



University of Wollongong



UOW Report on a Trial Benchmarking Project on
Academic Transition Support
between the University of Wollongong
and the University of Tasmania

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Table of Contents

1. Acknowledgements	4
2. Executive Summary	5
3. Introduction	7
4. Background and Context	8
Benchmarking	8
UTAS and UOW as partners in benchmarking.....	9
Context of trial benchmarking project	9
5. Phase I: Preparations	11
Development of project objectives	11
Project schedule	11
Key structures for benchmarking	12
Resources and tools	13
6. Phase II: The Self Assessment	15
Identification of project leaders	15
Collection and collation of data	15
Analysis of self assessment reports	15
Self assessment workshop	17
Areas of good practice	17
Agreed areas for improvement	19
Evaluation of evidence	19
Evaluation of workshop	19
7. Phase III: The Peer Assessment	20
Preparations	20
Peer assessment workshop	20
Comparison across institutions.....	20
Comparison of AUSSE survey results	22
Common areas for improvement and collaboration	22
Evaluation of peer assessment workshop.....	23
8. Project Outcomes and Evaluation	24
Summary of outcomes	24
Evaluation of project	25
9. Conclusion	26
10. References	27
11. Action Plan	28
12. Appendices	34
Appendix 1: List of acronyms used in report	35
Appendix 2: Self assessment template	36
Appendix 3: Briefing notes for project leaders	41
Appendix 4: Guideline to performance indicators	43

Appendix 5: Glossary of terms	45
Appendix 6: Participating faculties and units	46
Appendix 7: UOW mapping of academic transition programs.....	47
Appendix 8: UOW self assessment ratings by faculty/unit	50
Appendix 9: UOW institutional self assessment report	51
Appendix 10: Similarities and differences in processes at UOW and UTAS	67
Appendix 11: Comparison of areas of good practice and areas for improvement	67
Appendix 12: Comparison of AUSSE survey results (2008)	71
Appendix 13: Good Practice Case Studies (UOW).....	73

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2. Executive Summary

This trial benchmarking project was initiated in response to the first AUQA reports for both UOW and UTAS which identified benchmarking as an issue for attention. UOW and UTAS are considered suitable benchmarking partners as they share similarities in terms of:

- being the sole provider of higher education for their region
- size
- having a number of regional campuses/centres
- faculty structure and discipline areas.

The topic selected for the benchmarking project was academic transition support for first year undergraduate students. The project focused on onshore programs covering domestic and international cohorts, from the period of offer to the end of the first year of study. It looked at academic transition strategies (including strategies to support the development of discipline-specific literacies and foundational knowledge, study skills, information literacy and e-literacy); and interconnected aspects of administrative, personal and social support which impact on academic outcomes.

The project had the following objectives:

- To develop knowledge and experience in the benchmarking process;
- To compare processes and identify good practice in academic transition support for first year students;
- To identify areas for improvement in this area.

The benchmarking project was undertaken in the period from May 2008 to October 2009; the period of analysis for the review of programs was January to December, 2008.

The project involved a series of scheduled events and activities: a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Vice-Chancellors of both institutions; a launch and briefing session for project leaders; collection of data for self assessment; self assessment workshop with project leaders at each institution; peer assessment workshop with both institutions to compare and follow up on collaborative projects and identification of priority areas for improvement.

UOW staff identified and are working on **ten action areas** relating to: first year student policy; coordination across programs; transition pedagogy; provision of first year transition support within faculties; identification and role of first year coordinators; processes to identify and support at-risk students; improved support for pathway students, international students and equity groups; professional development and induction, especially for casual staff; comparison of library programs; and comparison of English language courses and Foundation Studies programs.

The **key findings** of, and outcomes from, this benchmarking exercise are:

1. UOW is comparable in performance standards with UTAS on academic transition support and there are many examples of good practice at each institution.
2. UOW is comparable in performance with UTAS from student feedback. UOW rates well when comparing results of the 2008 AUSSE survey.

3. Overall, UOW provides a range of services to support first year students, however more work can be done to provide *integrated and intentional* first year transition programs and curriculum design.
4. Individual UOW areas are already benefitting from collaboration with UTAS on areas for improvement. Many of the ten action areas link with work already being undertaken at UOW.
5. Participants from both institutions have an increased understanding of benchmarking.
6. The issue of lack of evidence for evaluation and quality improvement purposes needs to be addressed, noting that both institutions were limited in this area.
7. Both institutions are challenged in supporting students who enter via non-traditional pathways, students with English as a second language, students from disadvantaged backgrounds and students with learning disabilities.
8. The allocation of resources (particularly staffing) needs to be reviewed from a strategic viewpoint to ensure students are supported in their transition into and through university.
9. Improved support and induction for teaching staff, particularly casual staff and those in first year coordination roles is needed, supported by the implementation of policy and procedures.

This project is timely given the Federal Government's policy of increasing participation and diversity in higher education. It is expected that universities will be required to devote more attention and resources to providing integrated, intentional, supportive first year transition programs and curriculum design.

The project's findings show that UOW needs, above all, a co-ordinating mechanism to build on strengths, address weaknesses and actively take up the opportunities offered by the government's participation agenda. To provide that mechanism and capitalise on the project's assessments, the University has taken action to establish a **First Year Experience (FYE) working party, under the University Education Committee (UEC), to oversee the implementation of the 'Improving Academic Transition Support' Action Plan which is included with this report.**

3. Introduction

This report presents the findings of a trial benchmarking project between the University of Wollongong (UOW) and the University of Tasmania (UTAS) in the area of academic transition support for first year students. The trial benchmarking project had the following objectives:

- To develop knowledge and experience in the benchmarking process
- To compare processes and identify good practice
- To identify areas for improvement.

The report presents:

- the context and background to initiating the benchmarking project with UTAS;
- the three phases of the project: preparation (including the development of benchmarking instruments), self assessment and peer review;
- comparative information on performance for each of the 18 participating units at UOW and for the two institutions as a whole;
- identified strengths and weakness;
- an evaluation of the trial project;
- recommendations for future institutional benchmarking exercises.

The report also includes an Action Plan which provides directions for change to better meet the needs of first year undergraduate students at this University.

Note: The period selected for the analysis of performance was January to December 2008 and as such, this report represents a snapshot in time. However, while it does not attempt to take full account of changes made since 2008, some significant changes which were in the pipeline in 2008 are referred to in the report. It should also be noted that while the report refers to first year students, many of the findings and improvement areas relate equally to students who enter directly into second year with advanced standing from TAFE or college.

4. Background and Context

4.1 Benchmarking

Simply put, benchmarking is a quality process used to compare performance of an organisation with that of like organisations. Jackson and Lund (2000, cited in Stella & Woodhouse, 2007, p. 14) defined benchmarking as, “*first and foremost, a learning process structured so as to enable those engaging in the process to compare their services/activities/products in order to identify their comparative strengths and weaknesses as a basis for self improvement and/or self-regulation*”.

The benchmarking process involves identifying areas for improvement, choosing benchmark indicators (this might be an attribute of good practice in a particular area or a quantitative measure of achievement) and collecting information to enable comparisons to be made in order to improve performance.

Comparisons might be against:

- individual benchmarking partners or benchmarking groups
- other units within the university
- sets of accepted standards (sector, professional, industry), which may or may not result in certification/accreditation
- data on past performance.

With the increased call for accountability in higher education, has come the demand for evaluative mechanisms that demonstrate that standards are being maintained and improved. Interest in benchmarking within the Australian higher education sector was sparked by the establishment of the Committee for Quality Assurance in Higher Education in 1991 and fuelled by the subsequent establishment of the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) in 2000. In that same year, DETYA as it then was, published *Benchmarking: A Manual for Benchmarking in Australian Universities* (McKinnon, Walker and Davis). Since then, benchmarking within the higher education sector has gained in prominence, both as a tool for continuous improvement and as a subject for scholarly discourse. As the literature on benchmarking has grown, so too has the formation of benchmarking groups and networks and benchmarking frameworks such as that developed by Business Excellence Australia.

AUQA has stated that in its second audit cycle (2008-2013) it will expect:

... evidence of setting, maintaining and reviewing institutional academic standards and outcomes (eg relating to student progress, student achievement, graduate attributes, research achievements) ... together with evidence of the institution’s comparative national and international performance... (Audit Manual March 2009 p27)

As relevant to the themes selected, the audit will investigate: ... *How are standards compared nationally? How are they compared internationally? What explicit benchmarking has there been to compare standards? How frequently does this occur?*

In addition to this external imperative, universities, faced with increasing competition, are increasingly seeing the need to lift their performance through management improvement and are using benchmarking as a tool to assist them. It assists in the establishment of priorities for change and resource allocation and informs goal setting.

4.2 UOW and UTAS as partners in benchmarking

UOW and UTAS are considered suitable benchmarking partners as they share similarities in terms of:

- being the sole provider of higher education for their region
- size (UTAS student population was 22,600 and UOW 24,400 in 2008)
- having a number of regional campuses/centres (UTAS has 3 regional campuses and a campus in Sydney; UOW has 5 regional campus/centres and a Business School in Sydney)
- faculty structure and discipline areas (see Appendix 5).

The University of Wollongong was established as a division of the then NSW University of Technology (now UNSW) in 1951 and achieved autonomy in 1975. In 1982 it merged with the Wollongong Institute of Higher Education and underwent a period of rapid expansion in the 1980s. Since then it has developed into a multi-campus institution. In addition to its main Wollongong campus, it has a satellite campus at Nowra on the NSW South Coast, and Education Centres in Bega, Batemans Bay, Moss Vale and Loftus as well as the Sydney (Graduate) Business School. In 1993 it established a Dubai Campus in the United Arab Emirates and offers courses in conjunction with partner institutions in a number of offshore locations including Singapore and Hong Kong. In 2008 it established a separate Innovation Campus in Wollongong as a research and development precinct in partnership with government and the private sector. UOW's vision is "to be internationally recognised for originality and enterprise in exploring, communicating and applying knowledge to enrich individuals, their communities and the environment".

The total student load (EFTSL) for 2008 at UOW was 17,430. The total number of students enrolled at UOW in 2008 was 24,413 including 15,706 undergraduate and 7,505 postgraduate students. There were 16,489 full-time students and 7,465 part-time students. There were 985 students studying at a regional campus (not including Dubai or Sydney Business School) and 9,657 international students of whom 5,203 were studying onshore.

The University of Tasmania was founded in Hobart in 1890 and is the fourth oldest university in Australia. In 1991 the University of Tasmania merged with the Tasmanian State Institute of Technology to form the new University of Tasmania (UTAS). The Vision of the University of Tasmania is to be ranked amongst the top echelon of research-led universities of Australia. The Mission of the University is to be committed to continuing its long tradition of excellence in the creation and application of knowledge and to scholarship that is global, yet is distinctive in specialisations and is unique to Tasmania. The University provides leadership within its community and contributes to the development of cultural, economic and social activities in Tasmania.

The total student load (EFTSL) for 2008 at UTAS was 14,463. The total number of students at UTAS was 22,600. There were 10,903 full time students and 11,697 part-time students. There were 12,228 undergraduate students at UTAS and 4,875 international students.

4.3 Context of trial benchmarking project

Following consultation in 2007, UOW and UTAS agreed to undertake a trial benchmarking project in 2008-09. The first AUQA reports for both UOW and UTAS had identified benchmarking as an issue for attention. The 2005 AUQA report for UOW affirmed “the need ... to explore institutional relationships with appropriate partners that will enable benchmarking activities for monitoring of standards and quality improvement purposes” (p.16). Similarly the 2005 UTAS AUQA report commented that the

“UTAS Quality System could benefit from the University of Tasmania benchmarking itself strategically, and more widely against another highly-regarded international university closer to home, ideally one which is also similar in size, vision, status and location and with shared aspects of academic profile”. (p.46)

The identification of potential benchmarking themes was initiated through the exchange of contextual information, such as campus locations and sizes, discipline areas, student profile information, and areas of topical interest at each institution.

The topic of the benchmarking project determined was ***academic transition support for first year undergraduate students from letter of offer to the end of their first year of study***. The project focused on undergraduate programs onshore covering domestic, international and Indigenous cohorts, from the period of offer to the end of the first year of study. It reviewed academic transition strategies (including strategies to support the development of discipline-specific literacies and foundational knowledge, study skills, information literacy and e-literacy); and interconnected aspects of administrative, personal and social support which impact on academic outcomes.

The benchmarking project was undertaken over the period from March to September 2009 and involved the following stages: a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the Vice-Chancellors of both institutions, a launch and briefing session for project leaders, collection of data for self assessment, a self assessment workshop with project leaders at each institution, a peer assessment workshop with both institutions to compare and follow up on collaborative projects, and the drafting of a final report. Eighteen UOW leaders and fifteen UTAS leaders participated in the self and peer assessment process.

The Professional Units and Faculties involved in the project are shown in Appendix 6.

5. Phase I: Preparations

The benchmarking project involved regular meetings via teleconference/video conference between the two project teams to ensure that a consistent approach to benchmarking was maintained across both institutions. The project teams at both institutions changed over the period 2007-09 which added to the complexity and duration of the project.

The project teams undertook a range of tasks in preparation for the benchmarking process:

- a) Development of project objectives
- b) Development of a project schedule
- c) Development of key structures for benchmarking
- d) Development of resources and tools

a) Development of project objectives

The first task for the project team in the benchmarking process involved the development of project objectives. These objectives were:

- To develop knowledge and experience in the benchmarking process;
- To compare processes and identify good practice;
- To identify areas for improvement.

b) Project schedule

A project schedule was developed in preparation for the benchmarking project. The schedule (Table 1) followed a tight timeframe in 2009 which included a self assessment phase, a peer assessment phase and the identification of key areas of action.

Table 1: Project schedule

June 2007	Preliminary discussions between UOW and UTAS senior executives
10 July 2007	In principle agreement to conduct benchmarking exercise in the area of learning and teaching- meeting between key UTAS and UOW personnel
September 2007	Sharing contextual information and data to assist in identification of benchmarking theme
May 2008	Agreement on general area of focus for “proof of concept” benchmarking exercise- “academic transition support”
15 March 2008	Teleconference conducted to enable key personnel from each institution to discuss respective approaches to academic transition support and provide examples of relevant activities and programs
August 2008	Comprehensive documentation of academic transition support activities and programs at UOW (in accordance with agreed template) forwarded to UTAS
3 October 2008	Video conference involving key organisational UOW and UTAS staff (facilitated by external consultant Christine Goodacre) conducted to define scope of benchmarking exercise and develop good practice statement and performance indicators Agreed scope: first year undergraduate students from letter of offer to end of first year of study (including domestic, international and Indigenous cohorts)
October-November 2008	Further development of benchmark statement, including performance indicators and measures in consultation with UTAS Identification of team of UOW/UTAS staff who will lead the self assessment process
End November 2008	Video conference with UTAS to confirm benchmark statement, process and timelines

23 March 2009	Self assessment process begins: A Memorandum of Understanding between both institutions signed via video conference Simultaneous briefing session held to inform UTAS/UOW staff leaders about process of benchmarking/self assessment
March-April 2009	Collection of data over a five week period to the end of April
18 May 2009	Self assessment workshops at both institutions
16 June 2009	Peer assessment workshop via video conference Comparative exercise on 10 indicators - identified areas of good practice and areas for improvement
September-October 2009	Identification of priority areas for improvement in consultation with project team leaders Preparation of action plan for self improvement Final report and evaluation of project Dissemination of findings and outcomes – reporting back to participants/committees/ generally

c) Key structures for benchmarking

A third task involved the development of the key structures for benchmarking: scoping statement, good practice statement, performance indicators and performance measures (on a 5 point scale). These key structures were based on the ACODE Benchmarking Framework (2007).

Scoping statement

The scoping statement describes what is considered in the benchmark as well as clarifying, as necessary, what lies outside the scope (ACODE, 2007, p.5). The scoping statement for this project read as follows:

“Academic Transition Support” is a broad term that can cover the facilitation of student transition into, through and out of the university learning environment. It includes developing aspirations before applying to study at university, providing pathways into university, facilitating adjustment to academic life (including academic, administrative and social processes); supporting the development of academic literacies; and supporting the transition of students into further study and/or the workplace.

The scoping statement included programs covering domestic and international (onshore) cohorts, for the period from the letter of offer to the end of the first year of study. It also included academic transition strategies to support the development of discipline-specific literacies and foundational knowledge, study skills, information literacy and e-literacy); interconnected aspects of administrative, personal and social support which impact on academic outcomes. The project did not include: outreach activities; alternative admission programs; activities supporting transition into further study and/or the workplace; support for Honours, higher degree research or postgraduate coursework students; support for study abroad students; support for students studying offshore.

Good practice statement

The good practice statement sets the agreed levels of achievement (standards), against which, performance is assessed (ACODE, 2007, p.6). The good practice statement for the project read as follows:

Academic transition support should be aligned to clearly identifiable institutional and faculty strategies and contextually relevant pedagogical approaches. It should be accessible to and used by students at their point of need to enable them to achieve successful academic outcomes. Planning and delivery should be coordinated, monitored and evaluated for continuous improvement purposes. Adequate resources and staff support should be provided.

The project team also developed good practice statements for each performance indicator to assist project team leaders in the collection and analysis of data. (Appendix 4).

Performance indicators

Performance indicators identify good practice in key performance areas (ACODE, 2007, p.6). Ten performance indicators were identified as determinants of good practice for academic transition support:

1. Aligned plans and policies are in place and implemented.
2. Planning and delivery of programs/activities are coordinated.
3. Programs/activities are informed by recognised pedagogical principles.
4. Processes are in place and used to support students at their point of need.
5. Programs/activities are promoted to, accessible to and used by students.
6. Programs/activities meet student needs.
7. Programs/activities are resourced.
8. Professional development and support is available to staff, accessed and informs practice.
9. The effectiveness of programs/activities is monitored and evaluated.
10. Evaluation of feedback and results is integrated into planning for continuous improvement purposes.

Through the self assessment process, it was realised that some performance indicators might have been more clearly differentiated or combined (e.g. PIs 9 and 10).

Performance measures

Performance measures are 'statements which represent progress toward good practice (as represented by an indicator' (ACODE, 2007, p.6). A five point scale was used as measures for the self assessment exercise and to compare between institutions. In the self assessment exercise the scores were used as a device to get discussion started. More emphasis was placed on citing evidence and providing a rationale for each performance indicator.

d) Resources and tools

Self assessment guidelines, template and briefing notes

A self assessment template was developed by the UOW and UTAS project teams to be used by the participants in the benchmarking process. The structure of the self assessment template was:

- Topic statement
- Good practice statement
- Performance indicators (10)
- Performance measures for each indicator
- A numerical rating which related to each indicator
- Rationale
- Sources of evidence

The template included instructions on how to complete the self assessment (Appendix 2). The briefing notes provided the background to the project and the timeline for the key milestones (Appendix 3).

Guideline to performance indicators

A guideline to the performance indicators was developed with good practice statements for each indicator and examples of sources of evidence. These guidelines proved to be a useful document for participants to refer to when collecting data (Appendix 4).

Glossary of terms/List of acronyms

A glossary of terms was developed so that all participants had a common understanding of benchmarking practice and language (Appendix 5). In addition, a list of acronyms used by each institution was prepared to assist staff who participated in the Peer Assessment workshop; this was developed into 'a list of acronyms used in this report' and appears as Appendix 1.

Mapping document

In 2008 UOW mapped programs and services that supported academic transition prior to and across the period of university study. (Appendix 7).

6. Phase II: The Self Assessment

The Self Assessment phase included the following actions and outcomes:

- a) Identification of project leaders
- b) Collection and collation of data by units
- c) Analysis of unit self assessments
- d) Self assessment workshop
- e) Areas of good practice
- f) Agreed areas for improvement at UOW
- g) Evaluation of evidence
- h) Evaluation of workshop

a) Identification of project leaders

The identification of project leaders in academic transition at both institutions was an important part of the benchmarking process. The membership of this group reflected staff with operational responsibility, an institutional perspective and experience in developing policy, strategy and quality assurance in first year student transition. The staff leaders chosen to lead the benchmarking project are listed on page 4.

b) Collection and collation of data

At UOW, each of the 18 faculty/unit-based teams undertook their own self assessment, in most cases convening a small team comprising key staff involved in first year academic transition support. In faculties the teams typically included the FEC Chair, Sub Dean, First Year Coordinator(s) and Faculty Service Centre staff and/or Faculty Manager. Most teams met on two occasions, first to decide the type and extent of information required and second, to decide on the rating and rationale for each performance indicator on the basis of the collected information. These team assessments were then forwarded to the project coordinators in SPQ.

At UTAS, staff leaders from the Division of the PVC (Students and Education) and faculties organised meetings with staff to discuss the project and to allocate staff various roles in the collection of data. The six faculties were supported by ten postgraduate students across the three campuses who interviewed staff and collected data during the self assessment phase. Coordination of the postgraduate students was organised through the UTAS project team leader with students being selected on their knowledge and understanding of their individual faculties.

c) Analysis of unit self assessments

The self assessment reports were mapped by unit and institutionally using the performance indicators and measures to highlight patterns across the institution (Appendix 8). This analysis identified the dichotomies in performance (shown below) between good practice in service and delivery and gap areas in planning, coordination and evaluation.

- UOW had examples of good practice in the following areas: the planning and delivery of programs (PI2), pedagogy (PI3), processes are in place and used to support students at their point of need (PI4), and programs/activities are used by students (PI5c).

- Areas for improvement were performance indicators 6, 7, 8 and 9 (identification of student needs, programs are resourced, professional development is accessed and informs practice, and effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation).

A brief overview of each area at UOW based on their self assessment report is provided below:

- The University **Library** demonstrated considerable performance in most indicators, particularly in the coordination and delivery of programs to assist students; well-resourced programs, promoted, accessible to and used by students; and professional development. The evaluation of programs was an area identified for improvement (noting that the evaluation of information literacy programs was a challenging area).
- **Learning Development** was particularly strong in programs underpinned by recognised pedagogical principles as well as in policy, planning, coordination and meeting student needs. Resourcing (of individual consultations) and the availability and accessibility of professional development were identified for improvement.
- **Student Support & Peer Learning** demonstrated considerable performance in most indicators, but it was noted that resource issues impacted on the capacity of Student Support Advisors (SSA) to support equity students and the effectiveness of SSA programs, while well monitored and evaluated at the individual or faculty level, was not being strategically evaluated at the institutional level.
- **WIC** demonstrated strength in policies, planning and delivery of programs but improvement needed to be made in the resourcing and evaluation of programs and in professional development of staff.
- **CEDIR** was strong in planning and delivery of programs, pedagogy and in the monitoring and evaluation of programs for continuous improvement but needed to improve how it promotes its audiovisual services to students.
- **ARD/UniAdvice** was strong in admission, enrolment and orientation and demonstrated strength in policies, planning, and evaluation.
- **ITS** was strong in its support for enrolment and SOLS, accessibility of its services, supporting students at their points of need and resourcing, but could improve in evaluation.
- **International Student Programs** needed a coordinating framework and home; project-based resourcing made sustainability of programs an issue.
- **Regional Campuses** demonstrated considerable performance in the planning and delivery of programs, promotion and accessibility of services and resources, but had no basis to determine if student needs were being met; distance from the main campus limited access to professional development; and there was limited monitoring and evaluation of programs.
- **Faculty of Arts** was strong across most indicators but resourcing limited technical support for academic staff; the integration of feedback and results into planning for continuous improvement was an area for improvement.

- **Faculty of Commerce** was strong across all indicators and demonstrated comprehensive performance in pedagogy, monitoring and evaluation of programs and quality improvement processes.
- **Faculty of Creative Arts** demonstrated considerable performance in most areas but noted a lack of funds for professional development.
- **Faculty of Education** was strong across most indicators, particularly in the planning and organisation of enrolment, orientation and the first week of session and pedagogy. A more formal, visible framework and professional development (with a focus on the first year experience) to share and strengthen initiatives were the main areas noted for improvement.
- **Faculty of Engineering** demonstrated strength in the planning and delivery of a range of support programs including bridging courses, but needed to improve the extent to which its programs are informed by recognised pedagogical principles, monitored and evaluated.
- **Faculty of Health & Behavioural Sciences** was strong in the planning, delivery and promotion of services and pedagogy. Areas for improvement included policy integration, better identification of students at risk and resourcing to provide more support for subject coordinators.
- **Faculty of Informatics** was strong in its support for international students and in identifying students at risk, considerable performance was also demonstrated in professional development, resourcing, monitoring and evaluation of programs. Areas for improvement including planning, pedagogy and promotion of programs.
- **Faculty of Law** has a common first year cohort, first year co-ordinator and first year working party, and therefore was very strong in coordination. Considerable performance was also demonstrated in meeting student needs, pedagogy, resourcing and professional development; however improvement needed to be made in the evaluation of programs and integrated with quality improvement processes.
- **Faculty of Science** demonstrated considerable performance in most areas with its strengths being pedagogy, resourcing and professional development.

d) Self assessment workshop

At the self assessment workshop on 18 May 2009, UOW staff leaders discussed each indicator in relation to their area. The purpose of the workshop was to come to an agreed institutional understanding of performance against each of the 10 indicators, with the main focus being on the rationale for each measure. The institutional self assessment report (exchanged with UTAS on 10 June) summarises UOW's agreed ratings, rationale statements, areas of good practice and areas for improvement (Appendix 9).

e) Areas of Good Practice

The areas of good practice in academic transition support identified at UOW were:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enrolment and Orientation 	<p>Strong central planning across the University. The 'Get Started @ UOW' Program has delivered recognised improvements to Orientation by providing an active coordination model.</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Faculty of Law's 'first year' plan and common first year cohort. 	For their first session, all LLB first year students are allocated to a group or 'POD' and attend all classes for all subjects together with their group.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Central co-ordination of Transition support programs across campuses 	ILIP, PASS, Learning Development, Counselling (with exception of Orientation, which is coordinated at each campus/centre).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Academic Services Division (ASD) role in academic transition support. 	Strong liaison between staff in ASD and with faculties via central and faculty committees ensures a degree of coordination.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learning Development's faculty program 	Targeting subjects and courses with significant academic transition and promoting practices that are curriculum-integrated, discipline-specific and student-centred.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ILIP 	Compulsory, available on and off-shore, caters to a range of learning styles, extensively reviewed in 2008, and externally validated.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PASS program 	Nationally recognised, high participation rates, positive feedback each semester; analysis of subject results has shown students benefit irrespective of background or prior performance levels.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Faculty of Education practice 	Informed by research into teaching and learning in general and into the first year experience in particular. Course structures reflect either a vertical or spiral integration of ideas and concepts, taking students from the simpler to complex, from generic to specialised.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Woolyungah Indigenous Centre programs 	Programs recognise that many Indigenous students are mature aged adult learners who are new to a tertiary education environment but bring a wealth of life experience. Indigenous Student Support Officers offer a broad range of information, support and internal and external referral.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Faculty intervention strategies to support students at critical points 	For example, Informatics offers Personal Academic Mentoring, Enabling Maths (MATH010) options for weaker students and compares progress of Early Entry students against non-Early entry students annually
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ First Year @ UOW website 	A central source of information to new students including an overview of academic help and support services available. Faculties also have web pages specifically for first year students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student Central 	A visible, institutional contact point and actively pursues quality improvement of services through feedback loops; Faculty Student Services Centres provide key contact and referral points at the faculty level.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strategically deployed resources 	Faculties are well supported by Faculty Librarians, Learning Developers, ITS and CEDIR/eLearning staff.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student feedback integrated into the review of programs 	For example, Library programs, Learning Development, PASS. Planning Services triangulate key student surveys (Student Experience Questionnaire, Subject Evaluation Survey and Course Experience Questionnaire) to inform planning.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recognition for good teaching practice 	10 ALTC Citations for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning in 2008.

f) Agreed areas for improvement

The “gap” areas for improvement identified and agreed by project team leaders at the UOW self assessment workshop are listed below:

- A holistic policy framework for first year student support linked to the relevant Strategic Goals
- Definition of the role and value of First Year Coordinators
- A more systematic approach to identifying “students at risk”
- A comprehensive first year student needs analysis
- Assessment of the impact of project-based funding on the sustainability of programs.
- Resourcing of support services for international students
- Professional development targeted towards first year student transition

These priority areas for improvement were developed further in the peer assessment and the final details are included in the Action Plan on p28-33.

g) Evaluation of evidence

A number of units reported that the citing of evidence to support rationale statements was a difficult task, especially in relation to PI 6 regarding the extent to which programs meet student needs. A number of faculties cited AUSSE survey data, but noted that this data, together with new attrition and other comparative data made available in 2008 and 2009, had been received too late to inform 2008 programs (the focus of the self assessment). The AUSSE survey will be a powerful diagnostic tool and provide evidential data for benchmarking exercises like this in the future.

Overall, the citing of supporting evidence was patchy; some areas did well, for example, the Library made good use of both qualitative and quantitative data, while other units relied heavily on references to websites and policy and procedural documents. This reinforces the finding that performance in the evaluation of programs is an area requiring improvement.

h) Evaluation of workshop

UOW participants rated the outcomes of the self assessment workshop which were:

- Improved understanding of the benchmarking approach used in this project (12/12 in agreement)
- Improved understanding of the range and type of academic transition programs offered across the university (8/12 in agreement)
- Improved understanding of the complexities and considerations in service delivery in this area across the university (11/12 in agreement)
- Clarity about the process and further actions for this project (10/12 in agreement)

Participants were asked if the workshop structure was appropriate for its objectives. Ten answered in the affirmative, none in the negative. A typical response was “lengthy but worthwhile”.

7. Phase III: The Peer Assessment

The Peer Assessment phase included the following actions and outcomes:

- a) Preparations including exchange of information
- b) Peer assessment workshop
- c) Comparison across institutions
- d) Comparison of AUSSE survey results (Appendix 11)
- e) Actions from peer assessment workshop and benchmarking process
- f) Evaluation of peer assessment workshop

a) Preparations

The respective institutional self assessment reports were exchanged one week prior to the workshop. An analysis of similarities and differences in terms of the ratings and identified strengths and weaknesses of each institution was prepared with the findings presented as a series of PowerPoint slides to facilitate discussion at the workshop.

b) Peer assessment workshop

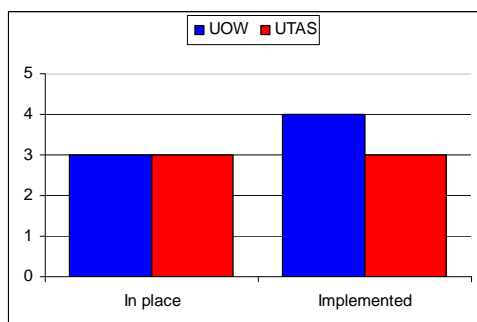
A peer assessment workshop was conducted by video conference between UOW and UTAS on 16 June 2009. Its purpose was twofold: (i) to share the detailed assessments against each of the indicators as a means to assist each institution to moderate their self assessments; and (ii) to discuss respective strengths and weaknesses in order to determine opportunities for shared learning and collaboration in undertaking future self improvement action.

c) Comparison across institutions

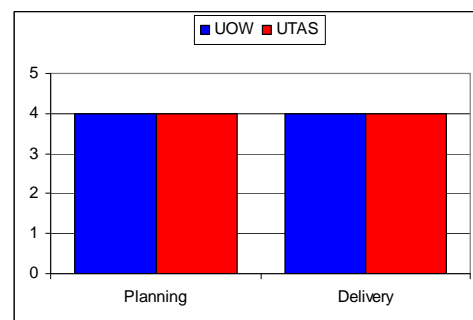
Figure 1 below compares performance between UOW and UTAS in each of the 10 performance indicators. The ratings are similar in most instances and it is worth noting that the difference between the ratings was no greater than one point on any of the indicators. The main difference between the institutions related to processes to support students at their points of need, access to resources for programs and professional development.

Figure 1: A comparison of performance ratings between UOW and UTAS

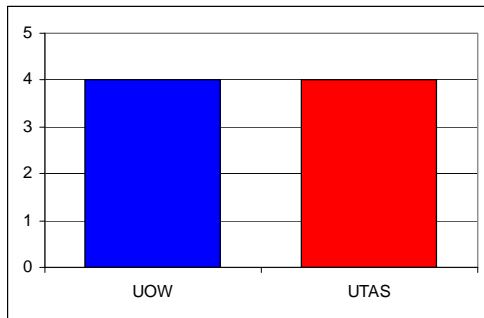
1: Aligned plans & policies are in place and implemented



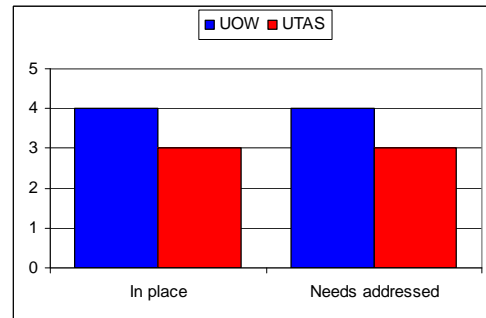
2: Planning & delivery of programs/activities are coordinated



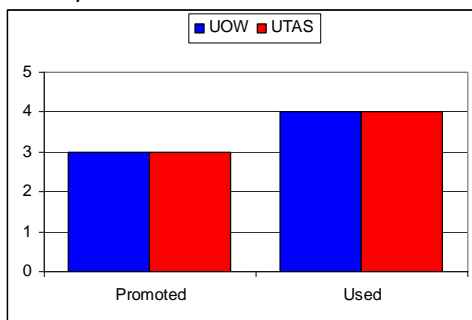
3. Programs/activities are informed by recognised pedagogical principles



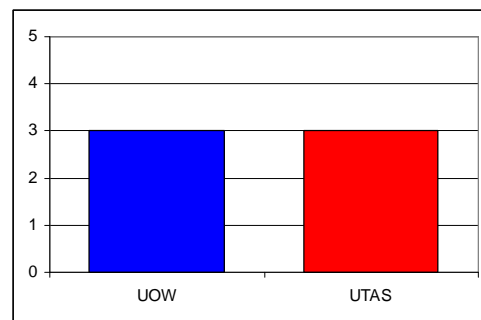
4: Processes are in place and used to support students at their point of need



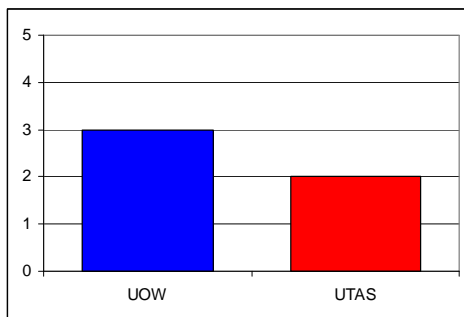
5: Programs/activities are promoted to, accessible to & used by students



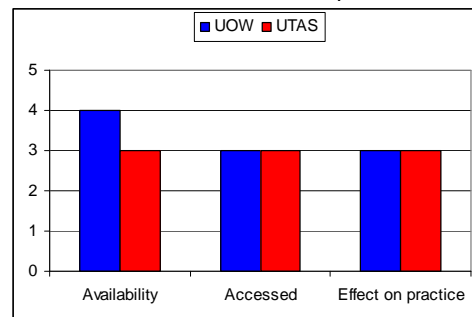
6: Programs/activities meet student needs



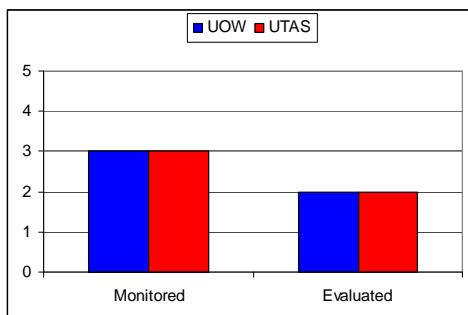
7: Programs/activities are resourced



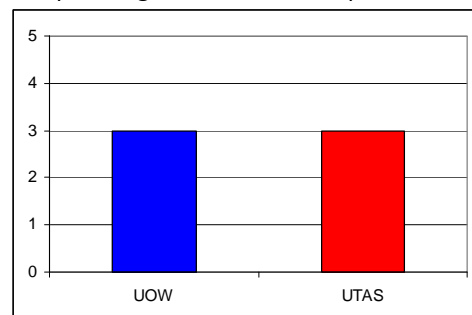
8: Professional development and support is available to staff, accessed and informs practice



9: The effectiveness of programs/activities is monitored and evaluated



10: Evaluation of feedback and results is integrated into planning for continuous improvement purposes



* Note: UOW's rating was changed from 4 "comprehensive" to 3 "moderate" upon reflection during the Peer Assessment Workshop

d) Comparison of AUSSE survey results

Findings from the 2008 Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) were benchmarked to assess student responses to their engagement with learning and interactions with the university. As this survey is targeted towards both first and last year students it was deemed an important source of data for comparative purposes (noting only first year student responses were included in the analysis). Appendix 12 outlines the comparative results for both UOW and UTAS (the latter had nearly double the number of students participating in the survey).

As a whole, UOW students were comfortable using online learning systems to discuss or complete an assignment, were happy with the support provided to help with academic success, and the support networks in place that helped them to socialise with other students.

Areas where we could do better included encouraging students to seek advice from academic staff, ensuring students receive prompt written or oral feedback from teachers/tutors on academic performance, and providing help to cope with non-academic responsibilities.

e) Common areas for improvement and collaboration

One of the main outcomes from the Peer Assessment Workshop was the identification of common issues and areas for improvement between the two institutions. It reinforced the findings of the self-assessment and, importantly, identified those areas where both institutions might benefit from collaborative improvement action.

The UOW Action Plan (refer section 11) is based on good practices and areas for improvement identified at both UOW and UTAS; it also identifies opportunities for collaborative action (already underway in some instances).

UOW staff identified ten improvement areas for action (bold denotes potential for collaboration):

1. **First year student policy** – develop and promulgate, improve formal recognition and ensure coordination (to be completed).
2. Review first year transition leadership role within faculties.
3. **Define role of first year coordinators** and improve opportunities for collaboration across faculties (to be completed).
4. Improve coordination and communication of transition support services to improve student awareness and usage (ongoing).
5. **Development and implementation of a first year transition framework** (UTAS extended an open invitation to UOW staff to attend its First Year Teaching Forum in October 2009. The forum included discussions between UOW and UTAS staff regarding first year transition pedagogy).
6. **Development of administrative processes for at-risk students** (ARD is developing processes for at-risk students using data from the Student Attrition project).
7. Review support for pathway students, international students and equity groups including consideration of the need for a more comprehensive induction program (this will be addressed, in part, by the newly formed Social Inclusion Working Party)

and through the UOW International Student Experience - English Language Proficiency project team).

8. **Provide professional development on first year transition to staff** (There are a number of related activities already underway including a Casual Teaching working group and a team developing 'Leading Teaching Teams Guidelines', however, more work needs to be done in individual faculties in collaboration with CEDIR and Learning Development).
9. **Comparison of library programs:** Both libraries are in the process of comparing activities and programs, exchanging information and identifying priorities for future work.
10. **Comparison of International Services:** Both international services areas will be working together on benchmarking English language courses and the Foundation Studies programs offered through WCA and UTAS College.

In the near future, both institutions will come together to celebrate the project outcomes (to date) and acknowledge areas of good practice.

f) Evaluation of peer assessment workshop

Participants rated the outcomes of the peer assessment workshop which were:

- Sharing our assessments of each performance indicator and comparing and contrasting: 4/5 were in agreement
- Sharing information and perspectives on Academic Transition and learning from each other: 1/5 in agreement
- Identifying areas of good practice and areas for improvement with the benefit of the peer review: 1/5 in agreement
- Learning more about benchmarking process: 3/5 were in agreement.

In asking what was not achieved it was clear participants had valued the institutional self assessment (learning and sharing practice) but were not as positive about the peer assessment workshop. Some considered the workshop (held over 2.5 hours) did not provide enough time to share detailed information. Although 3/5 found the structure appropriate, there was concern that the structure did not allow for a critical assessment and that videoconferencing does not allow for easy interaction or discussion.

On the positive side, the peer assessment workshop was seen as setting the ground work for possible future collaboration and helpful in identifying areas where further information sharing was needed.

The UTAS participants had a more positive view of the outcomes as they were in agreement that all objectives had been met. But it is worth noting that some of the comments expressed by the participants were similar to those made by the UOW participants.

8. Project Outcomes and Evaluation

8.1 Summary of outcomes

The main outcomes from the project were:

- a) An improved understanding of our processes, activities and practices in academic transition support for first year students (see below).
- b) An understanding of our performance relative to the University of Tasmania (see **section 7**)
- c) An Action Plan for achieving improvements in the first year student experience at UOW (see **section 10**).

Improved understanding of ATS practices and systems:

Academic Transition Support is provided to first year undergraduate students through a range of central and faculty based programs and services, although only a few of these are specifically targeted at first year or 'new to UOW' students. The full range of services and program which operated in 2008 is listed in Appendix 7. Coordination occurs to some extent through the Academic Services Division (ASD) network and ASD representation on faculty committees, through a campus-wide coordinating committee for enrolment and orientation, and through the UEC/FEC committee structure with the latter responsible for coordination of programs across the faculty. While individual programs are well coordinated, coordination across programs is an area for improvement.

At the central level the major players are: Learning Development (student learning, academic literacy and English language skills); the Library (information literacy programs); Student Services and Peer Assisted Learning (specialised services covering disability support, personal and career counselling, casual employment, peer assisted learning, conversation classes for international (NESB) students and welfare support through faculty-based SSAs); WIC (Indigenous programs); and ARD (the 'Get Started at UOW' program which includes special welcome days, enrolment, and orientation and the Student Central administrative enquiries centre). Other players include ITS and CEDIR (technology access and support and professional development). *[Note: PODS, Accommodation Services, UniCentre and URAC were not included within the scope of this project.]*

At the Faculty level, there is some variation in the type and level of support available. All faculties have a dedicated Student Enquiry Centre and trained staff who serve as the first port of call for a range of student enquiries, and staff with specialised roles to assist students including a Sub-Dean (academic issues) and Student Support Advisors (welfare issues). Variation occurs in the level of support specifically available to first year students: Law has an Integrated First Year Program with all LLB first year students allocated to a group or 'POD' and a First Year Working Party to provide oversight of the program; other faculties with more complex structures and programs have first year coordinators for some but not all programs e.g. Chemistry in Science and SECTE in Informatics; others rely heavily on subject coordinators and program convenors e.g. Arts. Across all faculties, casual academic teaching staff are essential to teaching at 100 level.

In general, support for first year international students is integrated across all service areas, although both Commerce and Informatics have an International Office which provides advice to international students and an International Students Coordinator runs a number of

activities to facilitate interaction between local and international students and the wider community.

8.2 Evaluation

The project met its objectives as follows:

Objective 1: To develop knowledge and experience in the benchmarking process

The experience of undertaking a trial benchmarking project at UOW has contributed to an improved understanding of the benchmarking process. This was an ambitious undertaking in two ways: it was the first time the University had undertaken a whole-of-institution project; and it involved a comparison of a range of processes, activities and practices across ten performance indicators (many of which had two or three parts). Participants in the process have gained knowledge of what is involved in benchmarking, including developing and using performance indicators and good practice statements, undertaking a self assessment, comparing processes through a peer assessment and identifying priority areas for improvement.

Lessons Learnt:

For future benchmarking projects, consideration needs to be made in the following areas:

- **Timing:** Development of longer timelines particularly to allow more time for the self assessment phase. Staff need adequate time to plan and collect meaningful evidence for a benchmarking exercise. Project staff need adequate time to collate, interpret and present findings. Some of the participants in the self assessment workshop indicated that earlier circulation of supporting documents would have been helpful.
- **Resourcing:** It is important to maintain continuity, both in terms of staff leading the project and within the unit teams to ensure project timelines are achieved. Having dedicated project staff will minimise impact on staff workload and reduce turnaround time.
- **Professional development:** This was provided at the outset for staff directly involved (at UOW this included the QAS group and SPQ staff) through an external consultant employed by UTAS. Professional development occurred for those project leaders involved in the project through a briefing, however, additional professional development in benchmarking and quality improvement would be helpful.
- **Performance indicators and measures:** The ACODE framework was useful and a number of staff were involved in the initial construction of templates. However, it was not until the templates were used by staff that a number of issues emerged. For example, some staff had difficulty matching their rationale to evidence and some indicators overlapped causing some confusion and duplication. Opting for a narrower focus with a smaller number of performance indicators is recommended. Using categories for organising data prior to gathering could be considered. Alternatively posing a series of questions under each indicator may provide more guidance to staff completing the self assessment.
- **Evidence:** Some staff reported that it was difficult to collect meaningful evidence in the time required. The systematic collection, dissemination and analysis of data ought to be reflected in the quality improvement process for the University.

Critical success factors included:

- Trust, mutual respect and a close collegial relationship between the project coordinators at both institutions
- Support and endorsement of the project from senior staff (at VC and DVC level)
- Support and cooperation of project team leaders from each of the contributing units
- Careful planning and preparation ahead of the briefing for project participants
- Clear communication about the project well ahead of the proposed timeline

Objective 2: To compare processes and identify good practice

Both institutions had examples of good practice at the unit and institutional level. Through the self assessment process, UOW identified five and UTAS four good practice case studies which were deemed to have significant value to offer colleagues at both institutions. They are listed below and are included in Appendix 13.

UOW	UTAS
PASS	PASS
ILIP	Transition Support Service
Faculty of Law first year integrated program	Riawunna
Student Experience Project	Zoology Program (Prof Sue Jones)
Learning Development's curriculum integrated program	

Objective 3: To identify areas for improvement.

Through the self assessment and peer review process, key areas for improvement were identified. These are listed on p19 and are discussed in more detail in the Action Plan on p28-32. The areas identified for *collaborative* improvement action are listed on p22-23.

9. Conclusion

The trial benchmarking project has been an invaluable exercise in quality improvement and for informing future benchmarking practices and projects. It has been both a learning process and a self improvement practice for participants across both institutions.

The key findings of this benchmarking exercise for UOW are:

1. UOW is comparable in performance standards with UTAS on academic transition support and there are many examples of good practice at each institution.
2. UOW is comparable in performance with UTAS from student feedback. UOW rates well when comparing results of the 2008 AUSSE survey.
3. Overall, UOW provides a range of services to support first year students, however more work can be done to provide *integrated, intentional, supportive* first year transition programs and curriculum design.
4. Individual UOW areas are already benefitting from collaboration with UTAS on areas for improvement. There have been ten action areas developed as a result of the benchmarking project and many of these action areas link with work already being undertaken at UOW.

5. Participants from both institutions have an increased understanding of benchmarking.
6. The issue of lack of evidence for evaluation and quality improvement purposes needs to be addressed, noting that both institutions were limited in this area.
7. Both institutions are challenged in supporting students who enter via non-traditional pathways, students with English as a second language, students from disadvantaged backgrounds and students with learning disabilities.
8. The allocation of resources (particularly staffing) needs to be reviewed from a strategic viewpoint to ensure students are supported in their transition into and through university.
9. Improved support and induction for teaching staff, particularly casual staff and those in first year coordination roles is needed, supported by the implementation of policy and procedures. UTAS has extended an invitation to UOW staff to participate in a First Year Teaching Forum in late October 2009.

These findings corroborate the outcomes from the 2008 Academic Risk Assessment exercise and 2009 Student Experience mapping exercise which made recommendations around student retention, provision of academic advice, support for casual teachers, identification of and support for “at risk” students, support for international students and use of student data.

10. References

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11. Improving Academic Transition Support – Draft Action Plan (to be developed further by FYE* Working Party)

Areas for Improvement	Assessment	Options/Suggested Actions	Link with recent/ new initiatives	Responsible Unit/s	Timeline
<p>Policy and Planning</p> <p>Development of a holistic policy framework for first year student support linked to the relevant strategic goals and which takes account of diverse cohorts and the social aspects of support for first year students</p>	<p>Faculties/units have commitment to academic transition support, but few specifically articulate this commitment.</p> <p>At faculty level, not all policies have clear procedural pathways for implementation e.g. in relation to equity targets, the only way a faculty can identify and recruit these students is via early entry.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review existing policies and guidelines to assess whether needs of first year/new UOW students are effectively addressed. - Develop a specific policy statement – using UTAS example as a model - Take account of academic transition support needs of first year/new UOW students in development of new Strategic Plan and Equity Plan. - Develop annual planning targets for academic transition support and needs of first year students for inclusion in Faculty and Unit annual plans. - Review pathways and support for equity students as part of new Equity Plan. 	<p>The new Social Inclusion Working Party (SIWP) brief includes first year inclusion and development of Equity Plan</p>	<p><i>To be completed by FYE Working Party</i></p> <p><i>Need for project manager?</i></p>	<p><i>To be completed by FYE Working Party</i></p>
<p>Coordination across programs</p> <p>Definition of the role and value of First Year Coordinators</p> <p>Coordination of orientation across all sites</p>	<p>Coordination <i>across</i> programs is not a strong feature.</p> <p>Most faculties/schools do not identify a first year coordinator.</p> <p>Co-ordinators lack opportunities to meet and share ideas.</p> <p>There is little reward or recognition for first year subject coordinators who put time and effort into doing a critical job.</p> <p>A range of services are available to assist international students but the lack of a coordinating framework/directory can result in students 'running' between different service providers.</p> <p>Orientation does not include Education Centres and units such as Woolyungah,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a First Year Experience (planning and coordination) Framework for the suite of programs offered to first year students (identifying the critical stages, before and after Orientation, and covering, in particular, students with advanced standing, Indigenous and international students) - with a view to this being appended to a FYE policy statement) - As a first step, an organisational map of units and programs be developed to raise awareness and assist communication. - A first year coordinator be identified for each undergraduate degree program/major. Such staff to be suitably rewarded for taking on this role. - Establish a community of practice amongst 	<p>Chemistry, SECTE have first year coordinators for degree/program.</p> <p>Faculty of Education plan to appoint 1st Year co-ordinator for each program (academic staff teaching into the first year of the particular degree). The co-ordinator will be the 'face of first year' for both students and staff; identify 'at risk' students in first year; work with SSA to oversee support for students from equity groups etc</p>		

Areas for Improvement	Assessment	Options/Suggested Actions	Link with recent/ new initiatives	Responsible Unit/s	Timeline
	resulting in specific student needs not being accommodated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> first year coordinators/email listing. - A first year coordinators forum be held at least twice yearly with representation from each faculty and ASD. - Orientation/welcome activities be reviewed to ensure that the needs of all new to UOW students are accommodated <u>including</u> those enrolled at the regional centres. 			
Pedagogy Development of guidelines to enhance the pedagogical basis of first year curriculum design and support	<p>Examples of innovation and good practice exist but not across the board – some pockets of misunderstanding and resistance suggest the need to better promote good practice.</p> <p>While the Academic Services Division is generally viewed by faculties as an integral part of curriculum design, a number of faculties felt they could make better use of these services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review ways to promote good practice in first year transition support through such means as FEC network, proposed first year coordinators forum, other T&L forums and professional development activities, and through promotion and enhancement of T&L good practice website. - Consider development of a transition pedagogy for first year curriculum design (with reference to work undertaken by ALTC (e.g. Prof Sally Kift at QUT). <i>Also refer to PD section below.</i> 			
Identifying first year student needs Evidence to support conclusions about first year undergraduate students	<p>Evidence is largely anecdotal and/or aggregated to the undergraduate cohort.</p> <p>The needs of particular cohorts such as late arriving international students and advanced standing students (who tend to enter at second year subject level) may be overlooked.</p> <p>Not all faculties draw on the expertise of LD and there are differences in perception of student need (e.g. curriculum-integrated vs extra-curriculum approach).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A comprehensive first year student needs analysis could be undertaken by each faculty, particularly to assess changing trends and take into account specific cohorts, such as advanced standing students' integration, students who report having a disability and other equity categories. (e.g. Engineering run first year focus groups each year). - Improve process for the early identification of students at risk through monitoring/analysis of attrition data, performance in early assessment tasks etc - Look at ways to connect with first year students (e.g. though use of systemic email messages at key points during first year). 	<p>The <i>PIP Student Attrition project</i> aims to establish a significant body of relevant data on student attrition and will assist in determining student needs and inform planning and policy approaches.</p> <p>New AUSSE survey and triangulation of survey data will assist units to better target needs of first years.</p> <p>The <i>Academic Advice project</i> looking to improve student progress based on correct and supportive advice and communications</p>		

Areas for Improvement	Assessment	Options/Suggested Actions	Link with recent/ new initiatives	Responsible Unit/s	Timeline
<p>Supporting pathway/equity students Development of targeted support programs for pathway/equity students</p>	<p>No particular targeted activity exists to meet the needs of students who enter via alternate pathways.</p> <p>The number and spread of SSAs limits their ability to strengthen services for equity students, give emphasis to first year and be able to take a more strategic view.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consider development of mandatory support program for high need students (e.g. students who score below 70% on STAT test could be required to attend learning development workshop or extra tutorial – look at Loftus example). - Review need for more comprehensive induction program, using UTAS's UniStart as a model. - As part of policy and coordination review, reassess provision of first year transition support within faculties (e.g review capacity of SSA to support both equity students and international students) 	<p><i>The First Year Staying Connected project</i> looking at improving support for and retention of first year students.</p> <p>Student Services already looking at a more comprehensive tertiary induction program?</p>		
<p>Supporting international students Coordination and resourcing of support services for international students</p>	<p>Support services for international students are affected by a lack of resources and a clear 'home'; one staff position is dedicated to "International Student Programs" which includes the coordination of a range of social, mentoring and friendship programs.</p> <p>The needs of late arriving international students may be overlooked.</p> <p>No systematic research or data available to show if there is any correlation between late entry and failure rates.</p> <p>There is tension between ESOS Act and requirements of DIAC. Problems with the way these are interpreted and applied and academic staff understanding of students' capacity to progress satisfactorily.</p> <p>Many international students do not attend international arrival program. (prior to 2009 attendance at international student orientation was mandatory).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review induction and support available to late arriving students. - As part of the PIP Internationalisation project, review means of capturing data on late arrivals and tracking performance for this cohort. - Consider making attendance at international orientation mandatory/look at ways to increase attendance levels. 	<p><i>PIP Internationalisation project</i> is looking at linking performance data with e.g. English proficiency scores, advanced standing, country of origin etc</p>		

Areas for Improvement	Assessment	Options/Suggested Actions	Link with recent/ new initiatives	Responsible Unit/s	Timeline
<p>Student Communication Promotion of support services</p>	<p>Many programs are well promoted but there is no overall coordination of promotions aimed at first year students.</p> <p>Promotional materials may not be, universally, planned or produced in a professional way and not targeted, hence reducing their effectiveness</p> <p>Students experience information overload at orientation, a range of services compete to get their information across to students and this can raise the risk of key information being lost or ignored.</p> <p>The heavy reliance on SOLS Mail may result in messages being ignored.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Look at repeating important orientation information in early week of session within a lecture time. - Seek student feedback about best ways/times to communicate. - Enhance on-line communication system 	<p>ARD/ITS initiative to upgrade electronic communication</p>		
<p>Staffing and Resourcing Assessment of impact of project-based funding of programs and heavy reliance on casual staff to teach at 100 level</p> <p>Assessment of impact of meeting government targets on support services/staffing</p>	<p>There is a heavy reliance on casual academic staff to teach first year classes.</p> <p>Insufficient acknowledgment of resources and time required to coordinate large first year programs and provide high quality academic advice.</p> <p>Project-based funding limits ability to plan ahead, act strategically and establish long-term relationships.</p> <p>The good will of individuals can mask a need for additional resources.</p> <p>Equity funding processes need to ensure that faculties have compensating resources for professional, technical and administrative support.</p> <p>PASS resourced on a year-to-year basis with a mix of faculty funding and central funding - it would benefit from recurrent funding and embedded IT support.</p> <p>Constraints of timetabling affects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Undertake a reassessment of the size and nature (eg, international, equity, learning difficulties) of demand to enhance the strategic distribution of resources. 			

Areas for Improvement	Assessment	Options/Suggested Actions	Link with recent/ new initiatives	Responsible Unit/s	Timeline
	practice (eg. lack of access to IT resources because of competition to use them).				
Professional Development PD targeted towards first year student transition	<p>A more systematic approach to professional development is needed, based on a survey of needs and informed by current research in the FYE area.</p> <p>More specific training for casual teaching staff.</p> <p>Lack of support for subject coordinators who lead large teaching teams.</p> <p>UOW Staff induction is useful for beginning staff but “refresher” courses would be valuable.</p> <p>Need for repeat sessions as access can be limited by workloads, staff availability, teaching commitments, distance (for Education Centres and offshore).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Survey teachers of first year subjects to assess professional development needs. - Offer specific training in first year curriculum design (taking account of current research such as that being undertaken by Prof Sally Kift at QUT). - Consider a program of FYE forums/seminars to share good practice, both at UOW and other universities, and current FYE research. - Consider extension of ULT course to include more focus on first year student transition. - Look at LLB model – can it be applied to other faculties/degrees/disciplines? 	<p>ULT is now repeated during year and distance version developed mid 09.</p> <p><i>Leading Teaching Teams Guidelines</i> (an Implementation and Communication Plan is under development).</p> <p>A Casual Teaching working group will look at ways to improve support for casual teachers.</p> <p>A survey of casual teachers will assess awareness of responsibilities for the integration of Graduate Qualities (QAS Audit working group)</p>		
Monitoring, Evaluation & Quality Improvement Systematic evaluation for quality improvement relevant to first year	<p>Monitoring is extensive but not, as a general rule, conducted against well-communicated goals and performance indicators.</p> <p>Monitoring the effectiveness of key programs is not systematic e.g. SSA programs</p> <p>Need to monitor surveying of students to avoid overload.</p> <p>Faculty monitoring of feedback data from surveys and UOW units (eg LD) is limited - little evidence of a holistic management of improvement strategies.</p> <p>Although it may be a faculty commitment (eg, in Law and Education), continuous improvement for first year programs is often in the hands of individual staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop performance indicators and targets for the First Year Experience, both at the institutional and faculty/unit level, as basis for evaluation and quality improvement. - Develop systematic process for provision of data related to FYE as basis for Faculty/Unit planning and reporting. 	<p>New curriculum review and academic unit review procedures introduced start of 2009.</p> <p>New evaluation methods are being explored in LD to integrate feedback and evaluation from extra-curricula teaching more strongly into forward planning, noting that extra-curricular, generic workshops have little or no potential to provide useful data</p>		

Areas for Improvement	Assessment	Options/Suggested Actions	Link with recent/ new initiatives	Responsible Unit/s	Timeline
	members and practices may not be sustained when staff change. Strategic use of LD data gathered from individual consultations, for planning purposes, has been limited by issues of time and expertise within the unit				
Regional campuses Accessibility of services at regional centres	Access to library limited at regional centres. IT infrastructure for regional centres is limited with an effect on both teaching and learning (eg. Edustream; lack of ability to record video-conference).	Review Library and IT services at regional campuses/centres.	Flexi ULT developed – can be assessed by staff at regional centres.		

** Note: The First Year Experience (FYE) is a generic term used to describe students' experiences with their first year at University (irrespective of their discipline, course, type (research or coursework) or level of study.*

Appendices

- Appendix 1: List of acronyms used in report
- Appendix 2: Self assessment template
- Appendix 3: Briefing notes for project leaders
- Appendix 4: Guideline to performance indicators
- Appendix 5: Glossary of terms used in benchmarking
- Appendix 6: Participating faculties and units (UOW and UTAS)
- Appendix 7: UOW mapping of academic transition programs
- Appendix 8: UOW self assessment ratings by faculty/unit
- Appendix 9: UOW institutional self assessment report
- Appendix 10: Similarities and differences in processes at UOW and UTAS
- Appendix 11: Comparison of areas of good practice and areas for improvement
- Appendix 12: Comparison of AUSSE survey results (2008)
- Appendix 13: Good practice case studies

List of Acronyms used in Report

AACSB	Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
ANZIIL	Australian and New Zealand Institute for Information Literacy
ASD	Academic Services Division
ARD	Academic Registrars Division
CAIO	Commerce Academic Integrity Online
CAUL	Council of Australian University Librarians
CEQ	Course Experience Questionnaire
CEDIR	Centre for Educational Development and Interactive Resources
DIAC	Department of Immigration and Citizenship
DVC(A)	Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic)
DVC(O)	Deputy Vice Chancellor (Operations)
ECAC	External Course Appraisal Committee
EPRS	Education Policy Review Sub-Committee
ESOS	Education Service for Overseas Students (legislative framework)
FASSA	Faculty of Arts Staff and Student Association
FEC	Faculty Education Committee
FYWP	First Year Working Party [in Law Faculty]
GDE	Grad Dip Ed
ILIP	Information Literacies Introductory Program
ISO	International Organization for Standardization (quality assurance standard)
ISP	International Student Programs
ITAS	Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme
ITS	Information Technology Services
LD	Learning Development
LLB	Bachelor of Laws
PASS	Peer Assisted Study Sessions Personal Academic Monitoring
PAM	Personal Academic Monitoring
PI	Performance Indicator
PGC	Postgraduate Coursework Students
PGR	Postgraduate Research Students
POD	First Year Law Student Cohort
PODS	Professional & Organisational Development Services
SEDLO	Student Equity and Diversity Liaison Officer (now called Student Support Advisor)
SEQ	Student Experience Questionnaire
SHARP	Students Health Alliance for Rural Populations [Health & Behavioural Sciences]
SOLS Mail	Student Online Services Mail [used to send messages to students /not email]
SSL	Student Support for Learning Subcommittee (SSL)
T&L	Teaching and Learning
UG	Undergraduate
UEC	University Education Committee
UOW	University of Wollongong
UniAdvice	Marketing, recruitment, and admissions unit
WIC	Woolyungah Indigenous Centre
WUSA	Wollongong University Student Association (undergraduates)

Academic Transition Support for first-year undergraduate students from letter of offer to the end of first year of study

Self Assessment Form for 2008

Section 1

Name of person completing self assessment:
Faculty/Unit:
List all Academic Transition Support Programs and/or Services supporting the rating measure under each performance indicator:
Period covered by self assessment (specify if not 2008 calendar year):

Section 2

Performance Indicator 1: Aligned plans and policies are in place and implemented *[Place an X against the rating measures]*

Plans and policies in place		Implementation	
1. Not at all		1. Not at all	
2. Limited		2. Limited	
3. Moderate		3. Moderate	
4. Considerable		3. Considerable	
5. Comprehensive		5. Comprehensive	
Rationale <u>[Using dot points]</u> , indicate key reasons for this rating]:		Rationale <u>[Using dots points]</u> indicate key reasons for this rating]:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • 	
Cite evidence [provide name and web reference for plans & surveys; actual data tables may be used for longitudinal studies]:		Cite evidence [provide name and web reference for plans & surveys; actual data tables may be used for longitudinal studies]:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	

Performance Indicator 2: Planning and delivery of programs/activities are coordinated *[Place an X against the rating measures]*

Planning coordinated		Delivery coordinated	
1. Not at all		1. Not at all	
2. Limited		2. Limited	

3. Moderate		3. Moderate	
4. Considerable		4. Considerable	
5. Comprehensive		5. Comprehensive	
Rationale [Using dot points, indicate key reasons for this rating]::		Rationale [Using dot points, indicate key reasons for this rating]:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • 	
Cite evidence [provide name and web reference for plans & surveys; actual data tables may be used for longitudinal studies]:		Cite evidence [provide name and web reference for plans & surveys; actual data tables may be used for longitudinal studies]:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	

Performance Indicator 3: Programs/activities are informed by recognised pedagogical principles. [Place an X against the rating measure]

Programs/activities informed by recognised pedagogical principles	
1. Not at all	
2. Limited	
3. Moderate	
4. Considerable	
5. Comprehensive	
Rationale [Using dot points, indicate key reasons for this rating]:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	
Cite evidence [provide name and web reference for plans & surveys; actual data tables may be used for longitudinal studies]:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • 	

Performance Indicator 4: Processes are in place and used to support students at their point of need. [Place an X against the rating measures]

Processes in place		Needs addressed	
1. None		1. Not at all	
2. Limited		2. Limited	
3. Moderate		3. Moderate	
4. Extensive		4. Extensive	
5. Comprehensive		5. Systematic	
Rationale [Using dot points, indicate key reasons for this rating]:		Rationale [Using dot points, indicate key reasons for this rating]:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • 	

•	•
Cite evidence [provide name and web reference for plans & surveys; actual data tables may be used for longitudinal studies]:	Cite evidence [provide name and web reference for plans & surveys; actual data tables may be used for longitudinal studies]:
•	•
•	•
•	•

Performance Indicator 5: Programs/activities are promoted to, accessible to and used by students. [Place an X against the rating measures]

Promotion		Accessibility		Usage	
1. Not at all		1. Not at all		1. Not at all	
2. Limited		2. Restricted		2. Limited	
3. Moderate		3. Working hours		3. Moderate	
4. Considerable		4. Extended hours		4. Considerable	
5. Comprehensive		5. 24/7		5. Comprehensive	
Rationale [Using dot points, indicate key reasons for this rating]:		Rationale [Using dot points, indicate key reasons for this rating]:		Rationale [Using dot points, indicate key reasons for this rating]:	
•		•		•	
Cite evidence [provide name and web reference for plans & surveys; actual data tables may be used for longitudinal studies]:		Cite evidence [provide name and web reference for plans & surveys; actual data tables may be used for longitudinal studies]:		Cite evidence [provide name and web reference for plans & surveys; actual data tables may be used for longitudinal studies]:	
•		•		•	
•		•		•	
•		•		•	

Performance Indicator 6: Programs/activities meet student needs. [Place an X against the rating measure]

Programs/activities meet student needs	
1. Not at all	
2. Limited	
3. Moderate	
4. Considerable	
5. Comprehensive	
Rationale [Using dot points, indicate key reasons for this rating]:	
•	
•	
Cite evidence [provide name and web reference for plans & surveys; actual data tables may be used for longitudinal studies]:	
•	
•	

Performance Indicator 7: Programs/activities are resourced.
[Place an X against the rating measure]

Programs/activities are resourced	
1. Not at all	
2. Limited	
3. Moderate	
4. Considerable	
5. Comprehensive	
Rationale [Using dot points, indicate key reasons for this rating]:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • 	
Cite evidence [provide name and web reference for plans & surveys; actual data tables may be used for longitudinal studies]:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • 	

Performance Indicator 8: Professional development and support is available to staff, accessed and informs practice. *[Place an X against the rating measures]*

Availability		Access		Effect on practice	
1. Not at all		1. Not at all		1. Not at all	
2. Limited		2. Limited		2. Limited	
3. Moderate		3. Moderate		3. Moderate	
4. Considerable		4. Considerable		4. Considerable	
5. Comprehensive		5. Comprehensive		5. Comprehensive	
Rationale [Using dot points, indicate key reasons for this rating]:		Rationale [Using dot points, indicate key reasons for this rating]:		Rationale [Using dot points, indicate key reasons for this rating]:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • 	
Cite evidence [provide name and web reference for plans & surveys; actual data tables may be used for longitudinal studies]:		Cite evidence [provide name and web reference for plans & surveys; actual data tables may be used for longitudinal studies]:		Cite evidence [provide name and web reference for plans & surveys; actual data tables may be used for longitudinal studies]:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • 	

Performance Indicator 9: The effectiveness of programs/activities is monitored and evaluated. [Place an X against the rating measures]

Monitoring		Evaluation	
1. Not at all		1. Not at all	
2. Limited		2. Limited	
3. Moderate		3. Moderate	
4. Extensive		4. Extensive	
5. Systematic		5. Systematic	
Rationale [Using dot points, indicate key reasons for this rating]:		Rationale [Using dot points, indicate key reasons for this rating]:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • 	
Cite evidence [provide name and web reference for plans & surveys; actual data tables may be used for longitudinal studies]:		Cite evidence [provide name and web reference for plans & surveys; actual data tables may be used for longitudinal studies]:	

Performance Indicator 10: Evaluation of feedback and results is integrated into planning for continuous improvement purposes. [Place an X against the rating measure]

Evaluation of feedback and results integrated into planning for continuous improvement purposes	
1. Not at all	
2. Limited	
3. Moderate	
4. Considerable	
5. Systematic	
Rationale [Using dot points, indicate key reasons for this rating]:	
Cite evidence [provide name and web reference for plans & surveys; actual data tables may be used for longitudinal studies]:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • 	

UOW/UTAS Trial Benchmarking Project 2009 Benchmarking Theme: Academic Transition Support

Briefing of Project Leaders and FEC Chairs, 23 March 2009

The second AUQA audit cycle, which began in 2008, places stronger emphasis on accountability in the HE sector and on institutional standards and performance outcomes, with attention to benchmarking activities and their effect on standards and outcomes.

The AUQA Reports for both UTAS and UOW in the first audit cycle contained similar messages regarding benchmarking. The UOW Report emphasised the need to “... *explore institutional relationships ... that will enable benchmarking activities for monitoring of standards and quality improvement purposes*”. The UTAS Report noted that the “... *'UTAS Quality System' could benefit from the University... benchmarking itself strategically, and more widely against another highly regarded international university closer to home, ideally one which is also similar in 'size, vision, status and location' and with shared aspects of academic profile*”.

As part of their respective quality improvement programs and in view of their next AUQA audits (in 2011 for both), UOW and UTAS initiated a benchmarking relationship in 2007 and, after scoping of the purpose and theme area in 2008, agreed to undertake a trial benchmarking project on *Academic Transition Support*.

UTAS and UOW share similarities in terms of performance rankings, provision of a distinctive student experience and the integration of a global learning perspective for students. For both, the benchmarking partnership is seen as being beneficial for examining strategies, processes and outcomes for learning and teaching and as a tool for goal setting and establishing priorities for change and resource allocation.

Trial Benchmarking Project

Both universities have agreed to conduct a self assessment, followed by a joint peer review assessment in the area of academic transition support. The project outcomes are expected to include: development of knowledge and experience in the benchmarking process; comparison of processes to identify good practice and identification of areas for improvement.

Academic Transition Support

“Academic transition support” has been defined by the benchmarking partners as a broad term that can cover the facilitation of student transition into, through and out of the university learning environment. This includes developing aspirations before applying to study at university, providing pathways into university, facilitating adjustment to academic life (including academic, administrative and social processes), supporting the development of academic literacies and supporting the transition of students into further study and/or the workplace.

For the purposes of the trial, academic transition support will be limited to all first-year students undertaking undergraduate programs onshore (including domestic, international and Indigenous cohorts) for the period from the letter of offer to the end of the first year of study.

Self assessment process

The self assessment is a critical component of the benchmarking process and project team leaders have been selected because of their operational responsibility, institutional perspective and their experience in developing policy, strategy and quality assurance.

The focus of the self assessment will be on academic transition strategies (including strategies to support the development of discipline-specific literacies and foundational knowledge, study skills, information literacy and e-literacy), although interconnected aspects of administrative, personal and social support which impact on academic outcomes will also be covered.

The self assessment will involve an evaluation using a rating template of academic transition' planning, policy and practice against the agreed performance indicators developed by the partners. Evidence and a rationale for each rating will be required as part of this process.

The results of the self assessment will be 'workshopped' by the project team leaders in order to establish a common institutional assessment for sharing and peer reviewing with the other benchmarking partner.

Data requirements

If statistics are required for this self assessment and are not held in your area please contact Dale Dumpleton at UOW [daled@uow.edu.au or 4221 4748] or Sara Booth at UTAS [sara.booth@utas.edu.au or 6324 3391].

Project Team Leader Responsibilities

Team Leaders are required to:

1. attend Briefing and Project Launch on 23 March
2. advise if training to complete the self assessment form is required for staff from unit
3. check if statistical data is held locally and if not advise requirements
4. arrange for team self assessment to be completed and returned by 30 April
5. attend Project Team Workshop on 18 May, to prepare UOW institutional response
6. provide feedback on UTAS institutional response
7. attend Peer Assessment Workshop on 16 June if required

2009 Project Timeline

23 March	Briefing of project team leaders & launch of project Other: Workshop for nominated staff from units as required; Briefing - UEC
30 April	Team self assessments completed and submitted
18 May	Project team workshop [using compilation of self-review report against benchmarks] Institutional response completed and approved by DVCA
End May	Institutional response circulated to other institution
16 June	Peer assessment workshop
August/Sep	Reporting back to Project Team Leaders, UEC, Deans etc with summaries of outcomes, strengths and areas for improvement

Guideline to Performance Indicators

The Good Practice statements below indicate the area of focus under each indicator. Examples of the types of data that may support ratings are also provided.

Performance Indicator 1: Aligned plans and policies are in place and implemented

Good Practice: The institution has established, well understood governance mechanisms and policies that guide the selection, implementation, utilisation/deployment of services and programs to support students academic transition in the first year of study.

Examples of Data Collection: Strategic and operational/functional plans; policy statements; progress reports

Performance Indicator 2: Planning and delivery of programs/activities are coordinated

Good Practice: The coordination of the first year student academic transition is aligned with institutional learning goals and staff are resourced and trained. The coordination is implemented, maintained, and supported efficiently and effectively through, for example, *planned* activities between different programs/services and the *delivery* of activities which are co-ordinated across different programs/services.

Examples of Data Collection: Plans showing *planning* and *delivery* of various activities/programs; reports on coordinated activities

Performance Indicator 3: Programs/activities are informed by recognised pedagogical principles

Good Practice: Sound pedagogical principles effectively underpin and are applied to teaching and learning programs and activities so that they are accordingly informed by sound educational research and good practice and aligned to the institution's plans.

Examples of Data Collection: Documented rationale underpinning program/activities (demonstrating the latest alignment with university's learning & teaching strategies); guidelines for the pedagogical application of teaching/learning activities which support students in their first year of transition; examples of good practice in use; surveys or research to inform these pedagogical principles.

Performance Indicator 4: Processes are in place and used to support students at their point of need

Good Practice Statement:

Sustained, well developed and supportive processes have been developed to address students' needs at critical points in their first year of study. For example, administrative practices at the point of entry and feedback loops to identify and address needs at critical stages.

Examples of Data Collection: Transition timelines/plans, student feedback data; student retention data/analysis, assessment/diagnosis process planning

Performance Indicator 5: Programs/activities are promoted to, accessible to and used by students

Good Practice: Students are actively and effectively informed about, given timely access to and utilise support programs

Examples of Data Collection

MyLO data, IT/online resources and activity statements, promotion /communication mechanisms, participation rates (not everything is online)

Performance Indicator 6: Programs/activities meet student needs

Good Practice: Programs/activities have the capacity, through their design and content, to provide students with relevant and effective support and information, taking into account student feedback.

Examples of Data Collection

Teaching and learning reports, student surveys

Performance Indicator 7: Programs/activities are resourced

Good Practice: Programs/activities have the technical and educational resources required to effectively support and improve student learning.

Examples of Data Collection: Teaching and learning reports, staff feedback reports on access to technical and educational support and resources

Performance Indicator 8: Professional development and support is available to staff, accessed and informs practice

Good Practice: Strategies are in place to ensure staff have access to professional development and other support services (for example CEDIR, IT and library) to assist them in informing their practice and to promote the innovative use of pedagogical applications.

Examples of Data Collection: Professional development strategy/program, participation rates, reports on collaborations with support services, teaching awards

Performance Indicator 9: The effectiveness of programs/activities is monitored and evaluated

Good Practice: A systematic, evaluative process which uses a range of feedback mechanisms is in place to inform the continual improvement plans for the programs/activities. This process is continually revisited and realigned to the institution's quality assurance indicators and updated to improve student learning outcomes.

Examples of Data Collection: Strategic/operational plans, guidelines on monitoring and evaluation, student reports on teaching and learning, monitoring committees

Performance Indicator 10: Evaluation of feedback and results is integrated into planning for continuous improvement purposes

Good Practice: Planning for programs and activities is systematically informed and updated in the light of performance outcomes and feedback data.

Examples of Data Collection: Annual planning frameworks and performance review reports, iterative development and enhancement of programs

Glossary of Terms (used in benchmarking project)

Academic transition: for the purposes of this project covers the facilitation of student transition into, through and out of the university learning environment. It includes developing aspirations before applying to study at university, providing pathways into university, facilitating adjustment to academic life (including academic, administrative and social processes); supporting the development of academic literacies; and supporting the transition of students into further study and/or the workplace. (Refer to page 1 of the Self Assessment Guidelines for the project limitations).

ACODE: Australasian Council on Open, Distance and E-learning. The benchmarking process that is being applied mirrors that used to develop the ACODE benchmarks.

Australian Universities Quality Agency Pty Ltd. AUQA is the principal national quality assurance agency in higher education with the responsibility of providing public assurance of the quality of Australia's universities and other institutions of higher education, and assisting in enhancing the academic quality of these institutions.

Benchmark: Standard or performance level that represents good practice.

Benchmarking is a tool for identifying, adapting and implementing outstanding practices in order to achieve performance improvement. Benchmarking comprises measurement (the what) and practices (the how). And it tells us how well we are performing, defines how good we need to be (a practical vision), how to get there (a road map) and it needs to link to our mission, vision and values. (Ref. Anton Benc, Business Excellence Australia (2003) cited in ACODE, 2007: 3).

Good practice: A technique, method, procedure or process which is shown, by performance data and benchmarking, to set a standard for achieving objectives effectively and efficiently with demonstrable quality improvement.

Peer Review: Assessment of quality by recognised fellow practitioners in the relevant field.

Pedagogical practices: Developing teaching, learning and assessment strategies which reflect the multiple opportunities in which students can demonstrate their learning.

Performance indicators: These identify the key performance areas that would indicate realisation of good practice.

Performance measure: A five point rating scale used for self-assessment and comparison purposes for each performance indicator. Level 5 indicates good practice.

Rationale: This is used to explain key considerations (reasons) for the rating measure.

Self assessment: An assessment against each of the performance measures conducted in a collaborative and collegial way.

Faculties and Units

At UOW, the project included the Academic Services Division – made up of the Library, Centre for Education Development and Interactive Resources (CEDIR), Learning Development, Woolyungah Indigenous Centre (WIC) and Student Services; Information Technology Services (ITS); and the Academic Registrar's Division (ARD).

The faculties which participated in the project were:

- *Arts*: School of English Literatures & Philosophy; School of History & Politics; School of Social Sciences, Media & Communication
- *Commerce*: School of Accounting & Finance; School of Economics; School of Management & Marketing
- *Creative Arts*: School of Music and Drama; School of Art & Design; School of Journalism & Creative Writing
- *Education*: Faculty of Education
- *Engineering*: School of Civil, Mining & Environmental Engineering; School of Engineering Physics; School of Mechanical, Materials & Mechatronic Engineering
- *Health & Behavioural Sciences*: School of Health Sciences; School of Nursing, Midwifery & Indigenous Health; School of Psychology
- *Informatics*: School of Electrical, Computer & Telecommunications Engineering; School of Computer Science & Software Engineering; School of Information Systems & Technology; School of Mathematics & Applied Statistics
- *Law*: Faculty of Law
- *Science*: School of Biological Sciences; School of Chemistry, School of Earth & Environmental Sciences.

For UTAS, the project included the Division of the PVC (Students and Education) and the Library, Student Services, Centre for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching (CALT) and International Student Services.

The faculties which participated in the project were:

- *Science, Engineering and Technology*: School of Agricultural Science; School of Architecture & Design; School of Chemistry; School of Computing & Information Systems; School of Earth Sciences; School of Engineering; School of Geography and Environmental Studies; School of Mathematics and Physics; School of Plant Science; School of Psychology; School of Zoology
- *Arts*: Conservatorium of Music; Riawunna; School of Asian Languages & Studies; School of English, Journalism & European Languages; School of Government; School of History & Classics; School of Philosophy; School of Sociology & Social Work; School of Visual & Performing Arts; Tasmanian School of Art
- *Business*: School of Accounting & Corporate Governance; School of Economics & Finance; School of Management
- *Education*: School of Education
- *Health Science*: School of Human Life Sciences; School of Medicine; School of Nursing & Midwifery; School of Pharmacy
- *Law*: School of Law

The institute which participated in the project was: *Australian Maritime College (AMC)*

UOW Academic Transition Support – Background Information

23 September 2008

Academic transition support has been chosen as a benchmarking theme by the Universities of Tasmania and Wollongong. To assist us to finalise the exact scope of the benchmarking exercise, we have agreed that it would be useful to exchange further information about our respective programs and activities in this area under the headings below.

UOW's general approach to “academic transition support”

UOW takes a broad, developmental approach to academic transition which recognises the need to engage students before they start at UOW and to support them into, through and out of the learning environment.

This approach is structured to encourage aspirations before application to UOW through activities that take place within school settings as well as on campus. Planned experiences at enrolment, orientation and during the first (Autumn) session also support engagement within the faculties and across UOW. Personal and social transition is recognised as playing a significant role in the process of successful academic transition and experiences that combine all of these aspects are provided for beginning students.

The UOW approach assumes that, on entry, students may not have all the skills required for successful study and that the University must provide experiences that facilitate their development. Academic skills are developed primarily through an integrated curriculum developed by the faculties in consultation with professional units (e.g. Learning Development and the Library) and delivered in the context of the relevant discipline. However, the University also funds a range of centralised academic and student services to address the initial and ongoing transition needs of students.

[Given the scope of the benchmarking exercise, this report does not cover the wide range of programs and activities designed to support the transition of UOW students into the workplace.]

Roles and responsibilities of professional units

Faculties

Faculties play a critical role in all aspects of academic transition support, including outreach, bridging programs, enrolment, orientation and academic skill development through the curriculum.

Sub Deans for each faculty provide students with advice and information on many aspects of the University Rules and Regulations as well as information relating to their degree. Their responsibilities typically include:

- reviewing and monitoring the progress of students within the faculty
- running a system for counselling students, including students whose results and/or progress towards a degree/diploma are not satisfactory
- where appropriate, monitoring and supervising the student advisory and schools' liaison services of the Faculty

Each faculty has its own student services centre, supported by administrative staff, whose focus is to provide support and advice to students regarding all aspects of their involvement with the university.

Student Services

The Student Services arm of the Academic Services Division provides a range of programs and services to support students. Included under the unit are Learning Development (LD), the PASS Program, faculty-

based Student Support Advisors (known as SEDLOs at time of study) and Careers, Disabilities and Counselling Services. The unit uses a broad definition of transition in their Business Plan:

“Provide services, programs and resources that facilitate student transition into, through, and out of the university learning environment. Specifically, they foster student progress, retention and development of the UOW Graduate Qualities. These services, programs and resources focus on the student experience, and are often designed and delivered in collaboration with faculty and other university staff”.

Learning Development (LD)

The role of LD in academic transition is to support students' development of academic language and learning. It helps students acculturate to specific academic learning environments, focusing on the language communication (academic literacy) required for successful completion of tertiary studies. LD's approach is multi-layered and interconnected, and includes:

- a strategic and collaborative curriculum-integration program
- an extra-curricular program of workshops and individual consultations
- resources for academic language and learning development (delivered online, in-curricula and/or through extra-curricular classes)

Library

The Library's support for academic transition is embodied in its vision statement to “develop education and training programs to equip staff and students with the skills for lifelong learning” and to “contribute to the enhancement of a knowledge-based society”.

The Library recognises the diversity of information retrieval skills of new students. To ensure that all new students are prepared to commence their academic life, a compulsory foundation level information literacy program (ILIP) must be completed in the first session. The program exposes students to basic, but critical skills to locate, source and evaluate information. The intention is that students will be positioned to interpret reading lists contained within their subject outlines and commence the process of locating information sources for their first assignments.

Building on the foundation program, Faculty Librarians in consultation with teaching staff (and Learning Developers) provide customised information skills classes that support the direct learning outcomes of individual subjects. These integrated information literacy programs aim to improve students' confidence and competency in dealing with scholarly information within a highly contextualised frame. Faculty Librarians can contribute to curriculum planning, define relevant information literacy learning objectives, plan effective learning activities and develop integrated assessment tasks; providing a scaffolded approach to skill development.

Other units providing academic transition support (not exhaustive)

Woolyungah Indigenous Centre: provides an alternative admission program, in conjunction with faculties, for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander students as well as providing support to Indigenous students undertaking undergraduate and postgraduate education.

Wollongong College Australia: offers a range of English language and university preparation courses for international and Australian students, providing pathways to UOW (and other institutions).

ARD: coordinates orientation at a central level and manages a process for monitoring student progress and facilitating intervention.

Research Student Centre: provides service to students and staff on all Higher Degree Research (HDR) candidature matters, including: orientation, enrolment and re-enrolment, leave, HDR student conference, supervision, progress reports, scholarships, thesis submission and examination, and information workshops for students and staff.

Relevant policies and procedures

Plans	Purpose
UOW Strategic Plan 2008-10 – Goal 4: “Students engaged with learning and University life”	Including strategy to “identify and respond to key support needs of students, including those from equity groups”
Faculty and (relevant) Professional Unit annual Plans	Including specific strategies for student support
Policies	
Code of Practice - Honours	Including responsibility of Honours supervisors to monitor and support their students in researching and producing an Honours report
Code of Practice – Supervision	Including responsibility of HDR student supervisors to provide help, support and mentoring
Code of Practice – Teaching and Assessment	Including responsibility of staff teaching courses (U/G & P/G) to, among other things: be available for consultation; foster the development of the UOW Graduate Qualities; refer students for support where required; recognise and accommodate diversity; provide appropriate feedback to students
Information Literacy Integration Policy	The purpose of this Policy is to communicate aims and implementation strategies for a more systematic process for integrating information literacy programs into the curricula. http://www.library.UOW.edu.au/content/groups/public/@web/@lib/documents/doc/UOW026890.pdf
Procedures	
Subject approval process	Identification of key points in a degree program where students are likely to be at a transition point (eg first year in an undergraduate program or postgraduate program, returning to study a, transfer from another tertiary institution, recognition of prior learning). Identification of these key points leads to a process whereby faculty staff and LD staff meet to discuss support options.

Note: A detailed matrix, mapping relevant programs and activities at UOW, was included in the document exchanged with UTAS in September 2008 (but has been omitted from this report). A copy is available from SPQ.

UOW Self Assessment Ratings by Unit/Faculty

0. Not applicable/ not answered	Performance Indicators																	
	1		2		3	4		5			6	7	8			9		10
1. Not at all																		
2. Limited																		
3. Moderate																		
4. Considerable	a	b	a	b	a	a	b	a	b	c	a	a	a	b	c	a	b	a
5. Comprehensive																		
Library																		
Learning Development																		
Student Services																		
WIC																		
CEDIR																		
ARD/UniAdvice																		
International Student Programs																		
ITS																		
Regional campuses																		
Faculty of Art																		
Faculty of Commerce																		
Faculty of Creative Arts																		
Faculty of Education																		
Faculty of Engineering																		
Faculty of Health & Behavioural Sciences																		
Faculty of Informatics																		
Faculty of Law																		
Faculty of Science																		
UOW																		

UOW Institutional Self Assessment Report

1: Aligned plans and policies are in place and implemented

Good Practice: The institution has established, well understood governance mechanisms and policies that guide the selection, implementation, utilisation/deployment of services and programs to support students academic transition in the first year of study.

(a) in place

1 Not at all	2 Limited	3 Moderate	4 Considerable	5 Comprehensive
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(b) implemented

1 Not at all	2 Limited	3 Moderate	4 Considerable	5 Comprehensive
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Rationale

- UOW's Strategic Plan 2008-10 includes a student specific goal supported by a range of objectives and strategies including *"Implement a coordinated and structured approach to engaging and supporting first year students"*; this strategy is being implemented through ongoing action, with recent attention focused on improving enrolment and orientation programs, but it is not a standard reference point for policy development and action across the board
- UOW's Strategic Plan 2008-10 also includes the following strategy: *"Support the engagement of international students in University life"*; whilst this strategy has not been systematically implemented, the new International Student Experience Project will aim to address this issue
- In general, faculty and unit operational plans are aligned with UOW's Strategic Plan
- The provision of support services to students is guided by UOW's policy framework, noting there are no specific policies and guidelines focusing on first year students
- Clear and well-established academic governance procedures and processes are in place. Policies and plans pertaining to the University's goals for (undergraduate) students are developed at the University Education Committee (UEC) subcommittee level and approved by Academic Senate
- The established link between the UEC and Faculty Education Committees (FECs) facilitates the implementation of plans and policies
- Generally, faculties reported sound integration of planning and implementation of activities and programs around admissions, enrolment and orientation with central administrative units
- Representation from the Library, Learning Development (LD) and Centre for Educational Development and Interactive Resources (CEDIR) on Faculty Committees and in the course/subject approval process facilitates alignment of plans and policies with practice
- The *Code of Practice-Students* and the *Graduate Qualities*, as reflected in Subject Outlines, convey to new students the University's expectations of them as independent learners
- Disability support programs are well supported by policy and procedures
- *Respect for Diversity Policy* and *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy* provide the framework for academic transition support for Indigenous students

Good Practice

- Strong central planning around Enrolment and Orientation across the University
- University policies listed in all subject outlines

Areas for Improvement

- UOW does not have a holistic policy framework for first year student support (covering diverse cohorts, eg, international students, equity cohorts and non-school-leavers, including those with advanced standing and/or mature age) linked to the relevant Strategic Goals
- Few Faculties/Units specifically articulate a commitment to academic transition support. (Two exceptions are the Library and Commerce which have statements that reflect their own individual missions)
- A lot of activity around academic transition support at the faculty level falls outside a planning framework (“inside peoples’ heads” and “knowledge (given) to some ...others don’t have”)
- UOW’s planning and policy framework does not effectively take account of the impact of social aspects on support for first year students (e.g. successful programs at the residences not identified for adaptation in central strategies and policies)
- Faculties and Units do not currently monitor specific targets for academic transition support and needs of first year students in their annual plans

2: Planning and delivery of programs/activities are coordinated

Good Practice: The coordination of the first year student academic transition is aligned with institutional learning goals and staff are resourced and trained. The coordination is implemented, maintained, and supported efficiently and effectively through, for example, planned activities between different programs/services and the delivery of activities which are co-ordinated across different programs/services.

(a) Planning

1 Not at all	2 Limited	3 Moderate	4 Considerable	5 Comprehensive
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(b) Delivery

1 Not at all	2 Limited	3 Moderate	4 Considerable	5 Comprehensive
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Rationale

Coordination occurs at both central and faculty/unit levels:

- Key programs and activities (orientation, enrolment, admissions) are centrally coordinated and resourced by Academic Registrar’s Division (ARD) and UniAdvice and coordinated with other units/faculties; for example, the UOW Orientation Committee has Library, Student Services and Faculty representation
- The Academic Services Division (ASD) is comprised of the Library, CEDIR, Learning Development and the Woolyungah Indigenous Centre (WIC); reporting to the DVC (Academic), these four centrally organised and resourced units provide a comprehensive service to students, staff and the university community on issues related to all teaching and learning matters, including academic transition. The ASD network meets 2-3 times per year

- ASD faculty representatives (specifically, the Library, CEDIR and Learning Development) are required to sign off on all new subject proposals and amendments. They are also invited to provide comment, input and resourcing for all new courses
- Learning Development (LD) is a co-ordinating centre for policy implementation and practice in academic language and learning; LD collaborates with faculties to embed opportunities for student learning and language development within the curriculum
- Academic staff are members of key UOW teaching and learning Committees and student support activities (SSL, UEC, EPRS, Senate)

At the faculty/unit level:

- Each Faculty Education Committee (FEC) is responsible for the coordination of programs and degrees (including first year), and only subordinate to the Faculty Executive in decision-making
- In some faculties, specific working groups are charged with particular programs/services. For example: Law's First Year Working Party (FYWP) provides a forum for subject coordinators to raise issues, reflect on programs, propose changes and recommend actions; and the Commerce Academic Integrity Online (CAIO) Working Party oversees the development and delivery of an academic integrity orientation module to all newly enrolled Commerce students. These working parties usually include the membership of the Library, CEDIR and/or Learning Development.
- For WIC its planning days provide the means to coordinate its activities with outcomes incorporated into an annual calendar and action plan

Delivery:

- Faculties coordinate academic delivery through Academic Program Advisers. For example: in Health & Behavioural Sciences, each academic program has a nominated coordinator who manages entry, programs, advanced standing and atypical degree progression; in Law, the First Year Coordinator (and Chair of FYWP) is the central contact for issues arising across subjects; and in Arts, a designated academic coordinator is responsible for curriculum development in the degree offered at the South and Southern Highlands Education Centres
- Faculty student services are provided through a central point of contact (Student Service Centres). Other student-centred initiatives include: SHARP (in H&BS) which supports rural and remote students by coordinating activities, providing networking opportunities and acting as a key source of support; and in the Faculty of Arts, FASSA, the staff & student association provides support to Faculty of Arts students
- Unit coordinators include: Indigenous Student Support Officers and ITAS Coordinator (from WIC); the Library's Promotions and Partnerships Coordinator (who works with teams to help design and deliver programs); Faculty Librarians; the Learning Support Librarian; and Education Centre Managers (who coordinate delivery locally)

Good Practice

- The Faculty of Law has a specific first year plan and has created a common first year cohort, regardless of LLB degree (double or single), in which students do common subjects in Autumn and Spring session. All LLB first year students are allocated for first session to a group or 'POD' and attend all classes for all subjects together with their group. Students determine their own timetable in second session with some choosing to try and stay together with their group
- The use of central and faculty committees has been effective in coordinating a range of programs and services
- The 'Get Started @ UOW' Program has delivered recognised improvements to Orientation by providing an active coordination model (planned during 2008/implemented 2009)

Areas for Improvement

- Coordination across programs is not a strong feature and, as a first step, an organisational map of units and programs is required to raise awareness and assist communication

- First year coordinators exist in most but not all faculties and their roles and value are not consistently defined (e.g. by Faculty Education Committees) and they lack opportunities to meet and share ideas
- The coordination of Orientation, through ARD, does not include Education Centres and units such as Woolyungah, resulting in specific student needs (i.e. international and Indigenous students and those arriving in Spring Session) not been accommodated in the range of Orientation activities offered
- A range of services are available to assist international students but the lack of a coordinating framework/directory can result in students 'running' between UniAdvice, Student Central, Student Support Advisors, Sub-Deans, Student Advocacy Service (run by the student union WUSA) and the ISP Office.
- A planning and coordination framework for the suite of programs offered to first year students , (identifying the critical stages, before and after Orientation, and covering, in particular, students with advanced standing, Indigenous and international Students)
- At Faculty level, not all policies have clear procedural pathways for implementation. For example, in relation to equity targets, the only way the Faculty can identify and recruit these students is via early entry

3: Programs/activities are informed by recognised pedagogical principles

Good Practice: Sound pedagogical principles effectively underpin and are applied to teaching and learning programs and activities so that they are accordingly informed by sound educational research and good practice and aligned to the institution's plans.

1 Not at all	2 Limited	3 Moderate	4 Considerable	5 Comprehensive
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Rationale

- Student support programs are informed by a range of recognised learning theories, literature reviews, best practice frameworks and collaboration across the Academic Services Division
- ALTC 2008 citations indicate there are many examples of innovation and good practice in this area. (UOW received 10 citations for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning 2008)
- A module on pedagogy is contained within the University Learning & Teaching course and CEDIR provides one-to-one consultation on pedagogy
- Faculty of Arts 100 level subjects are seen as a foundation year of study, which is also reflected in teaching delivery and assessment. Some subjects deliberately and explicitly scaffold student language and learning development through the assessment design and schedule
- Graduate Qualities are beginning to reshape the pedagogy for all Arts subjects including 100 level by clearly integrating qualities, learning outcomes and assessment (but still a work in progress)
- WIC provides a holistic learning environment for Indigenous students, which incorporates academic, social and cultural support for students who may not have accessed University through the traditional Year 12 pathway
- Commerce has engaged a T&L consultant; pedagogical principles are defined, documented and approved at the creation and review points of subject content and assessment
- Law has integrated learning outcomes for all first year subjects based on critical approaches, legal knowledge, legal skills and generic skills; each subject highlights in bold the aspects of each of these areas most relevant to that subject
- New curriculum review procedures developed in 2008 for implementation in 2009 are still to be tested

Good Practice

- Learning Development's faculty program specifically targets subjects, programs and courses where students are experiencing a significant academic transition. This program promotes practices that are curriculum-integrated, discipline-specific and student-centred. Discipline-specific teaching is based on principles of 'scaffolding' students' learning, 'constructivist' theories of learning and development, and a social-functional theory of language. The collaborative, curriculum-integrated approach has multiple benefits – students' needs are interpreted and met in a meaningful context at a receptive point of need; there is immediate 'triangulation' of interpretation and feedback between students, LD and the faculty; the target for teaching and learning is broad and inclusive, such that best practice in this area leads to significant professional development of staff across the Academic Services Division and the faculties; and it represents recognised best practice for our profession [(i) see page 17]
- ILIP - Information literacy programs and activities developed in line with the Australian and New Zealand Information Literacy Framework and Australian and New Zealand Institute for Information Literacy (ANZIIL) and Council of Australian Librarians (CAUL) - cater to a range of learning styles e.g. face to face, hands-on, online, print, visual etc. ILIP is compulsory, available off-shore, extensively reviewed 2008 and externally validated
- In Education, practice is informed by research into teaching and learning in general and into the first year experience in particular – it also shapes planning and delivery of activities and learning experiences. Course structures reflect either a vertical or spiral integration of ideas and concepts, taking students from the simpler to complex, from generic to specialised

Areas for Improvement

- In Learning Development, individual consultations have a significant impact on individual learners, and as such, are worth preserving and strengthening, but feedback to the faculty is delayed or limited by various constraints
- The Academic Services Division is generally viewed by faculties as an integral part of subject and curriculum development, however, a number of faculties felt they could make better use of these services
- Examples of innovation and good practice exist but not across the board – some pockets of misunderstanding and resistance suggest the need to better promote good practice through FEC network

4: Processes are in place and used to support students at their point of need

Good Practice: Sustained, well developed and supportive processes have been developed to address students' needs at critical points in their first year of study. For example, administrative practices at the point of entry and feedback loops to identify and address needs at critical stages.

(a) in place

1	2	3	4	5
None	Limited	Moderate	Extensive	Comprehensive

(b) used to support student at their point of need

1	2	3	4	5
None	Limited	Moderate	Extensive	Comprehensive

Rationale

Processes in place to support students:

- Location of services seen as important in assisting students, e.g. the central location of services like

Careers Service, Faculty Student Service Centres and Student Central. The latter is a central service facility for all students, which covers fee and enrolment management, enquiries, feedback and referral

- A range of services to support students at critical times is provided through specialised units such as the Library, ITS and WIC. The Library, for instance, has extensive opening hours (80 hrs p/week); offers a considerable range of help services (mediated and unmediated) regardless of location; and conducts mid-session and technology orientation. ITS provides support for enrolments, assistance with computer account creation and management, email and internet access and extended lab hours with support staff at central facility. Mentoring is provided by WIC academic staff which is flexible and in response to student need and is built into academic workloads
- Most services are provided across the University campuses and Education Centres, for example the Library, Learning Development, PASS, Counselling and Student Support Advisors
- Education Centre Managers are available specifically to support all students
- Orientation program activities support new students on arrival
- Some faculties employ diagnostic processes to help identify potential problems and build a supportive culture for students. For example, Informatics uses the recruitment process and early assessments to identify students 'at risk'. Early Entry applicants are also contacted personally and monitored. Creative Arts use mid session reviews to help monitor student progress. Education contacts all first year students with average marks below 50% in first session subjects to determine what support can be given
- The Faculties of Informatics and Commerce both have a dedicated Faculty International Unit
- A clear procedure for grievance processes is in place for students and is referred to in subject outlines and Faculty Handbooks
- A system of referrals operates on different levels to ensure students receive the most appropriate assistance. For example the Course Progress Policy (administered by ARD) is a formal referral to LD for official intervention for issues related to academic literacy. Faculties make referrals to specific services and personnel as required (e.g. Learning Development, Student Support Advisor, Counselling Service) and self-referral is well-promoted to students encouraging them to make use of the LD service
- A 'Welcome to Wollongong' civic reception and international student festival have been conducted for the past two years with broad community support – seen as a symbolic welcome and transition to living and working in the Illawarra and a way to promote harmony between international students and the broader community
- SOLS Mail allows communication with students about a range of administrative and academic matters and is of importance in considering requests for academic consideration
- The Faculty of Education organises the assessment tasks across its first year programs to avoid clashes and allow early feedback on progress

Student feedback:

- The Library use regular surveys of clients and the Library Client Survey is conducted biennially. Data is aggregated to broad enrolment groups, e.g. UG, PGC, PGR etc. Clients are also invited to provide feedback on their perceptions of relevance and responsiveness of services, and to suggest resources to purchase. 'Friendly and helpful staff' & 'Virtual Library' scores highly in Library Client Survey
- Education hosts a student reference group meeting in each session, with representatives from each undergraduate program and the GDE included - specific feedback is sought from first year representatives on Enrolment, Orientation, use of relevant resources and engagement with subjects
- Other feedback is obtained through the use of focus groups; visits to Education Centres; and informal feedback from staff, formal and informal feedback from support services e.g. Student Support Advisors, ASD representatives and students including student representatives

- ARD aims to ensure student enquiries are addressed in a timely, accurate and consistent manner as measured by key service measures (response time, wait time, telephone abandonment rate and feedback). Further work underway with respect to measurement of quality of response to students

Good Practice

- Roles within faculties are clearly defined and this ensures students know who to approach for specific purposes. Designated staff provide student support (for example Sub Dean, Subject coordinators, Student Support Advisor). Academic consultation times are advertised. Commerce does this via an online system, notice boards and on staff doors. The Faculty Office (in the case of Law) or Faculty Student Services Centre is the key starting point for students
- Faculty of Informatics processes are geared to addressing student academic needs and include: Personal Academic Mentoring (PAM); Enabling Maths (MATH010) options for weaker students; and use of positive student feedback. The Faculty also carries out a statistical analysis re progress of Early Entry students against non-Early entry students annually
- Administrative processes in place to support Faculty planning and response: CEDIR, Planning Services and ARD provide results of Subject & Teacher evaluation and student surveys; and triangulate key student surveys (Student Experience Questionnaire, Subject Evaluation Survey and Course Experience Questionnaire) to inform planning [links also to PI 6 – good practice]
- Student Central provides a visible, institutional contact point and actively pursues quality improvement of services through feedback loops; Faculty Student Services Centres or Faculty Offices provide key contact and referral points at the faculty level

Areas for Improvement

- The needs of particular cohorts such as late arriving international students and advanced standing students (who tend to enter at second year subject level) may be overlooked [links to PI 2]
- Some processes not in place to appropriately address student need (e.g. critical adjustment period for international students, difficulty in reducing study loads, problems with isolation) and this can put students at risk
- The number and location of Student Support Advisors limits their ability to strengthen services for equity students, give emphasis to first year and be able to take a more strategic view
- Tension between ESOS Act and requirements of DIAC. Problems with the way these are interpreted and applied and academic staff understanding of students capacity to progress satisfactorily
- International students do not tend to attend special “international” arrival day workshops and orientation in sufficient numbers and it has been suggested that the latter be made compulsory
- Improvements in timetabling system for faculties to better meet student needs. For example, Creative Arts students must do theory subjects outside building but return to do their practical subjects; Health & Behavioural Science students have classes every two weeks and these do not fit well into the University timetabling system
- The Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS) has been undersubscribed by Indigenous students suggesting that there may be unmet need for academic support
- Assessment due dates across different subjects are generally not well co-ordinated within faculties
- No systematic research or data available to show if there is any correlation between late entry and failure rates
- LD’s understanding of student need (coming from a curriculum-integrated approach) can be at variance with a faculty’s understanding and/or acknowledgment of need [applies also to PI 6]
- Developing a better appreciation of the student perspective, in that they may not:
 - recognise when they are at their point of need
 - identify with particular services
 - know what will meet their particular needs [links to PI 5 – areas for improvement]

- The Student Attrition Project (currently underway) aims to establish a significant body of relevant data on student attrition and will assist in determining student needs and inform planning and policy approaches and priorities [links also to PI 9]

5: Programs/activities are promoted to, accessible to and used by students

Good Practice: Students are actively and effectively informed about, given timely access to and utilise support programs.

(a) promoted to students

1 Not at all	2 Limited	3 Moderate	4 Considerable	5 Comprehensive
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(b) accessible to students

1 Not at all	2 Restricted	3 Working hours	4 Extended hours	5 24/7
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(c) used by students

1 Not at all	2 Limited	3 Moderate	4 Considerable	5 Comprehensive
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Rationale

- Many programs and activities are promoted professionally, extensively and in a timely way, but this is not necessarily universal
- A wide range of media is used to promote programs and activities (e.g. print, web-based, plasma screens, direct promotion by staff in lectures etc) but lack of evidence to measure effectiveness
- Extensive range of services and resources available 24/7 via website (e.g. ILIP, e-journals, databases, e-readings, email a Librarian, self directed learning resources)
- Library opened 80 hours per week on Wollongong campus (less extensive at regional centres); 60% of surveyed clients (2008) used the Library online services two or more days a week
- Good access to computer labs (some labs open 24-hours e.g. South Coast, residences), while supervised computer labs open 16-hours/day during session, 10-hours/day outside session; technical help available 24/7
- Audiovisual counter operates extended hours during teaching sessions on main Wollongong campus restricted hours during session break
- Students on other campuses (including Education Centres) have ready access to computers in labs and audiovisual equipment in teaching spaces
- Videoconference support available whenever videoconferences occur; this is often after hours and outside of session dates
- Counselling, Learning Development and Student Support Advisor consultation times are heavily subscribed
- The voluntary Learning Development workshops were well attended in 2008
- Student Central serves as one-stop-shop for range of student enquiries and is open for extended hours during peak times
- Most faculties have a central student enquiries counter to facilitate access and report a high volume of student enquiries

- Many faculties reported 70%+ attendance at orientation and pre-enrolment sessions; close to full attendance at the regional Education Centres
- Increased usage of WIC facilities between 2007-2008

Good Practice

- *First Year @ UOW* website provides central source of information to new students including an overview of academic help and support services available. Faculties also have web pages specifically for first year students
- Orientation was significantly reviewed and modified during 2008 to increase student engagement; promotion of O week is well coordinated and informed by feedback from students
- ILIP compulsory for all first year undergraduates (penalties for non-completion) >90% completion rates
- PASS Program is well promoted through a number of channels and is well utilised with participation rates increasing each year

Areas for improvement

- Many programs are well promoted but there is no overall coordination of promotions aimed at first year students
- Promotional materials may not be, universally, planned or produced in a professional way and not targeted, hence reducing their effectiveness
- Students experience information overload at key times in their first year of study: e.g. during orientation, a range of services seem to be competing to get their information across to students and this can raise the risk of key information being lost or ignored (as reported by Education students in the most recent Student Reference Group meeting)
- SOLS Mail is a dedicated student communication channel used to convey important messages regarding academic and administrative matters, but the heavy reliance on this system may result in messages been ignored
- Students don't always realise they need support until it is too late - e.g. Learning Development workshops are offered from week 2 of session but some students will only seek out help after they have failed an assessment task or have been encouraged to attend by academic staff
- Accessibility to support services after hours is limited for part time students and libraries in regional centres
- Usage data made available to FECs is patchy; it is difficult, across the board, to analyse service usage by year of enrolment
- Students may fail to utilise a needed service because (1) they don't realise they need it, (2) they have conflicting priorities, or (3) they may not know where to look. A proper needs analysis of first years must be undertaken - Do we ask the right questions? Do we investigate areas where there is unmet demand? [links also to PI 4 – areas for improvement]

6: Programs/activities meet student needs

Good Practice: Programs/activities have the capacity, through their design and content, to provide students with relevant and effective support and information, taking into account student feedback.

1 Not at all	2 Limited	3 Moderate	4 Considerable	5 Comprehensive
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Rationale

- Generally, student needs are anticipated based on past experiences and activities, information drawn from current research and materials are structured to meet their needs
- Timetabling of extra-curricular workshops by LD is aligned with typical patterns of assessment deadlines and learning needs of students
- Faculties sometimes involve LD in structure of subjects and assignment design [note PI 3 – areas for improvement]
- Library “Start Smart” orientation tours – 2008 feedback indicated that 93% of students completing tour felt more confident in using the Library.
- Library support for first year subjects has involved mapping subject outlines to assess if information literacy is/isn't occurring in relation to stated learning outcomes
- The Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS) program responds flexibly to student need by matching tutors and students on an individual basis.
- Student Services satisfaction survey 2008 indicated that approximately 80% of users were satisfied with the service received
- Exit questionnaires and other survey mechanisms used in Arts have begun to provide a longitudinal view of student needs
- Focus groups, feedback forms and on-line student feedback channels are used widely by the Faculty of Commerce and units such as ARD, ITS, Library, and CEDIR to improve services
- Results from the Student Experience Questionnaire (SEQ), the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) and the Subject Evaluation Survey provide feedback to faculties to inform their planning. These three surveys are being triangulated with others to identify themes for improvement [links to PI 4 – good practice]
- UOW's consistent Five Star performance ratings suggest we do well in meeting student needs in comparison with other Australian universities e.g. the 2009 *Good Universities Guide* awarded the University the maximum five stars in six categories including Getting a Job; Positive Graduate Outcomes; Graduate Starting Salary; Graduate Satisfaction; and Generic Skills

Good Practice

- PASS is a voluntary program with high participation rates, indicating needs are being addressed. Qualitative feedback each semester is very positive. Econometric analysis of subject results has shown students benefit irrespective of background or prior GPA [grade point average]. Material and study skills offered by trained PASS leaders are specific to the subjects in which students are currently enrolled
- Woolyungah Indigenous Centre (WIC) recognises that student success depends on multiple factors outside the classroom. Indigenous Student Support Officers offer a broad range of information, support and internal and external referral; WIC's Indigenous specific Orientation acknowledges that many Indigenous students are mature aged adult learners who are new to a tertiary education environment but bring a wealth of life experience. Both newness and lack of experience in the academic environment are acknowledged in a supportive and culturally affirming way
- Bridging courses offered through the Faculties of Science, Engineering and Informatics in Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics and Physics assist new students who lack the necessary background in one or more of these subject areas. These courses provide a foundation for first year study and are offered prior to the start of session

Areas for improvement

- Limited evidence to support conclusions about first year undergraduate students; with the exception of the new AUSSE survey data, the evidence is largely anecdotal and/or aggregated to the undergraduate cohort
- Limited authoritative student-driven data that gives feedback about their needs and whether they are been met
- Faculty monitoring of feedback data from surveys and UOW units (eg LD) is limited and there is little evidence of a holistic management of improvement strategies
- Discrepancy between LD's understanding of student need (coming from an curriculum-integrated approach) and faculty's understanding and/or acknowledgment of need [applies also to PI 4]
- A comprehensive first year student needs analysis particularly to assess changing trends and take into account specific cohorts, such as advanced standing students' integration, students who report having a disability and other equity categories is not generally evident
- No particular targeted activity exists to meet the needs of students who enter via alternate pathways

7: Programs/activities are resourced

Good Practice: Programs/activities have the human, technical and educational resources required to effectively support and improve student learning.

(a) in place

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	Limited	Moderate	Considerable	Comprehensive

Rationale

- Overall resourcing is well targeted and compares favourably with the sector, e.g in support for areas such as Learning Development and PASS
- Key faculty staff are designated points of contact for student support (for example Sub Dean, Student Services Centre, Directors, Student Support Advisor) and all faculties provide a range of student services through Student Service Centres or Faculty Office
- JobSeekers database is well resourced and continually improved
- Disability Services has a range of assistive technologies to offer students
- Library resources include information resources, study spaces (individual and group), technology
- Collaborative activity between units (eg, CEDIR, LD and Library) enhances quality of resourcing eg Law's Faculty Education Committee working party on subject proposals included ASD as an integral part of the team
- Levels of cooperation and collaboration between ASD teams and faculty staff promote effective use of resources
- Programs and activities developed in Commerce are built into existing budgets and positions for continued support
- Internal sacrificing strategies employed by Law Faculty for the First Year Program (with decision to involve more staff in first year at the cost of a second year elective)
- The Journalism program is strategic about their deployment of teaching resources – by allocating teachers who will be most effective in teaching first year classes (a strategy which ensures students engage/connect with their lecturer and remain in the program)

- Language development and disciplinary preparation needs of NESB (international) students will always exceed the resource capacity of the institution and the LD Programs to meet them within the timeframe of a degree program

Good Practice

- Faculties are well supported by Academic Services Division staff; Faculty Librarians; Learning Developers, ITS and CEDIR/ eLearning staff
- Dedicated International Units are located in the two faculties with the highest number of international students. The Informatics Unit is resourced with three staff members and Commerce has four staff including an Associate Dean

Areas for improvement

- Overall, a reassessment of the size and nature (eg, international, equity, learning difficulties) of demand to enhance the strategic distribution of resources
- The initiation, planning, and provision of particular programs and activities can rely to a great degree on the good will of individuals, thus masking a need for additional resources
- The number of Student Support Advisors (SSA) has increased in direct response to student demand, however larger faculties may require a dedicated faculty SSA. Also SSA resources need to be allocated to respond effectively to both high-demand international students and equity student issues
- Support services for international students are affected by a lack of resources and a clear 'home'; one staff position is dedicated to "International Student Programs" which includes the coordination of a range of social, mentoring and friendship programs
- A 'Welcome to Wollongong' civic reception and international student festival has received some University support for the past two years but this has not been mainstreamed
- Academic workload formula does not acknowledge the resources required to coordinate programs and provide high quality academic advice
- Equity funding processes need to ensure that faculties have compensating resources for professional, technical and administrative support
- PASS has high level, ongoing support but the program is resourced on a year-to-year basis with a mix of faculty funding and central funding; it would benefit from recurrent funding and embedded IT support
- IT infrastructure for satellite campuses is limited with an effect on both teaching and learning (eg. Edustream; lack of ability to record video-conference)
- Constraints of timetabling affects practice (eg. lack of access to IT resources because of competition to use them)
- Poor quality of teaching venues can detract from well-planned learning experiences (eg. overcrowded teaching rooms)
- Timetable constraints can sometimes impede good pedagogical practice

8: Professional development and support is available to staff, accessed and informs practice.

Good Practice: Strategies are in place to ensure staff have access to professional development and other support services (for example CEDIR, IT and library) to assist them in informing their practice and to promote the innovative use of pedagogical applications.

(a) available to staff

1 Not at all	2 Limited	3 Moderate	4 Considerable	5 Comprehensive
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(b) accessed by staff

1 Not at all	2 Limited	3 Moderate	4 Considerable	5 Comprehensive
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(c) informs practice

1 Not at all	2 Limited	3 Moderate	4 Considerable	5 Comprehensive
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Rationale

- A range of professional development opportunities and processes is identified through Academic Staff Career Development Interviews or the Annual Performance Planner process for general staff
- Professional development (facilitated through PODs, CEDIR, ITS) includes conferences, seminars, workshops (internally and externally) and study leave options and is also offered within faculties/units e.g. using planning days for both peer learning and formal presentation
- Professional development specifically related to academic transition support includes: Teaching to Large Groups, Chinese and Saudi culture and language training (facilitated through PODs); ad hoc individual mentoring and team teaching by LD; professional association (activities and events); CEDIR staff workshops; and faculty training for casual staff. Engineering provides: Tips for Tutors and Demonstrators; FEC teaching workshops and Peer review in teaching
- Library support for UOW staff is considerable in terms of resources and training
- University Learning and Teaching Course Policy provides for all University teaching staff to be trained
- Code of Practice Casual Academic Teaching provides for integration and support of casual academic staff
- Professional development programs are accessed by staff through self-registration and sign-off by supervisor
- Arts holds an induction morning for all new casual academic teaching staff across all sites (these staff are major component of the first year Arts teaching program)
- Education holds induction meetings for all new permanent and casual academic and administrative staff at the beginning of each session
- Examples of areas where practice has been informed by professional development:
 - Extensive use of modelling and best practice by senior team members for new PASS Leaders
 - Professional partnerships within Academic Services Division, e.g. CEDIR, Learning Development, Library
 - Applying Web 2.0 technologies to design web resources in the Library
 - Recommendations, made by staff, from conference attendance
 - Revision of online Library learning modules
 - Mentoring, team teaching and collaborative work by LD
 - Meeting of key performance indicators and career goals and innovations in Commerce

Good Practice

- UOW's suite of high-standard, continually improved professional training and development programs, administered through PODs, CEDIR and ITS

Areas for improvement

- A more systematic approach to professional development based on a survey of needs and informed by current research in the area of academic transition support in the first year
- Need for specific training for ITAS program
- UOW Staff induction is useful for beginning staff but “refresher” courses would be valuable
- More specific training for casual teaching staff
- Need for repeat programs/sessions as access can be limited by workloads, projects, staff availability, teaching commitments, perceptions, priorities, distance (for Education Centres and offshore)
- Provision of real evidence of how professional development changes practice and what practice is changed

9: The effectiveness of programs/activities is monitored and evaluated

Good Practice: A systematic, evaluative process which uses a range of feedback mechanisms is in place to inform the continual improvement plans for the programs/activities. This process is continually revisited and realigned to the institution's quality assurance indicators and updated to improve student learning outcomes.

(a) monitored

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	Limited	Moderate	Considerable	Comprehensive

(b) evaluated

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	Limited	Moderate	Considerable	Comprehensive

Rationale

- At the institutional level, the curriculum review process (within the Academic Review Policy) provides for scheduled, systematic review of academic programs, based on available data including surveys
- LD and Disability have processes in place to capture student feedback on individual consultations and workshops
- Library regularly gather statistics on classes (type, delivery, attendance, core, linked to assessable task) and also maps where Information Literacy intervention occurs/doesn't occur and forwards recommendations to faculties
- Faculty-based programs and activities, including Assessment Committee Review and Course Reviews, Faculty Planning days, Student Focus Groups, SSA feedback are monitored by FECs or Faculty Committees
- Attrition and related data available in Performance Indicator Project (PIP) system and Subject Evaluation Surveys and Comparative Course Outcomes now becoming available
- eduStream and videoconference monitored by technical and academic staff
- WIC uses feedback through Orientation Day Report, student suggestion box and student representation and staff feedback
- Systematic monitoring of subjects undertaken by Commerce FEC through subject surveys, core curriculum sub committees, course reviews and participation in benchmarking opportunities e.g. Griffith University and the international accrediting body AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business)

- Student Reference Group, Committee of Co-operation, Principals' Reference Group and Professional Experience Reference Group assist Education Faculty to monitor programs/activities
- “Wash-up” activities, including meetings, reports and recommendations for improvements are performed for all major student events administered by ARD (orientation, enrolment etc)
- Administration division is ISO-accredited, which involves a significant emphasis on evaluation and performance improvement
- ITS monitor through capacity planning for SOLS, email, eLearning, internet utilisation
- Job tracking database in Careers Service identifies student requests
- Informatics monitor most activities through feedback process; intake years targeted for life of course progress analysis; “at risk” student data collected and monitored; Student Teaching and Learning reports examined and analysed carefully

Survey results and other data used to evaluate various programs/services in Faculties and Units:

- LD workshop surveys and Individual Consultation Feedback forms (anonymous) are aggregated and analysed annually
- Library is trialling use of pre and post tests to assess skill/knowledge acquisition within the classroom but no longer offers ‘generic’ workshops based on analysis of need and attendance rates
- Usage trends identified and reported within CEDIR and continuous improvement strategies for eduStream and Videoconference are in place
- Creative Art’s Executive and FEC Committees evaluate student feedback and review KPI data on quarterly basis and the Dean meets with DVC(O) every six weeks to discuss issues
- Education reviews feedback on regular basis (each session) – Dean meets regularly with DVC(O)
- Education has a four year program review cycle. All Education courses have external accreditation (e.g. NSW Institute of Teachers and DOCS). ECAC – all Education degree evaluations involve external sources. Feedback from students and staff in Education Faculty used to reshape programs/activities
- Engineering Student Satisfaction Surveys discussed and evaluated at Dean’s and Heads of School meetings. Engineering attrition rates monitored
- Law’s Integrated First Year Program was extensively evaluated during its introductory year (2006). It has not been reviewed annually since then because of resourcing issues but, under the UOW Academic Review Policy, it will be reassessed every 5 years as a core segment of all Law’s LLB courses

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring is extensive but not, as a general rule, conducted against well-communicated goals and performance indicators
- Evaluation for quality improvement is not systematic or relevant to first year
- Analysis of how transition programs influence summative assessment outcomes, noting it will require considerable collaboration with teaching staff in terms of receiving feedback regarding effect on student performance (feedback is currently sporadic and largely anecdotal)
- Need to monitor surveying of students to avoid overload
- Quality of evidence used by Education Centres when assessing/planning orientation
- Analysis of attrition rates (links to PI 4) and finding out why students leave through exit strategy is rather limited

- On basis of Library experience, consider value of generic workshop evaluation form limited for assessing change in skill and ability
- Issues of consistent skill development and retention from first year to later years

10: Evaluation of feedback and results is integrated into planning for continuous improvement purposes

Good Practice: Planning for programs and activities is systematically informed and updated in the light of performance outcomes and feedback data.

1 Not at all	2 Limited	3 Moderate	4 Considerable	5 Comprehensive
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Rationale

- Forward planning and development in some curriculum-integrated LD projects informed by qualitative data on student learning experience and use of resources
- Data gathered from individual LD consultation practice fed back to faculties through FEC and annual reporting and through informal processes. Individual teaching can be peer-reviewed for professional development purposes
- Library has a long established Annual Business Plan and Team Planning process and its participation in FECs and ASD projects helps to inform practice and improvement initiatives
- ITS Business Plan and projects developed with business owners
- Bi-annual planning meetings held for continuous improvement across all WIC areas
- Continuous improvement is an objective of Faculty planning days and review cycle mechanisms
- In some faculties, subject evaluations, involving FECs and Heads of School, provide basis for review and restructure of subjects; end of session results assessment meetings provided basis for discussion of subject content and student experience with recommendations processed through Faculty and Executive meetings
- Faculty Planning & Review cycle is an established practice
- The membership of the FEC in Law includes first year and ASD representation; issues in relation to learning at all year levels regularly raised. Current focus on integration of Graduate Qualities and skills across the curriculum
- A longitudinal survey of Arts cohorts 2005-2008, examining attrition across all sites indicated 100 level was the year most students decided not to continue their studies. A preliminary study of attrition in 100 level subjects for Autumn 2008 was completed. Both were raised as a matter of importance at the Arts Faculty's Planning Day in December 2008 in terms of future planning for the Faculty

Areas for improvement

- Provision and systematic evaluation of data related to first year transition as basis for Faculty planning
- Although it may be an inclusive faculty commitment (eg, in Law and Education), continuous improvement for first year programs is often in the hands of individual (albeit experienced) staff members and practices may not be sustained when staff change
- Strategic use of LD data gathered from individual consultations, for planning purposes, has been limited by issues of time and expertise within the unit
- New evaluation methods are being explored in LD to integrate feedback and evaluation from extra-curricula teaching more strongly into forward planning, noting that extra-curricular, generic workshops have little or no potential to provide useful data

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN PROCESSES AT UOW and UTAS

(prepared for Peer Assessment Workshop)

PI	Similarities	Differences
PI 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strong policy frameworks for admission and enrolments ▪ Faculties have good practice but not captured in written policy ▪ Social aspects of first year support not taken into account 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ UTAS has policy for first year transition; UOW does not. ▪ Admission policy subcommittee is responsible for policy development at UTAS; at UOW policy development through University Education Committee but no committee focused on Admissions
PI 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Broad scale coordination within services, programs, enrolment and admissions ▪ Coordination across campuses and external learning centres is a challenge ▪ First year coordinators need to work more collaboratively and closely on first year issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coordination of academic transition across different faculties needs to be improved at UTAS; UOW has good coordination at faculty level through Faculty of Education Committees (FECs)
PI 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pedagogical workshops offered to staff (CALT & CEDIR) ▪ Recognised for excellence in teaching (UTAS 6 ALTC Citations, 2 national teaching excellence awards; UOW received 10 ALTC Citations) ▪ Articulation and feedback on pedagogical principles needs to improve with faculties (CALT & Learning Development) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ UTAS demonstrates some collaborative efforts (teaching discussion groups) but UOW does not ▪ CALT needs to focus more on first year academic transition for staff development; Learning Development is targeted towards first year transition
PI 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Orientation activities at both institutions ▪ Embedded support across faculties/schools ▪ Faculty based advice (TSS) /SSAs ▪ Identification strategies: process of early identification and follow up ▪ Diagnostic strategies: early assessments to identify at risk students, interviews, staff member available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Significant resource issues at UTAS such as gaps in delivery due to lack of resourcing such as distance students, unmanageable caseloads for Student Services, technical gaps in video link; At UOW the number and location of SSAs limits their effectiveness ▪ UTAS has data available on first year attrition; UOW is developing its data system on first year attrition
PI 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Websites for first year students ▪ First point of contact available in faculties/service desk at UTAS/Faculty office at UOW ▪ Range of programs and services available 24/7 or extended hours ▪ Students not taking up some services ▪ Wide range of media employed to promote programs ▪ Online learning resources available (UniStart, ILIP) ▪ Both libraries provide tours, guides, orientation activities, online services ▪ Faculties provide face-to-face consultations ▪ PASS not fully utilised 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ITR limited after hours access at UTAS; UOW has technical help available for extended hours ▪ Gaps in promotion in some areas of UTAS; information overload at UOW ▪ Accessing online materials is an issue for distance NESB students at UTAS; accessing services limited for part time evening students at UOW
PI 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Programs that support students' needs have high usage rates ▪ Feedback on student needs met by evaluations, at-risk research, part experience, exit questionnaires ▪ Need systematic approach to addressing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some services were noted as not being able to meet students' needs (UTAS)

	<p>students' needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special needs: concern about meeting the needs of particular students: working off campus, having poor language and literacy skills and disability 	
PI 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project funding impedes long term planning .eg. PASS Over-reliance on casual staff to teach first year students Many support services are stretched Satellite campuses not well resourced in some areas e.g. Cradle Coast student advisor and Education Centres lack IT infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library has issues with space, wireless set up for students with laptops at UTAS; UOW has recently expanded with upgraded facilities TSS staff are faculty based at UTAS; at UOW SSA are shared between faculties and not just first year students Lack of space at UTAS
PI 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff are provided with access to professional development Professional development both internal and external More training for casual staff Extensive use of modelling by senior members for new PASS leaders Professional partnerships: CALT, Student Services and Library; CEDIR, Learning Development and Library Access is limited by workloads, projects, staff availability, teaching commitments and distance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UTAS needs professional development on first year issues; UOW has workshops on teaching to large groups, Chinese and Saudi Culture UTAS does have induction of new staff, not consistent. UOW (Arts) holds an induction morning for all new casual academic teaching staff.
PI 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some programs are well monitored PASS, UniStart at UTAS; PASS, ILIP, Orientation at UOW Generally monitoring and evaluation is not systematic No or limited documentation of evidence Wide variety of mechanisms used to obtain feedback Student feedback surveys but first year data is not analysed separately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of student trend data at UTAS; UOW have started to analyse attrition and student performance data UOW have course progress policy to provide assistance for students if students fail 50% or more of their subjects UOW have a major review of orientation informed by student and faculty feedback
PI 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broad feedback mechanisms but not solely focused on academic transition Programs such as PASS are reviewed annually Annual reviews of major admin processes- admissions, enrolment, assessment to inform future planning Student feedback used to improve services but not across the board Established faculty planning and review processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library at UTAS does not have holistic review process in place; UOW has well established planning and review processes UTAS is using student data to inform planning; Faculty of Arts at UOW is starting to use attrition data to inform planning but it is not systematic

Comparison of areas of good practice and areas for improvement

Areas of Good Practice			Areas for Improvement	
	UOW	UTAS	UOW	UTAS
PI 1	Strong central planning around enrolment & orientation University policies listed in all subject outlines	Services demonstrate comprehensive use and understanding of policies Integrated model of transition support (TSS) Collaborative planning between services	Set up framework for First Year Student Support	First year student policy –promulgate, improve formal recognition
PI 2	Faculty of Law common first year cohort, allocated 'POD' and do common subjects Use of central & faculty committees effective in coordinating programs and services	Faculties rely on Transition support staff, PASS and CALT Support programs are coordinated across campuses Individual faculties coordinate distinctive experiences for first year	Review and define role of first year coordinators Provide opportunities for coordinators to collaborate across units more efficiently Ensure optimal level of IT support	Review and define role of first year coordinators Need central coordination of Orientation Ensure optimal level of IT support
PI 3	Learning Development	CALT has certificate of teaching and learning in higher education-compulsory unit for new academics Teaching awards	Develop a first year transition framework	Professional development of post graduate students on pedagogical principles Concern about teaching spaces Develop a first year transition framework
PI 4	Faculty of Informatics processes address student academic needs; Enabling Maths (MATH010) options for weaker students. Faculty also carries out statistical analysis re progress of Early Entry students against non-Early entry students Student Central visible contact point for students	Processes for supporting students put into policy (School of Human Life Sciences) International Services has programs which include processes for information, early intervention, remedial support, regular assessment of needs Student Centre visible contact point for students	Attrition-need to agree on a definition for attrition What are the needs to be support in this year of transition? Define and reach agreement on information literacy needs	Attrition-need to agree on a definition for attrition Processes and models in place work well but resourcing cannot support the demand
PI 5	Orientation reviewed and modified 2008 to increase student engagement PASS well promoted ILIP compulsory for all first year undergraduates: ≤90% completion rates	Website for first year students TSS promoted as first point of contact; faculties rely on this service PASS program well supported	Would like to know more about UniStart which is more extensive.	Library would like to know how IILIP functions
PI 6	PASS has high participation rates Woolyungah Indigenous Centre: student support officers offers a broad range of information and support Range of bridging courses	PASS evaluation positive ITR offer flexible service delivery Riawunna: ITAS staff on each campus for information and support Range of bridging courses	Support pathway students. Issue of special cohorts, such as international students, equity groups which need assistance UOW have completed a mapping of scholarships across all student groups Interested in learning about early identification of at risk students at UTAS (Jane Reinks research) Survey and improve the type of strategies utilised to attain information as to how support is working	Support pathway students. Issue of special cohorts, such as international students, equity groups which need assistance Review scholarships-especially equity

PI 7	Faculties are well supported by Academic Services Division staff; Faculty librarians, Learning developers, ITAS and CEDIR/eLearning staff Dedicated international units located in two faculties for international students Faculty of Law policy of resourcing first year classes	Students provided with online resources Effective support of staff in development of resources TSS used as a resource by faculties School of Pharmacy have first year website and booklet School of Zoology has policy for resourcing first year classes	Examine role of Student Support Advisors (their focus is domestic equity and international student support not transition per se) Examine resources of International Service Area Find out how transition practices work at UTAS (TSS) Embed funding for PASS	Embed funding for PASS
PI 8	UOW's suite of high-standard, continually improved professional training and development programs administered through PODs, CEDIR and ITS.	Graduate certificate has impact on practice and is reflected in evaluations (CALT) Cultural awareness sessions are held annually for ITAS	Professional development for academic staff on transition support Connection between what students require and how teachers relay information not clear Not enough support for first year coordinators	Recognition of multi campus teaching. Workload on support staff. Align procedures for sessional staff to policy http://www.utas.edu.au/universitycouncil/legislation/pol_sessionalteaching.pdf Professional development for academic staff on transition support
PI 9	Library, LD and Disability have processes in place to capture student feedback Attrition data available in Performance Indicator Project (PIP) system and subject evaluation surveys Reviews conducted for all major student events administered by ARD (orientation, enrolment)	Programs use a range of feedback mechanisms to aid monitoring and evaluation: surveys, attendance and appointments, self and peer evaluation, evaluation reports, electronic monitoring, staff meetings, assessment	Look at what we do well and share	Look at what we do well and share
PI 10	Administration division is ISO-accredited which involves significant emphasis on evaluation and performance improvement Library has long established planning and review processes in place Data gathered from individual LD consultation practice fed back to faculties through FEC and annual reporting	Feedback from staff and students is encouraged and compiled in different ways Riawunna uses feedback from focus groups for improvement AMC has policies to reflect quality process	Look at what we do well and share	Look at what we do well and share

Comparison of AUSSE Survey Results 2008

		University of Wollongong			University of Tasmania				
Q1	In your experience at your institution during the current academic year, about how often have you: Sought advice from academic staff	Never	At least once	Total	Never	At least once	Total		
	Total Count of Responses	25	220	245	30	444	474		
	Distribution of Responses	10.2%	89.8%	100.0%	6.3%	93.7%	100.0%		
Q2	In your experience at your institution during the current academic year, about how often have you: Used library resources on campus or online	Never	At least once	Total	Never	At least once	Total		
	Total Count of Responses	6	236	242	9	465	474		
	Distribution of Responses	2.5%	97.5%	100.0%	1.9%	98.1%	100.0%		
Q3	In your experience at your institution during the current academic year, about how often have you: Used student learning support services	Never	At least once	Total	Never	At least once	Total		
	Total Count of Responses	71	168	239	135	335	470		
	Distribution of Responses	29.7%	70.3%	100.0%	28.7%	71.3%	100.0%		
Q4	In your experience at your institution during the current academic year, about how often have you: Used an online learning system to discuss or complete an assignment	Never	At least once	Total	Never	At least once	Total		
	Total Count of Responses	30	213	243	119	350	469		
	Distribution of Responses	12.3%	87.7%	100.0%	25.4%	74.6%	100.0%		
Q5	In your experience at your institution during the current academic year, about how often have you: Used email or a forum to communicate with teaching staff	Never	At least once	Total	Never	At least once	Total		
	Total Count of Responses	25	218	243	43	428	471		
	Distribution of Responses	10.3%	89.7%	100.0%	9.1%	90.9%	100.0%		
Q6	In your experience at your institution during the current academic year, about how often have you: Received prompt written or oral feedback from teachers/tutors on your academic performance	Never	At least once	Total	Never	At least once	Total		
	Total Count of Responses	33	203	236	45	402	447		
	Distribution of Responses	14.0%	86.0%	100.0%	10.1%	89.9%	100.0%		
Q7	Which of the following have you done or do you plan to do before you graduate from your institution: Participate in a study group or learning community	Have not done	Done	Total	Have not done	Done	Total		
	Total Count of Responses	171	59	230	329	103	432		
	Distribution of Responses	74.3%	25.7%	100.0%	76.2%	23.8%	100.0%		
Q8	Which of these boxes best represent the quality of your relationships with people at your institution? Relationships with teaching staff	Unavailable unhelpful	Neutral	Available helpful	Total	Unavailable unhelpful	Neutral	Available helpful	Total
	Total Count of Responses	22	43	167	232	35	92	307	434
	Distribution of Responses	9.5%	18.5%	72.0%	100.0%	8.1%	21.2%	70.7%	100.0%
Q9	Which of these boxes best represent the quality of your relationships with people at your institution?: Relationships with administrative personnel and services	Unhelpful rigid	Neutral	Helpful flexible	Total	Unhelpful rigid	Neutral	Helpful flexible	Total
	Total Count of Responses	42	50	142	234	72	110	256	438
	Distribution of Responses	17.9%	21.4%	60.7%	100.0%	16.4%	25.1%	58.4%	100.0%

Q10	To what extent does your institution emphasise each of the following? Providing the support you need to help you succeed academically	Some	Quite a bit	Total	Some	Quite a bit	Total
	Total Count of Responses	60	171	231	145	288	433
	Distribution of Responses	26.0%	74.0%	100.0%	33.5%	66.5%	100.0%
Q11	To what extent does your institution emphasise each of the following? Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social and ethnic backgrounds	Some	Quite a bit	Total	Some	Quite a bit	Total
	Total Count of Responses	129	100	229	274	155	429
	Distribution of Responses	56.3%	43.7%	100.0%	63.9%	36.1%	100.0%
Q12	To what extent does your institution emphasise each of the following? Helping you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (e.g. work, family, etc.)	Some	Quite a bit	Total	Some	Quite a bit	Total
	Total Count of Responses	189	42	231	333	97	430
	Distribution of Responses	81.8%	18.2%	100.0%	77.4%	22.6%	100.0%
Q13	To what extent does your institution emphasise each of the following? Providing the support you need to socialise	Some	Quite a bit	Total	Some	Quite a bit	Total
	Total Count of Responses	150	82	232	308	120	428
	Distribution of Responses	64.7%	35.3%	100.0%	72.0%	28.0%	100.0%
Q14	To what extent does your institution emphasise each of the following? Attending campus events and activities (e.g. special speakers, cultural performances, sporting events, etc.)	Some	Quite a bit	Total	Some	Quite a bit	Total
	Total Count of Responses	156	76	232	287	139	426
	Distribution of Responses	67.2%	32.8%	100.0%	67.4%	32.6%	100.0%
Q15	To what extent does your institution emphasise each of the following? Using computers in academic work	Some	Quite a bit	Total	Some	Quite a bit	Total
	Total Count of Responses	52	180	232	96	334	430
	Distribution of Responses	22.4%	77.6%	100.0%	22.3%	77.7%	100.0%
Q16	In this academic year have you seriously considered leaving your current institution?	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
	Total Count of Responses	95	1035	1130	260	1930	2190
	Distribution of Responses	8.4%	91.6%	100.0%	11.9%	88.1%	100.0%
Q17	Overall, how would you evaluate the quality of academic advice that you received at your institution?	Fair	Good	Total	Fair	Good	Total
	Total Count of Responses	41	185	226	93	343	436
	Distribution of Responses	18.1%	81.9%	100.0%	21.3%	78.7%	100.0%
Q18	How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution?	Fair	Good	Total	Fair	Good	Total
	Total Count of Responses	32	194	226	84	351	435
	Distribution of Responses	14.2%	85.8%	100.0%	19.3%	80.7%	100.0%

Good Practice Case Study 1 - UOW

PASS (Peer Assisted Study Sessions) Program

Summary

The PASS Program allows students, led by 'Peer Leaders' to consolidate understanding, reinforce concepts and develop effective study strategies. It is available for many core subjects in first and second semester of transition to university life.

Context

UOW has a diverse student body, drawing on NESB and first-generation university students. UOW also has a significant number of international students who are seeking both academic support and opportunities to interact with domestic students.

As a mainstream program, PASS is offered primarily for first year subjects to provide support to all students in their transition to university. It is also offered in some second year and postgraduate subjects, with a large number of international students, many of whom have received advanced standing. These students are still then in their first semester at UOW and also need support in making a successful transition to life at UOW.

Aims

PASS aims to support all students through the transition stage in realising their potential.

The PASS Program is a key initiative supporting UOW's Strategic Goals to provide: "Excellence and innovation in learning and teaching and Students engaged with learning and university life" (UOW Strategic Plan 2008-2010). The primary goals of the Program are to:

- improve student outcomes in subjects which students perceive as difficult and/or with high failure rates, with an emphasis on first-year subjects
- enhance student experience and student satisfaction with learning
- promote the formation of discipline-specific learning communities
- assist new students to 'learn how to learn' in a tertiary environment
- contribute to the development of the UOW Graduate Qualities.

Outcomes

PASS commenced in 2002 in one faculty and, over the past eight years, has expanded to support over 2,000 students per semester from across all nine faculties. The Program has been internationally recognised as 'best practice' with the appointment in 2005 of Sally Rogan as the Certified (UMKC) National PASS Trainer for Australia and New Zealand and UOW as the PASS National Centre. This involves UOW PASS staff in providing training and assistance to other institutions wishing to implement PASS or enhance an existing program. Four members of staff and one group of PASS Leaders from UTAS have been trained by UOW staff.

PASS was commended by AUQA in 2005, in 2007 PASS staff were awarded a UOW OCTAL and a Carrick Citation and in 2008-09, four PASS leaders were awarded national prizes for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning, as judged by the International PASS Centre in the USA.

Surveys of participating students at the end of each Semester provide qualitative and quantitative evidence that the program enhances their satisfaction, confidence and enjoyment of the learning process. Data collected since 2002 indicate that subjects supported by PASS generally experience a drop

in failure rates and an increase in retention rates. 'At risk' students who attend regularly achieve higher average marks than 'at-risk' students who do not participate and their failure rate is lower.

An econometric analysis by Lewis et al. (2005) indicates that the PASS program has a positive impact on the academic performance of students after correcting for selection bias.

What was done?

PASS is based on the Supplemental Instruction model initially developed at the University of Missouri, Kansas City. High-achieving, senior students with excellent interpersonal skills are recruited to act as Peer Leaders in sessions where students work together to develop effective study strategies.

Peer leaders are not surrogate tutors or teachers. Their role is to guide a group of 10 to 15 students to review and consolidate their understanding of subject material by managing group dynamics, posing questions relevant to course material and encouraging collaboration. Leaders are trained to work with mixed-ability groups to extend advanced students and enable struggling students to learn from their more advanced peers.

Peer leaders are initially provided with two days of training focused on collaborative learning strategies and group dynamics. Role plays and simulations are used to model appropriate leadership skills. Leaders also receive ongoing professional development and supervision. Senior Peer Leaders act as mentors to new leaders and all leaders (particularly those in their first semester) are regularly observed and provided with constructive feedback on their strengths and areas for improvement.

The program currently provides up to 120 contact hours at the Wollongong campus. One-hour sessions are run between Weeks 2 to 13 of Semesters 1 and 2. PASS sessions are formally scheduled and students are encouraged to enrol online so that they can timetable sessions to avoid clashes with other subject requirements. While students can join PASS at any time during a Semester, they are encouraged to attend regularly to maximise the benefits of the program. PASS also runs at a number of UOW Education Centres including Loftus, Shoalhaven, Bega and Bateman's Bay.

The role of PASS Peer Leader provides an opportunity for senior students to enhance their leadership, communication and group work skills. Leaders are also involved with many aspects of the Program management.

Critical success factors

Critical success factors include: a high level champion such as the DVCA, a PASS staff member champion or driver, sufficient funding, support of faculty/academic staff, strong quality control, training, support and professional development of PASS staff and leaders and allocation of resources such as rooms.

Review and improvement

The UOW PASS Program undergoes continual and extensive review. PASS leader performance and support by senior team members is ongoing, the initial PASS Leader training is reviewed and assessed by participants annually, feedback from participants is assessed and implemented each semester and general operational functions are also reviewed and assessed each semester.

Links and resources

For further information on PASS: www.uow.edu.au/student/services/pass

Contacts

UOW PASS - Kylie Austin at kaustin@uow.edu.au

PASS National Centre or training enquiries - Sally Rogan at sally@uow.edu.au

Good Practice Case Study 2 - UOW ILIP (Independent Learners Introductory Program)

Summary

Independent Learners Introductory Program (ILIP) provides an introduction to basic research skills necessary for university study. It prepares students to find items on reading lists, to use the Library Catalogue and to start using databases to find books and articles for their studies.

Context

UOW's aim is for all students to acquire the Qualities of a Wollongong Graduate. In support of this, an aspect of the Library's Vision is to develop education and training programs to equip all students with appropriate information literacy skills for their current research needs, future careers and lifelong learning. The Library's commitment to this, is demonstrated by the establishment and achievement of information literacy goals linked to University planning and academic curricula.

A computer and library literacy program has been in place since 1989. In 1999 ILIP100 was introduced as a compulsory, zero credit point subject focusing on providing newly enrolled undergraduate students with an elementary introduction to research skills and technology to enable students to find information. It comprises ILIP instruction and a compulsory ILIP assignment and both are completed online.

The learning modules include: Starting your research, reading lists, finding more information, plagiarism and evaluating and using information. ILIP is a requirement for both onshore and offshore undergraduate students.

Aims

ILIP aims to provide the foundation for systematic and ongoing development of the UOW Graduate Quality of being an *independent learner* (e.g. *Engage with new ideas and ways of thinking and critically analyse issues. Seek to extend knowledge through ongoing research, enquiry and reflection. Find and evaluate information, using a variety of sources and technologies. Acknowledge the work and ideas of others*) and supports the principle of lifelong learning by equipping students with appropriate skills to:

- recognise the need for information and determine the nature and extent of the information needed
- find information effectively and efficiently, and
- develop higher-level information literacy skills of critical analysis, interpretation and evaluation.

Outcomes

- ILIP009 introduced in 2003 as a zero credit point subject designed to capture postgraduate coursework students who have not completed ILIP100.
- ILIP100 and ILIP009 implemented successfully at UOW offshore teaching locations.
- The University Senate endorsed an Information Literacy Integration Policy in 2005 in recognition of the need to communicate specific objectives and implementation strategies for further integration of information literacy programs into curricula.
- A review of ILIP, April 2005 showed students reported improved confidence in:
 - being able to access information (58%)

- determining the credibility of found information (60%)
- their ability to avoid plagiarism through referencing (60%)

Feedback from students includes:

- *The tutorials and the ILIP assignment were and still are useful and helpful in making students familiar with what the library has to offer.*
- *The library workshops provided to explain the use of the online library website have helped me a lot, and have oriented me around the library, whether I am present or not.*
- *One aspect ..that ..really impressed me is the number of workshops and tutorials .. to assist.. in the use of library resources. I have found the staff's strong emphasis on assisting students in using electronic journals and databases very helpful.*

Responses from focus group participants in 2009 include:

- *The library online tutorials gave me clear and concise directions on how to go about with my assignments and how to look for information I need from the library.*
- *"Show Me" demonstrations .. easier than reading and more interesting.*
- *Now I use the Library databases instead of Google.*

The value and efficacy of ILIP has been acknowledged by external bodies, for example:

- The Library's information literacy strategy and practices were recognised as best practice by the Award's evaluation team for the University of the Year Award 2000-2001 'Preparing Graduates for an e-world' (awarded to UOW).
- Recognised as an effective practice, in 2005, by the United States Association of College and Research Libraries.
- ILIP was selected for inclusion in the AUQA Good Practice Database - Developing Graduate Attributes: Information Literacies Introductory Program (ILIP) – 2006
http://www.auqa.edu.au/gp/search/detail.php?gp_id=2518

Critical success factors

- Articulation of the Graduate Qualities, including references to the need for students to be information literate
- ILIP recognised as a compulsory zero credit subject for all new undergraduate students
- University recognition of the need for the integration of information literacy into the curriculum; as reflected in policy.

Review and improvement

Phase I – 2008

A major review of ILIP was conducted under the auspices of the DVC(A) in 2008. In response to feedback from the University community, the following changes were implemented in readiness for the 2009 academic year:

- Major revision of content within the learning modules
- Communication of learning outcomes within the modules
- Greater use of learning objects to demonstrate principles of information skills
- Creation of a skills checklist prior to launching the assignment page, offering the student the option of returning to the relevant learning activity if confidence level is low
- Improved assignment and introductory pages

Phase II - 2009

- Extensive surveying and consultation conducted with new students and high school teacher librarians to assess the level of information skills new students possess when entering higher education.
- New software scripting to meet stringent access and security requirements
- Improved functionality with other student systems to facilitate seamlessness in monitoring completions and assigning grades
- Improved application of pedagogical principles to ensure learning outcomes are achieved through appropriate assessment exercises
- Closer collaboration with Learning Developers to ensure a sound pedagogical framework and a robust, technical interface for the administrative of this core program. Phase II enhancements are scheduled for deployment in 2010.

Challenges

The Library has a significant role to play to further embed integrated and *assessable* information skill development within the curriculum and to ensure a positive and rewarding academic experience for students.

The new cohorts of students are of the era of the *digital native*. Considerable debate has occurred on the relevancy of compulsory transition programs, especially foundation level information skills. Recent research on students' information literacy skills underscores the need to continue such programs, as tests of ability indicate that the transition to a new learning environment, with particular emphasis on locating scholarly information resources (journals, databases, books etc) would prove challenging for many students. Results show for example that 63% searched the internet for all their research needs; 53% either didn't use journals or were not sure what a journal is; and 67% couldn't distinguish a journal citation from a list of resources – similar to a typical reading list.

The elearning environment has and will continue to change. In addition the acceleration of advances in technical and digital platforms presents challenges for the establishment of regular and proactive measures for refreshing and updating instructional programs that fulfil the aims of recognised standards and principles. The Library intends to respond to these through continual assessment of technological applications and demonstration of the value that core foundation programs provide in supporting the attainment of the Graduate Qualities.

Links and resources

ILIP <http://www.uow.edu.au/student/attributes/ilip/>

Development of Information Literacy at the University of Wollongong:
<http://www.library.uow.edu.au/informationliteracy/UOW026276.html>

UOW information literacy education programs, policies and projects
<http://www.library.uow.edu.au/informationliteracy/UOW026255.html>

Contact

Helen Mandl, Associate Librarian, Client Services

Good Practice Case Study 3 - UOW

First Year Integrated Program - Faculty of Law

Summary

The First Year Integrated Program (FYIP), comprises a common set of LLB subjects for all first year LLB students who are allocated to a 'pod' (or group) and who follow the same timetable of lectures and seminars across all subjects, for their first semester of enrolment in the LLB.

Context

Prior to 2006, students enrolling in an LLB degree had the option of ten combined degrees and the 3 year (Graduate) degree, the latter being available only to students who had completed a Bachelors degree in another discipline with the required grades. An intake of students into the LLB in any one year actually saw students undertake their first year LLB studies in any of their first three years. Graduate students undertaking the three year program undertook core subjects in their first year, then remaining core subjects and electives in their second and third years.

Timetabling difficulties caused problems for both staff and students. With ten individual combined degrees, the first three years of a student's combined degree created a timetabling nightmare, as core classes for the LLB had to be scheduled to avoid clashing with 10 other programmes. This was complicated by the fact that combined degrees students were always the minority in other programmes, with the result that LLB subjects were typically moved when clashes arose. Timetabling difficulties also mitigated against students abilities to undertake outside work, both for financial and career development reasons

Aims

The FYIP aims to:

- create a common 'aggregation' point for all LLB students to encourage their formation into a collegial year group
- facilitate a feeling of 'connectedness' with other students through day-to-day contact in class with other first year LLB students and teachers, as well as the formation of support networks and study groups
- assist students in the transition to tertiary study by gradually introducing them to practical realities of tertiary life (negotiating timetabling difficulties, selection of subjects and their sequencing)
- overcome extensive timetabling difficulties created by the need to avoid clashes with 10 other programs

Outcomes

A distinct first year cohort is established each year, as a normal course of the enrolment process. This facilitates:

- tailored orientation activities to introduce students to the University, the Faculty, the first year coordinator and first year teachers, as well as their pod, and individual students within their pod
- communication with first year LLB students as a distinct cohort on issues impacting on them
- student contact with first year staff, including the first year coordinator

- staff collegiality in the first year program, particularly through the First Year Working Party (FYWP), chaired by the first year coordinator
- development of awareness of first year teaching staff to issues of academic transition, including the need to identify circumstances, either raised with them directly by a student or via a student's Academic Consideration request, that may impact on the student across their subjects, so that appropriate action can be taken as early as possible
- tailoring of teaching and learning strategies to the needs of a first year cohort, both across the first year program and in specific subjects
- development of knowledge by first year teachers of what students are learning in other subjects, so that comparisons, links and distinctions can be raised and discussed, and skills reinforced
- first year representation on the Law Students' Society, with representation drawn directly from the first year cohort
- gradually 'easing' of students into UOW's normal enrolment and timetabling systems, thereby reducing early session stress

What was done?

In 2006, a 4 year, straight LLB degree was made available to school leavers and at the same time the the FYIP was launched, initially in the third year of study for combined degree students. In 2008, FYIP moved to the first year of study for all LLB degrees.

Students are required to complete the first year of the LLB on a full time basis except where Faculty approval is given on equity grounds.

All first year LLB subjects are core subjects, and are co-requisites for one another. There is an integrated approach to the subjects across the session, with key material in each subject built upon in other subjects, as appropriate to the overlapping, but different, learning objectives in each case. Assessment due dates are coordinated, and assessment tasks varied depending on the subject and the acquisition of skills both in individual subjects and across the first year curriculum.

In first session students are allocated to a pod with a maximum size of 25. In second session students apply for seminar registration through the normal system. This means become familiar with organising their own timetable while they do not have the added complication of also selecting subjects (as all are core at this stage, and must be undertaken together unless otherwise arranged with the Sub Dean, including in cases where a student has failed one or more subjects in first session¹).

Critical success factors

- Faculty commitment to the importance of the learning and teaching experience of first year students in shaping their engagement with the Faculty and their subsequent studies
- First year teachers must be willing and able to effectively communicate with each other and to address issues arising in relation to individual students across the first year program. This may

¹ This also has the benefit of effectively building in consultation with the Sub Dean in circumstances where a first year student has failed one or more subjects in their first session. This creates the opportunity to enter into a discussion with the student about their studies and any transition or other issues they are facing, thereby facilitating early intervention and provision of assistance. This has also given rise to more contact with at-risk students during the second half of the year.

require the First Year Coordinator or Sub Dean to assist via the provision of advice, liaison and/or direct contact with the student.

Review and improvement

The FYIP was extensively reviewed in 2006², and subsequently moved to the first year for all LLB students in 2008. Pods were also reduced to Autumn session only in 2008 and 2009, in response to staff and student feedback, which indicated that the main benefits are achieved in first session, and other benefits can be achieved by not using pods in second session. A full review is due in 2011.

Challenges

Initial challenges were faced in negotiating the necessary course schedule changes with other faculties involved in the double degree programs; however, these were ultimately resolved to the benefit of all parties and have promoted further double degree options being developed that fit with the 'standard' LLB double degree recommended schedule (two new double degrees will be offered in 2010: Bachelor of International Studies/ Bachelor of Laws and Bachelor of Information Technology/ Bachelor of Laws).

Further challenges are faced in actually achieving integration of the first year subjects, so that the integration is apparent to the students. Some issues are relatively easily dealt with (such as coordination of assessment due dates to ease workload and promote early feedback to students); others (such as integrating links between subjects as appropriate to their overlapping, but different, learning objectives) require on-going collaboration, reflection and communication.

Links and resources

Faculty of Law 2009 Handbook:

<http://www.uow.edu.au/content/groups/public/@web/@law/documents/web/uow057272.pdf>

LLB Course Programs, pre 2006 and 2006 onwards:

<http://www.uow.edu.au/law/undergrad/UOW046298.html>

LLB Skills Program (of which 3 are first year subjects):

<http://www.uow.edu.au/law/undergrad/UOW013613.html>

Contact

Judith Marychurch , Sub-Dean, Faculty of Law, Ph: 4221 4653

² Report prepared by Dr Ruth Walker (Learning Development), The First Year Experience 2006: A Report on four focus groups conducted for the First Year Working Party (FYWP), Faculty of Law, University of Wollongong.

Good Practice Case Study 4 - UOW Student Experience Project - ARD

Summary

The focus of the Student Experience Project was the initial stage of a student's university lifecycle, from the students offer to the point just before classes commence (orientation), with the aim of differentiating the UOW student experience.

Context

That students need to feel valued and supported by the University and the role UOW plays in creating opportunities for social interaction and networking were considered important considerations in a new student's life. These were built into each of the three phases of the new program.

Aims

The aim was to differentiate the UOW student experience by making activities and events social, engaging, motivating and personalised. The objectives were that students would:

- feel valued by their faculty and the UOW community,
- with their family, feel welcomed to the UOW community,
- agree they made the right choice in selecting UOW,
- experience an atmosphere that minimises anxiety, promotes positive attitudes, and stimulates an excitement for learning,
- be confident they are adequately informed and prepared, and know what they need to do next,
- be encouraged to participate in social activities in order to support their personal, social, professional and academic development,
- be provided opportunities to discuss expectations and perceptions of campus with current students and faculty staff.

Outcomes

- Students expectations were exceeded
- Opportunities were engaging and motivating
- Students felt welcomed and confident they made the right choice

What was done?

In autumn 2009 UOW delivered the following enrolment and orientation program:

Welcome Days

A welcome atmosphere was created at Main Round Enrolment Days on the Duck Pond Lawn with information stalls, daily music and street theatre, with welcome banners and festival flyers. Information sessions and campus tours were also available. There was increased signage and staff involvement.

International Arrival Days

The inaugural International Arrival Festival took place the week prior to Orientation Week and included an Indigenous welcome, information stalls and International clubs and societies on the Duck Pond Lawn. Also included Taronga Zoo, bush tucker BBQ, daily music and street theatre, welcome banners and festival flyers. Information sessions and campus tours were also available. It concluded with a social movie night and dinner.

Orientation Days

Orientation saw a strong partnership forged with funding allocated to faculties for new and innovative approaches to orientation. A balance between academic and social activities was successfully coordinated to ensure objectives on both sides were met. The Faculty programs were aimed at engaging their students via Faculty led social activities, greater interactive information sessions and increased faculty involvement within the Orientation process.

Orientation Festival

Social opportunities were provided for all student cohorts with extra entertainment that included:

- Music and Street Theatre
- Obstacle Courses/Giant Twister Games
- Clubs and Societies
- 'Salsa under the Stars'
- 'Comedy on the Duck Pond Lawn'
- O Party concluded the week's activities

Critical success factors

O Host Program

The role of the O Hosts was to meet and greet and host a group of new students from their faculty for an hour prior to the faculty information session. In this hour students introduced themselves, the O Hosts talked about their own first year experience, took the students on a campus tour and did some social ice-breaker activities. The O Hosts then remained with the students for the duration of the faculty activity, faculty information session and faculty lunch. The O Hosts were required to encourage new students to come to the O Week Festival on the Duck Pond Lawn.

Communication strategy

A well-developed communication strategy was integral. Changes to start dates for international students, meant a possible reduction in numbers attending, but this not the case. The strategy was coordinated and inclusive of all stakeholders, ensuring changes were not met with any surprises.

Communications were personal, fun and directed via age appropriate designs and forms of media. Communication also extended to all UOW staff to increase the knowledge and feeling that something different was about to begin. Communications started early and maintained throughout the project.

Significant increase in Faculty Engagement

It is important for ownership to be an integral part of the faculty orientation. The faculties brief was to have staff engage with new students and provide an interactive session of information, followed by a faculty based social activity.

Common Stakeholder Objective and Goals

Although not documented through the project this was the key component of what made the project a success. The fact a directive was provided and funded to ensure students felt welcomed and felt a sense of belonging, saw the institution, unite as one (ie not separate divisions) to achieve this goal.

Review and improvement

- For 2010, look at engaging more student leaders for the role of O Host as some selected were not entirely appropriate for the role.
- Look at relocating the drop in information sessions to a more accessible room and stronger promotion for 2010.

- A minor number of faculties had difficulties with their planned activity. Additional support from the project team and the development of an event plan may assist the faculties in covering issues not considered this time.
- A review of the welcome address for International Students needs to be conducted, as it was not effective in its current format.
- Look at ensuring international students receive information they need. This is connected to the drop in sessions which did not work so well.

Challenges

Access to grass areas was difficult at times. Restrictions on where event items can go caused concern and involved a great deal of consultation, yet further negotiations will be required to improve this further for 2010.

Links and resources

getstarted.uow.edu.au

Contact

Glen Meznaric, Events Coordinator, Academic Registrar's Division, Ph 4221 4401

Good Practice Case Study 5 - UOW
**A comprehensive approach to supporting students’
academic literacy: transition, retention, success**
Learning Development

Summary

Learning Development’s (LD) role in academic transition is to support students’ academic language and learning development through acculturation to specific academic learning environments, focusing on language communication (academic literacy) required for tertiary study.

Context

UOW is a medium-sized regional university that delivers its degree programs across 6 geographically dispersed onshore campuses as well as offshore. In 2008, over 24,000 students were enrolled, with almost 40% of international students. LD has 10 full-time academic staff and 4 casual staff working at the Wollongong campus and the satellite campuses.

Aims

LD provides a comprehensive interconnected academic language and learning service through the integration of layered practices at the individual, faculty and university-wide level. LD’s diagrammatic model of practice is shown in Figure 1. At the university level, LD plays a significant role in governance bodies responsible for teaching and learning policy and practice. At the individual and faculty level, LD delivers:

- a strategic and collaborative curriculum-integration program;
- an extra-curricular program of workshops and individual consultation; and
- resources for academic language and learning development (delivered online, in-curricula and/or through extra-curricular classes)

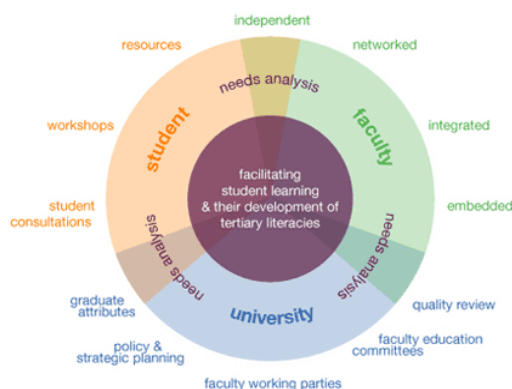


Figure 1: Learning Development Diagrammatic Model of Practice

Outcomes (2008)

- In 2008, LD assisted over 4000 students, approximately 33% of whom were international.
 - Over 1,445 students attended generic workshops offered by LD.
 - LD online (interactive and print-based) resources received over 10,500 visits.
 - 820 students were assisted through the provision of individual consultations.
- LD Lecturers integrated situated academic language and learning development opportunities into 133 subjects (incl. 24 **first year** subjects in 7 of the 9 major faculties).
- LD made a significant contribution to a wide range of university and faculty teaching and learning projects.
- Individual and team awards (see next section).

What was done in 2008

At the University level

- Alignment of business plan to the goals and objectives of the UOW Strategic Plan 2008-2010.
- Representation on university-wide teaching and learning committees.
- Contribution to a number of strategic university-wide projects, such as the *Mathematics and Statistics resources to support student learning* project.
- Inclusion of LD in subject/course approval processes. For example, the inclusion of a section in the New Subject Proposal Form requesting information regarding the nature of the student cohort.

At the faculty, school and program level

- Representation on all Faculty Education Committees.
- Contribution to faculty working parties engaged in the design, development and implementation of faculty-wide projects, such as:
 - *The Commerce Academic Integrity Online (CAIO) Working Party*
 - *The Master of Professional Accounting (MPA) Working Party*
 - *The Master of Commerce Embedded Literacies Project*
 - *The Law First Year Curriculum Working Party*
 - *The Science Graduate Qualities Mapping Project*
 - *The Nursing Academic Integrity Project*
 - *The Mathematics and Statistics Resources Project*
 - *The Informatics Communications Subject*

Integration at the subject level

LD specifically target first year core subjects, and subjects with high numbers of advanced standing and international students, for their curriculum-embedded practices. As mentioned under Outcomes this integration occurred in 133 individual undergraduate subjects in 2008.

At the student level

- Provision of individual consultations and generic workshops for all students.
- Provision of online interactive and print-based resources.

At the professional level, in 2008

- Significant contribution to and representation in the *Good Practice Principles for English language proficiency for international students in Australian universities* (DEEWR 2008).
- LD teams awarded ALTC citation for 'Sustained work to collaboratively integrate contextualised academic integrity into curricula'.
- LD individuals awarded UOW Outstanding Contribution to Learning and Teaching (OCTAL) Award (2008, 2009)

Critical Success Factors

- Institutional support for this model of practice
- Resourcing adequate to the task
- Expertise and commitment of staff
- Collaborative approach to faculty work
- Leadership in the Faculty
- Participation in university and faculty governance

Review and improvement

- Resources and workshops under review.
- Work with faculty requires more strategic planning, implementation and evaluation.

Challenges

- Structural change that allows a more strategic approach to faculty work.

Links and resources

- Learning Development website <http://www.uow.edu.au/student/services/ld/index.html>

Contact

- Kim Draisma, Head, Learning Development, kimd@uow.edu.au