



Exploring students' experiences of 1-1 advice and guidance conversations: a pilot study

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'...not feeling like that person was above me in any way you know, just very on my level...' [PI [1]]

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Presentation outline

- Supportive learning environments in the current HE context
- Student Academic Advice: a faculty-based model
- The pilot study: an overview
- Emerging themes from the pilot data:
student access, retention and progression in HE



Supportive learning environments in the current HE context

- Current market-based models of higher education (HE) (Brown, 2011; Universities UK, 2014; HEFCE, 2016)
 - Mass HE (Trow, 1972); student numbers (Nicol, 2010) and resource constraints (Price, Handley & Millar, 2011)
- Dilution of ‘personal, inclusive and supportive’ learning environments (Middleton, 2015, p.3)
- Dialogue is being squeezed out of mass higher education (Nicol, 2010; Blair and McGinty, 2013)
 - Social interaction and support to facilitate learning: relationship between talking, thinking and learning (Vygotsky, 1978)
- One-to-one work as an important part of learning and teaching (Wisker *et al*, 2008)
 - One aspect of working one-to-one is academic/study skills’ advice and guidance (Cottrell, 2001; Hilsdon, 2011; Turner, 2011).



Academic Advice: a faculty-based model

- Established in October 2010, Faculty of Business and Law
- 3 Student Academic Advisors
 - Module and Programme-embedded academic advice workshops, online resources, study groups and one-to-one
- Early testimonials helped inform professional curiosity;

Through the meetings I had the chance to find out the right ways through which I could/can conduct a good assignment. As so, now I am more confident in structuring, writing and analyzing a given theme. This can be monitored also from my grades that were better after the applications of the right methods (PG, International, 2011/12)



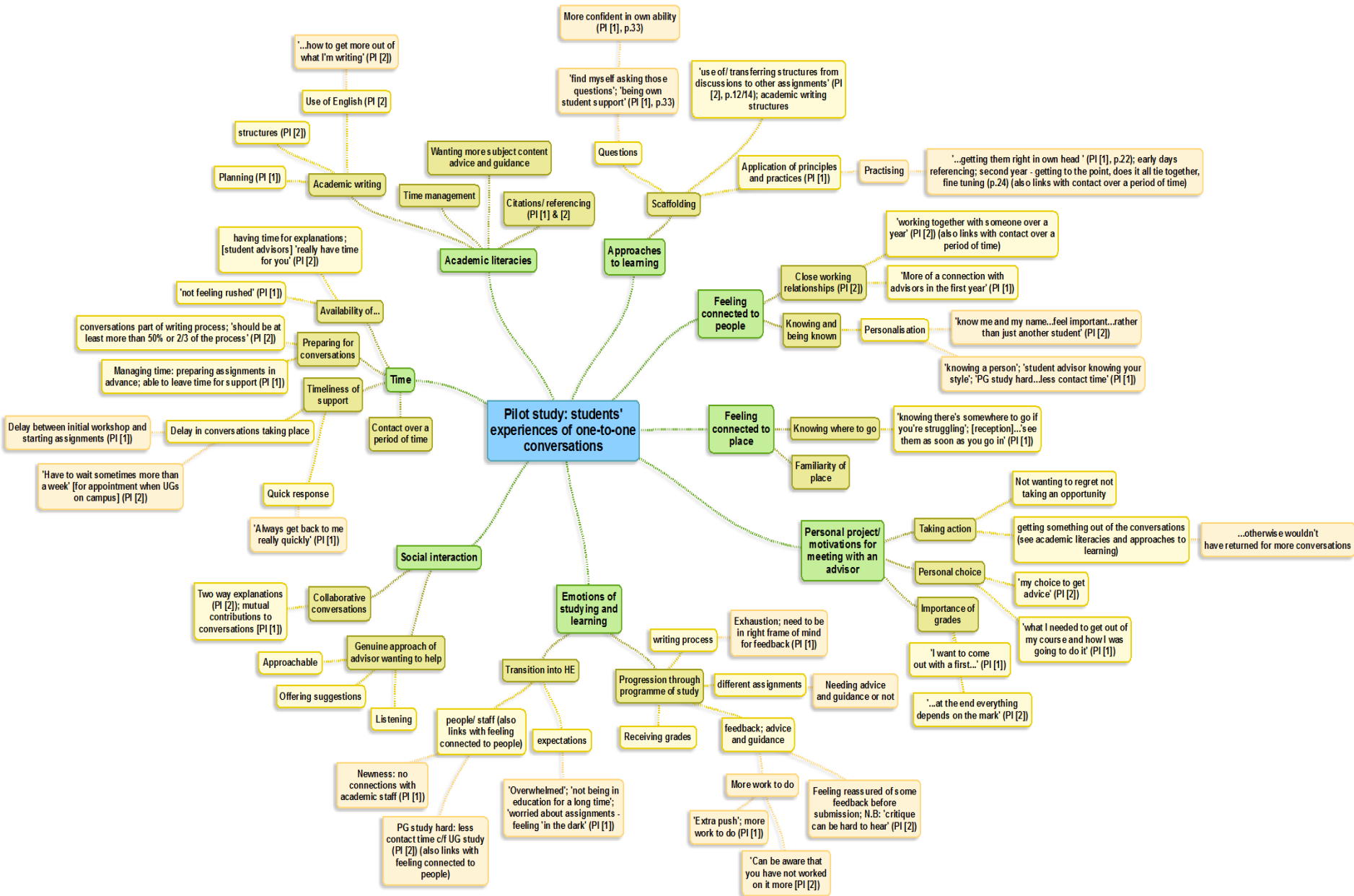


The pilot study: an overview



- Interpretative methodology: insight into how individuals understand their experiences of discussions with an advisor (Hammersley, 2013)
 - Cases within a case study (Stake, 2000)
 - Semi-structured interviews, based on Carnell & Lodge's (2002) work
- Two-stage pilot study:
 - Stage 1 (April 2016): suggestions, comments and bullet-pointed written answers to interview schedule (3 students)
 - Stage 2 (May & June 2016): 2 extended interviews
 - Mature, home student (stage 2), UG Business programme (FT)
 - EU student, PG Business (FT)

An iteration of emerging data from the pilot study



Aligning findings to 'Access, retention and progression'



STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF 1-1 ADVICE AND GUIDANCE CONVERSATIONS: A PILOT STUDY

| Access | Retention | Progression |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student transitions - Sense of belonging & promote engagement and enhance attainment (HEA, 2015) <p>Transition into HE: <i>People/staff</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Newness: no connections with staff [PI 1] - PG study 'hard': less contact time c/f UG study [PI 2] <p><i>Expectations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'overwhelmed': 'not being in education for a long time'; 'worried about assignments- feeling 'in the dark' [PI 1] | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Active learning to support retention - Supportive environments: safe, belonging (HEA, 2015) <p>Social Interaction: <i>Collaborative conversations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mutual contributions to conversations [PI 1] - Two way explanations [PI 2] <p><i>Approach of advisor</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - '... I think you've got to be supported by somebody that's very open minded and..., not judgemental in <u>any</u> way and just very down to earth' [PI 1] - '...they want to help you make your work better' [PI 2] | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facilitation of academic progress & promotion of shared responsibility & commitment (HEA, 2015) <p>Academic literacies: <i>Development of own work</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'early days referencing; second year – getting to the point, does it all tie together, fine tuning' [PI 1] - '...how to get more out of what I'm writing' [PI 2] <p>Time: <i>Students preparing for conversations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - managing time to allow for conversations [PI 1] - conversations part of the writing process; taking part complete assignments for discussion [PI 2] |
| <p>Feeling connected to place: <i>Having somewhere to go</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'knowing there's somewhere to go if you're struggling'; [reception] '...see them as soon as you go in'; more confidence around uni. [PI 1] <p><i>Familiarity of place</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'I have the experience during my undergraduate before so I knew Sunderland a little bit...wasn't completely new' [PI 2] | <p>Feeling connected to people: <i>Close working relationships</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'I sort of got closer to the student support than I did the lecturers [S: laughs] and the tutors in first year' [PI 1] - 'working together with someone over a year' [PI 2] | <p>Personal project for meeting with advisor: <i>Personal choice</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'what I needed to get out of my course and how I was going to do it' [PI 1] - 'my choice to get advice' [PI 2] <p><i>Not wanting to regret opportunities to develop</i></p> <p><i>Striving for grades</i></p> |
| <p>Feeling connected to people: <i>Knowing and being known</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - '...know me by my name...feel important...rather than just another student' [PI 1] - 'knowing a person'; 'advisor knowing your style' [PI 2] | <p>Time: <i>Availability of time</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'I never felt like I wasn't important like I never felt rushed' [PI 1] - Having time for explanations; 'advisors really have time for you' [PI 2] | <p>Approaches to learning: <i>Scaffolding</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Questions: 'find myself asking those questions'; 'being own student support'; 'more confident in own ability' [PI 1] - Use of/ transferring structures from discussions to other assignments' [PI 2] |



The alignment of findings to literature



Social interaction and support to facilitate learning: relationship between talking, thinking and learning (Vygotsky, 1978)

Learning as a social and emotional process, not just cognitive (Illeris, 2004)

Access:

- The importance of nurturing students' sense of belonging (Thomas, 2012)
- The positive effect of students being known (Cooper, 2011)

Retention:

- Time and relaxed atmosphere for students to learn from feedback/ direction from staff (Blair & McGinty, 2013)
- Talk as a powerful tool (Alexander (2010); Effective dialogue as discursive – rich in two-way exchanges (Laurillard, 2002)
- Positive personal interaction supporting high quality learning and engagement in learning (Cooper, 2004)
- The establishment of positive connections with someone students believe will guide them as they navigate their studies: 'guide on the side' (King, 1993);

Progression:

- Referencing, writing practices and frameworks, critical questioning: Academic literacies (Lea & Street, 1998); Learning Development (Hartley et al, 2011); Alder's (1982) socratic seminar
- Students' reasons for engaging with their learning – personal project (Jary & Lebeau, 2009)



Finally, observations of the interview process

- Interviews as an opportunity for reflection
 - *'...is it useful [conversations] I've thought about it but how is it useful in what way and what do they really give me that came during the interview process'* [PI [2], p.25]
 - Interviews as an opportunity for self-reflexivity (Kyung-Hwa, 2015)
- Interview providing time to speak in detail – valuing individual voice
 - *'...I've never thought that deep about it before...I mean it was good practice...I think I've never talked that long...so it was good practice for my English'* [PI [2], p.23]
- The conversational style interview
 - *'It flowed really well I felt like from the beginning to the end I felt like... it was quite natural'* [PI [1], p.57]



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