Case Study

‘Mind the Gap’: addressing the transition needs of students entering the second and third year

Project summary

In order to support first year undergraduates’ transition into the second year and second years’ transition into the third year, a ‘Mind the Gap’ event was held within the Department of Geography, following the summer exams.

Background and rationale

Transition within the student lifecycle is not a one-off occurrence, but rather something that students experience throughout their studies as they encounter more challenging material, ideas and assessment practices. The event was held in order to address the needs of students about to enter the second and third years of their studies.

Current stage of the project and planned next steps

The Student Learning Development team worked with academic staff within the department to design a day of activities addressing the academic aspects of the students’ transition. For the first years, the morning session covered critical analysis and note-making, and included a note making exercise from academic journal articles. The afternoon session focused on writing: students worked to reassemble an academic journal article which had been divided into individual paragraphs, and assessed two past student essays using an expanded question-based version of the assessment criteria. The session for second years centred on managing the dissertation process and included discussion of past students’ work. Both first and second year days also included a joint staff and student panel, with panel members answering questions regarding the upcoming year. Feedback from attending students indicated that they considered the sessions useful for preparing them for upcoming studies.

The sessions have currently run for two years and are part of a week-long programme of activities designed to address a number of aspects of the students’ transition.