Grade Grubbing:

Student Expectations and Academic Assessment

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NEWS



Please Professor, I want some more

'Grade grubbing' may be on increase as student entitlement grows in high-fees era. Chris Parr writes

freshly marked paper back to an revisions is "a sense of consumerism expectant student only for their face and entitlement" - something that to drop as they realise they have not | could grow more pronounced as the been awarded the grade they cost of higher education increases. expected? And how often has that "Students were pointing out to

for a doctorate at the University of | ticularly susceptible to persuasion. Southampton's School of Education, "The grade-grubbing technique

happens, how academics feel about | that they need to get a 2:1 or a first."

universities in the South of England | them less attractive to employers. has produced initial results. These The research will initially survey include a perception by academics | academics and students at five unithat grade grubbing has increased, versities, before being made availparticularly in "soft" subjects such | able online to widen its scope. as media studies. They think the main | chris.parr@tsleducation.com

How often have you handed a | reason for students seeking grade

student then pursued you to your | lecturers that they pay an absolute office, teary-eyed, to plead with you fortune to study," Ms Allen continto change the grade, or to add a few | ued. "If they bought something in a shop and it was broken, they The process of "grade grubbing", would take it back. It's quite possible whereby students seek to appeal the | that attitude exists towards education marks they have been given using | - if the mark isn't what they wanted,

the world. However, there has been | She is also hoping to uncover the practice is in the UK, prompting by students and whether academics Steph Allen, a researcher studying of a certain age, sex or status are par-

"Some of my colleagues were she continued. "Some will make an talking informally around the water- appointment to see a tutor and will cooler about how students occasion- go in good-humouredly and just ask ally approach them, and it got me | for an explanation of what hapto thinking: 'I wonder how often | pened and why they are not happy that happens?" Ms Allen said. "I with the grade. Some might say that want to find out how regularly it their parents will be very upset, and

Students might also be made She is conducting a UK-wide more desperate by the recession, research project to answer these ques- Ms Allen said, if they feel that a tions, although a pilot study at two lower degree classification will make

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Literat	ture and	d Emi	pirical	Evid	ence

Molesworth et al (2009) argue that the current higher education (HE) market discourse promotes a mode of existence, where students seek to 'have a degree' rather than 'be learners', knowing how to 'play' markets to maximize self-interest, based on experiences in commercial marketplaces (p279).

Others (Gose1997; Trout 2000) posit student beliefs that high grades should come as a result of paying for tuition that confirm Delucchi and Smith's (1997) and Delucci and Korgen's (2002) concerns that tuition fees underpin good grades.

"Grade grubbing" is the phenomenon whereby students seek high grades for minimum effort, and is often cited as a symptom of the consumer orientation of contemporary college students (Franz 2010).

Research Aims

To investigate student expectations of degree grades in the post 2012 higher tuition fee landscape.

To examine what grade-grubbing looks like in UK HE.

To assess the extent of grade grubbing 2012-2015.

Methodology

Case Study: One UK HE institution

A mixed methods approach was chosen to make meta-inferences using data from undergraduates and academics.

Preliminary Findings

- Students see themselves as learners but struggle with independent learning.
- Educators are driving the 2:1 standard.
- Students acknowledge the commitment debt and seek ROI.
- High sense of morals and ethics evident.
- 'Grade Grubbing' is more complex than it seems.

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ı	Your perspective:				
	Name /institution	Feedback			
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