8fed Gynhadledd Dysgu ac Addysgu

8th Annual Learning and Teaching Conference

7-9 Medi | September 2020

# Crynoldebau / abstracts

Can we predict academic achievement in undergraduate students? The impact of sleep quality, attendance and mental health issues

Victoria Wright & Brandon Stennett

Academic performance is influenced by a complex range of cognitive, social and emotional factors (Liem, 2019). Of particular importance in the university context are attendance, sleep quality and mental health factors. It has long been known that attendance is positively associated with academic performance in undergraduate students (Devadoss & Foltz, 1996; Park & Kerr, 1990; Romer, 1993; Clair, 1999), and recent work has further highlighted the importance of sleep quality on academic achievement (Hershner, 2020; Okana, Kaczmarzyk & Grossman, 2019). Within undergraduate populations, numbers of students who report mental health concerns to their institutions have increased more than five-fold in the decade to 2018 (UniversitiesUK, 2018).

Given the close relationship between attendance, sleep quality and mental health issues, the study described in this talk set out to determine whether sleep quality, attendance and mental health issues are predictive of academic performance. Undergraduate students (N=500) completed a range of measures relating to sleep quality, mental health issues and academic self-efficacy, in addition to reporting their attendance and current average grade. Mediational analysis was applied to develop and test a conceptual model of the predictive relationship between the variables. Building on previous research, the results demonstrate the importance of sleep quality and attendance in directly predicting academic performance, and further show how these factors can combine to produce indirect effects. The results are discussed in the context of traditional face-to-face teaching delivery, and we additionally consider how they may be applied in the pivot to increased use of online learning and teaching caused by COVID-19.