



The Issue of Student Retention: Reducing Attrition in Nursing

Case Study

January 2021

Introduction

Retention of student nurses is an ongoing and increasingly pressing issue in the UK. The average attrition rate, which varies significantly from university to university is 25%, meaning 1 in 4 nursing students will drop out (Nursing Standard, 2020).

Recent data from the University and College Admissions Service (UCAS) shows a record rise in student admissions in 2020, of over 23%. At a time when more nurses are needed than ever before, this is good news.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has hit nursing students hard. Increased anxiety around working in the field and the move to remote learning presents a heightened risk to progression and the need for increased support, challenging universities traditional methods of student support.

At [Solutionpath](#), we wanted to investigate whether the [StREAM](#) student engagement platform could be effective in identifying student nurses 'at-risk' of early withdrawal with the view to reducing attrition in this area.

Can engagement data be used to identify nursing students 'at-risk' of withdrawal?

Approach

We reviewed student engagement data from 3 UK Higher Education Nursing providers, each with varying numbers of enrolled students.

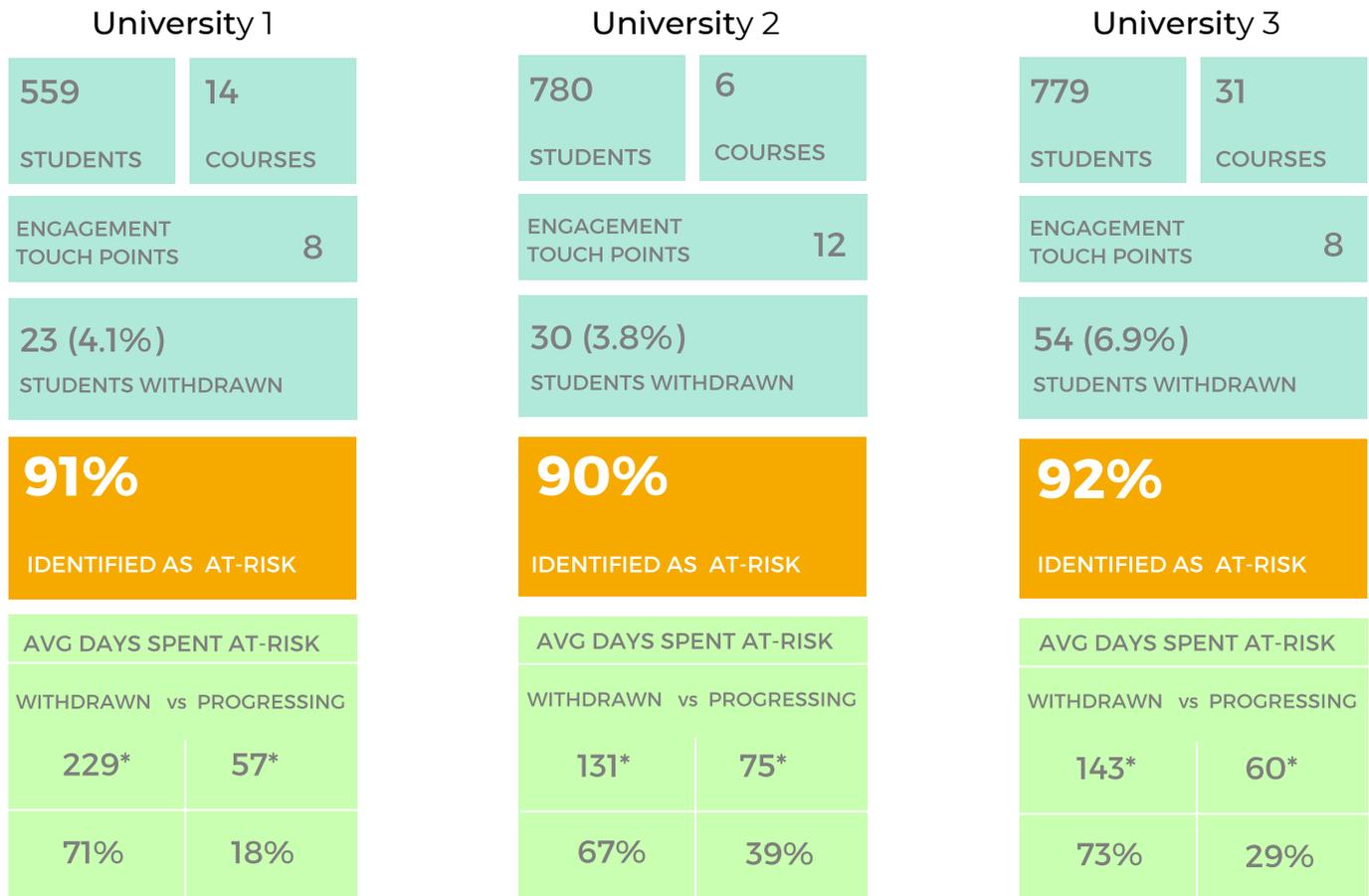
3 UK Universities	6 month period 2019/2020
Undergraduate Nursing Courses	Full Time 1st & 2nd Year students

Engagement data, defined as data points that reflect active participation in a student's learning, was collated covering a range of academic interactions including the VLE, library, e-resources, Teams, attendance, online classrooms and video.

Methodology

This data was processed via the **StREAM** platform engagement algorithm to create an 'engagement' profile. Taking a modal average of the most frequently occurring category that a student appears in, each student would then be assigned to an engagement category. By creating categories that represent those at lower or higher risk of progression we are able to identify levels of engagement for the students who went on to withdraw.

Key Findings



*NOTE: The analysis period covered times of absence including academic breaks and placements. As engagement is measured continuously it is expected that students have periods of lower engagement.

Conclusion

Over 90% of withdrawn students across all 3 universities were identified in the at-risk category. In addition, there is a notable difference in the average number of days a withdrawn student spends in an at-risk category compared to those students who went on to progress. This not only allows for benchmark and comparison but indicates an opportunity to use low engagement as an early warning sign to target support before a potential crisis point.

To conclude, this study provides evidence to prove engagement as an effective method of identifying student nurses at-risk of withdrawal and as a result, can provide university staff a means to action timely intervention to help reduce attrition in nursing courses.

For more information about the study or to request a demo of StREAM email Nursing@solutionpath.co.uk.