# Final project report: Delivering student engagement interventions using learning analytic data

January 2024

# 1. Executive summary

## 1.1 Project team

*Table 1: Project team, roles and responsibilities*

| Organisation | Name | Role and responsibilities |
|---|---|---|
| Sheffield Hallam University | Carolyn Fearn | Head of Operations (Teaching and Learning) |
| Sheffield Hallam University | Helen J Parkin | Senior Lecturer in Research, Evaluation and Student Engagement. |
| Sheffield Hallam University | Katie Smaylen | Manager of Student Success and Engagement team at Sheffield Hallam University |
| Sheffield Hallam University | Felicity Woodhouse | Senior administrator in Student Success Team<br>Tracking the data<br>Intervention delivery |
| Sheffield Hallam University | Mark Godson<br>Denzil Watson<br>Sarah Churchill | Academic Advising leads from the courses participating in the trial |
| TASO | Eliza Kozman | Project lead (commissioner) |
| TASO | Robert Summers | Project manager |

## 1.2 Project description

### 1.2.1 Intervention being evaluated

Student engagement, retention and outcomes are a priority for Sheffield Hallam University. Students may be low- or non-engaging for a variety of reasons. *Data Explorer*, the learning analytics system at the University, identifies low- and non-engaging students so that interventions can be implemented to help and support students re-engage with their learning.

### 1.2.2 Aim and description of intervention

The aim of the intervention is to increase the engagement, progression and ultimately the outcomes of students who have been identified as *at risk* of dropping out of their studies.

The objective is to deliver a support intervention to students who are identified as *at risk*, either via an email followed by a telephone call or by an email alone. The intervention is designed to provide supportive information and to encourage them to access support and re-engage with their course.

### 1.2.3 Target group

Undergraduate students across five courses (BA Hon Business and Marketing, BA Hon Business and Management, BA Hon Accounting and Finance, BSc Hon Criminology and Psychology, BA Hon Criminology) form the target population of 1,552 students.

### 1.2.4 Number of students involved

The initial sample of the 1,552 students was randomly allocated to one of two interventions by the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT). Students identified as *at risk* received an intervention at two points during the trial.

### 1.2.5 Implementation – how often, when, who, where

Interventions will be delivered in week 4 (w/c 17th October 2022) and week 9 (w/c 21st November 2022) of teaching[1]. At the beginning of each intervention week, all students identified as *at risk* will receive an intervention. In the Intervention 1 condition, students received an email with information about support available to them (identical to the Intervention 2 email), plus a text message informing them to expect a support call. A call was then attempted to all students in the group. In the Intervention 2 group, students who generated an *at-risk* alert received the support email but no additional follow up. Across both interventions, students' Academic Advisors were informed that one of their students had generated an *at-risk* alert, although this was not expected to trigger additional support.

### 1.2.6 Brief description of IPE

The IPE evaluates the delivery of the intervention and explores student perceptions of the intervention through notes made during the support phone call and notes made during telephone interviews. All 514 students who were flagged as *at risk* were invited to take part in telephone interviews. Six students took part in these interviews, five students from Intervention 1 and one student from Intervention 2. Notes taken during the telephone interviews were used to inform a thematic analysis that tested the assumptions in the Theory of Change.

### 1.2.7 Key conclusions

The IPE shows that there is real value is creating a human connection between the University and students who are identified as *at risk*. We therefore argue that a telephone-based intervention can add real value to a student's sense of belonging and mattering and create a sense of a caring university. These factors should not be underestimated.

The evaluation of this intervention was conducted over a short timeframe, and several outcome measures fell outside of this period. To achieve effective monitoring

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[1] The intervention weeks were rescheduled from weeks 5 and 8 following a review of the academic calendar and activities scheduled for the participating courses.

and understand the real impact of interventions made as a result of learning analytics data, we must take into account outcome measures such as attainment, progression and retention, which can only be achieved if observed over the full students' academic lifecycle.

## 2.    Introduction

### 2.1    *Background and rationale for intervention, including existing evidence and the challenge.*

According to *From Bricks to Clicks* (Higher Education Commission, 2016, p.i) adoption of data analytics methodologies within the HE sector will help institutions "*understand how students learn and optimise the student experience. This is called Learning Analytics."* . Motivations for introducing learning analytics include: "*increasing retention, providing better feedback to students, capturing attendance data, enhancing teaching and learning*" (ibid, 2016 p. 4).

A student's engagement with their teaching to support their learning is essential to ensure they can achieve and succeed. With this in mind, Sheffield Hallam University has invested in learning analytics software, *Data Explorer*, provided by Jisc. This allows colleagues to observe student engagement and allow them to target and improve student support with the aim of improving student success and increasing student retention as part of Hallam's Student Support Framework. The strategic implementation is managed by the directorate of Student Experience, Teaching and Learning (SETL) and the live operation is delivered by the Student Success and Engagement team.

The software provides data on a student's engagement with the Virtual Learning Environment (Blackboard), assessment and attendance (where recorded). Using learning analytics data, Student Support Advisers (SSAs) from the Student Success and Engagement team proactively monitor engagement at pre-agreed census points to identify students who have poor engagement with their course. Students with low engagement with the Virtual Learning Environment, poor attendance at timetabled events and/or poor assessment results are defined as *at risk*. The term *at risk* (see Section 2.3) is used to describe students who could benefit from earlier interventions from tutors or support staff to improve student outcomes, specifically, students who are deemed to be potentially *at risk* from becoming disengaged with HE. Students are contacted via email and given supportive information and encouraged to access support and re-engage with their course. Sponsored students studying on a Tier 4 visa are also referred to the compliance team, as per UK Visa and Immigration regulations. The use of Data Explorer is business as usual at Sheffield Hallam, but still in development as enhancements to the system become available.

Increasing use of learning analytics data in HE means we must now understand how best to apply appropriate interventions to ensure the best possible outcomes for students who are identified as *at risk*, and to ensure that resource is appropriately directed to best effect. For this reason, this project seeks to explore the impact of a telephone call intervention of students who have been identified as *at risk*.

## 2.2 Intervention aims and objectives

The aim of the intervention is to increase the engagement, progression and ultimately the outcomes of students who have been identified as *at risk* of dropping out of their studies.

The objective is to deliver a telephone call intervention to students who are identified as *at risk*, to give supportive information and to encourage them to access support and re-engage with their course.

Impact will be evaluated through delivery of a randomised controlled trial (RCT) to assess the causal impact of the intervention. The two interventions being tested are

- Intervention 1: A support email, followed by a text message and then a telephone call.
- Intervention 2: A support email alone (Business as usual).

## 2.3 Detailed description of the intervention (to enable replication)

This study seeks to use our learning analytics platform to identify *at-risk* students, and to implement, and evaluate the impact of, interventions to support those students. The intervention process will be delivered in the following stages (see Appendix J):

### Step 1 – Identification

Interventions are delivered in Week 4 (w/c 17th October 2022) and Week 9 (w/c 21st November 2022) of teaching. At the beginning of each intervention week, data for all students who are enrolled (and not on placement) is exported from the learning analytics system to Microsoft Excel. The filter function is used to identify *at-risk* students, those who have an overall RAG (Red-Amber-Green – see Appendix I) status of red.

### Step 2 – Emailing Students

Once *at-risk* students have been identified, a Unihub (CRM system) form is completed for each *at-risk* student, starting with the Intervention 1 group to allow sufficient time between the email and the follow up text message. This process automatically sends the students an individually addressed generic supportive email (see Appendix B) which alerts them to the engagement concern and provides them with information about the support available at the university. This communication also advises the student that they will receive a telephone call from the university in the following week. An engagement concern email for the Academic Adviser is also

triggered through this process (see Appendix D). Once the Unihub form is completed for all relevant students in the Intervention 1 group, the same process is followed for students in the Intervention 2 group. The only difference when filling in each Unihub form is that the administrator selects 'control' (Intervention 2) rather than 'treatment' (Intervention 1) group. This then sends the student the university standard response email for low engagement (see Appendix C), which is very similar to the email the Intervention 1 group receives but omits information about being contacted by text and telephone call. An email is also sent to their Academic Adviser. Once the students in the Intervention 2 group receive this email, they will not receive further contact from the team, they must proactively seek out the support resources listed in the email.

## Step 3 – Texting Students

At least one day from sending the email to them, students in the Intervention 1 group are then contacted via SMS text to inform them that they will receive a telephone call in the coming week (see Appendix E). This text tells students not to worry and details the first part of the telephone number from which to expect a call. If there is no contact number available for a student, they will be sent the same information, but in an email format.

## Step 4 – Calling Students

The week after the initial contact with students, the telephone call intervention for the Intervention 1 group begins. There are two possible outcomes; the student answers or does not answer.

If the student answers the call, this is noted on the data tracker and a call centre script is followed (see Appendix F). Following a short introduction, verbal consent is obtained from the student to proceed with the call. If the student does not consent, the call is ended, and the student is removed from the study. If the student does consent, then they are asked about potential causes of their low engagement. They are then advised to contact an appropriate support service, usually their Academic Adviser or Student Support Adviser. If a more serious issue is raised as to the cause of the student's low engagement, such as mental health difficulties, their call is escalated to the Student Support Manager.

After the telephone call ends, a UniHub form is completed for each student (see Appendix G). This form contains a brief summary of the student's issues and what services they should be advised to contact. Their Academic Advisor's email address is also added to the form, and they receive an email that provides them with information about the nature of the call and the advice that the student received (see Appendix H). If the student raises serious issues during the call that need to be addressed, this is noted on the form that a Student Support Adviser should contact the student to check-in and provide support.

If the student does not answer the call, a voicemail is left. The voicemail includes an introduction, the reason for the call (support with low engagement) and a request that the student calls the administrator back in a specified time frame (when the administrator is in the office). This communication is recorded on the data tracker. If the student does not call back before the intervention week has finished the UniHub form is completed noting that the student did not answer the call, but a voicemail message was left. Their Academic Adviser is also sent an email to make them aware. If the student does call back after the intervention, they are directed to support resources. If the team are unable to contact a student, e.g., if the phone number provided is incorrect, then students are emailed and asked to update this information. If they update their contact information during the time of the intervention, they will be called again. If not, the team are unable to call them as part of the intervention and this is noted on the data tracker.

## 2.4    *Brief description of the evaluation and what this report covers.*

This document reports findings from a qualitative analysis of notes made during the telephone intervention, and from notes made during separate telephone interviews with students in the Intervention 1 and Intervention 2 groups.

## 3.    Methodology

### 3.1    *Overview of IPE design and methods.*

#### 3.1.1    *Specific research questions related to IPE*

**Adaptation**

1.    There may be times when there is a delay in data retrieval meaning calls cannot be made when originally scheduled.
     a.  Was the intervention still delivered even with a delay to the data?
     b.  What impact did this delay have on the intervention outcomes?
2.    There may be instances where the phone number for a student is missing from our Student Record System meaning that a call cannot be placed to that student. In this situation, the student will be sent the same information that they would have received in the telephone call in an email, ensuring that a read/receipt is applied.
     a.  Was the intervention still delivered effectively when contingency plans were put in place?
     b.  What impact did the adaptation have on the intervention outcomes?

**Fidelity**

3.    The intervention is implemented by a team of two callers. Each member of calling staff receives training (a full staff induction programme to University including, but not limited to, GDPR, Unconscious Bias, Protect and Respect,

Equality Essentials, Interpersonal Skills such as Communicating with Confidence, Communication Skills) and script prompts to ensure a consistent service. As such, we will ask the following question:

a. How closely do the implementers/callers adhere to the training and scripting of the intervention?

### Dose

4. The intervention is constituted by a single successfully administered call to a non-engaging student. This call can vary in duration according to the needs and availability of the student. As such, we will ask the following questions:

a. How many telephone calls were made during the intervention timeline, and what was the call success rate for contacting students?

b. How much does call length vary, and what are the reasons for this?

### Reach

5. This intervention is targeted at those students that generate *at-risk* alerts on the Student Engagement Dashboard. Therefore, we will ask the following question:

a. What proportion of those students generating an engagement alert were contacted by the support team?

### Fit for purpose

6. Through the Theory of Change (see Appendix A) map and narrative, we have identified several short-term outputs that will lead to medium- and long-term outcomes and impacts. This is based upon research into pre-existing literature and theory. As such, we will ask the following questions:

a. Did the intervention achieve the desired outputs?
   i. Increased student and Academic Adviser engagement with communications
   ii. Students are more aware of where to go for support.
   iii. Increased engagement with support service/mechanisms (CRM)
   iv. Increase confidence in self (as observed through qualitative mechanism)
   v. Number of phone calls made
   vi. Number of referrals made
   vii. No of calls answered
   viii. Number of support appointments delivered

b. Has the intervention achieved the desired outcomes and impact?
   i. Increased student awareness of own engagement
   ii. Students feel more supported by the university
   iii. Students are more aware of where they need to go to receive support

c. Has the intervention supported the needs of our students?

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d.  What are the experiences and opinions of students who did/did not receive the targeted intervention?

e.  What are the experiences of administrators in delivering this intervention?

### 3.1.2  Research methods

The quantitative data is collected from the learning analytics system, including a weekly update on students' enrolment status, their overall RAG status and percentage red RAG score. This information is added to a tracker which is sent weekly to BIT. This data provides information on the student's engagement for every week that the trial is running.

Additional qualitative data is collected during the support telephone calls between students and the Student Support Advisers in the form of personal circumstances relating to the student that may be affecting their engagement with academic studies. All *at-risk* students are also invited to take part in semi-structured telephone interviews[2] to explore students' experiences of the intervention. Thematic analysis will be conducted on qualitative data (see Section 3.1.5)

The rationale for conducting a thematic analysis of the data obtained during the support phone calls is two-fold. The first is that the data is already being collected throughout the intervention to be added to the students record and, it is reasonable to use this data to gain insight and understanding into the issues affecting students and potentially use this information to guide university support practices. Secondly, thematic analysis was selected as the time and resource allocated for the intervention does not allow detailed notes of the issues affecting students, so the information gleaned will be more descriptive than analytic.

For the telephone interviews, the rationale is to test the assumptions described in the IPE. Recruitment is limited to only those students who receive an intervention. Compensation in the form of a £20 Amazon voucher is offered to all participants. Telephone interviews were conducted by members of the project team Detailed notes were taken during the telephone interview which were used to inform a thematic analysis (see Section 3.1.5).

The telephone-interview schedule was developed by multiple members of the project team, including the senior administrator who conducted the interventions with students. An inductive thematic analysis following the steps outlined by Braun and

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[2] Initially it was planned to run these as focus groups because it was believed that it would allow students to feel more comfortable talking with university staff if they are amongst their peers as well as allowing students ideas to interact and thus provide insight into the opinions of a larger student group. However, upon recruitment students expressed a preference for individual telephone interviews.

Clarke (2006) will be used to analyse the data as this will allow for an exploration and coherent summary of students' experiences.

A narrative analysis of the intervention process was created by the senior administrator. This allowed for an understanding of staff experiences delivering the interventions and identify potential improvements needed within the process.

### 3.1.3  Sample, data sources (size, demographics, recruitment, data collection)

Participants for the telephone interviews were invited from those 558 students who generated an *at-risk* alert during the trial period. Undergraduate students across five courses (BA Hon Business and Marketing, BA Hon Business and Management, BA Hon Accounting and Finance, BSc Hon Criminology and Psychology, BA Hon Criminology) are participating in this research project. Five students from Intervention 1 and one student from Intervention 2 volunteered to be interviewed.

### 3.1.4  Details of dosage, compliance, fidelity, and usual practice.

### Dosage

Intervention 2 is considered to have successfully occurred if the support call is answered by the student. The call could vary in duration depending on the needs of the student.

### Fidelity

The intervention is implemented by a team of two callers. Each member of calling staff receives training and script prompts to ensure a consistent service.

### Usual practice

Intervention 2 is usual practice, i.e., a support email is sent to students that are identified as *at risk* and their academic advisor is notified.

### 3.1.5  Analytical approach

An inductive thematic analysis following the steps outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006) will be used to analyse the qualitative data – notes made during support calls and during the telephone interviews – as this will allow for an exploration and coherent summary of student's experiences.

### 3.1.6  Ethics

Ethical approval for this project was granted by Sheffield Hallam University Research Ethics Committee (ER45788236).

A concern for the ethics review was whether the study needed to obtain prior informed consent from the two intervention groups. The research team felt strongly that seeking informed consent prior to the start of the study may influence student behaviours. However, the reviewers felt that it was very important to be transparent with our students and give them the opportunity to withdraw from the study. For this

reason, a notice outlining the nature of the study and how to withdraw from it was posted on every Blackboard Module site for every course that was involved in the study, prior to the start of the data collection. Verbal consent was also sought during the intervention telephone calls and students were given the opportunity to withdraw at this stage. No students withdrew from the study on this basis.

## 4.    Results

### 4.1    Summary of findings from the implementation and process evaluation, referencing the key research questions.

This section presents the findings from the implementation and process evaluation of the student engagement intervention delivered by Sheffield Hallam University using Learning Analytics data to identify *at-risk* students. Five telephone interviews were conducted with students from the Intervention 1 group and one telephone interview was conducted with a student from the Intervention 2 group. No focus group data was collected due to scheduling difficulties and a strong student preference for individual discussions.

### *Adaptation*

1. *There may be times when there is a delay in data retrieval meaning calls cannot be made when originally scheduled.*
    a. *Was the intervention still delivered even with a delay to the data?*
    b. *What impact did this delay have on the intervention outcomes?*

No interventions were delayed due to data retrieval and all calls were delivered on schedule. As there was no delay there was no impact on the intervention outcomes. The interventions were rescheduled to be delivered in weeks 4 and 9 following a review of the academic calendar and associated activities relating to the academic courses participating.

2. *There may be instances where the phone number for a student is missing from our Student Record System meaning that a call cannot be placed to that particular student. In this situation, the student will be sent the same information that they would have received in the telephone call in an email, ensuring that a read/receipt is applied.*
    a. *Was the intervention still delivered effectively when contingency plans were put in place?*
    b. *What impact did the adaptation have on the intervention outcomes?*

There were eight unobtainable telephone numbers in the first intervention round and 11 in the second. These students received the information via email. It can be

argued that in the case the intervention was still delivered but the nature of the intervention was more similar to the intervention received by the Intervention 2 group than the Intervention 1 group.

It is difficult to ascertain what, if any, impact this had on the intervention outcomes. None of these students made any further contact with the support team.

### *Fidelity*

3. *The intervention is implemented by a team of two callers. Each member of calling staff receives training and script prompts to ensure a consistent service. As such, we will ask the following question:*
    a. *How closely do the different implementers/callers adhere to the training and scripting of the intervention?*

This is a newly established team and therefore all callers were newly trained and adhered closely to the script. The team manager was present for all calling sessions to monitor calls and, and as an escalation point for students requiring immediate support. For this reason, we are confident that the intervention script was closely followed.

### *Dose*

4. *The intervention is constituted by a single successfully administered call to a non-engaging student. This call can vary in duration according to the needs and availability of the student. As such, we will ask the following questions:*
    a. *How many telephone calls were made during the intervention timeline, and what was the call success rate for contacting students?*
    b. *How much does call length vary, and what are the reasons for this?*

See Table 2 for detailed information on how many telephone calls were made, and answered, during the intervention timeline. Overall, 307 calls were made and the call success rate for contacting students was 52%; there was no target call success rate set.

During Intervention Week 1, calls lasted on average 3.6 minutes. During Intervention Week 2, this was reduced by around 26 seconds on average due to caller familiarity with both the script and the associated processes. Where students were experiencing more complex issues which required referral to other services, calls were longer due to the need to understand the issues presented and to complete the appropriate forms to action the referral.

*Table 2: Summary of intervention delivery in Week 4 and Week 9 of teaching.*

| | Intervention Week 1 (Week 4 of teaching) | | Intervention Week 2 (Week 9 of teaching) | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Intervention 1 | Intervention 2 | Intervention 1 | Intervention 2 |
| Number of eligible enrolled students* | 703 | 703 | 699 | 704 |
| Number of students identified *at risk* | 102 | 102 | 225 | 231 |
| Number of emails sent to *at-risk* students | 102 | 102 | 224 | 227 |
| Number of telephone calls made | 94 | NIL | 213 | NIL |
| Number of unobtainable telephone numbers | 8 | NIL | 11 | NIL |
| Number of telephone calls answered | 55 | NIL | 106 | NIL |
| Number of voicemail messages left | 36 | NIL | 93 | NIL |
| Number of students referred to student support advisors | 17 | NIL | 10 | NIL |
| Number of students who were escalated to contact from student support advisors | 8 | NIL | 20 | NIL |
| Number of students referred to academic advisors | 17 | NIL | 6 | NIL |
| Number of students referred to other services | 4 | NIL | 5 | NIL |
| *Students who had not yet enrolled, did not enrol, or were on placement have been removed from the total of 1552 students who were randomised to one or other intervention.* | | | | |

**Reach**

5. This intervention is targeted at those students that generate at-risk alerts on the Student Engagement Dashboard. Therefore, we will ask the following questions:
    a. What proportion of those students generating an engagement alert were contacted by the support team?

All students who generated *at-risk* alerts were contacted by the support team though we cannot be certain if those who were contacted only by email read it.

**Fit for purpose**

6. *Through the Theory of Change map and narrative, we have identified several short-term outputs that will lead to medium- and long-term outcomes and impacts. This is based upon research into pre-existing literature and theory. As such, we will ask the following questions:*
   a. *Did the intervention achieve the desired outputs?*
      i. *Increased student and Academic Adviser engagement with communications*

There is no evidence of increased student and Academic Adviser engagement with communications. Academic Advisers were grateful to receive email notifications that their tutees had been identified as *at risk* and contacted, however, their usual practice of meeting with their tutees at set dates throughout the academic year was still applied to these students.

   ii. *Students are more aware of where to go for support.*

Students reported that, prior to intervention, they were unaware of all the support elements available from the university to support their physical and mental health as well as their academic studies. As a result of being contacted by a Support Adviser and receiving guidance on appropriate support for their personal circumstances some students were able to establish a learning contract which one student reported as the *"best thing that happened"* during their university experience. During their telephone intervention conversation, students also reported they were not aware of other support mechanisms such as requests to repeat assessment, financial guidance and support which were a great help as an additional way to support and enable their learning.

   iii. *Increased engagement with support service/mechanisms (CRM)*

Although we are able to state which action was advised during intervention telephone calls, it is difficult to establish whether students took the advised action. It is difficult to assess the impact on engagement with support services and mechanisms due to reporting limitations. Overall

- 27 students were advised to contact Student Support Adviser (SSA).
- 23 students were advised to contact Academic Adviser.
- 9 students were advised to contact other university services (laptop loaning service and Hallam Help).
- 28 referrals were made to SSAs for proactive support.

   iv. *Increased confidence in self (as observed through qualitative mechanism)*

Students interviewed did not report increased self-confidence as a result of the applied intervention. Whilst awareness of support and services increased, this did not lead to immediate impact on perceived confidence levels. Engagement with those support services may lead to increased confidence, this is potentially an area for further exploration.

v. *Number of phone calls made*
vi. *Number of referrals made*
vii. *No of calls answered*

The number of calls and referrals made and number of calls answered by week are in Table 2. Overall 307 calls were made, 88 referrals were made, and the number of calls answered was 161.

viii. *Number of support appointments delivered*

In the Intervention 1 group, 71 students booked and attended at least one appointment with a support service as a result of the telephone intervention. These included appointments with careers and employability, disabled student support, residential support, wellbeing and student funding. A further 69 appointments were booked by students in the Intervention 1 group and subsequently cancelled or not attended.  While students in the Intervention 2 group could book such appointments this data was not recorded.

b. *Has the intervention achieved the desired outcomes and impact?*
i. *Increased student awareness of own engagement*

There were mixed levels of awareness of students' own engagement in the Intervention 1 group. Some students felt that their engagement levels were acceptable and questioned why they had been contacted, whilst other students acknowledged their low level of engagement and were able to explain their challenges to engagement. The intervention gave an opportunity to make contact with students and have an open dialogue with them about appropriate engagement levels and how they can achieve the best outcomes through better engagement.

ii. *Students feel more supported by the university*

In general, students felt very supported by the university as a result of the intervention telephone call. The University acknowledging the students' individual circumstances made them feel cared for and supported. They felt that all staff had provided good support and guidance and that they had been appropriately directed to support services specific to their personal circumstances.

iii. *Students are more aware of where they need to go to receive support*

Through the intervention telephone calls, students reported and increased knowledge of the support services available and welcomed an opportunity to discuss their individual circumstances and receive the appropriate guidance/redirection to the relevant service(s).

c. *Has the intervention supported the needs of our students?*

On the whole, the intervention has supported the needs of those students in Intervention 1 who acknowledged their own low levels of engagement. For these students, they were appreciative of the additional, proactive contact and were

appropriately directed to relevant support services. For Intervention 1 students who did not feel that there was an issue with their levels of engagement, the contact from the University was, on occasion, a cause of concern. This still provided us with an opportunity to raise awareness of support services should the students feel that they needed support in the future.

> d.  What are the experiences and opinions of students who did/did not receive the targeted intervention?

Students who received the telephone call were generally positive and felt well supported by the University. Students from the Intervention 2 group, who received the email-based intervention, were invited to share their views on the intervention but unfortunately this invitation received a poor response (n=1). This is perhaps unsurprising given that these students had already been identified as disengaged and *at risk*.

> e.  What are the experiences of administrators in delivering this intervention?

Those delivering the intervention found this to be a time-consuming but rewarding process. Being able to engage with individual students and gaining a better understanding of their personal circumstances led to increased job satisfaction and a sense of making a real difference to the student experience.

## 4.2    Qualitative findings

### 4.2.1    Summary of qualitative findings from notes made during telephone interventions

**Intervention Week 1**

During telephone conversations, students reported factors affecting their levels of engagement with their studies as where appropriate, referrals were made to relevant support services. The team delivering the intervention felt that the telephone calls were received positively by students and found the conversations rewarding. The team reported that there was a positive impact on the students, some of whom reported that the conversation had been beneficial and had given them much needed advice and support. In the first intervention week, themes affecting engagement were reported as follows:

- Struggles with mental health
- Struggling to find a balance between work and study
- Physical Illness
- Issues accessing resources
- Personal issues
- Not being in Sheffield

**Intervention Week 2**

During the second round of interventions, there were some students who felt they were engaging well and were unsure as to why they were being contacted. Some of these students were irritated by the call and made sure to explain that they were attending taught sessions at the beginning of the call. This may indicate a need to further refine the algorithms that inform the flagging of *at-risk* students.

For those students who acknowledged that their engagement was lower than ideal, reported issues were similar to those described in the first intervention week. No students were escalated as a cause for concern as in most cases the students reported that they had started to deal with their issues. Themes affecting engagement were as follows:

- Physical Illness
- Mental Illness
- Personal and family issues
- Financial Issues
- Work Commitments
- Trouble with commuting

### Summary of findings from the telephone interviews

The main themes emerging from the telephone interviews were that students were more aware of the support services available to them, and how to access them, increased awareness of their own levels of engagement, and a sense that they were valued and cared for by the university.

- Students more aware of where to go to for support, and how to access it

Students reported that they were much more aware of the variety of support services available to them at Sheffield Hallam University and were confident that they were able to access them at the point of need; e.g. *"I feel like I know where I need to go for support now, thanks."* Some of the students interviewed were previously unaware of the range of services available and felt that these services would be beneficial to them, expressing an intent to book with relevant services.

- Increased student awareness of own engagement

Students interviewed felt that the intervention phone calls were helpful in terms of reflecting on their own levels of engagement and exploring reasons for lower levels of engagement compared with their peers. Some students did highlight that the notification text message made them feel anxious and/or concerned about the pending telephone call, indicating that they felt that their engagement was already at an acceptable level.

- Students feel more supported and cared for by the university

Qualitative data indicated that students felt more supported, and cared for, by the University through the proactive, human approach. Knowing that a person has 'seen them', taken time to acknowledge their individual circumstances, and provided

tailored supportive information, created a sense of belonging, as one student reported, *"It felt good to know that the university cared."*

The human element was incredibly important here and students that were interviewed felt that the telephone approach was much more effective in creating the sense of care and belonging than the email approach, which felt more impersonal.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Discussion of findings

#### 5.1.1 Frame by compliance, fidelity, dosage, reach, and moderations made to the intervention

With the exception of the revision of the intervention periods to week 4 and week 9 the intervention was delivered in line with the trial protocol. No amendments were made to the timescales of the intervention relative to the point at which the student was flagged as *at risk*.

There were several instances of students' telephone numbers being unobtainable, and in these circumstances, students were sent emails containing the same information as they would have received during the telephone intervention. Whilst a 'read/receipt' was applied to these emails, we cannot be confident that the students did read, or act upon, the guidance contained within the email. In interviews, students who were in the Intervention 1 group were unable to recall the emails that they had received during the intervention period, and therefore it is likely that the email aspect of the intervention (for both Intervention 1 and Intervention 2 groups) had minimum impact. The nature of the adaptation made the context of the intervention for students with unobtainable numbers more similar to that received by the Intervention 2 group. Consideration should be given to undertaking a detailed data quality process to refine the data set prior to any further interventions taking place and/or removing students with unobtainable phone numbers from future trials.

Whilst all callers adhered closely to the intervention telephone script, the personal circumstances of the students receiving the telephone calls were different, and therefore it was impossible to predict and script the intervention response. For this reason, the conversations for each intervention delivered were dynamic and responsive to the needs of each individual student. It is therefore challenging to assess the impact upon the outcomes of the intervention. Observations from the telephone interviews indicated that students were not aware of the full range of support services available at the University and therefore, this will inform future intervention script developments.

No escalations were required during the delivery of this trial but the administration team delivering the intervention telephone calls were appreciative of the presence of the team manager in case escalation was required. Administrators, who were new in

role, reported a growth in their confidence as the trial progressed and they were able to deliver calls more efficiently. As the knowledge and experience of the team grows, the presence of a manager may become less necessary during intervention the delivery.

During the first intervention week, the call team was able to make three call attempts per student. This was reduced to two call attempts per student for the second intervention week due to the increase in *at-risk* students. During the first intervention round, 60% of calls were answered, compared to 50% during the second round of intervention. The reduction in number of attempts may have been partially responsible for the decreased number of answered calls, therefore we would recommend that a three-call approach should be employed for future interventions. This will have an impact upon the workload of the team and must be taken into proportionate consideration against the number of *at-risk* students.

Calls during the first intervention week (3.6 minutes) were longer than during the second intervention week (3 minutes). This can be attributed to the growth in knowledge, confidence and experience of the team of administrators and the familiarity with the script. Where complex scenarios arose, calls did take longer. For future delivery it would be difficult to predict both the volume and level of complexity of calls and therefore how long calls should take to administer, however an allocation in excess of 3 minutes should be used to inform work planning.

All students who generated an *at-risk* flag during the intervention period were contacted via email or telephone. Where students were contacted via email, interview data shows that we cannot be confident that students have read and acted upon the data contained within. Where students answered the telephone calls, we can be confident that they have received the information about support services and can track whether they have engaged with the additional internal support services that they were signposted to, but we cannot monitor further engagement taken with external support mechanisms as a result of the telephone call. The telephone conversations provide us, as a university, with a much greater level of detail about the personal circumstances of the student and about the support they may need, and about the likelihood of re-engagement with their studies. It is important to note here that re-engagement is not always the best outcome for the student, and a telephone conversation provides an opportunity for the student to discuss their options with a member of staff to make an informed decision pertinent to their personal circumstances.

### 5.1.2 Evidence to support theory of change

- Increased student and academic adviser engagement with communications

There was no evidence of increased student and Academic Adviser engagement with written communications in the short term. Whilst Academic Advisers were not asked to take any action based on the email notifications that they received about

*at-risk* students, qualitative feedback indicates that the notifications were helpful and appreciated. They continued to apply their usual practice, as per requirements of the study. The only evidence of increased student communications was through engagement with the telephone calls made by our team. Longer term observation on engagement with communications is required to assess the impact of a proactive approach to student support. If there is a noticeable increase in students reaching out to Academic Advisers as a result of their *at-risk* status and contact from the Student Support Team, consideration would need to be given as to how to manage this from a work planning perspective.

- Students more aware of where to go to for support

As this intervention is rolled out more widely, the number of phone calls delivered to students will necessarily increase, and it is likely that demand of support services will also increase as awareness is raised about what types of support are available. Careful consideration needs to be given to the resource implications of this proactive approach to student support. It may be necessary to consider the scalability of some types of support sessions to ensure that they are delivered in the most efficient and effective way, and to allow us to increase capacity to meet increasing demand.

- Increased engagement with support services/mechanisms

As outlined above, 71 students in the Intervention 1 group did access further support services as a result of the telephone intervention. We cannot compare this number to previous cohorts due to how data is currently captured.

- Increased confidence in self

Whilst students interviewed did not report increased levels of confidence as a result of the applied intervention, it is possible that subsequent engagement with support services may lead to increased confidence. This report therefore recommends extended tracking of this cohort of students to see which support services the students engage with and whether this leads to changes in their engagement and in their self-reported levels of confidence.

- Increased student awareness of own engagement

Most *at-risk* students in the Intervention 1 group acknowledged their lower levels of engagement. A small number felt anxious about the phone call from the University when they felt that their engagement was at an acceptable level. This is indicative of a need to review the phrasing of the approach by the support team to ensure that students do not feel persecuted. Promotion of the Study Goal app, which enables students to track their own engagement, may also give students a better awareness of their own levels of engagement prior to any intervention taking place.

- Students feel more supported by the university

Qualitative data indicated that students felt more supported, and cared for, by the University through the proactive, human approach. Knowing that a person has 'seen

them', taken time to acknowledge their individual circumstances, and provided tailored supportive information, created a sense of belonging.

The human element was incredibly important here and students that were interviewed felt that the telephone approach was much more effective in creating the sense of care and belonging than the email approach, which felt more impersonal. Consideration needs to be given as to how this can be applied at scale.

- Students are more aware of where they need to go to receive support

Students reported increased awareness of where to go to for support as a result of the telephone conversation with the Support Adviser. Whilst we were able to track the short-term impact of the increased awareness on demand for support services, longer-term tracking is needed to assess whether this translates to increased demand on services year-round. Information about support services is available to all students through the University webpages and through communications at induction, but this study has highlighted a need to evaluate current communications to ensure that students have access to all of the information that they require. Increased awareness of support services may lead to increased demand for these services. This will require monitoring, and possibly investment, to ensure that we can deliver an appropriate level of service to all those students who need the additional support.

## 5.2 *Limitations of the research.*

More work is needed to explore the views of disengaged or *at-risk* students who did not actively engage with the study. Whilst we were able to interview a number of students from the Intervention 1 group via telephone interviews, we were only able to gather data from one student in the Intervention 2 group. An invitation was extended to all students in both the Intervention 1 and Intervention 2 groups, but only one student from the Intervention 2 group agreed to participate in a telephone interview to share their views. We could hypothesise that, because mostly students who had been identified as *at risk* and had received the intervention telephone call agreed to participate in further research, this provides evidence of the intervention starting to develop a relationship between the student and the University that actively re-engages the student not only with their studies but also with the wider community. Further work is required to understand this issue.

Restrictions in how we currently record data means that it is difficult to track student engagement with support services, this is currently a manual exercise. Automated tracking of this data would be beneficial to enable us to undertake a detailed impact analysis.

This study covers a limited number of courses. Five undergraduate, full time courses were included in the study. Part-time and postgraduate experiences were excluded. Wider coverage would give greater insight into the impact across a university with a diverse portfolio of courses and students.

The data quality of student contact details was a limitation for this study. Successful delivery of this type of intervention is dependent upon accurate student data, including contact details.

## 6.  Conclusions

### 6.1   *Final reflections on findings and recommendations for future research.*

Whilst the impact evaluation found that there was no statistically significant impact of a telephone call intervention delivered to *at-risk* students on student outcomes, qualitative data shows that there is real value in creating a human connection between the University and students who are identified as *at risk*. Therefore, we argue that a telephone-based intervention can add real value to a students' sense of belonging and mattering, and create a sense of a caring university. These factors should not be underestimated.

The evaluation of this intervention was conducted over a short timeframe, and several outcome measures fell outside of this period. To achieve effective monitoring and understand the real impact of interventions made as a result of learning analytic data, we must take into account outcome measures such as attainment, progression and retention, which can only be achieved if observed over the full students' academic lifecycle.

**Recommendations**

- A revised Theory of Change should reflect the student lifecycle and account for outcome measures over an extended time-period and include shorter-term measures such as increase/decrease in extenuating circumstances and requests for extensions.
- Successful delivery of this type of intervention is dependent upon accurate student data, including contact details. We therefore recommend a data cleansing exercise prior to commencement to ensure accurate and reliable data is available.
- Review how support services are communicated to students prior to, and during, their time at university is necessary in order to raise awareness of how these services can support engagement and outcomes.
- Clear communication should be given at induction about Learning Analytics data and how it may be used.
- Promotion of tools such as the Study Goal app, which enable students to track their own engagement, may give students a better sense of their own levels of engagement prior to any intervention taking place. This should sit alongside an exercise to increase awareness of the value of engagement.

- Detailed tracking of the interventions made and the actions that a student has taken, including services that they may have engaged with, should be conducted over the entire student lifecycle. This is currently a manual task, so consideration should be given to automation to achieve efficiency.
- Consideration should be given as to how to manage potential increases in communications between students and Academic Advisers as a result of students' *at-risk* status. Longer-term observations on such communications are required to assess the impact of a proactive approach to student support.
- Consideration should be given to the scalability of some types of support sessions to ensure that they are delivered in the most efficient and effective way, and to allow us to increase capacity to meet increasing demand.
- Further exploration is needed to explore the views of disengaged or *at-risk* students who did not actively engage with the study.

## 7.  References

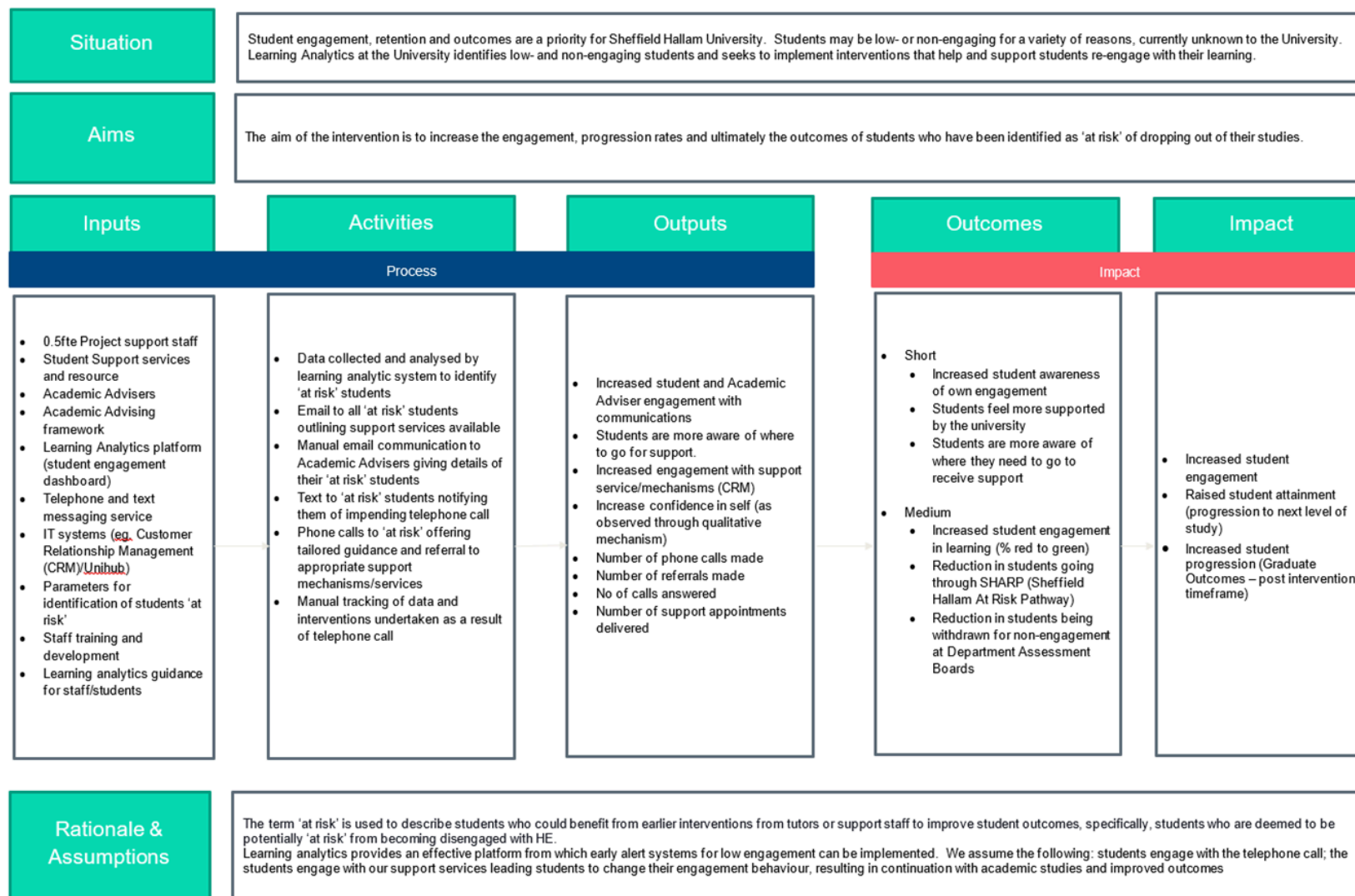Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using thematic analysis in psychology'. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.

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## 8. Appendices

### Appendix A: Theory of Change

TASO
Transforming Access
and Student Outcomes
in Higher Education

Sheffield
Hallam
University

## Situation

Student engagement, retention and outcomes are a priority for Sheffield Hallam University. Students may be low- or non-engaging for a variety of reasons, currently unknown to the University. Learning Analytics at the University identifies low- and non-engaging students and seeks to implement interventions that help and support students re-engage with their learning.

## Aims

The aim of the intervention is to increase the engagement, progression rates and ultimately the outcomes of students who have been identified as 'at risk' of dropping out of their studies.

| Inputs | Activities | Outputs | Outcomes | Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Process** | | | **Impact** | |
| • 0.5fte Project support staff<br>• Student Support services and resource<br>• Academic Advisers<br>• Academic Advising framework<br>• Learning Analytics platform (student engagement dashboard)<br>• Telephone and text messaging service<br>• IT systems (eg. Customer Relationship Management (CRM)/Unihub)<br>• Parameters for identification of students 'at risk'<br>• Staff training and development<br>• Learning analytics guidance for staff/students | • Data collected and analysed by learning analytic system to identify 'at risk' students<br>• Email to all 'at risk' students outlining support services available<br>• Manual email communication to Academic Advisers giving details of their 'at risk' students<br>• Text to 'at risk' students notifying them of impending telephone call<br>• Phone calls to 'at risk' offering tailored guidance and referral to appropriate support mechanisms/services<br>• Manual tracking of data and interventions undertaken as a result of telephone call | • Increased student and Academic Adviser engagement with communications<br>• Students are more aware of where to go for support.<br>• Increased engagement with support service/mechanisms (CRM)<br>• Increase confidence in self (as observed through qualitative mechanism)<br>• Number of phone calls made<br>• Number of referrals made<br>• No of calls answered<br>• Number of support appointments delivered | • Short<br>  • Increased student awareness of own engagement<br>  • Students feel more supported by the university<br>  • Students are more aware of where they need to go to receive support<br>• Medium<br>  • Increased student engagement in learning (% red to green)<br>  • Reduction in students going through SHARP (Sheffield Hallam At Risk Pathway)<br>  • Reduction in students being withdrawn for non-engagement at Department Assessment Boards | • Increased student engagement<br>• Raised student attainment (progression to next level of study)<br>• Increased student progression (Graduate Outcomes – post intervention timeframe) |

## Rationale & Assumptions

The term 'at risk' is used to describe students who could benefit from earlier interventions from tutors or support staff to improve student outcomes, specifically, students who are deemed to be potentially 'at risk' from becoming disengaged with HE.
Learning analytics provides an effective platform from which early alert systems for low engagement can be implemented. We assume the following: students engage with the telephone call; the students engage with our support services leading students to change their engagement behaviour, resulting in continuation with academic studies and improved outcomes

## Appendix B: Email sent to students (Intervention 1 group)

Dear Joe

We have noticed that you may not have been fully engaging with your course recently. Therefore, we are getting in touch with information about support resources that may help you engage.

It could be that you have not been attending some of your classes, not logged onto Blackboard or accessed the library resource etc.

There are a range of reasons as to why students may not be engaging fully with their studies. We are getting in touch, just in case you are currently having a difficult time, so you know where to go if you feel you need to access further support.

You are not in any trouble, and we'd like to make you aware of the support resources available to you, they could help with any issues you may be facing.

We recognise that it's not always easy to manage academic studies alongside day-to-day life. We do know that it is important to participate positively with University life where possible, as students who engage are more likely to succeed, achieve their potential and enjoy their time at Sheffield Hallam.

We are here to listen and advise you on the support that is available to you and to provide guidance on options that could help you to get you back on track with your studies, if needed.

To ensure you feel fully supported, we will also give you a call over the next two weeks. This call is to offer further support and advice. The number that will call you will start with 0114 225 XXXX

How to get further support

To enable you to achieve your potential and enjoy your time at Sheffield Hallam. You have three dedicated advisers (Academic Adviser, Student Support Adviser and Employability Adviser), providing a personal support service.

The links below will lead you to more information about how you can access support from your named advisers, alongside information about further support available at SHU:

Student Support Triangle

Hallam Help

Student Support Advisers

You can also find a range of resources to help support your wellbeing whilst studying at Sheffield Hallam.

If you encounter problems or difficulties during your studies then please contact Hallam Help. We are here to support you.

You can do this through accessing My Hallam, by emailing hallamhelp@shu.ac.uk or by Tel: 0114 225 2222.

Best wishes

Student Success and Engagement Team

Sheffield Hallam University

## Appendix C: Email sent to students (Control Group)

Dear Joe

We have noticed that you may not have been fully engaging with your course recently. Therefore, we are getting in touch with information about support resources that may help you engage.

It could be that you have not been attending some of your classes, not logged onto Blackboard or accessed the library resource etc.

There are a range of reasons as to why students may not be engaging fully with their studies. We are getting in touch, just in case you are currently having a difficult time, so you know where to go if you feel you need to access further support.

You are not in any trouble, and we'd like to make you aware of the support resources available to you, they could help with any issues you may be facing.

We recognise that it's not always easy to manage academic studies alongside day-to-day life. We do know that it is important to participate positively with University life where possible, as students who engage are more likely to succeed, achieve their potential and enjoy their time at Sheffield Hallam.

We are here to listen and advise you on the support that is available to you and to provide guidance on options that could help you to get you back on track with your studies, if needed.

How to get further support

To enable you to achieve your potential and enjoy your time at Sheffield Hallam. You have three dedicated advisers (Academic Adviser, Student Support Adviser and Employability Adviser), providing a personal support service.

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If you encounter problems or difficulties during your studies then please contact Hallam Help. We are here to support you.

You can do this through accessing My Hallam, by emailing hallamhelp@shu.ac.uk or by Tel: 0114 225 2222.

Best wishes

Student Success and Engagement Team
Sheffield Hallam University

## Appendix D: Email sent to Academic Adviser

Dear Academic Adviser,

Your student _____ has been contacted via email, due to a concern with their engagement, flagged by the Data Explorer System.

The Student Success and Engagement Team look to provide a range of supportive interventions for students who are demonstrating poor engagement. This is flagged to us using the Data Explorer platform. A snapshot is taken at key points in the semester and those students showing poor engagement are contacted with a **supportive** email.

This intervention has been made as part of the TASO Engagement Intervention project. You will have received an email from Sarah Churchill with information on this project.

This student is in the group that will receive the supportive intervention email only.

You can view your student's engagement profile by logging into Data Explorer, they should appear under the "My Students" section. You can find further resources on Learner Analytics and Data Explorer through this link: Sheffield Hallam Learning Analytics

Following the most recent census point, it was identified that currently has poor engagement, according to learning analytics data.

**There is no required action for the student at this stage**, apart from looking to improve their engagement and considering support they may need to do this.

**There is also no action for you as the Student's Academic Adviser,** this email is just to notify you that an intervention has been made. This may inform any contact you have with the student in the future.

Further information on Learning Analytics, can be found here: SHU Learning Analytics

Many Thanks
Student Support Adviser Team

## Appendix E: Text message to students

You will have received an email recently about supporting you with your engagement. In order to further support you, we have scheduled an informal call which will take place next week. This call is nothing to worry about and you are not in any trouble, the university just wishes to support you. Please look out for a call from a number starting with 0114 225 XXXX.

## Appendix F: Call centre Script

Engagement Intervention call script

General outline of a call with a student contacted for enhanced intervention. The opt in statement must be included at the start of every call.

A manager will be present when all calls are conducted. At any point if you need further guidance or support on a telephone call with a student, please ask the student to hold and gather further guidance. The manager will be able to advise on how to respond to the student's query.

**Call Centre**: "Hello, my name's Felicity and I'm calling form the Student Success and Engagement team at Hallam. I'm calling you today to discuss support for your engagement, are you happy for the phone call to go ahead? "

YES:            Record verbal consent on tracker.

NO or QUERY:    Participation sheet

"We had noticed that you may not be engaging well with your course at the moment. We have sent you an email to advise you of the support available to you at the University, but we also wanted to give you a call to check in with you and see if there is anything more we can do to support you.

So, can I ask, is there a reason why your engagement with your course may be affected at the moment? "

Student explains an academic issue-

**Academic adviser Support Response: "**For academic support you can request to meet with your academic adviser, do you know who this is? "

No:    provide the information to them and advise that they can contact them for academic support.

Yes:    recommend they contact their Adviser to ask for support or a meeting with them.

Student explains a personal/wellbeing/pastoral issue-

**Student Support Response: "**There is support available to you at Hallam and you can book an appointment with a Student Support Adviser. You can either do this by using the links in the email sent to you last week, searching "Student Support Adviser" on MyHallam or contacting Hallam Help**."**

**Student advises a missed assessment-** Advise student to search for RRAA's on MyHallam

Student advises an upcoming assessment they are worried about: Advise student to search for 'RESD' on MyHallam

Student wants to change seminar/elective-

Advise on Semester deadlines and refer to process on MyHallam.

No issue discussed-

**Call Centre Response:** "Engagement with your course can positively affect your success on your course. You have information now on the support available to you. You can also use the Study Goal web app so you can see your engagement information.

Is there anything else I can help you with today?"

"Thank you for taking my call today, if you need any further support, please do use the information sent to you in the email last week. "

End of Call Actions:
- Record on tracker that telephone call took place and verbal consent given
- Following your conversation please complete the TASO Engagement Interventions- Phone call Log- Sem 1 22/23 form on Unihub. Do this by first searching for the student and then adding the form as a new form submission.
- This will send an email to the Student's Academic Adviser to advise a call has taken place with the student as part of the TASO project.
- It will also send a summary to the CRM system so it can be logged on the student CRM record. Here we can flag for the SSA to contact the student if we deem necessary. The SSA team will then pick up for further support.

## Appendix G: TASO Engagement interventions: Phone call log - Semester 1 22/23 UniHub Form

### TASO- Phone Call Log- Sem 1 22/23

A record of phone calls made to students in enhanced intervention group, as part of the TASO research project

**Name**

First Name

Last Name

**Student Number**

**Did the Student Answer?**
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No and No Voicemail Left
- ☐ No and Voicemail Left

**What topics were discussed in the call?**
- ☐ Student did not require further support
- ☐ Student had pastoral concerns and was advised on how to contact the SSA team
- ☐ Student had academic concerns and was advised on how to contact their Academic Adviser
- ☐ Student required support from other service (detail in next question)

**Does the SSA team need to contact this student?**
- ☐ This Student needs follow up contact from the SSA Team. Please convert the case and assign to dept queue for action
- ☐ This Student DOES NOT need follow up contact from the SSA team and has been advised how to access the service if needed. Please convert and resolve the case

**Phone call discussion notes**
*ANY INFORMATION INCLUDED HERE WILL BE ENTERED INTO THE CRM AND ACADEMIC ADVISER EMAILS Please note down any important information shared by the student in the phone call*

**Academic Adviser Email Address**

> ⓘ ONCE YOU HAVE COMPLETED THE NECESSARY SECTIONS, PLEASE "SUBMIT" THE FORM
>
> By completing the fields in and submitting the form, this will ensure the relevant emails are sent to:
>
> 2. The Students Academic Adviser (if email box is completed)
>
> 3. The SSA General queue

[ Save draft ]  [ Submit ]

## Appendix H: Email sent to academic advisors after phone call with students

Hello

As you are the Academic Adviser for {FirstName} {LastName} ({StudentNumber}) this is a notification email to advise that an engagement call has been made to the student as part of the TASO engagement interventions project.

The details of the call are below. This call is in addition to an email sent to them last week, which advised on how they can access support at Hallam.

As part of the call we will have advised the student on how they can access support, in response to any specific support requirements they had. If this was academic based we will have reminded them of your name and contact details. **There is no requirement for you to proactively contact this student, unless you wish too, based on the information included below. The Student Support Adviser will also receive a copy of this email and follow up any necessary actions.**

If some areas are blank this is because the call was made but the student did not answer.

[Fields.Name.FirstName] [Fields.Name.LastName]

[Fields.StudentNumber.Value]

Was the call answered?

[Fields.StudentAnswer1.Value]

What were the topics discussed in the call?

[Fields.TopicsDiscussed.Value]

Are there further details to share from the call?

[Fields.Discussion.Value]

If Student Support or Academic Support has been discussed with the student they will have been advised on how to access this support.

## Appendix I: Traffic Light Calculator and Overall RAG rating formula

| TLC count Blackboard Engagement | | | | TLC count Attendance | | | | TLC count Assessment (Boarded marks) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Red (days) | Amber (days) | Red (% less than avg.) | Amber (% less than avg.) | Red (days) | Amber (days) | Red (% less than avg.) | Amber (% less than avg.) | Red (avg. mark) | Amber (avg. mark) | Green (avg. mark) |
| 14 | 7 | 100 | 20 | 14 | 7 | 40 | 20 | 0-39 | 40-59 | 60-100 |

| Overall RAG Rating | |
|---|---|
| % Red greater than | % Amber greater than |
| 15 | 30 |

The Learning Analytic platform, Data Explorer collects individual student digital footprint data and generates module traffic lights. The Traffic Light Calculator (TLC) is a rule-based tool to identify student digital behaviours that are often associated with a lack of engagement and risk of failing.

Student engagement is measured on a per module basis and on three elements:

1.    Virtual Engagement – use of the online virtual learning environment (VLE) - Blackboard

2.    Physical Engagement – attendance at scheduled events

3.    Assessments – results of confirmed assessments

The student will receive a Red, Amber or Green (RAG) rating for each of these elements. The traffic light calculator has been configured by Hallam. These are set at Department level and calculations are run on a nightly basis (see above for current settings for courses included within this project).

Note: the Assessment data is taken from confirmed Department Assessment Boards (DABs), therefore for the majority of the academic year, this element will be grey (insufficient data) until after the DABs. The grey indicators do not count as part of the overall RAG calculation.
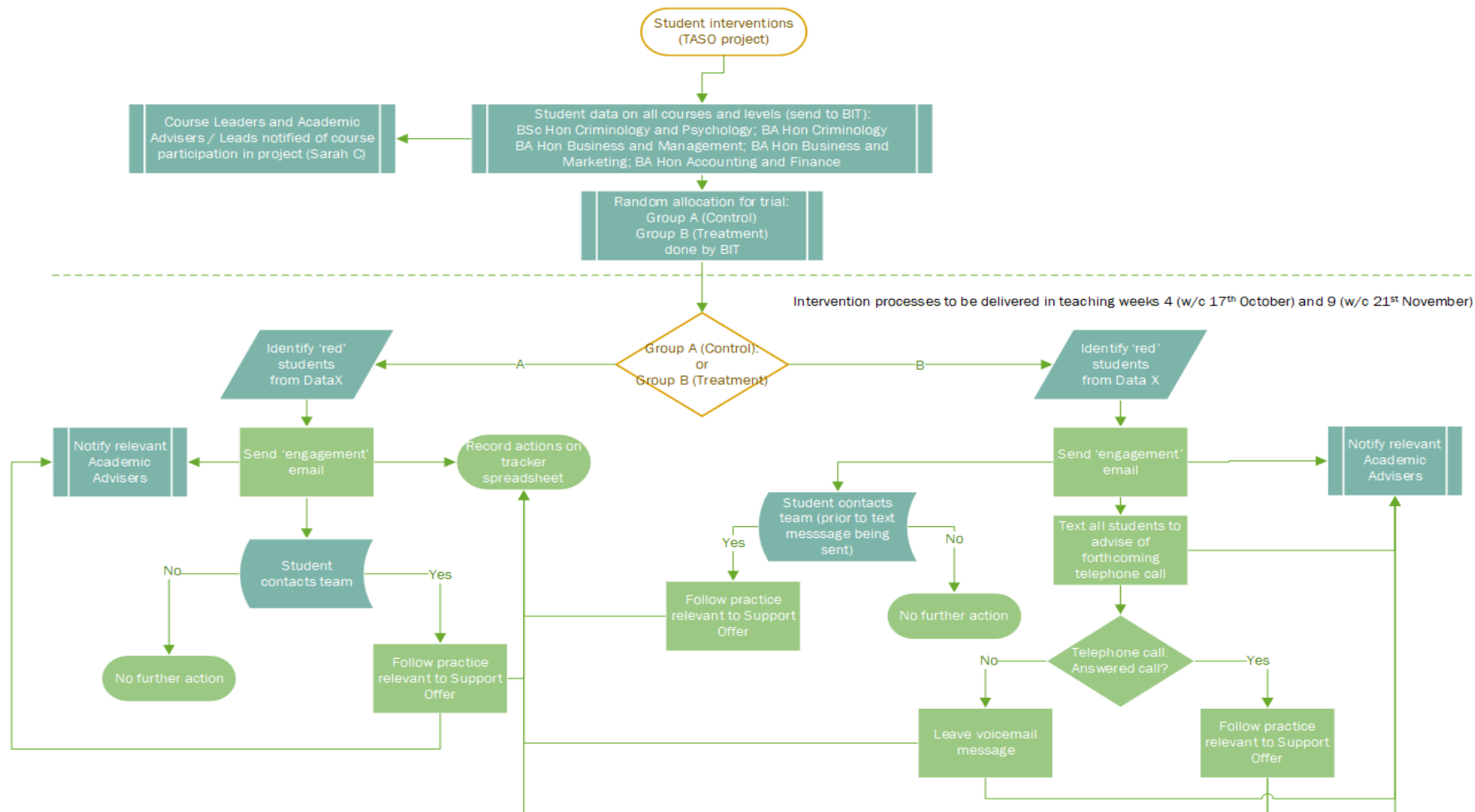
The engagement period specifies the previous number of days of activity to use in the calculation. This is set at 30 days for Hallam.

TLC Count

Each student is evaluated against their module activity on the 3 elements above, each element will result in a TLC count and indicated as red, amber, green (RAG). A

student will then have a total number of ratings across their modules and elements which are used to determine their overall RAG rating.

**Appendix J: Process map of intervention**

## Appendix K: Interview schedule

1) Did you act on the advice provided in communications?
    - If yes: How did you do this? Did you book appointments? Were they useful? If no: Why not? Was the advice irrelevant etc?
2) How could we improve the support we provided?
    - Non-answering students- Was the email sufficient to provide support? What reasons prevented you from answering the phone call? Do you feel like answering the phone call would have been beneficial to you?
    - For answering calls- did you feel the phone call was supportive? Is there anything else we could have done on the phone call to increase support? Do you feel that administrators being able to book the appointments for student would increase the support? Did you feel comfortable opening up during the phone call? What aspects of the call enabled this?