

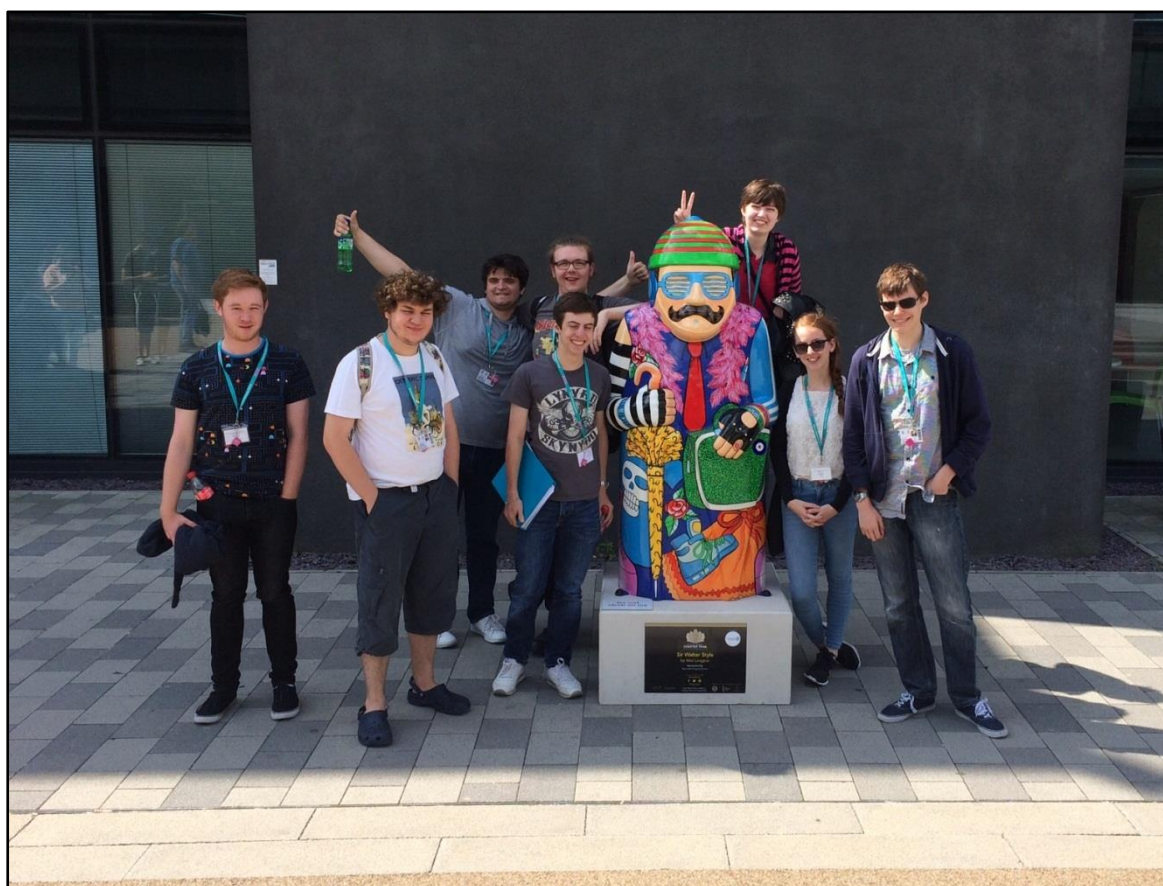


WOW Transitional Summer School

Evaluation Report

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July 2015



Some of the WOW Attendees 2015, with Baron Walter Style, part of the Lincoln 'Baron' Tour, outside the Great Central Warehouse - University Library



Background to WOW –

Preparation for the transitional Summer School began in early 2014, with ideas for the School dating much earlier.

From following Disability practitioner forums, it was noted that many institutions had recently begun, or had ideas for, hosting transitional Summer Schools, but all of these had been for students with Autistic Spectrum Disorders.

When looking at the complexity of issues that many of the students who access the Student Wellbeing Centre face, students have anxieties about either initially beginning University or when beginning study, around a range of areas, such as social interaction, ways in which they will study, getting around, familiarity with the campus, etc. This in turn, can at times lead to students feeling overwhelmed and on occasion, withdrawing from University altogether. When thinking about the Summer School, the Student Wellbeing Team wished to offer this to many prospective students who would be accessing support through the Team, but all of which who may experience anxieties about beginning University study, such as those with Autistic Spectrum Disorders, mental health, sensory or physical impairments.

The term WOW, came about after needing something other than simply 'Summer School' as a name for the School that Student Wellbeing would be providing. Over the summer, many departments may host events such as this and we needed to ensure that the terminology used was instantly recognisable, remembered and had links to the team who were providing it.

WOW stands for Wellbeing Orientation Welcome and the name encapsulates all we had initially hoped to provide for the students. The initial aims were to provide students with Autistic Spectrum Disorder, mental health, sensory or physical impairments the opportunity to learn more about the University, what to expect and what is expected of them whilst studying at HE level. WOW's aim therefore was to ease any anxieties those students may have about the transition into University life.

WOW was proposed to be held in July 2015, with initially up to 30 free residential places for a 3 day, 2 night stay on campus. Students would be provided a room within the University Halls of Residence and would live with other students for the time of the residential. This would give them the ability to



engage socially with their peers and it was hoped and anticipated, build strong relationships that would last through to enrolment and beyond.

When thinking about offering the School to prospective students, it was understood that this may be the first time that some students have lived away from home, lived with others, or cooked and cleaned for themselves independently. Some students may have concerns about the potential learning environments, ways in which they will study, social interactions and all the forthcoming changes that becoming a full time University student can bring.

A comprehensive programme of workshops, debates, teaching sessions and social events were discussed and agreed, to hopefully give prospective students a flavour of what lies ahead. Sessions would include:

- Tours of the City and facilities on Campus
- Taster sessions from academics in different learning environments
- Information on Support Services available
- Advice and guidance on fees, funding and budgeting
- Applying for a Disabled Students Allowance
- Social skills workshops and how to cope with the changes ahead

As a part of the WOW residential, Student Wellbeing staff would be on site 24/7, to help and support students as needed. Students under 18 at the time of WOW would stay on campus after signing an agreement by a parent or guardian.

Applications were put together, to include a brief questionnaire, to establish the main cause of anxieties and concerns that students may have ahead of enrolling at University and the main strategies that they use to 'cope' with change, as part of their diagnosed condition.

Disability Advisors within the Student Wellbeing Team, as part of their work with Prospective students over 12 months prior to students enrolling, would identify students most in need of places on WOW and offer it to those students in the first instance. As this would be the first time the residential School had been offered to students, it was still an 'unknown' area and therefore, for the first year at least, places would be allocated by staff to prospective students, rather than 'advertised' on a wider basis outside of the University.

Funding was available through the University Access Agreement, to offer places at the School cost free to students, to include meal vouchers and overnight stays.

(Copy of Application Form – Appendix i)



WOW Programme of Events -

	Day 1 – Wednesday 8th July 2015	Day 2 – Thursday 9th July 2015	Day 3 – Friday 10th July 2015
8am		<i>Breakfast</i>	<i>Breakfast</i>
9am	Arrival/ Collection of Keys - Informal meet and greet – (<i>Accommodation Office – Building 8 on Campus Map</i>)	Academic Learning Environments – student/academic interactions etc. (<i>MC2201 - 2</i>)	Coping Strategies – Workloads/Exams/Introduction to ‘Patting Dogs’ - (<i>Witham House - 10</i>)
10.30am	<i>Coffee break</i>	<i>Coffee break</i>	<i>Coffee break</i>
11am	Collect Sample Student Cards (<i>Student Support Centre - 1</i>) Parents Workshop (at the same time) information from Support Teams, FAQ’s etc. – (<i>MB1010 - 1</i>)	Library Tour – Getting started, Using the Virtual Learning Environment (<i>Great Central Warehouse Library - 16</i>)	What has been learnt? Any other questions + looking towards the future, graduation and beyond– (<i>Witham House - 10</i>)
12pm	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Goodbyes/Return keys</i>
1pm	Campus Tour – Student Crew or SWC (<i>Meet at 1.15pm in the Student Wellbeing Centre - 5</i>)	Roger Bretherton – Being Positive at University (<i>MC2201 - 2</i>)	
2.30pm	Meet the Students Union – Clubs and Societies, who is available to support students, benefits of joining, etc. (<i>SOAP Centre at 2.15pm - 15</i>)	Roger Bretherton - Being Positive at University (<i>MC2201 - 2</i>)	
3pm	<i>Coffee break</i>	<i>Coffee Break</i>	
3.30pm	Support Services – Advice and Funding – FAQ’s – (<i>MB3201 - 1</i>)		
4pm		Market Kitchen – (<i>mobile unit</i>) Healthy, wholesome, affordable cooking suggestions and mini course provided.	
5pm	Sports Centre – tour and information (<i>9</i>)		
7.30pm onwards	Informal Evening Meal and City Tour Yo Yo’s Booked.	Free Time (Unguided) – Explore the City, Cinema, etc. ??	



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A programme of events was discussed, based around the known difficulties and concerns that the students attending had and issues that the Student Wellbeing Team had come across with previous students. These would include sessions with academics, tours of the City and Campus, meeting the Students Union and opportunities available, chance to go out for a meal together, budgeting, funding and finance.

As part of the Programme of Events, a session was provided by Advice and Student Wellbeing colleagues for parents, separately from students, to answer any concerns or queries they may have about students ahead of enrolling or during WOW.



WOW 2015 attendees during the Market Kitchen and Pets as Therapy sessions

Questionnaire before and after WOW -

As part of the application to attend the WOW Summer School, prospective students were also asked their expectations of WOW, their expectations of University life, along with any coping strategies they currently use to aid them with any difficulties they have due to their diagnosed condition.

Questionnaires were also completed by all attendees on their final day at the WOW Summer School, to ask if it had been beneficial, what sessions they have



enjoyed most and least, if they feel less anxious about starting University, what the Student Wellbeing Team could have done differently and if they would recommend WOW to another student.

(Copy of Questionnaire – Appendix ii)

WOW Participants -

Initially, it was planned to offer the School to prospective students with a disclosed diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder, mental health, sensory or physical disability. Uptake for WOW was initially slow, but increased over the last 5 months or so, but those students who did respond either had an ASD or mental health diagnosis.

20 students were identified to come along to WOW, 9 female and 11 male attendees applied. Two days before the start of the School, one male student withdrew from attending. His Mother contacted the team to say that he had changed his mind and; frustratingly for them, as they knew how much of a help and valuable resource it would be for him to attend, he was very adamant that he did not want to. 19 students therefore in total attended WOW.

Emails, information, maps and correspondence was sent to all attendees, informing them of what to expect, what would be provided, FAQ's and numbers to contact if needed.

(Copy of Information Sheet – Appendix iii)

Results and Outcomes –

The Student Wellbeing Team were overwhelmed by the group of 19 students who joined us for WOW and the way in which they flourished over the time of the School. From knowing the individual concerns of the students ahead of them arriving, through meeting and welcoming them, to seeing them slowly overcome their issues to become more socially confident, joining in and making new friends during WOW was fantastic. Since WOW has ended, students have already been in touch with the team to say that they are meeting up again independently in August, ahead of enrolments, which is wonderful.

During WOW, a 'selfie' competition was announced, asking students to take selfies around the Campus and Lincoln, to be added to social media with the hashtag 'WOW' or 'WOW Summer School'. 9 students felt confident enough to take part and add their photos to the Student Wellbeing Facebook page.



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A winner was picked at random and a £40 amazon gift voucher awarded during the final WOW session.

Questionnaires were given to students on their final day, with very long, but all very positive comments received.

A number of different sessions were held to identify main areas of concern and give students a flavour of what lies ahead. All of these were very successful, with academic and social sessions alike being extremely popular.

Students were asked if they enjoyed the WOW Summer School – all students who attended said they had, with some saying 'very much' and another commenting "I have loved every minute of it".

We asked students if they feel less anxious about starting in September. Comments were received such as "I feel completely different about joining university now, I am not anxious at all and can't wait to return in September" and "definitely feel more comfortable with the staff and feel happy that they are all so approachable and supportive".

All students said that they would recommend WOW to other students.

Other positive comments received included –

"It's really nice to see that the staff genuinely care and are so open and willing to help you with anything they can".

"It was nice, everything was explained well".

"It was a great experience that I would highly recommend".

(Copies of completed Questionnaires – Appendix iv)



Staff were delighted to receive a thank you card and chocolates from all WOW 2015 attendees.



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Future Plans –

WOW has generated a number of thoughts already to help students and aid retention. Plans following the outcomes of WOW include 'peer' and 'ambassador' roles and support at forthcoming WOW Summer Schools, from attendees at this year's WOW. Students were very open to this when we initially spoke to them about it during this year's Summer School and students were excited to be a part of something next year and to help other students to feel more comfortable.

Students built very strong friendships over the 3 days and; because of this, the possibility of securing a place together within University Halls of Residence could be explored. This would mean that students are not overwhelmed by meeting completely new people when moving in and enrolling, they have connections already made and in turn, again, this can hopefully go towards aiding retention and preventing withdrawal. Isolation in the first few weeks of term, particularly for students with Autism or those with a diagnosis of mental health can be a real concern, so to provide reassurance by living with someone you have already met during WOW, will hopefully ease these concerns and help students feel able to remain studying.

Students who attended WOW, will be monitored to assess how they are engaging with their studies and to also identify if any concerns arise, which would hopefully have been addressed by the Summer School. The student who chose not to attend will also be closely monitored, to check if he has any concerns during his studies, which again, could have been eased or identified during WOW.

A Newsletter is planned to be sent to all WOW attendees and their families, as an update and overview of the School, to include recaps, photos and positive comments shared.

Further plans to consider for next year (at this initial planning stage) include –

Timing – after A levels, as some students were still completing exams and therefore could not attend.

Further academics sessions, sample lectures – to give students an idea of what being in a lecture based environment, listening to academics, will be like.

Registry session – as a guide to online enrolments, what to expect.

Photos / videos during sessions.



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Appendix –

Application Form – Appendix i

Questionnaire – Appendix ii

Information Sheet – Appendix iii

Copies of completed Questionnaires – Appendix iv