

The Opportunity Window for Academic Intervention Programmes in Higher Education

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Abstract

The article introduces the concept of an opportunity window for academic intervention in higher education and argues that the timing of support is just as critical as the type of intervention provided. While institutional discourse typically emphasises early intervention, the article points out that interventions implemented either too early, meaning before students recognise a need or are ready to engage, or too late, meaning after failure and disengagement have become entrenched, are both suboptimal. Drawing on the edu-socio model for student success and its operationalisation in the Student Success Thermometer© (SST), the article conceptualises student success as the navigation through a complex, evolving, but universal edu-socio environment, largely structured by a universal hidden curriculum. The six domains and 22 elements of core academic skills identified in the edu-socio model for student success typically point to the hidden curriculum scaffolding for student success across diverse institutional settings and faculties. The composite/cohort study profiles generated by the SST practically identify the opportunity window for academic intervention and highlight when particular hidden-curriculum elements become fragile, thereby locating each student's optimal window of opportunity for targeted support. The article concludes that effective academic intervention, which relies on the art of timing—connecting specific areas of need to the moments when students are most capable and willing to access and utilise academic support—is achievable in practice through using SST results.

Keywords

Intervention opportunity window, hidden curriculum, edu-socio model, Student Success Thermometer©, student success.