



## **HEA Workshop & Seminar Series 2012**

When retention doesn't work –  
Learning more about & supporting HE  
early-leavers, the IAG experiences &  
research of **back on course**

**Kate Machent – Adviser**

**Alexis Peters – Senior Project Manager**

**Katie Weeds – Senior IAG Manager**

This is **back on course**

A graphic featuring two stylized human figures. The figure on the left is green, and the figure on the right is blue. Each figure consists of a circular head and a curved, open-bottom body shape. The figures are positioned behind the text.

Katie Weeds

**back on course** Senior IAG Manager

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# Programme for today



- Enclosed in your pack
  - No practice fire alarms
  - Code for the security doors is ...
  - No scheduled breaks apart from lunch  
12.30 to 1.30
  - Taxis
  - Mix of presentations and break out groups
  - Brief feedback at the end
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# What is **back on course**?

- 3 yr HEFCE funded project
  - A partnership between UCAS, The Open University and all the English HEIs
  - Providing free impartial IAG at a distance to f/t, u/g, UK domicile early-leavers
  - Helping early-leavers make positive decisions about their futures
  - Conducting research based on this client group
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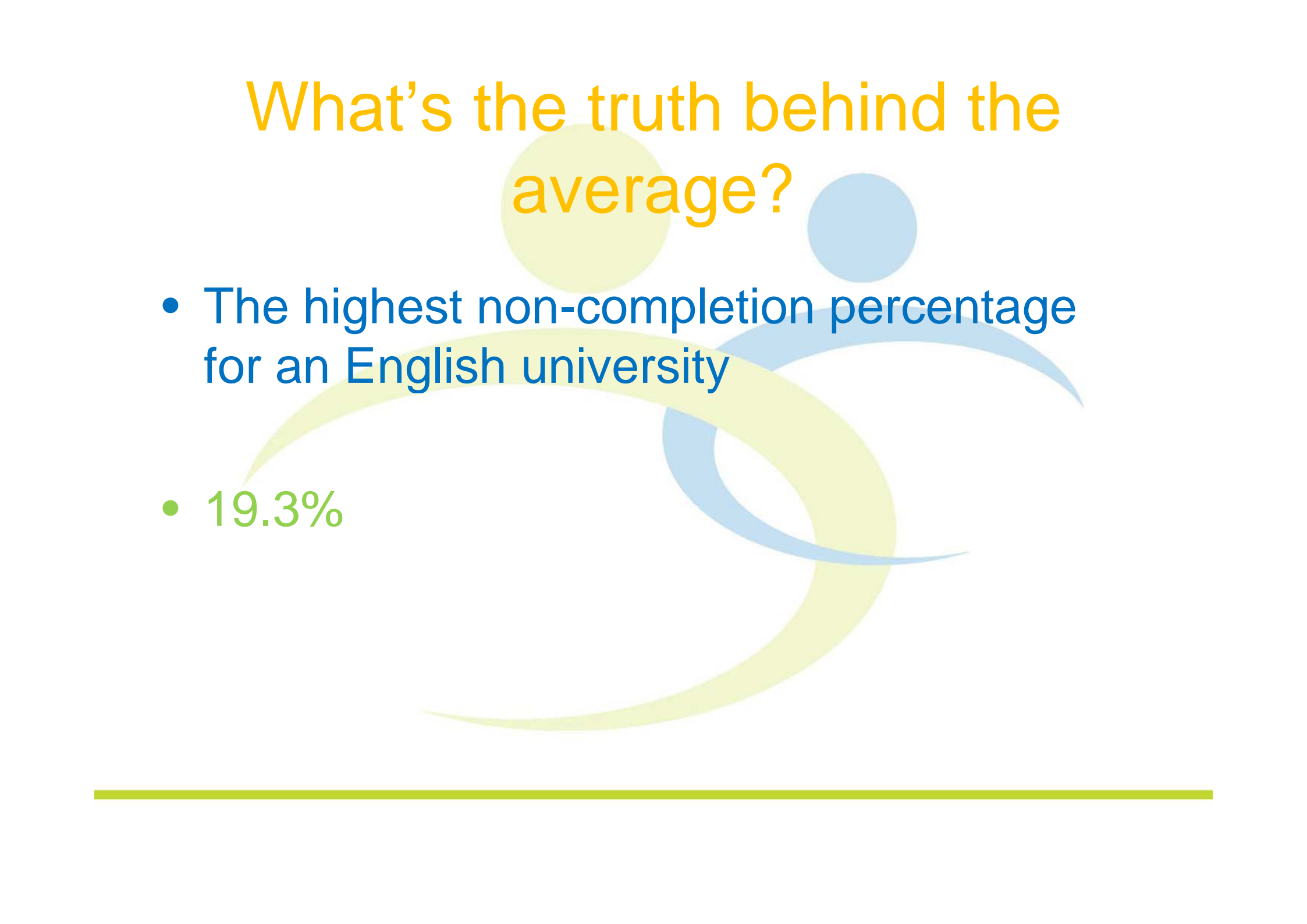
# back on course the beginnings

- Piloted in North West during 1<sup>st</sup> year
  - HEFCE approved roll-out across England from August 2010
  - Target of 50% HEIs to become engaged
  - On track for approximately 90% (currently 107+)
  - 40,000 early-leavers have been offered the service
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# Why bother?


- How many ft ug students did not continue in HE following their 1<sup>st</sup> Year of entry?
  - Overall UK percentage no longer in HE
  - 7.9%
  - Overall number for UK students no longer in HE
  - 28210
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# What's the truth behind the average?



- The highest non-completion percentage for an English university
- 19.3%

# What's the truth behind the average?



- The lowest non-completion percentage for an English university
  - 0.9%
-



# Does age make a difference?



- Do a higher percentage of younger students leave early than mature students?
  - Mature students
    - 12.9%
  - Younger students
    - 6.5%
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# How does **back on course** engage early-leavers?

Katie Weeds

**back on course** Senior IAG Manager

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# How does **back on course** engage early-leavers?

- We only work with those who have withdrawn/been withdrawn
  - Data transferred from HEI to UCAS
  - UCAS writes to early-leaver with 10 day opt-out offered
  - Non-opted out early-leavers transferred to **back on course**
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# How does **back on course** engage early-leavers? Cont.

- Team Assistant phones early-leavers to explain & discuss IAG service further
  - If early-leaver not contactable by phone a “no contact” letter is sent, with email if personal email address provided
  - Guidance appointment arranged with Adviser (phone or email)
  - Subsequent appointments available
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# back on course IAG team



## 6 FTE Team Assistants

- Graduates or HE experience
  - Most happen to have non-traditional routes through/into HE
  - Working towards or hold Cert in Advice & Guidance (NVQ3)
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# back on course IAG team



## 3 FT Advisers

- 2 postgraduate Careers qualified with significant careers guidance experience
  - 1 completed NVQ4 Advice & Guidance with **back on course**, with significant educational advice & guidance experience
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**back on course's** most recent  
Research findings

Alexis Peters

**back on course** Senior Project Manager

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# The **back on course** research project

- 2 sources of info:
  - collected directly from early-leaver as part of IAG service
  - Data provided on UCAS Application
  - Research aims to sit between in depth smaller studies previously done and at scale HESA data
  - Data collected quantitatively using pre-defined categories developed from pilot research
  - Only early-leavers matched to UCAS dataset included in research
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# back on course 2011 research report

2011 Research at 3 different levels:

1. Characteristic data about who leaves HE
  2. Who participates in **back on course** service
  3. What early-leavers say about why they left
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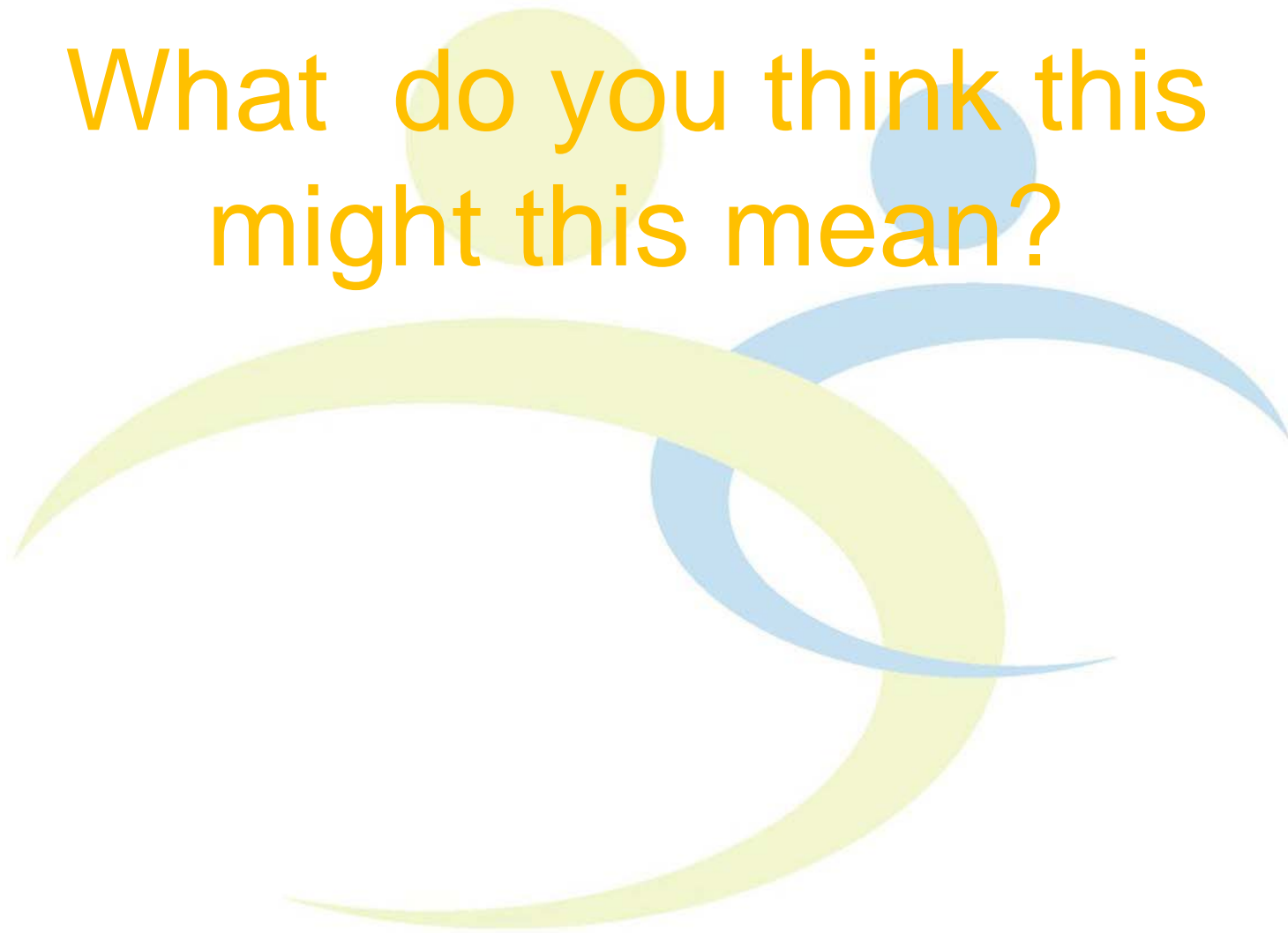
## Key research findings from 2011 (i)

- 12% of matched early-leavers had re-applied to HE and been accepted – higher than generally expected?
  - Younger students, those from POLAR groups 4 & 5 and those with A levels were more likely to cite dissatisfaction with their course
  - Mature students significantly more likely to leave early, twice as likely to use the BoC service and less likely to reapply to HE
  - 48% of early-leavers live within 25 miles of the HEI
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## Key research findings from 2011 (ii)

- Asian and black students are comparatively less likely to leave early than white students; disabled students no more likely
  - 47% of early-leavers are from the 40% more advantaged sectors of the population, but this reflects the profile of applicants – however, this is counter to the belief that early-leavers are ‘WP’ students
  - Characteristics of ‘no shows’ are different to other early leavers – more likely to be from 21-29 age group, ethnic minority
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What do you think this  
might this mean?



# What's your problem? Using **back on course** case studies




Kate Machent  
**back on course** Adviser

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# Using **back on course** case studies



- Divide into 4 groups based on the coloured spot on your badge
  - A **back on course** adviser will act as a facilitator for each group
  - Return to share your discussions with the main group
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Providing guidance at a  
distance how and why  
**back on course** works

Kate Machent  
**back on course** Adviser

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# Telephone Guidance **back on course** challenges

- Where have I been? - making sense of the journey so far
  - Where am I now? - what do I want to change?
  - Where am I going and how am I going to get there? - making the next move
-



# Where have I been?



- Utilising narrative to reframe failure or enforced failure
- Dealing with negative emotions
- Letting go of the 'dream'

# The Change Curve

## Shock

Immobilisation  
Overwhelmed  
Mismatch of expectations and perceived reality

## Blame - others

Anger  
Frustration  
Defensive  
Victim

## Blame - Self

Self pity  
Self doubt

## Moving On

Incorporating new meanings and behaviours  
New habits

## Problem Solving and Decision Making

Commitment  
Actions  
Contribution to change

## Denial

Disbelief  
Refusal  
Rejection

## Confusion

Uncertain  
Bewildered  
Perplexed

## Resistance

Impeding change  
Preventing  
Sabotage

## Testing New Behaviour

Search for meaning  
Direction

## Accepting – letting go

Willingness to accept change

## Exploration

Investigate  
Seek options



# Where am I now?



- Helping clients deal with ‘unplanned turning points’
  - Getting to the real ‘heart of the matter’
  - What is stopping me from moving forward?
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# Where am I going.....?

- Analysing and understanding risk – dealing with uncertainty
  - Expanding horizons for action through empowerment and agency
  - Guidance in relation to information
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# What skills do we use ?



# Why telephone Guidance Works

The background features two stylized human figures. One is yellow and the other is blue. They are composed of simple circles for heads and curved lines for bodies, suggesting movement or interaction. The yellow figure is positioned slightly behind and to the left of the blue figure.

- Accessibility and convenience
  - Highly Focussed and client centred
  - Visual Anonymity and impartiality
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# What do clients think?

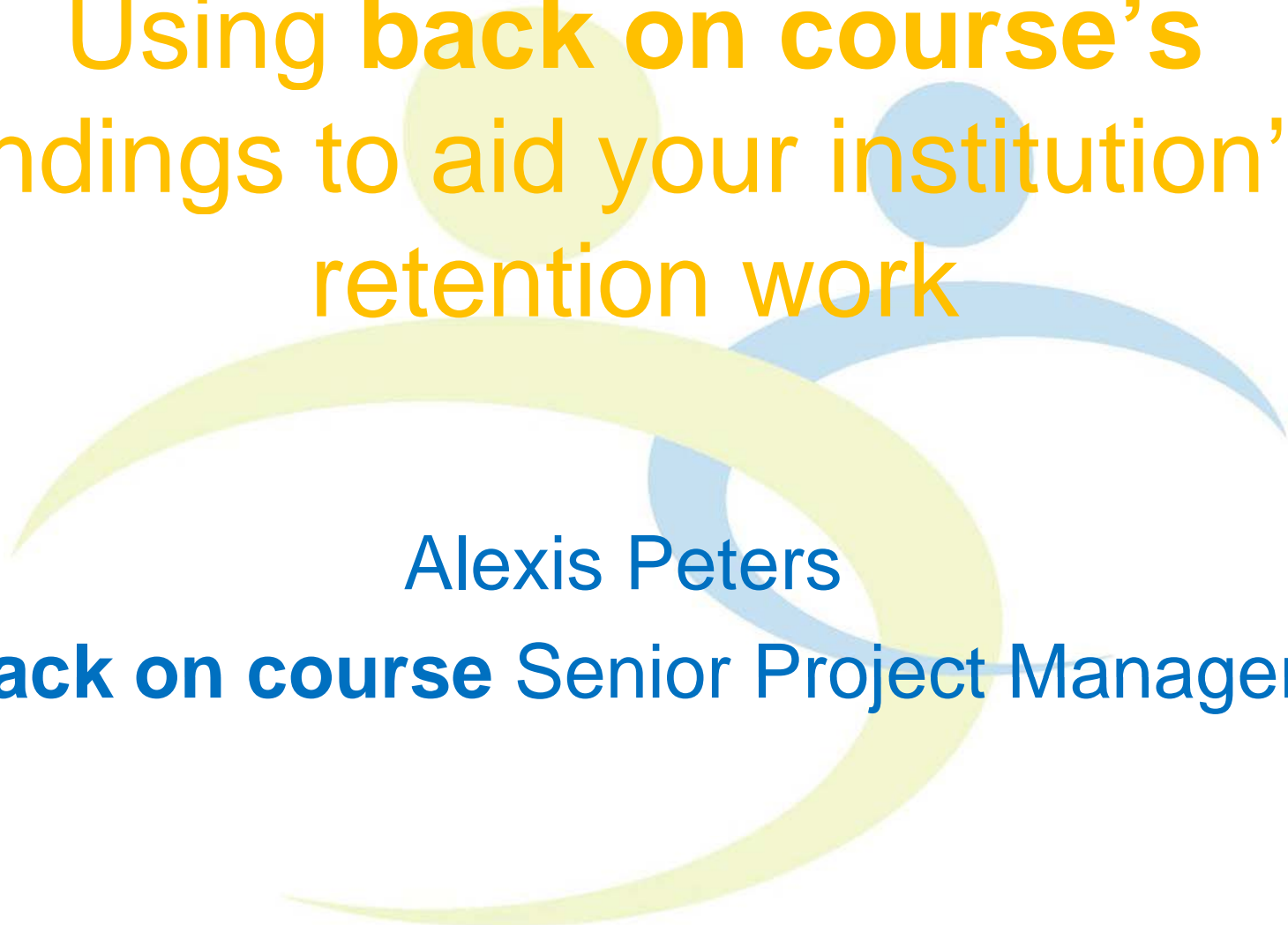
- ‘I could write a whole essay on why I think students should be made aware of this **back on course** service and I’m more than happy to!’
  - ‘Not only have the **back on course** team given me renewed motivation and confidence, they have given me the drive to go on and complete a course and start on another. They also helped me become more work savvy’
  - ‘The adviser boosted my confidence and made me feel ‘I CAN DO THIS’ I’m now completing my degree and I would recommend this service to everyone! It helped me to feel positive and believe in myself and most importantly follow my dreams’
  - ‘Never give up on yourself, doing this has given me something ‘for myself’ and with that I feel that I have gained confidence’
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# Excellent feedback



85% of those providing feedback on the **back on course** IAG service said they'd recommend the service to others.





Using **back on course's**  
findings to aid your institution's  
retention work

Alexis Peters

**back on course** Senior Project Manager

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# Aiding your institution's retention work

pre-entry/transitional guidance

different learning methods

ideas for your own research/analysis

your institution's ethos

investigate retention further  
in your own context

provide early-leavers  
with written info options

look at your Client Profile Report in more detail

support whilst leaving  
think about how you &  
colleagues work with students

use of phone/email guidance

proactively “chase” drifters

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ideas to apply to your own practice

support whilst studying

# Contact us

A stylized graphic of two human figures, one in yellow and one in blue, with their arms raised in a celebratory or supportive gesture. The figures are composed of simple circles for heads and curved lines for bodies and arms.

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