

Developing a sense of belonging and mattering for commuter students

Developing a Sense of Belonging and Mattering within a Diverse Community: How Pastoral and Pedagogical Support can be used to Enhance Student Experience and Success.
University of Worcester Teaching and Learning Conference 2025. University of Worcester, Worcester, UK. 17 June 2025.

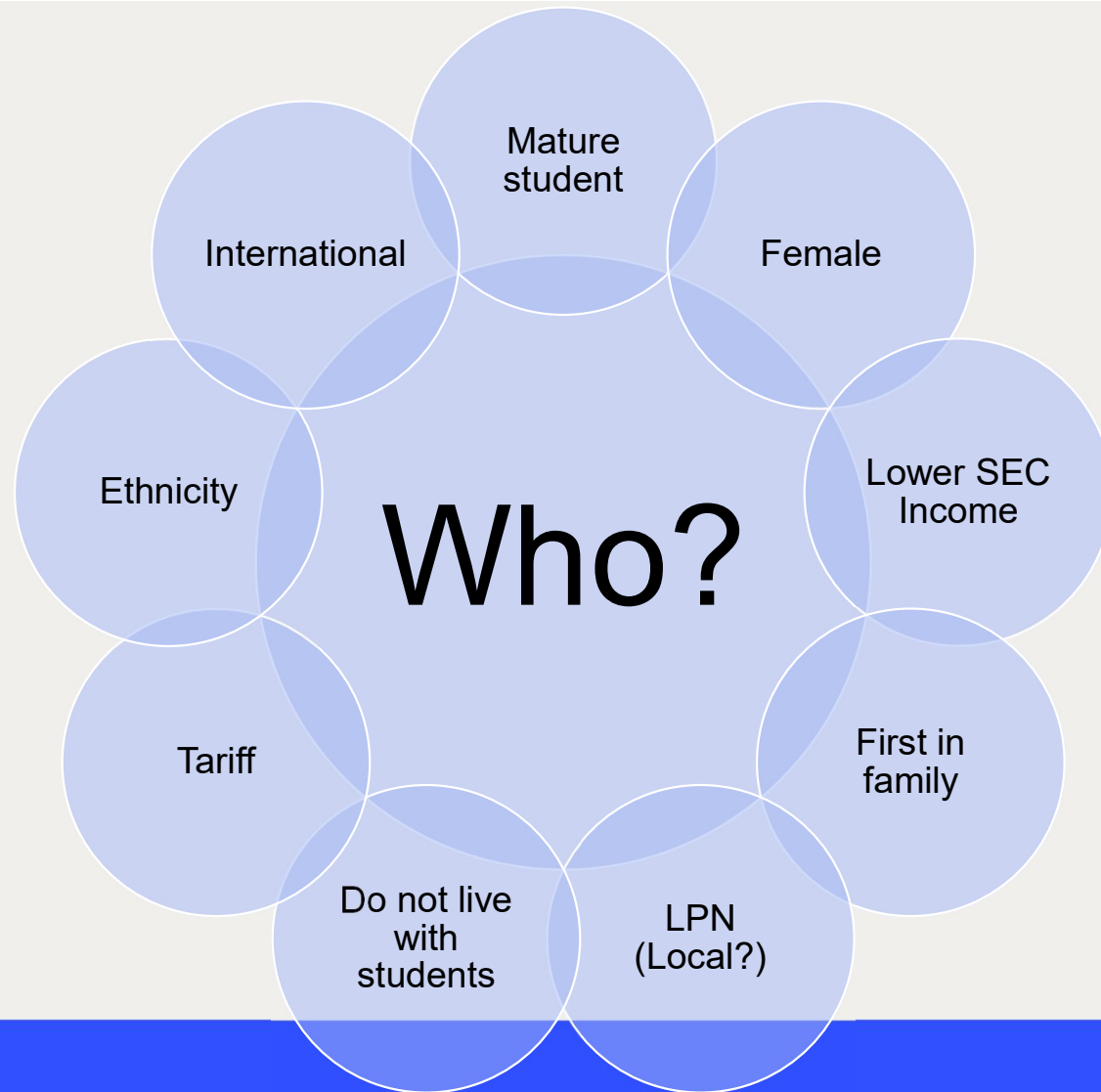
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Overview

- Who are we talking about?
- Why are we talking about commuter students?
- Why are commuter students disadvantaged?
- What can we do?

Who are we talking about?

‘Students who continue to live at home whilst studying, rather than moving into student accommodation’ (Kenyon, 2024a).









‘I am a student’.

‘I am a parent, an employee, a
community activist, a volunteer, a
band member... and I study.’

Why are we talking about commuter students?

- (1) Increasing numbers.
- (2) The Office for Students.
- (3) Increasing and improving evidence-base.
- (4) The crisis in the sector.

Why are we talking about commuter students? (1)

47%

Nationally 2022

12-85%

Nationally 2022

62%

Worcester 2018*

Why are we talking about commuter students? (2)



These students are likely to experience the following risks:

Risk 5 →

Risk 6 →

Risk 7 →

Risk 10 →

Commuter students

This refers to students based on the distance or time they take to travel from their accommodation to their place of study.

- Risk 5: Limited choice of course type and delivery mode.
- Risk 6: Insufficient academic support.
- Risk 7: Insufficient personal support.
- Risk 10: Cost pressures.

Why are we talking about commuter students? (3)

Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning
Volume 26, Number 3, November 2024
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Commuter students: does reducing the need to travel enable more inclusive, equitable participation?



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JOURNAL OF FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION
2020, VOL. 44, NO. 10, 1320–1334
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2019.1684461>

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group



The association between residential arrangements and academic performance in UK university students


Oliver J. Webb  and Rebecca Turner 

RESEARCH IN POST-COMPULSORY EDUCATION
2023, VOL. 28, NO. 3, 373–389
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13596748.2023.2221116>

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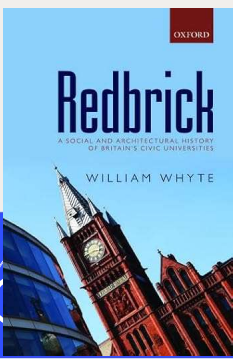


College higher education commuter students' experiences of belonging, mattering and persisting with their studies

Isabel Hallam 




■ Influences on living at home and attending a local university for young people from a UK deprived area




Academic engagement amongst commuter students: a comparative analysis

Rebecca Turner¹  · Oliver Webb¹  · Christie Pritchard¹ 


Supporting Higher Education in London

Commuter Students in London:
Results of a pilot project on factors affecting continuation




Shaping higher education for commuter students

SUSAN KENYON | COMMENT | 2/02/25 | 1



Which universities recruit commuter students?

DAVID KERNOHAN | DATA | 12/03/25 | 10



How cost of living is influencing UK student mobility

BEN JORDAN | COMMENT | 21/05/25 | 1

WONKHE

<https://wonkhe.com/tag/commuter-students/>



A change agenda for the commuter student experience

SUSAN KENYON | COMMENT | 9/06/25 | 1




The difference between commuting by choice versus necessity

ELISE THORNTON | COMMENT | 28/03/25




Making space for commuter students

SUSAN PRESTON | COMMENT | 12/03/25




Students making changes on transport

MOLLY PEMBERTON | COMMENT | 26/02/25 | 1




The potential of educational podcasts for commuter students

TOM PEROU | COMMENT | 12/02/25




The value of the classroom in building belonging for commuter students

KULVINDER SINGH | COMMENT | 11/04/25 | 1




Understanding the commuter student paradox

MARTIN LOWE | COMMENT | 23/04/25




Reframing the commute

EMMA MASLIN | COMMENT | 19/03/25 | 1



How we shifted institutional thinking about commuter students

VAL YATES | COMMENT | 19/02/25 | 1




Supporting commuter students with the right information

SUSAN KENYON | COMMENT | 5/03/25



Building a public transport agenda for commuter students

JOEL DOWSON | COMMENT | 4/04/25 | 1



How commuter students show up in new access and participation plans

MACK MARSHALL | COMMENT | 15/05/25

Why are we talking about commuter students? (4)



- Lower attainment, attendance, engagement.
- Poorer experience.
- Less sense of belonging.
- Disconnection from course, university, community.
- Poorer emotional wellbeing.
- Poorer financial wellbeing.



- Retention.
- Recruitment (league tables).
- An increasing market.
 - Cost of living.
 - Tuition fees.
 - Widening participation.
 - Transport barriers increasing.
- Regulatory and reputational risk for sector.



- 15% CCCU CO2e emissions from student commute.
- Commuters drive; residents walk/bus.
- Transport network impacts.

Why are commuters disadvantaged?

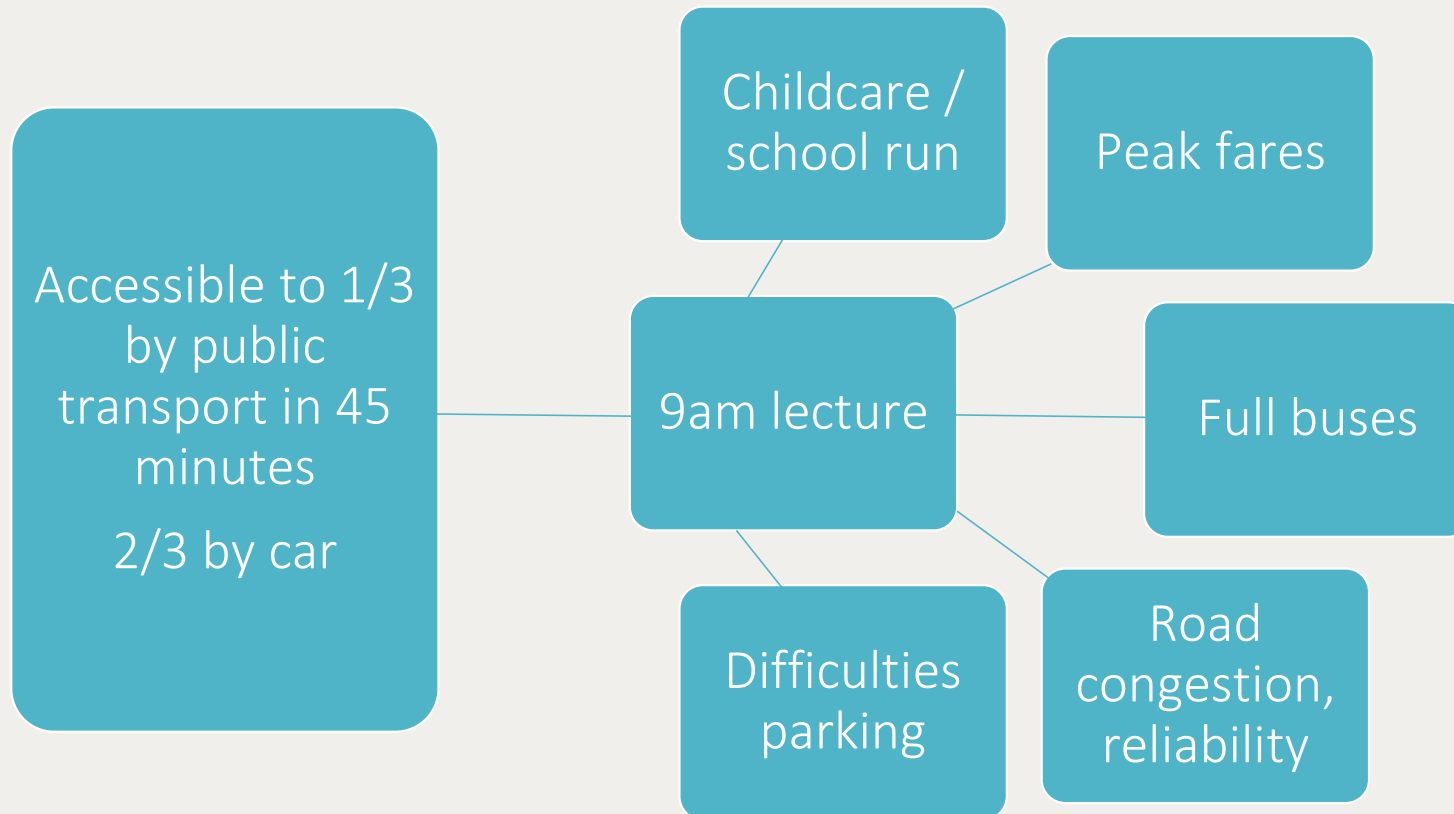
- Pedagogy, policy and processes are designed for residential, not commuter, students.



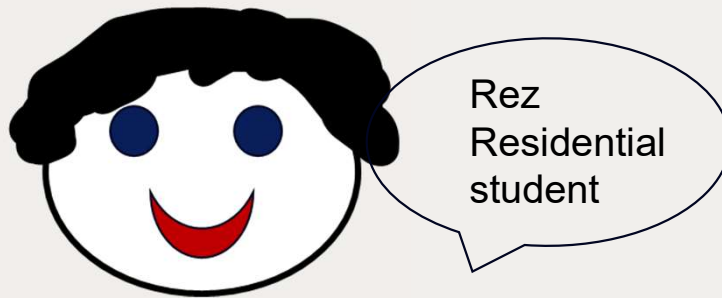
(1) The 9am lecture.







(2) The traditional timetable.

Why are commuters disadvantaged? (1)



Why are commuters disadvantaged? (2)



	9-10	10-11	11-12	12-1	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5	5-6	6-7
Mon							✓			
Tues		✓								
Weds						✓	Student activities afternoon			
Thurs	Office hours									
Fri					✓					

Why are commuters disadvantaged? (2)



Caz
Commuter
student

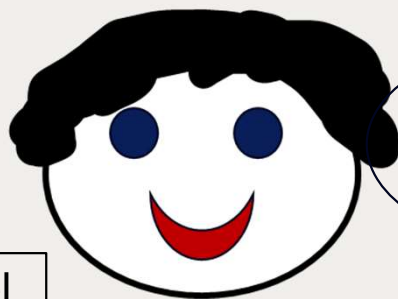


	9-10	10-11	11-12	12-1	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5	5-6	6-7
Mon										
Tues										
Weds										
Thurs										
Fri										

student activities afternoon

Office hours





Rez
Residential
student



Caz
Commuter
student

Off-peak travel

	9-10	10-11	11-12	12-1	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5	5-6	6-7
Mon										
Tues		Student activities afternoon								
Weds										
Thurs	Office hours									
Fri										

Compressed
timetable
Active learning
In-class support /
co-curriculars
Value external life

Online
support

Repurpose
classrooms,
accommodation

Flipped learning
Online communities

Vibrant campus

What can we do?

In the classroom.

In our support services.

Students and Students'
Unions.

At the Institution.

In the classroom	In our support services
Talk about commuting	Raise the profile and work together
Visibility Stigma Acceptance Belonging	Listening lunches Drop-ins Meaningful activities in down-time Targeted
Active learning	Support services
Belonging Empower Meaningful	Timetabled In-class In-curriculum
Teaching and support	Online outreach and community
Online On-commute Timetabled Co-curricular Curriculum includes external lives	Timetabled Bookable Joined up Information

Students and Student Unions	At the Institution
Campaign and empower	Acknowledge and celebrate
Institution Transport Course Premier Inn	Count Map Publicise Recruit
Student spaces	Review and adapt
Student lounge Overnight accommodation	Policy Support Timetabling Spaces Information Accommodation
Community	External partnerships
Commuter society Rush-hour socials Online	Transport Government Businesses

What can you do?

In the classroom.

In our support services.

Students and Students'
Unions.

At the Institution.

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HESA data is from a bespoke dataset, provided by Jisc.

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