



# The Olympic challenge of first year students: technology enabling and support completing 'the first lap'

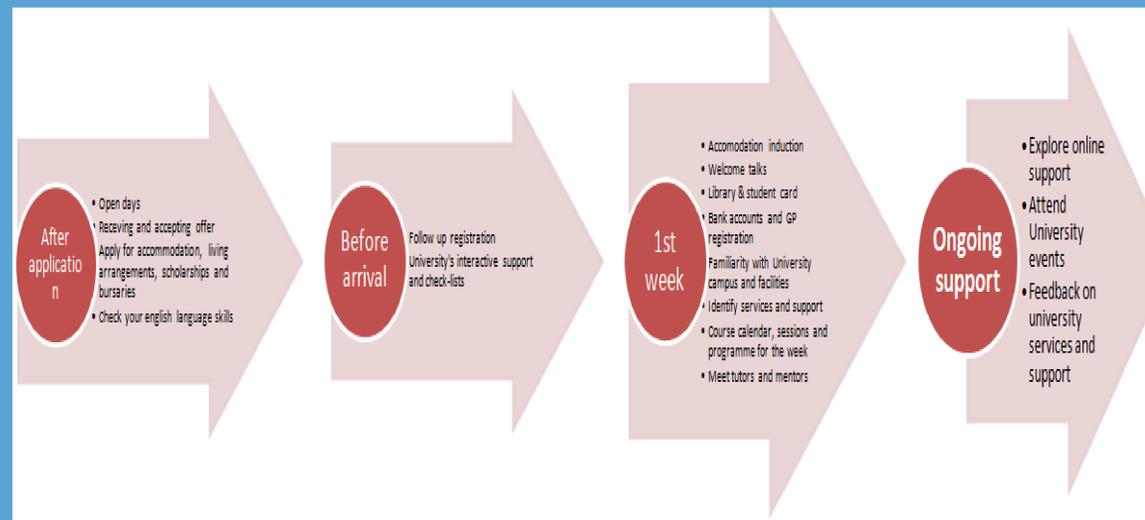
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## Background

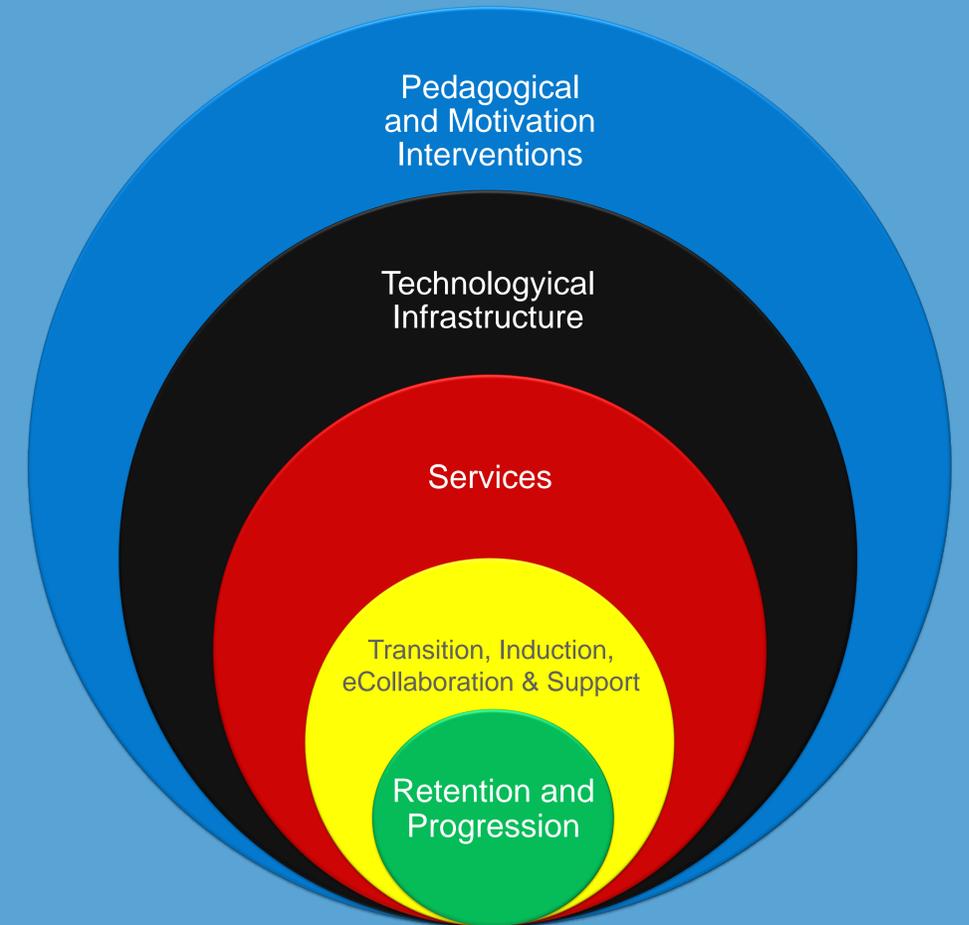
The University of Bolton is suffering from a 'dropout pandemic'. In a recent all staff meeting, the Vice Chancellor highlighted the financial negative impact of losing students on the first year, and how the new government policies will make retention essential for the University financial health and its overall impact on the University future.

In the higher education literature it is evident the importance of the attention given to induction processes in order to assist students with effective integration and adjustment to the university environment. Whereas student induction (in some contexts referred to as orientation or as fresher's week) was once largely perceived as a one-off event, it has been recognised that providing students with a more comprehensive and integral introduction to their studies helps alleviate potential anxieties, enabling students to make early connections with their courses/departments and progress successfully with their studies.

The process diagram below represents an example of essential student steps followed, starting from the application stage up ongoing support after first week(s) induction and orientation.



The diagram on the right presents the relationship of five approaches by using an adapted 'stacked Venn' diagram. These five approaches should be explored and considered by the University to prevent attrition in student progression, including institutional led development focusing on the use of data tracking systems and processes to identify students in danger of dropping out (being tested at the moment), complemented by additional technology enabled support systems (interactive media and ICT support infrastructure), as well as pedagogical and motivational interventions during students transition and induction to support learners during their critical first year.



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