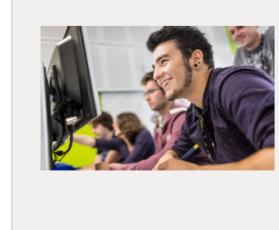


Knowledge, Attainment & Pedagogy

WORKING GROUPS

The Knowledge, Attainment and Pedagogy group (KAP) brings together educators, researchers and practitioners interested in improving access, success, and progression of diverse student populations in higher education. It is focused on exploring how opportunities to gain knowledge, skills, and experiences across educational journeys can foster academic success for educationally disadvantaged groups.

With its horizontal focus across NERUPI's network, KAP fosters discussion on pedagogical approaches and curricula that align with student-centred ideas on



Pathways, Pedagogy, and Progression: Learning to Thrive through Higher Education Access and Attainment

Dr Yetunde Kolajo SFHEA
Research Associate
University of Kent

Stand for ambition.
kent.ac.uk

Session Outline



Explore how pre-entry outreach aligns with student success, retention, attainment, and progression



Share effective practices and innovations across UK HEIs



Discuss how institutions can foster collaboration between outreach, academic, and student success teams



Discuss how to co-develop institutionally embedded strategies for equity and inclusion.

Join by Web PollEv.com/yetundekolajo512



When you hear 'access to higher education,' what's the first idea or word that pops into your mind?

Loading...

Nobody has responded yet.

Hang tight! Responses are coming in.

Join the Vevox session

Go to **vevox.app**

Enter the session ID: **106-523-129**

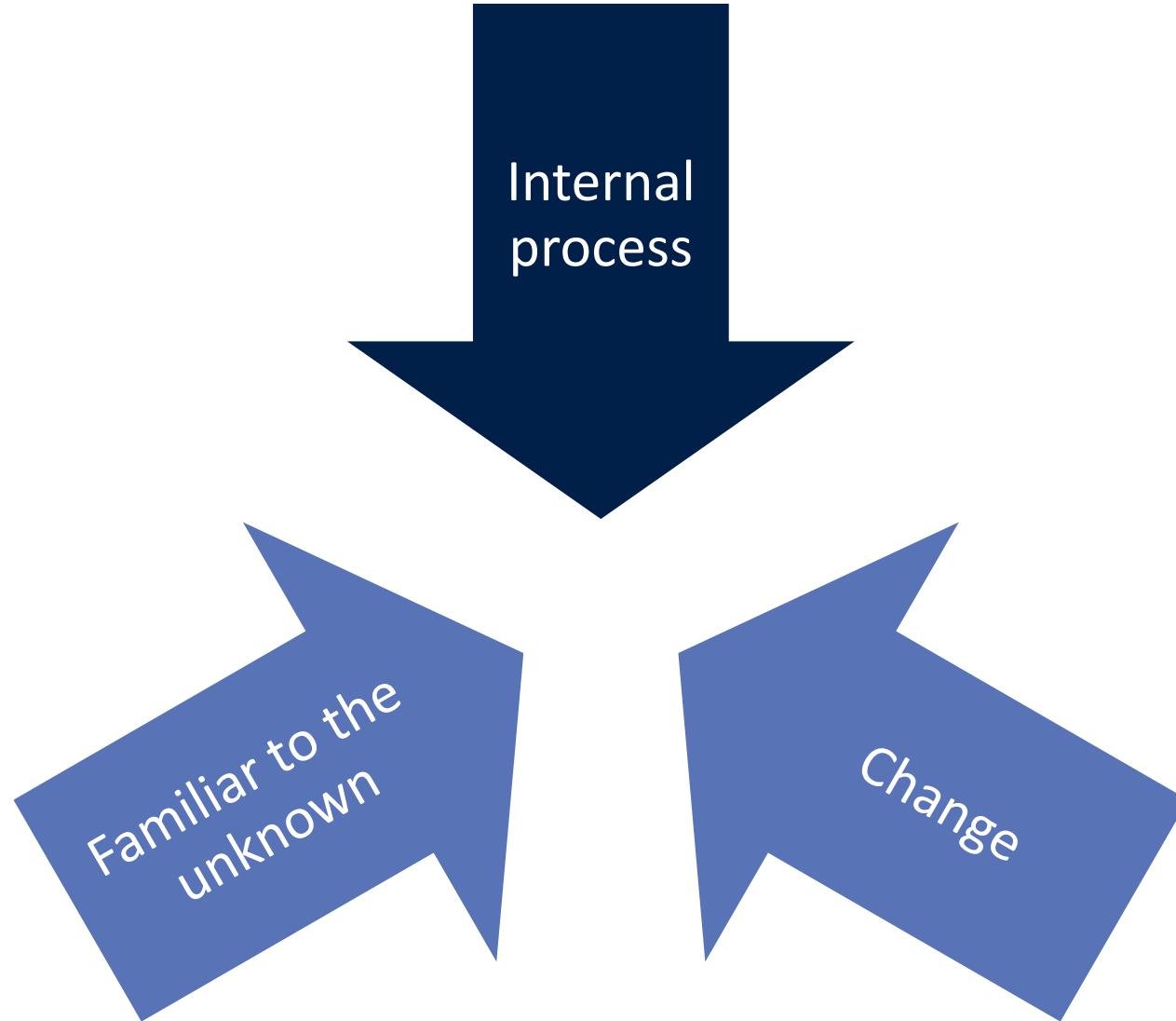
Or scan the QR code





When you hear ‘access to higher education,’ what’s the first idea or word that pops into your mind?

What is Transition?



Access & Transition

Transition Skills and Strategies

Transition Models and How Students Experience Change

January 2023



- Cheng, M., Barnes, G. P., Edwards, C., Valyrakis, M., Corduneanu, R., & Koukou, M.. Transition models and how students experience change. QAA. Accessed June 10, 2025

IMPROVING THE TRANSITION TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Responding to the needs of a post-Covid generation of students



- Unite Report, Unite Group, May 2024

Bridging the Gap: Exploring the Unique Transition From Home, School or College Into University

Joanne Deborah Worsley^{1*}, Paula Harrison² and Rhiannon Corcoran¹

¹Department of Primary Care and Mental Health, University of Liverpool, Liverpool, United Kingdom, ²Student Administration and Support, University of Liverpool, Liverpool, United Kingdom

Although previous research has shown that psychological distress increases on entering university, little is known about first-year student perspectives on the stressors in university environments, and what measures might better support student mental health and well-being during the transition period. The present research seeks to bridge this gap by exploring the unique transition period from home, school or college into university in order to identify aspects of the university experience (teaching, curriculum, support services, accommodation) that could be adapted to better support student mental health and well-being. Eight focus groups were conducted across two higher education institutions in North West England. Focus group data were thematically analyzed. Four overarching themes were identified: "Tackling multiple challenges"; "The preparatory role of schools and colleges"; "University staff and services: Feeling supported/unsupported"; and "Friendships". Although pressure to perform academically whilst fulfilling the stereotypical student life is keenly felt during the transition period, many students conceal their struggles from family and friends. Living beyond their familiar support structures often leaves students in need of compassionate humans to turn to for support or advice, especially as many keep their struggles hidden. Large-group teaching settings stifle social connection and leave students feeling lonely. Loneliness was also experienced within accommodation environments. Providing increased opportunities for connection within living and learning environments would enable young people to build and strengthen relationships with fellow students and staff. As supportive environments foster a sense of belonging and community, universities should ensure that students feel supported by staff and peers whilst they acclimate to multiple new challenges.

Keywords: first-year student experience, transition period, loneliness, sense of belonging, friendships and relationships, well-being

INTRODUCTION

While starting university is exciting and liberating (1), the transition period can be stressful, especially for those who are relocating (2). In Britain, over 80 per cent of full-time students leave their family home to attend university (3). The transition to university coincides with a critical developmental period during which young people leave their family home whilst their

- Worsley, J. D., Harrison, P., & Corcoran, R. (2021). Bridging the gap: exploring the unique transition from home, school or college into university. *Frontiers in public health*, 9, 634285.

Contextual Overview

- Complex
- Internal processes
- External processes

Transition Skills and Strategies

Transition Models and How
Students Experience
Change

January 2023



Overview of changes and potential challenges

External Changes	Potential Challenges	Strategies
Environment		
Location	Homesickness, depression, anxiety, isolation	Develop new supportive relationship
Cultural Shock	Fear of being ignored	Adjustment, adaptation
Financial		
Loan (family, friends or bank)	Stress, worry of future debt	Seek institutional support, monitor expenditure
Employment (part or full time)	Stress on establishing priorities, time commitments and responsibilities	Good time management
Social		
New friends	Anxiety	Be open and flexible
Academic staff	Isolation, feeling of not belonging here	Engage in classroom and institutional activities, and develop self-efficacy
Flatmates	Stressed, unsettled, unhappy	Consideration, communication and compromise
Academic		
Learning environment	Anxiety, confusion	Interact with peers through student societies and clubs, and institutional activities
Expectations	Disappointment, stress	Attend induction, self-management of expectations
Performance	Stress, anxiety	Develop self-efficacy, good time management, and develop academic and information literacy
Presentations and exams	Stress, anxiety, fear of getting embarrassed, lack of confidence	Develop communication and academic study skills, and develop self-efficacy and critical self-reflection

Key Challenges During Student Transition



Environment



Financial



Social



Academic

Six Models of Student Transition



1. Bridges' Transition Model (Bridges, 2011)



2. U-Curve Theory of Adjustment (Risquez, Moore & Morley, 2008)



3. Model of Student Adjustment (Menzies & Baron, 2014)



4. Student Experience Model (Burnett, 2007)



5. Model for Mapping Student Identity Formation (Briggs, Clark & Hall, 2012)



6. Psychological Model of Student Retention (Bean & Eaton, 2002)

Transition Pedagogy

Key Insights:

Induction week-only models

Longitudinal pedagogical process

Effective transition pedagogy

Access to Higher Education

- Survey of 2141 students
- Survey of 219 teachers
- Two in-depth focus groups



Research and Practice

- Critical life shift
- Underrepresented groups
- Three systemic challenges:
 1. Personalised support
 2. Mental health
 3. Institutional gaps



Qualitative Data

“My current students don't know what it means to live independently. I have more concerns about them than I have ever had about other year groups. They just need so much support.” Secondary school teacher

Quantitative Data

Key Findings

- 30% worry about the cost of living
- 55% work term-time jobs, up from 39% in 2019
- Mental health
 - 38% report anxiety
 - 23% report depression



Transition Pedagogy

Key Findings

Fragmented support

Silo approaches

Shifting to **belonging-first** induction models

Expectation and Need for Support

“Students often start higher education with an expectation that they will be able to access the same kind of support that they could draw on at school or college, feeling disillusioned when that help is not routinely available.”

Data-Informed Transition Practices

The report advocates

- Standardised data sharing
- Proactive tools
- Cross-sector collaboration

Data Continuity and Data Sharing

“If universities were given the information I’m given [about students] as head of sixth form, and there was someone designated at the university who could access the file of a student seeking support in great detail, I think that would be an ideal extension of what we do.”

Director of Sixth Form

Improving Transition Support

“They've got used to the safety net of home and school, and they don't want to lose it – especially those with mental health issues and anxiety. Not having support is a real fear. They also have concerns about their social wellbeing. They want a community and to feel like they belong.” Secondary school teacher

Bridging the Gap



Key Findings

1. Tackling Multiple Challenges

2. University Staff & Services

-Pre-entry life-skills training

-Academic Staff

-Accommodation Teams

-Support Services

Bridging the Gap: Exploring the Unique Transition From Home, School or College Into University

Joanne Deborah Worsley^{1*}, Paula Harrison² and Rhiannon Corcoran¹

¹ Department of Primary Care and Mental Health, University of Liverpool, Liverpool, United Kingdom; ² Student Administration and Support, University of Liverpool, Liverpool, United Kingdom

Although previous research has shown that psychological distress increases on entering university, little is known about first-year student perspectives on the stressors in university environments, and what measures might better support student mental health and well-being during the transition period. The present research seeks to bridge this gap by exploring the unique transition period from home, school or college into university in order to identify aspects of the university experience (teaching, curriculum, support services, accommodation) that could be adapted to better support student mental health and well-being. Eight focus groups were conducted across two higher education institutions in North West England. Focus group data were thematically analyzed. Four overarching themes were identified: "Tackling multiple challenges"; "The preparatory role of schools and colleges"; "University staff and services: Feeling supported/unsupported"; and "Friendships." Although pressure to perform academically whilst fulfilling the stereotypical student life is keenly felt during the transition period, many students conceal their struggles from family and friends. Living beyond their familiar support structures often leaves students in need of compassionate humans to turn to for support or advice, especially as many keep their struggles hidden. Large-group teaching settings stifle social connection and leave students feeling lonely. Loneliness was also experienced within accommodation environments. Providing increased opportunities for connection within living and learning environments would enable young people to build and strengthen relationships with fellow students and staff. As supportive environments foster a sense of belonging and community, universities should ensure that students feel supported by staff and peers whilst they acclimatize to multiple new challenges.

Keywords: first-year student experience, transition period, loneliness, sense of belonging, friendships and relationships, well-being

INTRODUCTION

While starting university is exciting and liberating (1), the transition period can be stressful, especially for those who are relocating (2). In Britain, over 80 per cent of full-time students

OPEN ACCESS

Edited by:
Elsa Hanum Kozasa,
Hospital Israelita Albert Einstein, Brazil

Reviewed by:
Grace W. K. Ho,
Hong Kong Polytechnic University,
Hong Kong
Jean Lillian Paul,
Medizinische Universität
Innsbruck, Austria

***Correspondence:**
Joanne Deborah Worsley
jworsley@liverpool.ac.uk

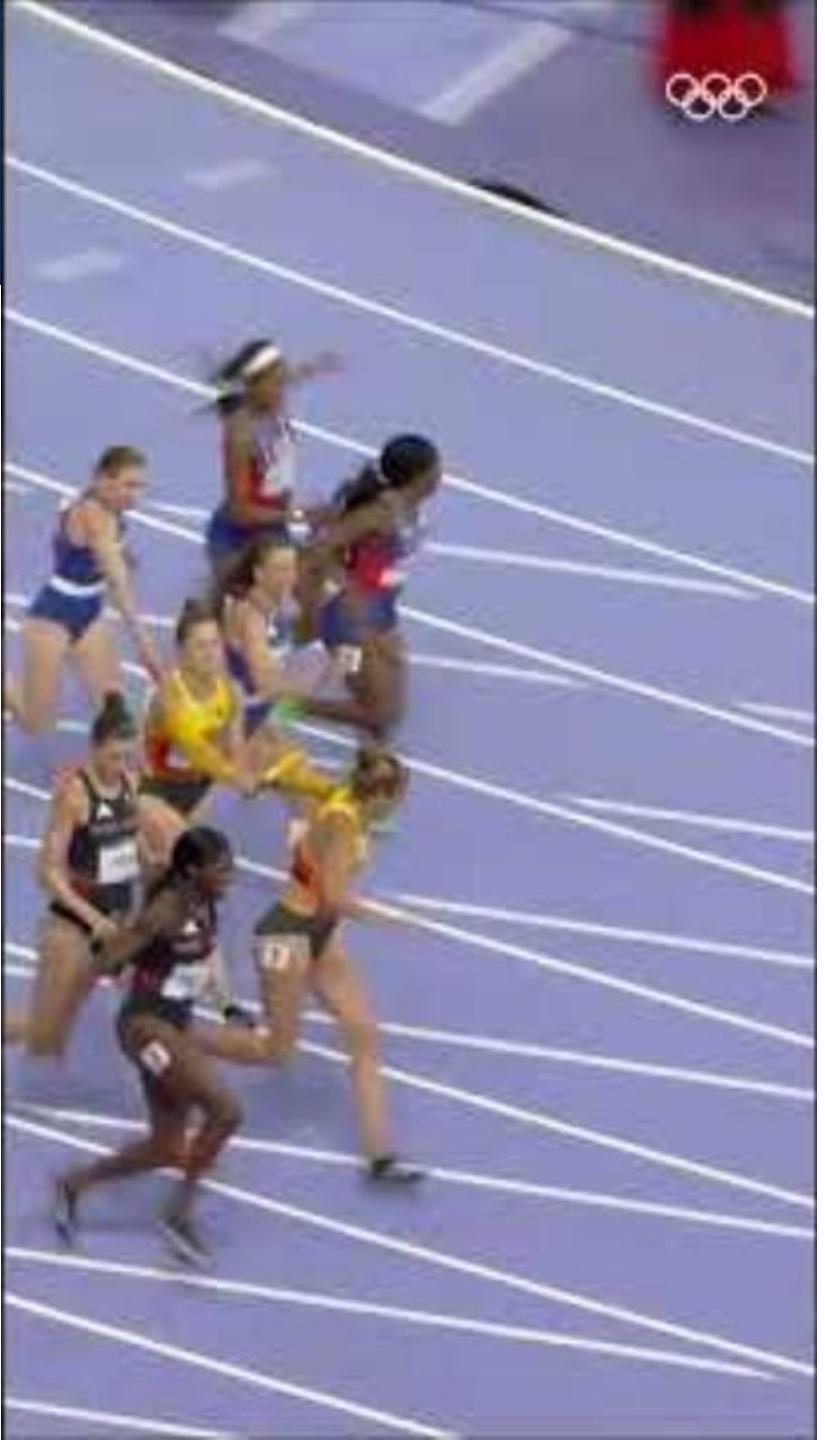
Specialty section:
This article was submitted to
Public Mental Health,
a section of the journal
Frontiers in Public Health

Received: 27 November 2020

Accepted: 22 February 2021

Published: 17 March 2021

Citation:
Worsley JD, Harrison P and
Corcoran R (2021) Bridging the Gap:
Exploring the Unique Transition From Home,
School or College Into University. *Frontiers in
Public Mental Health* 9:611111. doi:
10.3389/fpmh.2021.611111



Passing the Baton to Excellence:

Ensuring Every Learner Runs for Gold

Stand for ambition.
kent.ac.uk

1. Reaction and reflection on the issues raised in these three studies, and identify if there are similar challenges that you have observed within HE and at your institution.

2. What do we mean by the following terms related to APP?

1. Access
2. Retention
3. Continuation
4. Completion
5. Attainment
6. Progression
7. Student Success



Access:

Ensuring everyone who could benefit from higher education does.



Retention:

Supporting all students to successfully complete their chosen programme.



Attainment:

Recognising and validating the achievements of students.



Progression:

Supporting students as they move on to further study or employment.

Understanding What are Measured

Term	Definition	Key Metrics	Used For
Student Success	Holistic concept encompassing academic, personal, and career development	Composite of attainment, retention, progression	APP strategies, inclusive teaching, equity-focused evaluation
Student Attainment	Final academic achievement (e.g., degree classification)	% of Firsts/2:1s; attainment gaps by demographics	Measuring equity in academic outcomes
Student Progression	Advancement through academic stages or into graduate destinations	Continuation rate; employment in skilled roles	Monitoring institutional effectiveness & graduate employability
Student Retention	Persistence to complete degree without withdrawal	Non-continuation and completion rates	Flagging risk factors; evaluating engagement and support systems

Taxonomy of Equity in HE Outcomes

Level	Category	Focus
Stage 1: Access	Entry	Who gets in?
Stage 2: Retention	Continuation & Complete	Who stays?
Stage 3: Success	Experience & Belonging	Who thrives?
Stage 4: Attainment	Academic Achievement	Who performs well?
Stage 5: Progression	Graduate Outcomes	Who benefits after?

Whose HE Experience Are We Designing?

Pre-Entry VS Post-Entry Outcomes

Widening Participation Must Extend Beyond Access

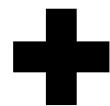
Transition Pedagogy Is a Bridge

Narratives of Belonging Start Before Enrolment

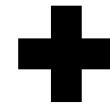
Data and Evaluation Across the Lifecycle

They're In But Are They Thriving?

Reflective teachers
*with sufficient workload
for teaching*



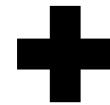
**Inclusive
curriculum**
*and support from
learning designers*



Engaged
students

Learning

**Inclusive
Teaching** with
engaging learning
environments
*that support
active learning*



Enabling
technologies
*that are easy to use &
support collaboration*

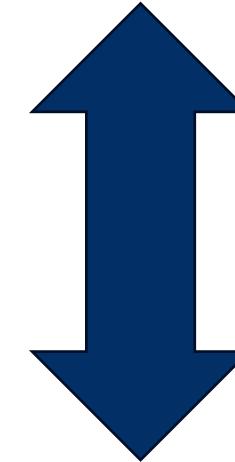
“The change that is required to address today's challenges is not vast or difficult or expensive. It is a small thing. But it is a small change that changes everything. Simply ask, how would we do things differently if we put learning first? Then do it.”

From Teaching to Learning -
A New Paradigm for Undergraduate Education
By Robert B. Barr and John Tagg, 1995

Paradigm shift from... to

Instruction Paradigm	Learning Paradigm
Focuses on teaching and content	Focuses on learning and understanding
Faculty deliver knowledge	Faculty design learning environments
Assessment tests what was taught	Assessment measures what was learned
Passive student roles	Active, participatory student roles
Knowledge is transferred	Knowledge is constructed collaboratively

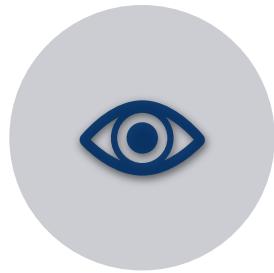
Relational Pedagogy



Compassionate Pedagogy

- Empathy, care
- Holistic student
- Encourages well-being

Four Pillars of Compassionate Pedagogy



NOTICING



COMMITTING



PROMOTING



ADDRESSING

Culturally Sensitive Curriculum

- Embeds** diverse cultural
- Recognises** and challenges
- Develops**



Responsive Pedagogy

Adapts

Promotes

Builds

Getting past the gate called Access

What is the Recipe for Success?



1. In what strategic and evidence-informed ways is your institution actively addressing issues of Access, Retention, Progression, and Student Success in relation to the persistent awarding gap?
2. To what extent are these efforts embedded within institutional culture, and
3. How are outcomes being measured and sustained?

Lessons Learned

Lesson	Implication for Academic Practice
Outreach isn't separate from pedagogy	Involve academics in designing transition-focused outreach
Transition is an ongoing process	Embed belonging, identity and feedback literacy in Y1 teaching
Inclusivity starts before enrolment	Design curricula that acknowledge different educational backgrounds
Collaboration is key	Link Student Success, Outreach, and Curriculum teams
Evaluation matters	Use data to inform iterative improvement and equitable practices

Reflections & Feedback



Thank
you.

References

Thomas, L. (2012). Building student engagement and belonging in Higher Education at a time of change: Final report from the What Works? Student Retention & Success programme. Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

Bhopal, K. (2018). White Privilege: The Myth of a Post-Racial Society. Policy Press.

Mountford-Zimdars, A. et al. (2015). Causes of differences in student outcomes. HEFCE.

Smith, S. (2021). Equity in Student Attainment: A Systematic Review of UK HE Interventions. *Studies in Higher Education*, 46(8), 1562–1578

Thomas, L. (2012). What Works? Student Retention & Success. Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

Mountford-Zimdars, A. et al. (2015). Causes of differences in student outcomes. HEFCE.

OfS (2022). Effective Practice in Supporting Student Success. www.officeforstudents.org.uk

NERUPI (2020). Theory of Change Framework. www.nerupi.co.uk

Kift, S. (2009). Articulating a transition pedagogy to scaffold student success. Australian Learning and Teaching Council.

Boden, R., & Nunez, I. (2020). Belonging Before Arrival: Pre-entry Interventions and HE Identity. *Journal of Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning*.

https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/schools-attainment-and-the-role-of-higher-education/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

The impact of Learning Development tutorials on student attainment Alison Loddick, Kate Coulson DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47408/jldhe.vi17.558>

Office for Students (2023). Student Outcome and Experience Measures

HESA Graduate Outcomes Data (2023)

My Contact Details



Y.Kolajo@kent.ac.uk

[LinkedIn](#)

[**https://www.linkedin.com/in/yetunde-kolajo/**](https://www.linkedin.com/in/yetunde-kolajo/)