

Source : Comenius 2.1 PPe Pee « Projet personnel de l'élève et politique éducative d'établissement, Mars 2000

Cannington

ACTIVITY: Pre-entry Interview

CONTEXT

Country :UK

Institution (type) :Land-based colleges

Students concerned in this activity (number, % of group) : All students

Age :16+

Course, training, options : All courses

Level (European) : 1-3

AIMS

To inform students about the course they are interested in (ie details, qualification, farm duties etc)

To discuss student's overall aims and expectations

Perhaps to meet and discuss with student's parents

Reasons for carrying out this activity :

To ascertain the student's learning needs

To make the best match between the student and the programme of study (course).

OBJECTIVES

Expected results; concrete products; expected benefits for the student(s) :

Student file (dossier). To direct the student onto the most appropriate and relevant course; to enable the college to prepare for the student's learning needs.

PROCESS

1) Setting up, preparation

What; for whom; why; who takes the initiative?

Personal interview between student and trained interviewer, and vocational tutor (not always – depends on availability, due to teaching commitments).

For all prospective students, and their parents if applicable

To give and to gain information. To give a good first impression of the college.

The college's Admissions team contacts students who have expressed an interest in enrolling on a course; the team sets up an interview date and contacts the appropriate (vocational) tutor to participate in the interview.

How (tools, techniques, procedures):

If it is known before the interview that the student has some learning difficulties/needs, a Learning Support tutor is also involved in the interview. A tour of the college and the teaching relevant areas is arranged – often a technician in the department concerned will conduct the tour.

Resources:

Transport for tour, room for interview, paperwork, and staff.

Who participates?

Interview team, vocational tutors, and technicians (for tours).

2) Sequence

Each person's role; when; at what time of the year; is it during or outside timetabled (class) time:

Interview (Admissions) team makes contact with student, then arranges date after talking to relevant staff (including Learning Support, if necessary, see above).

1. This activity is linked to the application form, which the student would have completed in advance (eg student may have ticked the box indicating a Learning need which would ensure that a Learning Support tutor would also attend the interview). The interview is also linked to the information supplied about the student, eg information/references from school or from previous employer.
2. Interviewer has a checklist of actions to complete during the interview, ie, questions to ask/information to give. One of these is to check Learning Support needs, whether or not the relevant box has been ticked

on the application form, as some students do not indicate a need initially but may discuss this at interview. If it becomes obvious during the interview, or as a result of the initial screening test (see point 4), that the student is likely to need some sort of learning support during the course of his/her studies, the Learning Support department is contacted to see if a tutor is available to join in the interview immediately. If no one is available, a further appointment is made for the student to come in again to discuss his/her learning needs. This does not affect his/her acceptance on the course in any way.

3. In some colleges, a nationally recognised basic skills screening test is given to all students just before the personal interview. This is 'scored' whilst the student is on the tour so that the results can be used for information during the interview. In other colleges, this screening test is given at Induction (ie, the first few weeks of the academic year).

An offer of a place at the college is made, this is either non-conditional (ie the student has been accepted), or conditional; ie, on condition that the student achieves certain results in forthcoming exams, or retakes certain exams at college, or agrees to an individualised support programme, etc.

Interviews take place throughout the year, and during 'normal' timetabled days or (in some colleges) on special 'Interview days'.

How long does the activity last?

Interview and tour lasts from 1.5 – 3 hours.

RESULTS OBTAINED *Products achieved*

Were the stated objectives achieved? Yes/No

This varies. The expected result is an appropriate match of course/programme of study to student.

Actual result, this is sometimes as expected (depending on how good the interviewer is, and whether the student is sufficiently realistic about his/her own capabilities), but sometimes there is an inappropriate match – for various reasons.

Another actual result is a 'baseline' (initial) assessment of student's abilities which allows colleges to judge student's support needs and expectations, and to judge the 'added value' which the college achieves for the student by the end of his/her course.

Has the activity had an impact on interpersonal relations (between teachers/students, between students, between teachers, etc):

The process allows students (and sometimes their parents) and staff to meet each other before the course begins and so to begin to build up a working relationship. This is very useful for the first Student Progress Review (for the under-18 year olds mainly, and their parents) when staff meet with students (and their parents) to discuss progress. If they have already met, the discussions are greatly facilitated.

Between staff: the process gives various members of staff; teaching and non-teaching, the opportunity to work together and collaborate for the good of the students.

Between students: students have the chance to meet others on the same course and talk to them, before the course begins. A few friendly faces at the start of term help a lot.

Has the activity had an impact on the student's plans; personal, academic, professional:

This activity gives the student the opportunity to make a more informed decision, using all the information available, about whether this is the right choice of course/career for him/her **before** starting at the college. The process also gives a good start to the student's personal and academic development as it makes him/her think about own expectations, capabilities and motivation.

EVALUATION METHOD

1. How is the activity evaluated; by whom?

The activity is evaluated through questioning of students, through the Course/Termly Reviews (anonymous questionnaire, followed by Focus Group discussions in certain colleges). This specifically asks students for their views on the interview process and how it could be improved.

Subsequent results also help to evaluate the effectiveness of the interview process, ie student's retention and achievement on the chosen course of study.

2. How is student progress evaluated?

Student progress is monitored through assessment and tutorials, the early 'baseline' assessment enables staff to measure progress more effectively.

DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED

What difficulties (if any)?

- a) Some wrong information given to prospective student(s) on occasion, due to inappropriate staff being involved in the interview procedure.
- b) Staff availability – due to timetable commitments.

How were these overcome?

- a) In one college, a file has been created by each course manager giving details of each course, including course expectations (i.e. farm duties, etc). Interviewers use this file to ensure accuracy of information given.

Solved through negotiation and by the Admissions team liaising between the various staff members involved in order to set up the interview. This is time-consuming but ensures the right people are involved.

MINIMUM CONDITIONS REQUIRED IN ORDER TO DEVELOP THIS TYPE OF ACTIVITY IN AN INSTITUTION

Willingness! Co-operation. The process needs to be put in place, with staff available both to arrange the interviews (eg an Admissions/Interview team) and to conduct the interview.

Communication with students (and parents). A room set aside for this activity, if possible.

ANALYSIS AND BENEFITS FOR THE STUDENT

This activity helps the students to integrate into the group as they may have met already at interview; they have shared the experience of the interview, visiting the college, etc.

It assists in the choice of the most appropriate course for the student's abilities, interests and career plans.

It places the student with his/her peers who have similar expectations, interests and general level of ability.

It gives the student (and parents, if applicable) a realistic impression of what the course entails before starting at college.

It gives the college a baseline assessment of the student, and identifies any learning support needs so that a programme of support can be set up from the very start of the course – with a consequent effect on academic results.

It begins to make the student aware of the standard of work expected.

BENEFITS FOR THE STUDENT

The student gains a prior knowledge of the course and the standards (see above). The staff's knowledge of the student's aims, abilities, possible learning needs, etc helps the student to progress.

The students are aware of the benefits of the pre-entry interview because: on starting the course (which has been chosen as a result of the interview), the student is aware of being known personally by the people s/he has already met, of his/her needs being known by the teaching team and catered for (ie, an individual support programme may have been set up). On starting the course, the student feels that s/he is returning to familiar territory.

Staff are aware of the benefits of the process, as they are fully involved in it.

LINKS WITH OTHER SUPPORT PRACTICES

This activity is linked to the overall student support, ie the Tutorial and Monitoring process begins with the pre-entry interview information (often the tutor has been involved in the interview) and any related support programme.

It is linked primarily through the use of the Student File which contains the information held on the student and is continually augmented and updated through the tutorials, etc.

It is also linked to the Wardening and other support services, such as Careers and Welfare.

THE EDUCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SUPPORT PRACTICE

Guidance

Inter-personal relations

Baseline assessment & Added Value

Matching the needs of the Learner

CONCLUSION, SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS