Four Steps to Build Student Support Services

A practical sequence for designing out-of-classroom supports with students, not for them.

> Effective support comes from collaboration, listening, and a willingness to adapt. Never assume what students need based on campus norms: survey students, talk with prison and education staff, and let the gaps you find, not your assumptions, drive what you build.

THE FOUR STEPS

1 Gather information

Identify which campus services will not be readily available to HEP students. Survey students on what they want to learn and where they need support, and ask prison and local education staff what key gaps they see. This gap analysis avoids assuming needs from campus norms.

2 Gather an interdisciplinary team

Balance lived experience of incarceration with professional experience in the areas needed. Leverage university support where feasible, and any available IT to offer services.

3 Schedule, facilitate, and monitor

Work with correctional partners to schedule workshops, visits, or online services. Facilitate in a student-centered way: explain the goal of each service, make room for input and questions, and keep content clear with opportunities for practice or dialogue.

4 Monitor and revise

Check in with students to see whether learning is happening and is meaningful. Survey them about what they want next and whether the approach is landing, then revise plans based on need and feedback.

QUESTIONS TO ASK ALONG THE WAY

- Which campus services won't be available inside?
- What are students interested in learning?
- Where do students say they need support?
- What gaps have prison and education staff identified?
- Is learning happening, and is it meaningful?
- Is this landing, or is a different approach needed?

STRATEGIES YOU CAN USE

Run the gap analysis first

Compare what students get on campus with what is available inside, and fill in the picture with student surveys and staff input, so services are built on evidence rather than campus norms.

Balance lived and professional experience

Build the team so both are represented. Relevance and meaning come from that mix, and it shows students what is possible.

Facilitate student-centered

Explain the goal of each service, invite input and questions, and design every session with opportunities for practice or dialogue.

Treat every plan as a draft

Revise services as student needs and feedback evolve. Survey again, listen again, and change the approach when it is not landing.

QUICK CHECKLIST

- ☐ List campus services unavailable to HEP students
- ☐ Survey students on interests and support needs
- ☐ Ask prison and education staff to identify gaps
- ☐ Recruit lived-experience and professional team members
- ☐ Explain each service's goal to students
- ☐ Revise plans based on student feedback

KEY TERMS

Gap analysis • Comparing services available inside against campus norms to find what is missing.

Student-centered facilitation • Explaining goals, inviting input, and building in practice and dialogue.

Correctional partners • Facility staff who approve and help schedule programming.