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| Transition into HE |
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**Transition** is the period between having decided to pursue study in higher education and taking up a course at a higher education institution. Attention to this period of the student lifecycle is important because navigating choices about higher education, making the application and taking the first steps as a student are complex.

**Social capital** is a way of describing the advantages that come with having networks of advisors and mentors who are well-informed, opportunities to develop yourself personally and academically, good access to information about course choice and the confidence to be proactive in pursuit of your higher education goals.

Prospective students with a lot of social capital have a significant advantage in making the transition into higher education. This is not to say that everyone without these advantages will struggle, or that those with social capital will not need support, but to demonstrate how, if transition is not managed, the system will tend to reproduce existing inequalities. Certainly, some schools and colleges are better informed than others about preparing their students to apply to and enter higher education.

Transition, particularly admissions, often receives a great deal of media focus, especially when it is about recruitment to highly selective institutions. For NUS, the issue is primarily about ensuring that students are able to make the choice of course that is right for them, that they are treated fairly and that the pre-entry and induction support enables them to connect to their academic community and engage effectively with learning.

### Pre-entry programmes and compact agreements

One way of supporting effective transition is to create formal programmes that support entry into higher education. Many colleges deliver Access to HE courses that are designed to prepare people who have not been in education recently for higher level study. Some higher education institutions have formal compact or progression agreements with local schools and colleges.

Some institutions run access programmes that offer support to a cohort of Year 12/13 students through the UCAS application process and prepare them for higher education entry through subject taster sessions and campus visits. These might include mentoring by current students or opportunities to shadow current students.

Taster sessions and short adult learning courses can be a way for prospective mature students to build academic skills and confidence ahead of entering a formal course of higher education.

### Some principles for effective induction

Induction should start at the point a student is confirmed as being admitted to an institution. Provision of information about the campus, sample course timetables and reading lists and accommodation information are all important, but could be balanced with activities designed to build a sense of belonging such as using social media to connect future coursemates.

Induction should take account of different students' backgrounds and expectations, and be inclusive of postgraduate, international and mature students.

Induction is not just orientation! Induction should have a clear intent to prepare students to be academically and personally effective while at university. This means building understanding, rather than just supplying information, and might include:

* Analysis of academic strengths and weaknesses as a precursor to a personal development plan.
* Consideration of the meaning of learning in the chosen subject and how this will be different from school.
* Understanding student engagement, the role of student voice and the responsibilities of students to shape their learning experience.
* Understanding the circumstances in which student services might be used and why they are useful, as well as where they are.