



From a Break in Study to a Successful Return

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Abstract

Students returning from a break in study often face practical and emotional challenges, yet there is little evidence about how universities can best support them. This study explored students' views of a Returners Guide using two online focus groups with students who had previously returned from a break in study. Data was analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. Four themes were identified: recognising the returning student, visibility of support, sharing responsibility for the return process, and supporting reconnection with the course. Students felt the guide was useful because it recognised the challenges of returning and brought together practical information in one place. However, they also felt that the guide on its own wasn't enough. Instead, it needs to sit within a wider, coordinated return-to-study pathway, with Academic Advisors working alongside students to support shared decision making throughout the return process.

Keywords

break in study, returning students, student transition, student support, belonging

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