

WHY DO STUDENTS FAIL

A social science perspective

Why a social science perspective

- 'Failure' is open to interpretation
- The experience I have is of Politics/IR and associated subjects – social sciences
- Links to policy issues

What's failure?



Cohort studies of Politics/ IR students

- Cohort studies tell us that we can correlate the following with non-progression:
 - ▣ Previous non-progression
 - ▣ Attendance levels
 - ▣ Engagement levels
 - ▣ Submission of work
 - ▣ Cohort dynamics
 - ▣ Age – mature students struggle much less
 - ▣ Years out in industry / away correlates to success in final year

Behind the correlations

- The wider issues are:
 - ▣ Writing and critical skills
 - ▣ Motivation and organisation
 - ▣ Gender biases and factors
 - ▣ Nature of subject (vocational; structured / independent study)
 - ▣ Reasons for study and choice of subject
 - ▣ Socialisation and location, sense of home and belonging

Policy issues

□ For course teams:

- Joined up provision
- Student numbers
- Assessment strategy
- Timetabling
- Induction and tutorial systems
- Meeting the student halfway
- Formative feedback

□ For the government(!)

- Pre HE education system, standards, assessment and qualifications
- The limits of QA
- Marketisation
- The purpose of HE and the intended audience and outcomes