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Summary

The Successful Transitions Project derives from a Learning Development initiative designed in 2009 to engage with and support first year student learning experience at the South Coast and Southern Highlands campuses. In part, the project is a direct response to the Final Report on the 2008 Review of Australian Higher Education which recommends a range of initiatives geared to make Australian universities more competitive in the global market place and more accessible to Indigenous students, domestic students of “low socio-economic status”, as well as other identified equity groups. The Report urges that “institution-specific targets for participation and performance [be] established and monitored” (Bradley et al. 2008, p.xiii). The Successful Transitions project is also the result of a longitudinal study (Stirling and Rossetto 2007-10) of how new students experience learning in the multi-media, multi-location environs of the regional campus network. A significant proportion of these students are mature age and / or the first in their family to attempt university study.

Over the first half of 2010, the Successful Transitions project has evolved to produce a broader set of Learning Development initiatives that include:

- student programs;
- curriculum networked programs;
- curriculum integrated programs; and
- research projects.

The project now comprises a range of student-focused events such as Immersion days for new students at the South Coast and Southern Highlands campuses; day-long research and writing intensives for students at 100 and 200 levels of study; and MGMT110 Successful Transitions, integrated teaching and learning resources developed in consultation with faculty academics for a core first year subject in the Bachelor of Commerce degree. At the Wollongong campus MGMT110 attracts a high proportion of International students from non-English speaking backgrounds; in Autumn semester the subject is also taught across the regional campus network.

By July 2010, day-long programs have been delivered to students at the Shoalhaven, Moss Vale, Batemans Bay and Bega campuses and attended by a total of 123 students. Centre managers have supported the programs by circulating advertising to students and providing catering for the days. Library and IT staff have provided insight into various aspects of student learning needs as have subject tutors from several of the campuses.

The inaugural MGMT110 Successful Transitions teaching and learning support resources are being trialled by the subject teaching team at the Wollongong campus Spring semester, 2010. The resources will be reviewed with the teaching team at the conclusion of the academic semester and rolled out to all six campuses where the subject is taught Autumn semester, 2011.

Dr Jeannette Stirling,
Project Designer,
August 4, 2010
Immersion Day: Shoalhaven and Moss Vale

Immersion or ‘I’ Day is a day-long transition program that was piloted at Moss Vale and Shoalhaven campuses February 25 and 26, 2010, respectively. Subtitled ‘The Naked Truth: Myths & Mysteries of Academic Study’, the program was designed to build on some of the ideas raised in O-Week sessions for new enrolling students. To this end and to help structure learning sessions and activities, Learning Development surveyed new students at both campuses in 2009 about their learning needs and in 2010 collected further feedback from Library and IT staff at the identified regional campuses.

The aim of ‘I’ Day was to: de-mystify, as far as possible, what would be expected of students in the first weeks of study; have them plan and implement some basic short-term survival strategies; and, introduce the Learning Development workshop program available at their campus, where they would have the opportunity to consolidate and further develop what they were sampling during ‘I’ Day. The activities on the day focused on four areas of concern for students: engaging with and understanding subject outlines; understanding what constitutes plagiarism and why it is important in the context of academic writing; understanding and developing a practical guide to Netiquette; beginning to acquire effective elearning and document management techniques.

The ‘I’ Day program constituted an integrated Learning Development initiative linking Orientation with a series of eight weekly seminars / workshops focussed on academic research, analytical reading and writing within particular disciplines: for example, at the Shoalhaven campus seminar / workshop streams are specific to B. Nursing; B. Arts; and B. Commerce.

Tables 1 and 2 show the number of new enrolments and attendees at ‘I’ Days on both campuses. Average attendance of new undergraduate students across both campuses was 90%.

Table 1: ‘I’ Day attendance at Shoalhaven campus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total New Enrolments</th>
<th>PG</th>
<th>UG</th>
<th>Respondents to initial advertising</th>
<th>UG Attendance at “I’ Day</th>
<th>Attendance of UGs as % of enrolled UGs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>174</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: ‘I’ Day attendance at Moss Vale education centre.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total New Enrolment</th>
<th>PG</th>
<th>UG</th>
<th>Respondents to initial advertising</th>
<th>UG Attendance</th>
<th>Attendance of UGs as % of enrolled UGs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tables 3 and 4 show that to date, ‘I’ Day appears to have had a positive impact on the attrition rates of students on these two campuses. Attrition rates may of course alter over the course of the year.

**Table 3: 100 level attrition at Shoalhaven campus.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13.93%</td>
<td>16.80%</td>
<td>7.98%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4: 100 level attrition at Moss Vale education centre.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15.13%</td>
<td>21.60%</td>
<td>10.43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The success of ‘I’ Day at both campuses owes much to the support of campus staff who enthusiastically promoted the event with students during O Week, provided feedback about first year experience at each campus, and provided catering. What has been very noticeable since the delivery of ‘I’ Day is the increase in the use of all Learning Development services by students at these two campuses throughout Autumn Semester.

The success of the pilot program resulted in a plan to develop a program for new and continuing students at the Batemans Bay and Bega education centres prior to the commencement of Spring Semester 2010. See Appendices for sample programs for both days.
Immersion Day: Batemans Bay

After travelling to both the Batemans Bay and Bega Education Centres at the end of May 2010 to gather feedback from teaching and ancillary staff about student learning needs specific to each campus, this day-long program was developed as an intensive critical thinking and writing event, or ‘Writing Boot Camp’. Although aimed at a mix of returning 100 and 200 level students, the activities were also designed so that new enrolling students could be mentored by participating in small group work with more senior colleagues.

Held July 21, 2010, ‘I’ Day @ Batemans Bay coincided with mid-year enrolment and Orientation at the campus. Perhaps because of this, attendance was limited to new enrolling students. Not having senior students to mentor new colleagues through the more advanced ‘Writing Boot Camp’ program, we instead ran a revised version of the program delivered to Shoalhaven and Moss Vale students at the beginning of Autumn semester, 2010. This program provided opportunity for new students to engage with the generic conventions of subject outlines and use this understanding to plan their semester’s academic workload; develop a basic understanding of what constitutes plagiarism and why it is a key concern in university study; develop a practical guide to Netiquette; and acquire / refresh basic computer skills.

Table 5 shows student evaluation of the value of each activity in the program:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Very useful</th>
<th>Useful</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Not useful</th>
<th>Waste of time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The Da Vinci Code of subject outlines</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Email communication protocols</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Online discussion: debate or ‘dissing’?</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Formatting in Microsoft Word</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Understanding plagiarism</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student comments about the day include:

This day increased my confidence somewhat as regards to computer use.

I found the plagiarism activity the most useful because it can be confusing to know where the line is. The day also gave me a general insight into essay writing, netiquette and a chance to meet fellow students.

I found this day very useful. It will make the transition for the first few weeks of uni easier.

The online discussion tips were really good because it’s all new to me and I’m sure to the other students.

The computer activity where we had type up a document in Microsoft Word and then edit it was great. Really good tips about formatting.

**Immersion Day: Bega - Writing Boot Camp**

We were able to run the ‘Writing Boot Camp’ version for Bega’s ‘I’ Day on July 22, 2010. As well as circulating the day’s program advertising which was forwarded to the Centres at the end of May, Ms Chris Dwyer, the Bega Centre Manager, targeted 100 and 200 level students who had expressed concerns about their academic progress at the end of Autumn semester. Twenty four students expressed interest in attending ‘Writing Boot Camp’; nineteen students were able to attend on the day. The students were a mix of 100 and 200 level Arts, Commerce and Nursing students plus two new enrolling students, one from Commerce and one from Arts.

The program consisted of three intensive seminar workshops with graduated activities that moved students through the various stages of critical thinking, analysis and academic writing. Students were divided into small groups (approximately 5 per) and each individual provided with an activity booklet to record their progress through the seminars. The booklet contained activity resources; sample academic journal articles; lists of transition signals and reporting verbs appropriate to academic writing. These intensive sessions were interspersed with a range of relevant but more light-hearted activities to stimulate motivation.
Table 6 shows student evaluation of the value of each activity in the program:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Very useful</th>
<th>Useful</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Not useful</th>
<th>Waste of time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <em>The Truth is Out There?:</em> critical thinking / critical argument</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <em>Inside the Tardis:</em> mapping the terrain; evaluating the evidence</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <em>Dr Who’s Sonic Screwdriver:</em> quoting; paraphrasing; weaving evidence into your argument.</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student comments about the day include:

*Because the activities were all linked, they worked well together: we couldn’t do one without the other. All were useful as all were highly important. I now better understand how to think critically, use transition signals and reporting verbs in my writing.*

*Learnt more about topic sentences. The day was great!!!*

*I feel a lot more comfortable in approaching assessments.*

*I found the most useful activity was how to develop an argument. I did not know. Thankyou. Thankyou. Thankyou.*

*Today made me realise that I was writing descriptively rather than analytically.*

*I found it really valuable to be taught how to paraphrase and construct a paragraph and then to put it all into practice straight away. Things I’d not understood before were clearly explained and made easy to understand.*

*Very hands on. I’m feeling much more confident about how to write analytically and develop an argument.*

*I know that my learning style is being hands on and having ‘live’ examples so this day helped me no end.*
MGMT110 ‘Successful Transitions’ Learning Support Package

MGMT110: Introduction to Management is a core subject for the Bachelor of Commerce degree. In Spring and Summer semesters the subject is taught at the Wollongong campus; in Autumn semester it is taught at Wollongong, Loftus, Shoalhaven, Moss Vale, Batemans Bay and Bega.

The MGMT110 Successful Transitions learning support package is designed to help subject tutors run a series of learning sessions in their classes to prepare students for various assessment tasks. It is also intended to ensure a basic standard of learning support for all students enrolled in the subject across all campuses where the subject is taught.

The package consists of a Tutor’s booklet which contains a section of general tips, four learning Modules with explanatory notes about each preparation session, PowerPoint notes for tutors, and a series of recommended learning activities relevant to each Module and assessment task. At the back of the booklet there is a DVD with PowerPoint presentations for three of the four learning modules, plus copies of activity sheets which tutors can print for use in class. PowerPoint presentations and writing exemplars for key Modules have been uploaded to the subject elearning site so that students can also refer back to these resources. Resources were developed in consultation with Mr Michael Gross, the subject coordinator, and he hosted a pre-semester meeting with the teaching team to discuss how the package might be implemented in teaching and tutorial sessions throughout the semester. We will meet with the MGMT110 team at semester’s end to review the resource so that it can be revised for multi-campus implementation in Autumn semester, 2011.

For the MGMT110 ‘Successful Transitions’ resource, Learning Development provides:

1. Hard copy booklet: MGMT110 Tutor Notes
   - Tips for tutors: setting the ‘rules of engagement’
   - What to teach: Preparing students for assessment
   - How to teach: Modelling (ppt. resource) + small group activities

2. DVD: ‘Successful Transitions in MGMT110’.
## Overview:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Support Modules</th>
<th>Suggested delivery week</th>
<th>Accompanying activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **1. Reflective Practice & Academic Journal Writing:**  
Pdf. resource; activity sheets. | 2, 3 and/or 4 | Small group activity:  
- Reflection on the ‘forming and ‘storming’ stages - group development. |
| **2. Oral presentation:**  
PowerPoint slides;  
DVD mock presentation; activity sheets. | 4 and/or 5 | Small group activities:  
- Evaluating an oral presentation |
| **3. Team report writing:**  
PowerPoint slides; activity sheets. | 5 and/or 6 | Small group activities:  
- Assignment analysis;  
- Defining research focus;  
- Planning structure. |
| **4. Reflective essay:**  
PowerPoint slides; activity sheets. | 7, 8 and/or 9 | Small group activities:  
- Writing Introductions;  
- Paraphrasing evidence. |
‘I’ Day @ Moss Vale & Shoalhaven
February 25 & 26, 2010
The Naked Truth: Myths & Mysteries of academic study.

Program:

9.00: Introduction


10.00-10.30: Plagiarism poker & the art of referencing.

10.30-11am: Morning tea

11.00-12.30pm: Navigating through e-space:
- Revisiting SOLs
- The Mysteries of Microsoft Word
- Email protocols
- Discussion, debate, or ‘dissing’?: A practical guide to netiquette

12.30-1.30pm: Lunch

1.30-3pmish: ‘It’s a wrap’: Q & A with Learning Development & Library.
‘I’ Day @ Batemans Bay & Bega
Writing Boot Camp
July 21 & 22, 2010

Programme

9.30-10am: Greetings: Dr Who (What; How; Where); forming groups.
10-11am: The Truth is Out There?: Critical thinking / critical argument
11-11.15am: Morning tea
11.15-11.45am: Who said what?: Getting to grips with appropriate attribution.
11.45-12.30pm: Inside the Tardis: Mapping the grid; evaluating the evidence
12.30-1.15pm: Lunch
1.15-1.45pm: In your own words - NOT!: Thinking about meaningful paraphrasing.
1.45-2.45pm: Using Dr Who’s Sonic Screwdriver to Fix Everything: Quoting / paraphrasing: your voice or their’s?; weaving evidence into your argument.
2.45-3pm: Sum-up & evaluations.

Overview

This series of learning seminars and activities is intended to further de-mystify some of the trickier aspects of academic research and writing. Although the sessions may seem very different from each other as you peruse the programme, in some way they do connect. Trust us - as the aliens once said to the earthlings - we mean you no harm. Have you ever found that sometimes thinking ‘outside the square’, so to speak, can suddenly lead to a new insight or suggest a new approach to a task? This is the background premise of today’s learning seminars. As you’ve probably figured out from a quick glance at the seminar titles, we’re also interested in having some fun with these sessions. Rest assured though, that despite the sly and not-so-sly sci-fi references that permeate the day, we’re going to be looking in some depth at the pros and cons of effective research strategies and the ways that these can feed into more effective academic writing. We suggest that you use this booklet to record what you learn throughout the day as you also work through the activities. This is the first time that we’ve run this particular version of ‘I’ Day so we’re also very keen to receive your feedback at the end of our time together. Your feedback will be crucial to future versions of the programme. We hope you find the day valuable - and fun. Either way, please let us know, we are also here to learn.

Dr. Jeannette Stirling & Dr Celeste Rossetto
Bibliography:


