

Success isn't just about the destination ... it is the Journey; The Impact of the Foundation Year Provision at a Land-based University

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Introduction

Foundation Years (FY) in Higher Education (HE) have become increasingly popular in recent years (Augar, 2019). FY creation was in an attempt to mitigate challenges linked to educational transitions affecting students' academic performance, stemming from a lost sense of belonging and identity leading to impaired confidence, resilience and engagement (Leese, 2010 & Chivers, 2019). The FY at Hartpury aims to increase student confidence and therefore sense of belonging alongside the development of the academic skills needed to bridge the entry gap and to achieve in their chosen degree through heterogeneous and unsegregated cohorts. Since its inception at Hartpury 2017/18, there has been an 87% increase in enrolments compared to 2022-23, rising to 120% in Sport. Sense of belonging (Walton and Brady, 2017), Self-identification and identification by others (Masika and Jones, 2016) has been strongly associated with academic achievement and retention (Van Herpen et al., 2020). This research explores the 'feeling' and results through examining student feedback, demographic and graduate outcome data, where we explore the challenges and successes. This information can be used by the institution and shared with the network to inform whether level 4 direct entry programmes can learn from the FY infrastructure and identify any changes needed to ensure the sustainability and maximise student success in potential Lifelong Learning.

Method

This research aims to explore whether and how the FY can lead to success in the future and why the journey is as equally important as the end result.

Qualitative

Foundation Year Review data (Phone calls and emails) and End of year programme survey

Quantitative

Student demographic data and degree classification

Why

The journey not the destination

Pedagogical Development

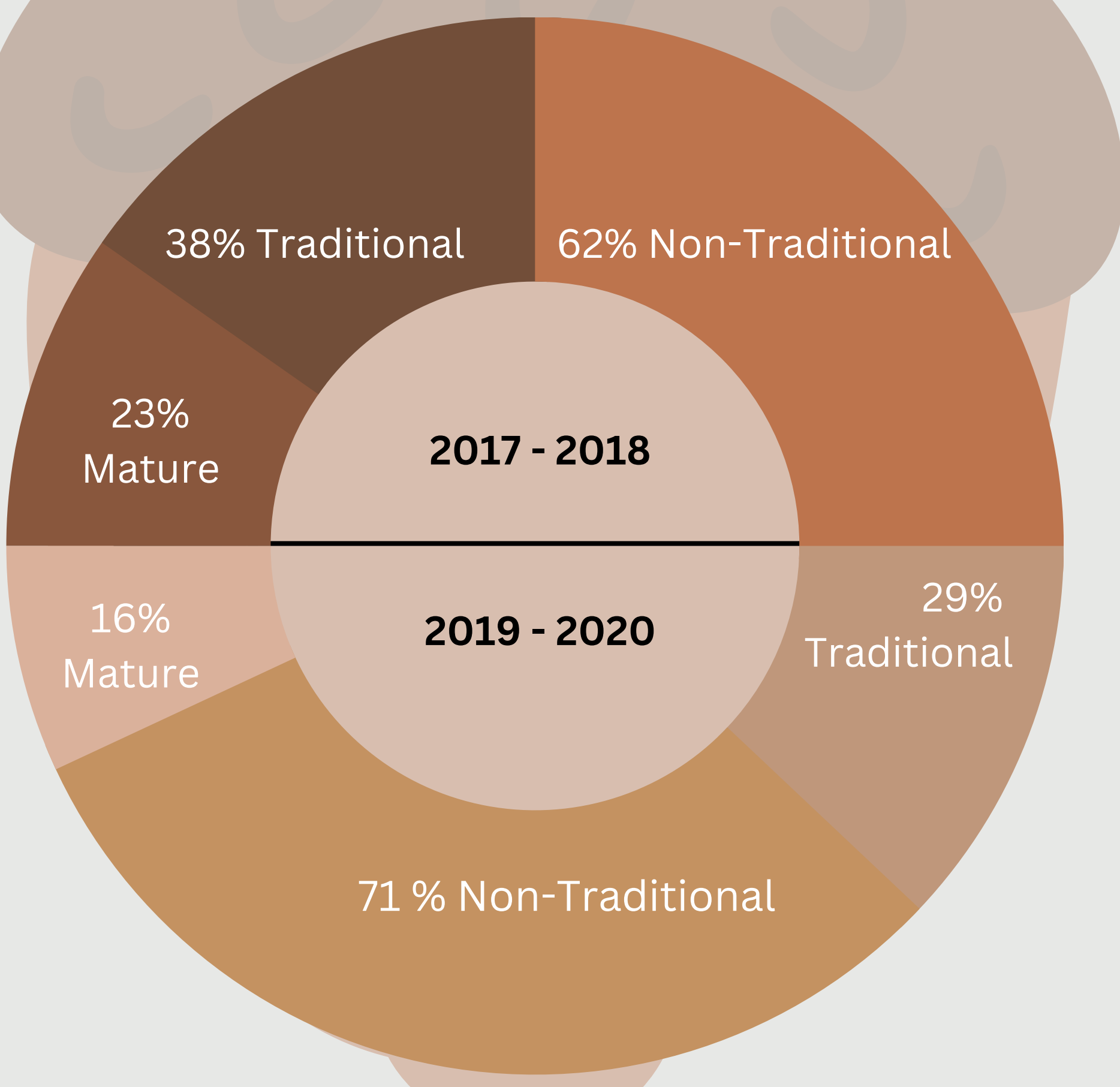


Research



Student Experience

What does a Foundation Year 'look like'?



The Findings

2017/2018 Student Completion Results

- 81% of Foundation Year students who graduated achieved a 'Good Degree' (first or upper second-class degree).
- Compared to 70% of direct level 4 entrants
- Nationally approximately 60% of Foundation Year students graduated with a 'Good Degree' (first or upper second-class degree) (OFS, 2019)
- 68% Enrolled on a degree with a FY completed

2018/2019 Student Completion Results

- 75% of students achieved a 'Good Degree'

2019/2020 Students Projected Completion Results*

- 57% Enrolled on a degree with a FY are due to complete
- 42% completing with a 'Good Degree'
- This year saw the highest international intake of 21%, but this is now decreasing

*(results and marks pending for final project)

Why did we see this and what made these students succeed in the Foundation Year?

- Induction helped students "settle in" and feel "safe and supported"
- Students felt they had "developed an understanding of academic expectations" and felt supported in their journey
- "Amazing programme. Very interesting content, a great experience".
- Students felt they were "appropriately prepared" for their transition to Level 4
- Nearly all of the respondents felt a 'sense of belonging' as a Foundation Year student at Hartpury.

Forward Facing Challenges:

- Retention
- Resource capacity
- Imposter Syndrome / Stigma
- Cost of Living
- HE Landscape
- Course Value

In Summary:

- FY entry could result in a better degree classification.
- FY demographic is potentially changing making success even harder with more focus needed on the transition, reducing the gap of prior experiences and giving them the confidence, skills and resilience to enter level 4 thinking they can, rather than reflecting on their prior experiences.

Bibliography:



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