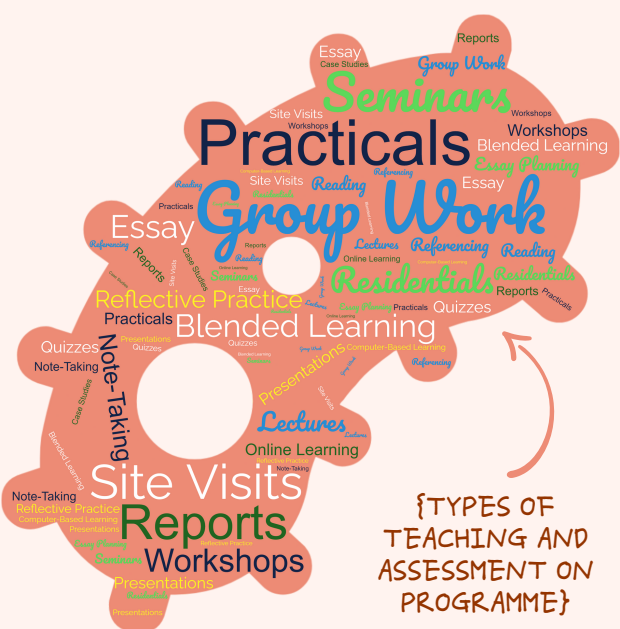


THE BIOSCI PATHWAY OPPORTUNITY PROGRAMME: CHALLENGES & SUCCESSES

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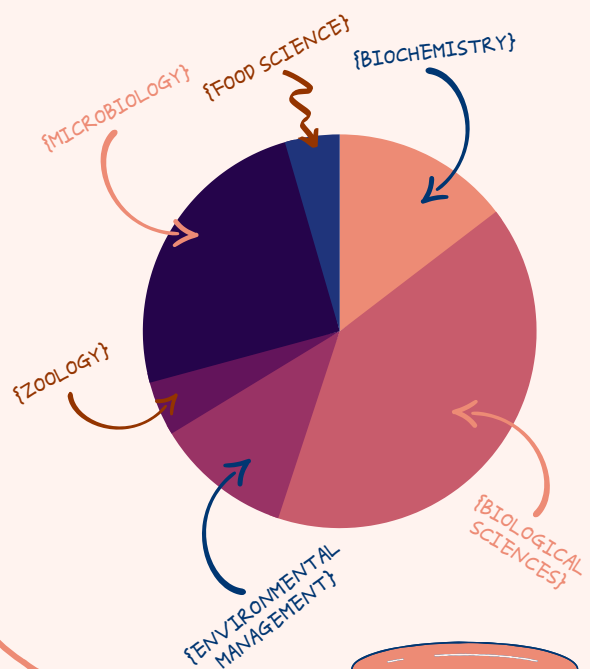


{BACKGROUND}

- The Pathway Opportunity Programme (POP) is a QUB Widening Participation initiative first piloted in our School in 2017 and has been running ever since.
- It supports students from backgrounds that are less likely to participate in higher education (1) by preparing them academically and socially for university life.
- While academic achievement is the main determinant of higher education participation, it is particularly important that students from backgrounds less likely to engage with higher education have the self-belief and aspirations to come to university (2).

Recruitment:

Students on the BioSci POP chose to study on a range of School degree programmes.



{CHALLENGE!}

How do you create a scheme that encompasses all our School programmes?
We chose the topic of food waste - it's multidisciplinary, engaging and an area of global significance!

POP STUDENTS MASSIVELY INCREASED THEIR CONFIDENCE AND SELF-BELIEF IN ABILITY TO STUDY IN HE

- BioSci POP student performance on degree programmes is comparable to their peers
- Familiarisation with the university environment and organisation e.g. timetable, room changes, assessment deadlines all helped students feel more prepared for what to expect at university and for what is expected from them
- Past POP students have taken on the role of Academic Guides and Peer Mentors to current POP students.

{WHAT DID THE STUDENTS SAY??}

"It gave me an idea of what the work is like. The strict deadlines, time limits and word counts. It also gave me an idea of the work standard that is expected from me."

"It has made me feel more confident about going to university and it allowed me to see what course I would want to do."

"It made me less worried about applying and money, as the student guides were great to talk to!"

{CONCLUSIONS}

- BioSci Pathway is good preparation for university life.
- Topic covered provided sufficient information to help with degree choice.
- There is a strong desire among former BioSci students to mentor current students.
- Continued support from the academic team and Widening Participation Unit staff has helped students remain on their programme of study.

{REFERENCES}

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2. Vignoles, A.; Murray, N. Widening Participation in Higher Education. *Educ. Sci.* 2016, 6, 13.
3. United Nations Environment Programme; Food Waste Index Report 2021.