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Example of a memo

Polly thoroughly enjoyed her FD - best thing she's done

Anxious to get a degree to achieve better standard of living - waited until her children were older and she could devote more time - timing very important for mature students - had to be incorporated into other commitments

Wanted to get a degree to make a return to work worth it - always wanted to go back to work but had not established a career when younger.

Changed her idea of a career path during the FD.

Now doing something she has had personal experience of - lots of conditional clauses in her speech - kind of, sort of ?? to detract and distance herself from the very powerful emotions being expressed.

Very impressed with the practical element of doing the FD - possibly less of an issue for students employed in the area of practice. Important for her to be able to apply her knowledge - knowledge important in itself but also wants to put it into practice - both for financial reward but also to be effective - find a use for what she has learned - ??feels really lucky to have had the opportunity - her way of repaying that

In her placements, Polly experienced working in environments that implemented care through a mechanistic interpretation of policies and procedures, and also settings which strove to understand policies in their broadest aspects and which put considerable effort into implementing them in ways that were of greatest benefit to their client group. The contrast between blind implementation and implementation with understanding had a great impact on Polly and confirmed her belief that what she was doing was the correct path to go down. She gained great confidence from witnessing the difference that understanding the full relevance of policy could have on the standard of care given.

Polly did not do a degree straight from school - family circumstances meant that there was little financial security - important to Polly to be working and achieving some financial security

Differences - in terms of feedback - the degree is more end loaded and there's not much feedback until later in the course - can be difficult to gauge whether you are working at the accepted degree level

More difficult for those coming from elsewhere - the students who studied here before know the lecturers, their expectations, and also have the confidence that the lecturers know them. Polly reluctant to criticise but clearly would have liked more feedback at an earlier stage. Referred to the safety net. Needing the reassurance

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that she was on the right track. Able to take responsibility for her own study - but not unreasonable to have this reinforced by more structured feedback. Interestingly, the lecturers thought that they had given feedback but it was of the informal - you are doing really well sort of comment. Underestimated the need for more structured responses. Able students might agonise over each comment because they are so determined to do well - small margins take on a real significance. Need to be able to quantify feedback. 'Really interesting' as a comment does not allow this to take place.

Again, degree level study appears to be viewed on one hand as a progression - completing the job - but also to carry the potential to generate anxiety because of the change in level and the uncertainty about the expectations that 'degree study' entails.

Polly and her cohort were also the first group of students to move to degree level study following the establishment of new HE partnerships. The lecturers freely admitted that they had not been entirely clear about the expectations of the new relationship. They were secure about the academic content and standards but were unsure of procedures, which may have resulted in reluctance to feedback to students before they were entirely sure about what was expected of them

??uncertainty breeds uncertainty - lecturers reluctant to commit themselves before understanding the changes themselves. The change in relationship between the partner university was perhaps inevitably characterised by generalisations rather than addressing the nitty-gritty issues that affected the day to day running of the programme. The announcement of the change had been trailed for a considerable time. However, the actual process of change was rapid. The difficulty of embedding two different and distinct systems took far longer than the summer vacation to accomplish. Consequently, at the beginning of the term there was still a good deal of confusion about the process.

During periods of transition lecturers can take their eye off the ball in ways that they otherwise might not.

Polly appreciative of the need to operate at Level 6 but in spite of past successes - this feels like a new risk - elevating oneself again ??need to have reassurance that this is not beyond capabilities....so progression on one hand - risky new enterprise on the other.

??lecturer impression that the progression is more seamless than it actually is

Need to acknowledge the change more explicitly - may not actually help by minimising the process - although must be careful not to create anxiety.

Probably, statements such as 'need to work at level 6', 'take more responsibility' are unhelpful. 'Level 6 means that you need to do.....' is not spoon feeding but is

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quantifying expectations and therefore transforming them from some nebulous notion into something that can be worked towards - taking away the mystique.

Students expect to 'up the ante' - all part of the challenge which will ultimately contribute to the satisfaction.

Not understanding what is expected of them can lead to feeling out of control - few things more difficult to cope with - especially when concerned with an issue that is so important to their self-worth and identity. Not being party to the rules by which an individual is required to play. Possibly more alienating experience for non-traditional students who are not generally familiar/comfortable with the HE framework - not prepared for it or nurtured by family background / cultural expectations and experiences. Also, because their entry into HE may not be undertaken at the expected time, they do not have the support networks that school/college can provide. Need to establish their own framework to replace the traditional one that is not fit for their purpose. Need for guidance paramount.

Polly states that you are not just learning about your work - suggesting that the HE process has been one of self-discovery. - 'It just switches something on in you in a unique way'.

(??when students stay in the same place to do a degree perhaps the lecturers think that students have established themselves and require less feedback – lecturers assume that they pick up on what has happened before and apply it to the new course – may be a need to be more explicit about expectations and more clear about feedback – students may see the move to full degree as a real step up in terms of risk and may require far more reassurance to move on. Not such a seamless transition as might have been anticipated)

Polly attended frequently - said that she thought the course demanded that level of respect. If that is not paid ?? devalues the experience. ??Undermines the importance of obtaining a degree if the process is relegated to a dip - in and out format. Also want to take the opportunity to accumulate as much knowledge as possible. Getting the information second hand or at a distance via VLE is not the same for Polly.

Contact important to remind herself she is on a course and to keep the identity of herself as a student intact. 'I think perhaps I'm saying you were right because you've got to be in it to feel it.'