



University
of Glasgow

Enhancing engagement of local ‘commuter’
students at induction to support transition
and promote student retention and success

**8th Annual University of Glasgow
Learning and Teaching conference**

Alison Browitt and Neil Croll, 14 April 2015





Project background and aims

Research, provide support for and evaluation of:

- Transition
- Induction
- Engagement
- Retention
- Success





Why ‘commuting’?

- Lower retention rates than first year students in Halls
- Includes ‘non-traditional’ or ‘Widening Participation’ students

Examples of WP criteria:

- Schools with low progression to HE
- SIMD disadvantaged postcodes
- Time spent in care
- Adult learners: Access/HN entrants
- In receipt of EMA
- Refugee/ asylum seeker status
- First in family



Our WP Programmes / entry routes

Schools (Engage with schools by HE progression rate)

- Top-Up Programme (25% or fewer leavers progress to HE)
- Summer School (27% or fewer leavers progress to HE)
- Reach: access to Medicine, Vet Medicine, Law, Dentistry and from 2015 to Engineering, Education, Acc / Fin (35% or fewer leavers progress to HE)
- Access to a Career in Teaching (all GCC schools)

Adult learners

- Centre for Open Studies Access courses
- Scottish Wider Access Programme



- ‘Drop-in café’ during Freshers’ Week 2012
WP students invited by email
- Qualitative research 2012/13
Covering transition to first year compared to expectations; preparation provided by pre-entry course (if appropriate); experience of Freshers’ Week and induction activities
- 51 students were interviewed in 5 focus groups
- 84 students responded to an online survey



Research findings

Barriers to Freshers' Week/ induction participation:

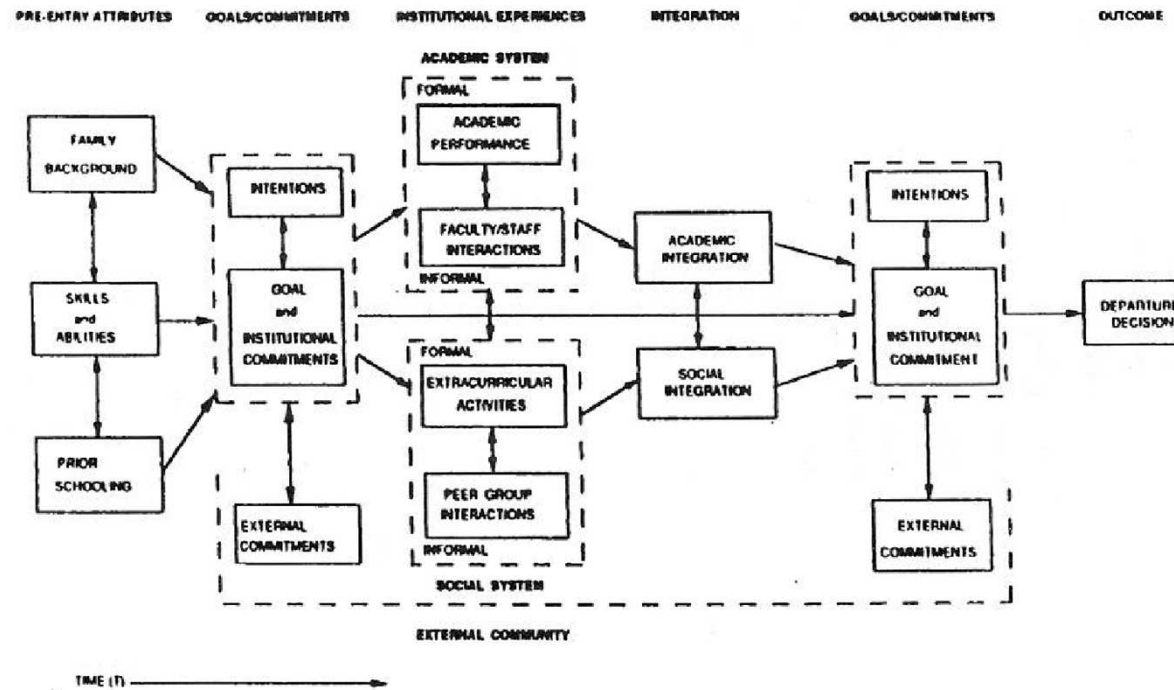
- Events finish too late for travelling home;
- Perceived as not aimed at them but for (young) students staying in Halls;
- Information overload.

Enablers:

- More likely to attend events with an academic focus as these perceived to be the most relevant;
- More likely to come up to the University with friends.



Figure 1. Tinto's Model of Voluntary Student Departure



Source: Vincent Tinto, 1993. *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition*, 2nd edition. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, p. 114. Copyright 1987, 1993 by The University of Chicago Press. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission.



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What Works? Student Retention & Success Phase I summary report

Particularly effective interventions... [for retention and success]... start pre-entry, and have an overt academic purpose. Such interventions often develop peer networks and friendships, create links with academic members of staff, provide key information, shape realistic expectations, improve academic skills, develop students' confidence, demonstrate future relevance, and nurture belonging.

https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/What_works_summary_report_0.pdf

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STAR Induction Guidelines

1. Activities should familiarise students with the local area, campus & support services
2. Activities should highlight students' academic obligations and obligations of staff
3. Activities should support development of independent study habits for HE
4. Events should provide the foundations for social interactions between students and the development of communities of practice
5. Activities should promote good communication between staff and students
6. Induction is required to manage transitions between elements of courses.

<http://www.ulster.ac.uk/star/induction/induction.htm>



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Best practice – who else is doing this?

The University Of Sheffield.

Discovery Week.

10–14 September 2012

WELCOME

Hello and welcome to Discovery Week! This programme combines a number of different events and is an opportunity for you to meet other people and get useful information about the University and city as you start life as a student. Everyone is welcome to take part but it is particularly aimed at local and commuter students and international students arriving early in Sheffield. It also provides a great chance for students from the local area to share their knowledge and experience with new arrivals from much further afield. Discovery Week has something for everyone, from a walk in the park to a scavenger hunt, and our team of student assistants are there to help you start your journey.

MONDAY 10TH SEPTEMBER

9:00-17:00 Discovery Week Welcome Students' Union Foyer

Come and meet us at the Students' Union to find out about the fantastic events we have on offer during Discovery Week.

10:00-16:00 Local/Commuter Welcome Day Jessop West Exhibition Space

A great opportunity for local and commuter students to meet each other and get to know the University. You'll also be able to meet your new local community mentor.

13:00 – 16:00 International Student Welcome Stephenson Main Hall

Join us for an opportunity to find private student accommodation (13:00 – 15:00), and meet with representatives from Property WithUs, High Street Banks, and Endsleigh Insurance (14:00 – 16:00).

11:50 – 13:00 Discover the Students' Union Students' Union Auditorium

Fadi Dakkak, International Students' Officer, will introduce you to the Students' Union and the wide range of events and services to be found throughout the Union.

13:00 – 16:00 Discover the Campus Scavenger Hunt Activities and Sports Zone, Students' Union

Get to know the University campus with our Discovery Week Scavenger Hunt! This fun challenge will test the very limits of your creativity, cunning and ingenuity. Each team will be given a list of things to collect, find, visit or do. Come back afterwards for coffee and cake to find out who's won. **Please bring a digital camera or camera phone if you have one.**

13:25 – 15:40 International Info Students' Union Au

LOCAL/COMMUTER MENTORS:

New for this year, we'll be providing all new local/commuter students with a mentor to help with your transition to university life. These mentors have all been local/commuter students themselves and will be able to share their experiences and tips with you. You'll be able to talk to your mentor about any worries you have about studying, whether they are practical or personal and they'll also be organising a number of events to help you meet other students. You'll have the opportunity to meet your mentor during the Local/Commuter Welcome Day and at other events during the week.



Local Student Orientation events, 2013 and 2014

In College groupings in morning:

- icebreaker activity;
- Small group activity to chat with each other and with circulating current undergraduates, Chief Advisers/Academics, Student Learning Service, postgraduate WP tutors;
- Plenary – Panel of staff and students answer questions.

- Lunch provided in QM Union
- Freshers' Week 'what's on' with SRC & Unions
- Mature students session
- WP programme reunions (2014)
- Introduction to Moodle
- Optional campus tours (2013) or Orientation Quiz (2014)



New 'local' students were invited (via email)

LSO 2013

- 1550 invited: 39% MD40, 15% mature, 33% WP schools
- 318 attended: 45% MD40, 17% mature, 42% WP schools

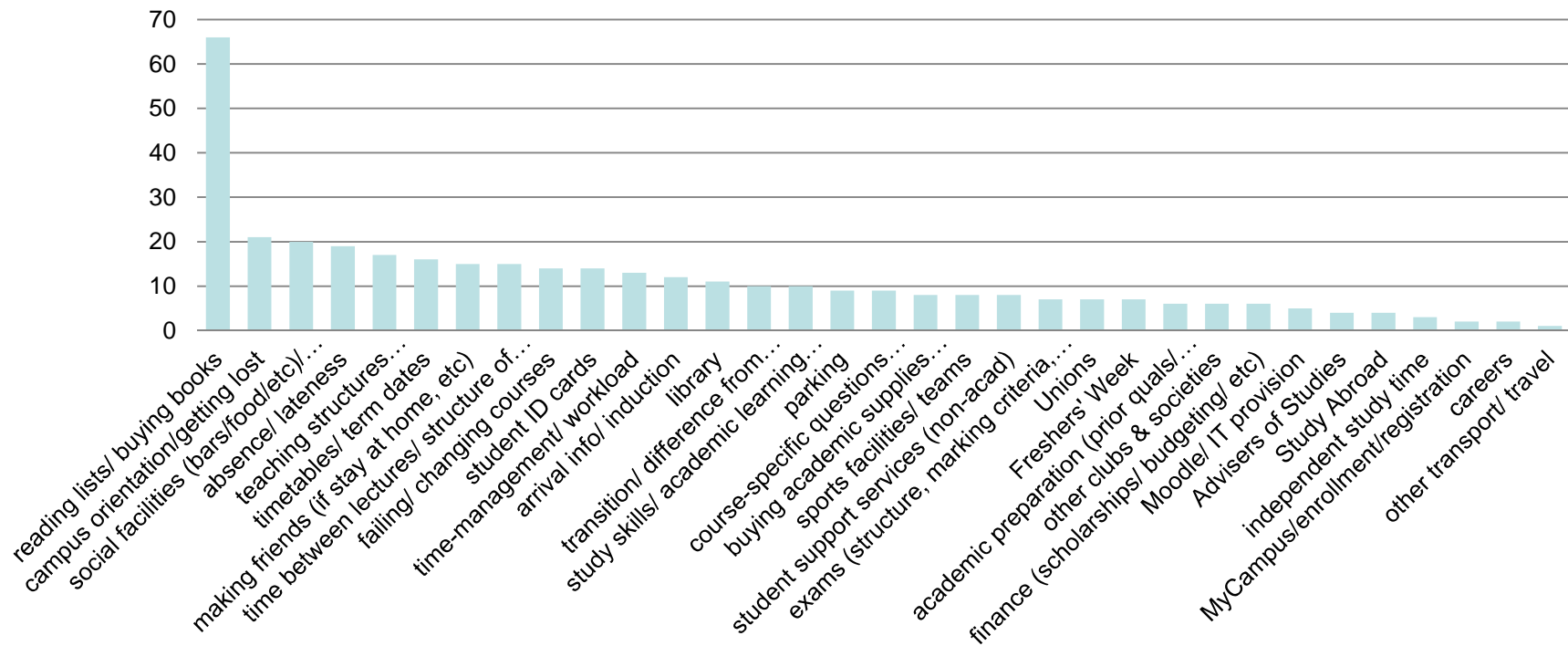
LSO 2014

- 1623 invited: 38% MD40, 23% mature, 30% WP schools
- 495 attended: 36% MD40, 19% mature, 38% WP schools



In small groups, agree on the 3 most important questions about starting University you still need answered

Frequently asked at LSO 2014





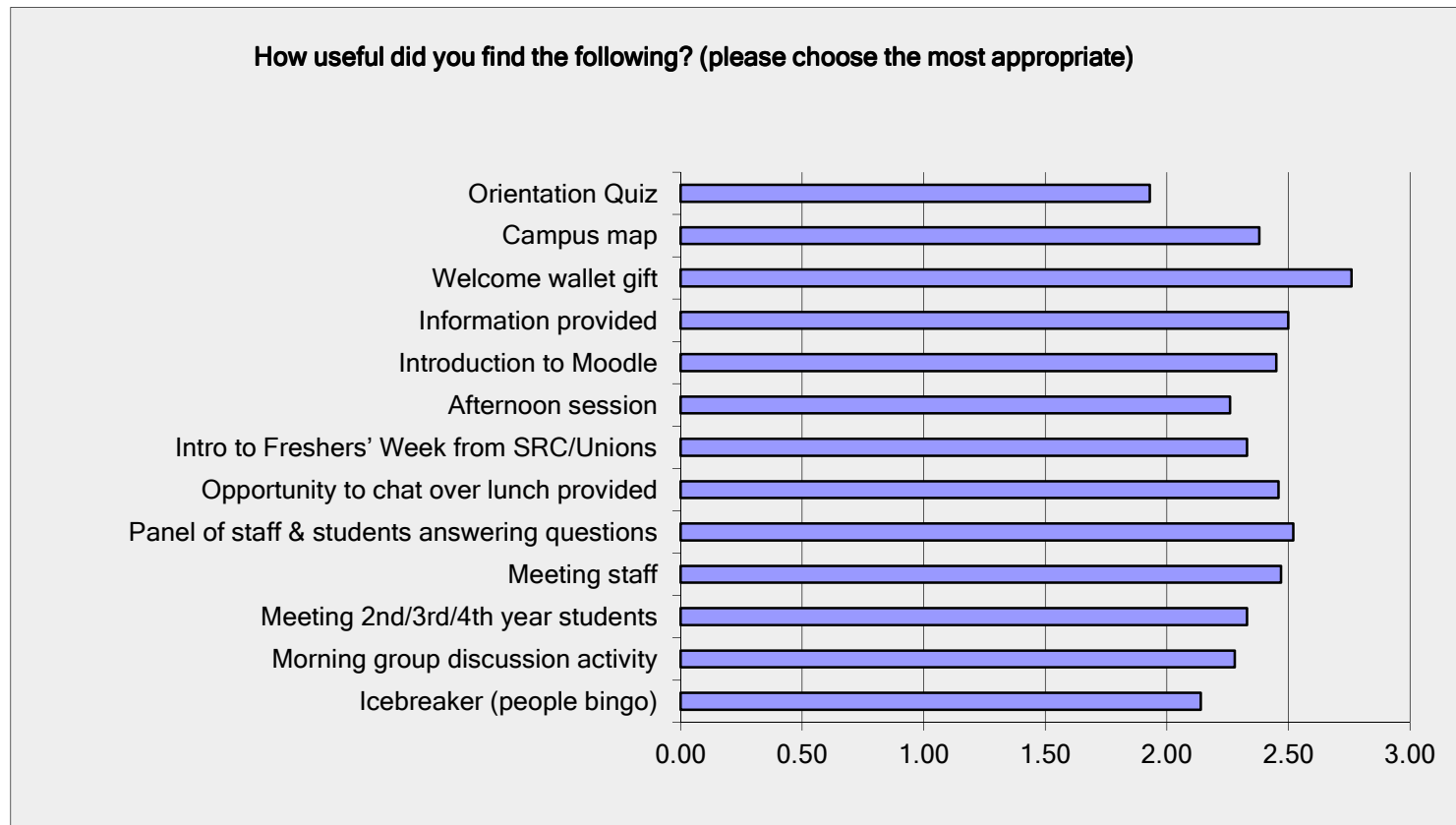
Local Student Orientation event 2014 evaluation

140 responses to feedback survey (28%)

- 95% agreed the event was enjoyable or very enjoyable
- Best thing about the day was meeting people
- But it could be improved by more time to meet people on your course



Local Student Orientation event 2014 evaluation





Local Student Orientation event 2014 evaluation

- Participants gained confidence & reassurances, lots of information and made friends
- 32% say event participation affected experience of Freshers' Week
- 50% say participation affected experience of starting classes in Week 1
- Around 90% still see people they first met on the day – some made their closest student friends at the event



Impact on student retention

LSO 2013

- 92.5% of attendees continuing their studies at Glasgow at 1 Dec 2014
- 87.0% of those invited but who did not attend are continuing

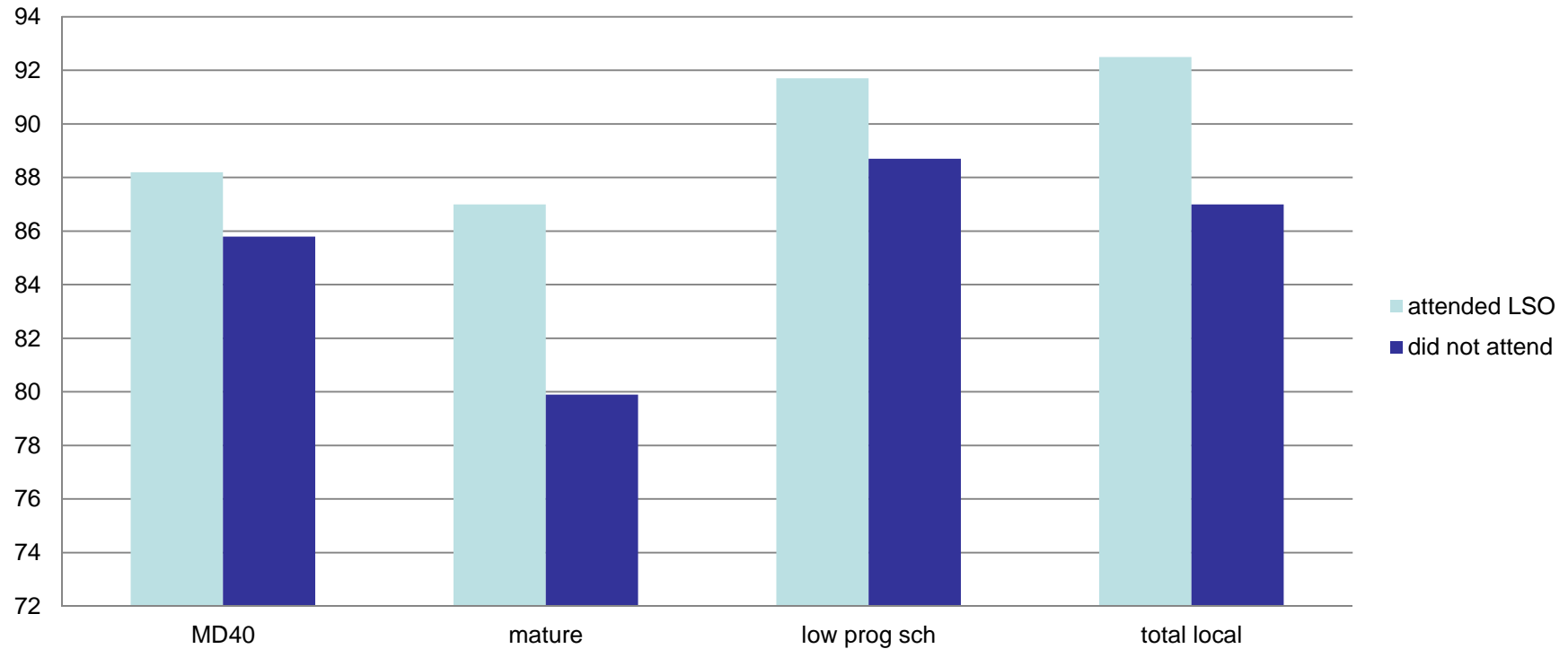
LSO 2014

- 3% of attendees have withdrawn from their studies by end of Semester 2 in 2014/15
- 7% of those invited but did not attend have withdrawn from their studies by end of Semester 2 in 2014/15



Impact on retention risk groups – LSO 2013

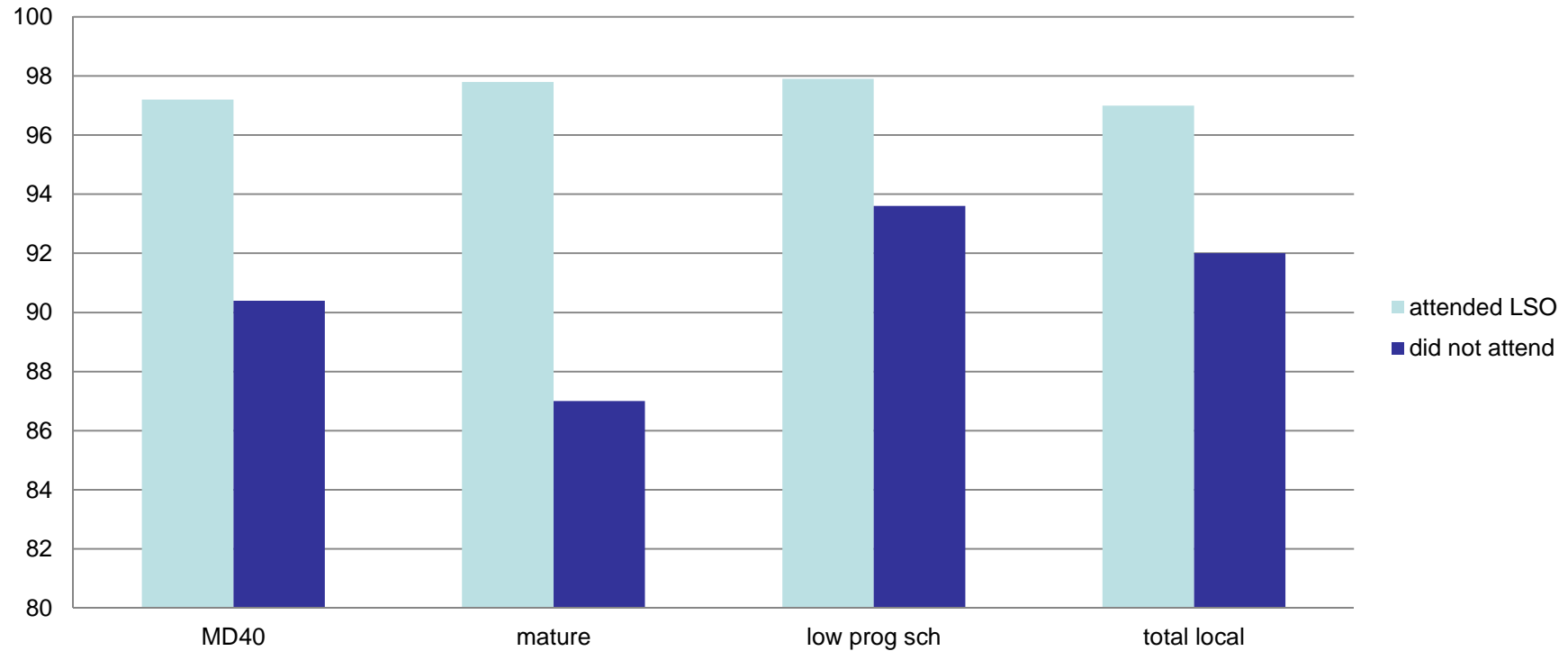
Percentage of 2013 local entrants continuing their studies after Year 1





Impact on retention risk groups – LSO 2014

Percentage of 2014 local entrants not withdrawn by end of Semester 2





Conclusions

- Students need to have the opportunity to meet each other, primarily, and feel they belong to the broader community by meeting staff and senior students
- Having an academic purpose is particularly of interest to the diverse and growing group of 'non-traditional' students who aren't quite so invested in 'student life'
- Good induction / orientation to the social and academic side of university life can positively impact on transition to university for the groups most 'at risk' in terms of engagement, retention and success



Thank you

- Research Assistants:
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 Nicola Pritchard
- Widening Participation team in RIO
- Postgraduate tutors and Undergraduate helpers
- Retention & Success Working Group and all of SLS, SRC, Chief Advisers, First Year Co-ordinators, Deans L&T
- LTDF for funding Aug 2012 – Dec 2013
- WP for 2014 funding and continuing the initiatives