



## Designing Progression: Teaching Tools to Support UG to PG Transition

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### Abstract

Employability is a central concern within higher education, particularly in health and social care, where workforce pressures are acute. Persistent shortages in nursing are exacerbated by demographic change, migration patterns, and wider socio-economic instability, contributing to a global workforce crisis (Simpson et al, 2024). In response, UK policy prioritises the development of a future-ready workforce with advanced skills and a shift toward community-based care (NHS England, 2023). Within this context, progression from undergraduate (UG) to postgraduate (PG) study represents a critical mechanism for workforce development. This paper reports on a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) project conducted within the College of Health, Wellbeing, Life Sciences and Sport (HWLS) at Sheffield Hallam University, designed to strengthen UG to PG progression pathways.

The project was underpinned by six objectives: to raise awareness of the HWLS PG portfolio among UG students, to undertake research around effective student communication strategies, to engage alumni in promotion opportunities, to analyse progression data to inform recruitment strategies targeting a 5% increase in UG to PG progression, to collaborate with recruitment and college leadership teams and to disseminate findings to the university and college leadership teams. Initial analysis of progression data revealed a concerning plateau in PG recruitment and a low proportion of internal progression, alongside missed opportunities for cross-college recruitment.

A mixed-methods approach explored both student and staff perspectives. Survey findings indicated strong student interest in PG study (84%), yet limited awareness of available options (58%) and institutional events. Students predominantly relied on external sources such as Google and NHS careers websites, with minimal influence from academic teams. Key barriers for students included financial concerns and fragmented information. Staff data revealed similarly limited embedded promotion within UG curricula, constrained knowledge of PG pathways, and a need for clearer resources to support progression discussions.

In response, a structured “progression toolkit” was developed to embed PG awareness across the student lifecycle. This intervention integrated curated digital resources, recruitment timelines, and examples of effective practice, alongside a staged communication model. A nursing case study illustrates this approach, combining targeted online resources, clear academic signposting, and follow-up hybrid engagement events involving staff and alumni. Early outcomes demonstrate high levels of student engagement, with over 150 participants attending or accessing pilot sessions.

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The findings highlight the importance of timely, discipline-specific communication and the role of academic staff in fostering progression aspirations. Embedding PG awareness throughout UG study (rather than confining it to final-year provision) can enhance both student belonging and employability, while contributing to strategic workforce development. The project offers a scalable, practice-informed model for supporting educational progression and addressing sector-wide skills shortages.

### **Keywords**

Undergraduate–Postgraduate Progression, Student Belonging, Employability in Health Education, Transition Pedagogy, Workforce Development.

### **References**

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