Theory of Change: Student Academic Support

Inputs

Activities and resources required

- Recruitment of Pastoral mentors.
- 'student data leads' in non-pilot Departments
- Project Group and Consultation Group to oversee and evolve model of support
- Digital support for student data and 'digital first' approach to student queries.
- academic colleagues and professional services teams to develop communications, referral and escalation resources and training.

Outputs

Key deliverables

- Recruitment and induction of pastoral mentors for pilot Departments.
- Identification of 'Student Data Leads' in non-pilot Departments.
- create a student engagement dashboard
- Develop a 'digital first solution' (e.g. chatbot) for student enquiries
- Training for staff and students
- Establish project group and consultation group for student academic support.

Outcomes

Early – midterm results

- Pastoral mentors and 'Student Data Leads' use data to identify students in need of support, assisting with earlier engagement discussions with students and earlier identification of issues impacting study.
- Staff and students understand the role of a Pastoral Mentor and regularly refer to or engage with them for support.
- Staff and students are confident in using signposting resources and digital solution to support them in their role/studies.
- Increase in number of 'early' referrals to specialist services (e.g. EWAs) and reduction in number of mitigation requests.
- Staff increase their engagement with the toolkit for academic tutors and training opportunities.
- All Departments adopt the new model for academic support.

Impact

Long term results

- Students receive and/or are signposted to academic and pastoral support that allows them to progress in their studies.
- Academic and professional services staff work collaboratively with Pastoral Mentors to support students.
- Students report increased satisfaction and reduced variability with their experience of academic support.
- Departments report increased student engagement, a reduction in non-continuation / withdrawal rates and improvement in student outcomes (with a focus on under-represented, disadvantaged and international students).

Assumptions (related to individuals who take up the activity)

- Effective student academic support is important in promoting student wellness, signposting to specialist services and reducing non-continuation / withdrawal rates.
- Pastoral Mentors will be E&S staff which will ensure greater visibility and accessibility for students and provide a link into the Department for professional services teams supporting students.

Assumptions (related to early changes in attitude or behaviour by activity)

- Pastoral Mentors will adopt a proactive approach which will reduce non-continuation and withdrawal rates in the faculty. The savings will be utilised to fund pastoral mentor posts within existing budgets.
- It will be possible to provide access to robust and accessible data on student engagement to pastoral mentors and Department Leads for student data.

Assumptions (related to benefits and possible unintended consequences)

- We have strong evidence that student performance and engagement in the first year of programmes are good predictors of degree outcome and that supporting students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds or from outside the UK, is crucial to driving down awarding gaps.