The STAR Project

Student Transition and Retention

Outcomes of the STAR Project

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The STAR Project
(Student Transition And Retention)

- Funded by FDTL4 till 2007, continuing on a consultancy basis

- Consortium of
  - University of Ulster
  - University of Brighton
  - Liverpool Hope University
  - University of Manchester
  - University of Sunderland

- Identify and disseminate good practice in managing student transition

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The STAR project

Four themes

- **Prior to entry**
  - Appropriate expectations
  - Matching student to course
- **Induction**
  - Pre teaching
  - Extended
- **Curriculum development**
  - Matching course to student qualifications
  - Support subjects
- **Staff development**
  - Raising staff awareness - things have changed
  - Teaching, learning and assessment practices

Time line

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STAR activities

- **Survey** of BioScience departments

- **Selection** of likely good practice

- **Staff** interviews to document good practice

- **Student** focus groups to validate good practice

- **Publish** good practice on the web

- **Publish** paper based booklets

- **Sponsor** mini-projects

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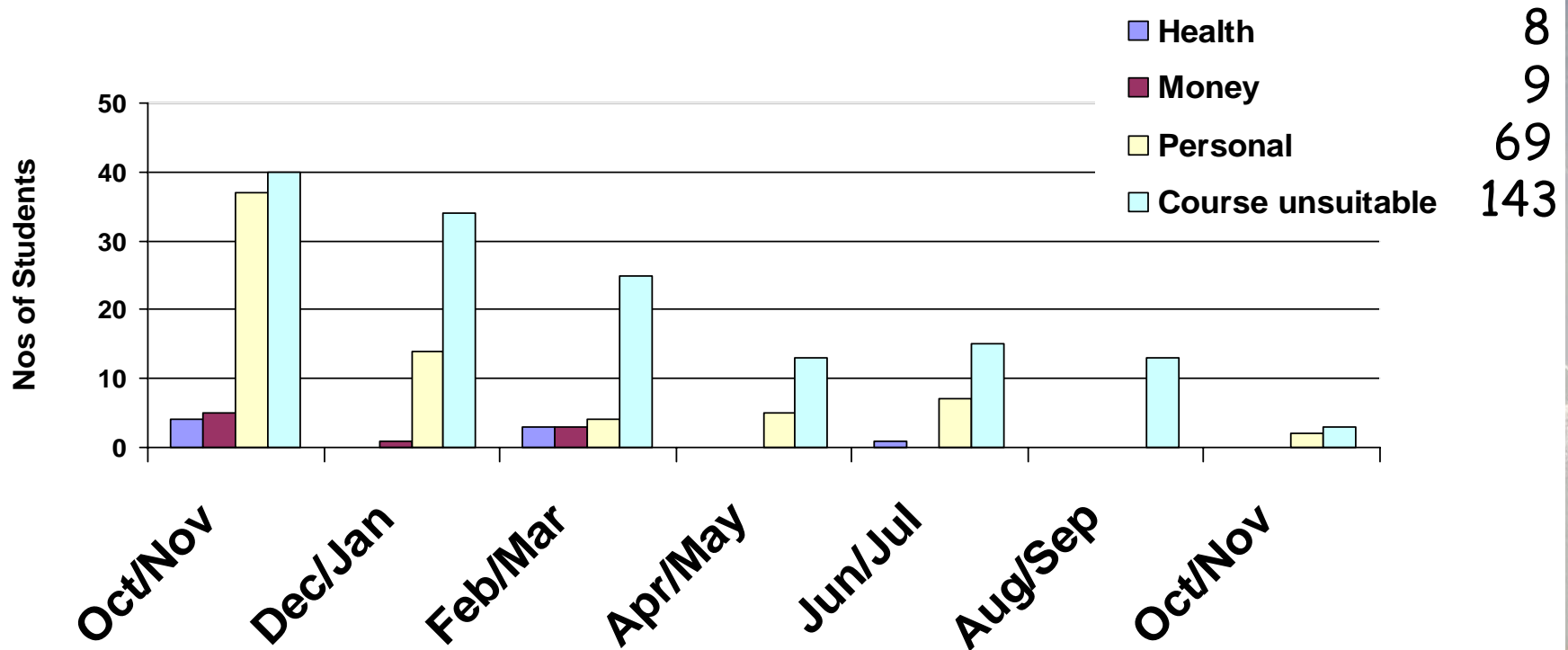
Managing transition

End point

Independent, enthusiastic, involved, motivated, communicative, present, sober

?
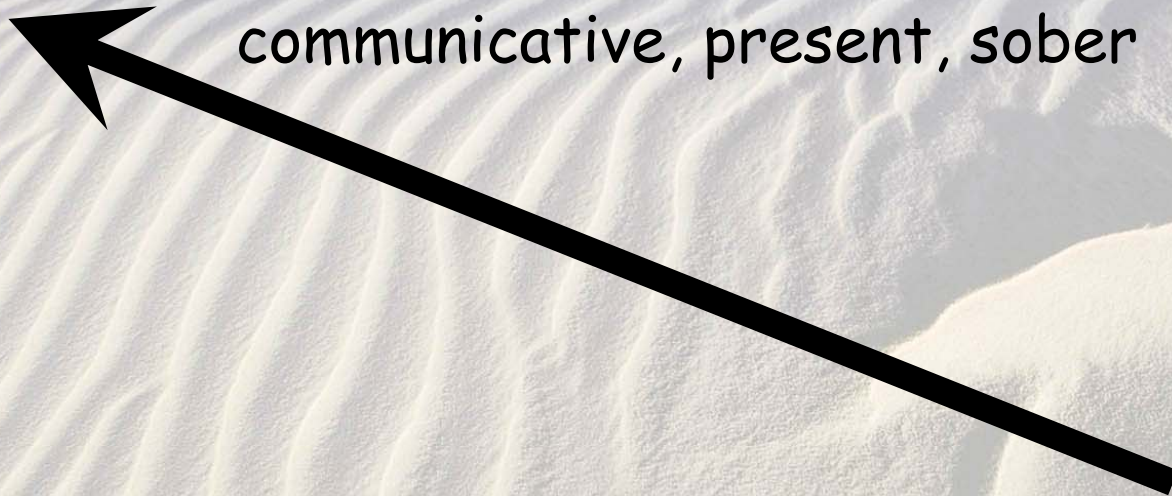
Start point

Why do students leave early?

Data from University of Ulster 2001/2 (institutional data)

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Decision making

Capable	Incapable
Coping	Overwhelmed
Integrated	Isolated
STAY	LEAVE

Capable v Incapable

- All admitted have the potential to succeed
- Not all start in the same place

- Solutions
  - Realistic expectations
  - Flexible curricula assuming student diversity
  - Proactive support

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Solutions

- Honest visit days

- Pre-entry student mentoring

- Accurate literature

- Awareness of student attributes

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Coping v Overwhelmed

- Culture shock of higher education
  - First generation students
- New social contexts
  - Away from home / financial management
- New academic expectations
  - Independence / time management

Solutions

- Extended induction
  - Longitudinal induction, year induction
- Tutorial support (small group teaching)
- Transitional methods
  - Look at pre-entry qualifications
  - Look at pre-entry assessment methods
- Enhance support for HE study skills

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Integration v Isolation

Students who feel they 'belong' are less likely to leave

- Social
  - Approachable staff
  - Cohort cohesiveness

- Academic
  - Does the subject meet their aspirations?
    Short term
    Long term

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Solutions

- Integrate 'home' students with residential ones
  - Homestart
- Social induction
  - Clubs, trips, social events
    - Residential field trips, outings with or without an academic context
- Student mentoring
- Identify and meet aspirations
  - Vocational curriculum
  - Start from where they *are* not where you would like them to be

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In conclusion

- Attrition is an institutional problem
  - But may be a student's solution

- Attrition is a multifactorial problem
  - Many prior experiences are inappropriate
  - Some students are disappointed
  - Some students fail to adjust to independent living while others never really leave home

  Solution is ……

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The Holy Grail

- Strong support from the top administration
  - High quality teaching, incentives and resources
- An emphasis on collaborative learning
  - Groups tend to socialize as well as study and learn
- Frequent and immediate formative assessment
  - students need a steady flow of feedback

  Tinto

- Mould and meet expectations

  STAR

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Tangible STAR Outcomes

- The STAR website
- The STAR *Guidelines*
- The STAR *Transition Audit* of current practice
- Published Case Studies
- Mini-project reports
- Group of people with expertise (consultancy)

- End of project conference (Easter 2007)

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The STAR Outcomes

Published Case Studies – 11 themes

Student Transition and Retention – An Overview

Informing Students

      Community outreach   Quality information

Supporting Students

      Early induction   Extended induction

      Student mentoring   Tutorial support

      Course Design   International students

      Special needs

Supporting Staff – Staff Development

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