11 Supporting students with resits and interruption: Challenges for student engagement

Karen Lander, Caitlin Hunter

University of Manchester, Manchester, United Kingdom

Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

Resits provide 'a second chance' for students. Consequently, it is essential that we support students to make the most of this chance. Students with resits may lack academic confidence and become 'disengaged'. Similarly, students who have interrupted may also lack academic confidence, having been away from the University. Resits and interruption are a significant problem and barrier to continuation.

Learning is dictated not only by the external environment but also internally through self-belief. Self-efficacy is related to a student's emotional state and self-confidence and is an important asset for students to develop. Improving self-efficacy may be one way in which students can improve their engagement and help themselves.

This presentation outlines work (focus groups & questionnaires) conducted to consider the methods and strategies used to engage students during resit preparation and following interruption. We explore recommendations for good practice and considering way to help students to improve their self-efficacy / engagement.

Full paper

Resits provide 'a second chance' for students (Ricketts, 2010, p.351) and it is essential that we support our students to make the most of that chance as part of an inclusive approach to teaching and learning. Having failed the original assessments, students with resits may lack academic confidence, they may find it difficult to admit failure, they may not seek advice on how to turn failure into success and hence they may become 'disengaged'. Similarly, students who interrupt their courses, typically have assessments that they need to catch up on and obstacles to overcome before they can continue their academic study. Thus, students who have interrupted also often lack academic confidence, having been away from the University and the academic environment. Here the challenge is support students to become 're-engaged' with their studies. Resits and interruption are clearly a significant problem and barrier to continuation, and we need to consider ways to best support and engage our students.

From an individual perspective, social cognitive theory draws attention to the importance of self-belief and efficacy in an individual's learning and development (Bandura, 1999). Students are seen as powerful agents who can see an improvement in their academic performance, because of their own self-reflection and confidence to act. Learning is therefore not dictated only by the external environment but also internally through self-belief. Indeed 'there is evidence (Bandura, 1997) that self-efficacious students participate more readily, work harder, persist longer, and have fewer adverse emotional reactions when they encounter difficulties than do those who doubt their capabilities' (Zimmerman, 2000, p.86). Self-efficacy has been related to a student's positive emotional state (that helps engagement) and self-confidence (belief they can do it) and is an important asset for students to develop. Improving self-efficacy may be one way in which students can improve their engagement and help themselves.

This presentation will outline work (from focus groups & via questionnaire data) conducted at the University of Manchester, as part of an Institute of Teaching and Learning Fellowship awarded to Karen Lander. The following issues are explored (i) to consider the methods and strategies we already use - and optimally could use - to engage students during resit preparation; (ii) to explore the challenges and barriers for student re-engagement following interruption; (iii) to explore possible recommendations for good practice in terms of student involvement and support, considering ways to help students to improve their self-efficacy and engagement. We present potential differences in student engagement levels across course level, course topic content and via on-campus and blended delivery modes. Finally, we outline mechanisms that are currently working well for students, providing them genuine gains in learning effectiveness, support and/or the community through student engagement.

References

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: Freeman.

Bandura, A. (1999). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. In R. F. Baumeister (Ed.), *The self in social psychology* (pp. 285–298). Psychology Press.

Ricketts, C. (2010). A new look at resits: Are they simply a second chance? *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 35*(4), 351–356. https://doi.org/10.1080/02602931003763954

Zimmerman, B. (2000). Self-Efficacy: An Essential Motive to Learn. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 25,* 82-91. https://doi.org/10.1066/ceps.1999.1016