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**Abstract**

This paper contributes to current debates about the contradictory character of approaches to learning and teaching in UK higher education by suggesting an ideal-typical distinction between an academic orientation and an instrumental orientation. The paper suggests that these two distinctive orientations are associated with different kinds of student expectations on entry to UK higher education.

Furthermore, the instrumental orientation is associated with an increasing preference within institutions for modes of programme delivery that are compatible with the instrumental tendencies of audit and surveillance. Institutions are likely to give priority to instrumental approaches not for pedagogic reasons but because they are convenient for the administration. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)