SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS
2011

A SOCIAL INCLUSION INITIATIVE:
SOUTH COAST AND
SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS CAMPUSES

ANNUAL REPORT

JEANNETTE STIRLING & CELESTE ROSSETTO, CO-DESIGNERS

UOW Learning Development
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1 Introduction / Background

The Successful Transitions Project is a social inclusion initiative explicitly designed to facilitate academic participation and retention in higher education study for new enrolling undergraduate students at the University’s South Coast and Southern Highlands network. These regional campuses attract students from a range of identified equity categories — low ‘SES’; ‘first in family’; Indigenous; mature-age; NESB — as well as school leavers who have not achieved a sufficient ATAR to enrol at a larger campus. There is also a number of students who are admitted at the discretion of campus managers on the proviso that they attend Learning Development programs. This proviso, however, is optional.

The context for the project comes in part from a longitudinal study of how students experience learning in the multimedia, multi-location environs of a regional campus network. In part, the project is also a response to the Final Report on the Review of Australian Higher Education which concludes that the wealth of a nation resides in the capacity of its people (Bradley et al. 2009, p.xvii) and directs educators to offer “More innovative, sustainable and responsive models of tertiary education provision … [and] to respond to rapidly changing local needs” (Bradley et al. 2009, p.13).

We began the project in 2009 by surveying students about their learning requirements on entry to university. Drawing on this data and wider research, in 2010 we developed, trialled and evaluated a three-tiered program specifically designed to connect to students’ academic progress at key points during and at the conclusion of their first semester. With the support of Professor Rob Castle we were successful in gaining funds from the Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program (HEPPP) budget which then allowed us to further develop the project for delivery to all South Coast and Southern Highlands campuses in 2011. For new undergraduate students commencing academic study at the regional campus network in Autumn semester 2011, we have offered a pre-semester Immersion (‘I’) Day; an eight week series of degree-linked learning seminars that focus on the development of academic literacies within specific disciplines; and a day-long academic writing intensive — Writing Boot Camp — that runs in the mid year break in preparation for Spring semester. By request, we have also provided Immersion Days at commencement of Autumn and Spring semesters for Woolyungah Indigenous Centre. In Spring semester South Coast and Southern Highlands students have been able to consolidate and build on their academic capabilities through the Writing Circle seminar series offered at each of the regional Centres.

In 2012 the academic literacy program will be consolidated across all campuses in the South Coast and Southern Highlands network with the view to embed it as part of standard Learning Development practice at these sites. We will also continue to work with Woolyungah to adapt a version of the program relevant to the learning needs of students enrolled in diverse degree programs and seeking learning support through the Indigenous Centre. The final component of the Successful Transitions Project to be developed in 2012 is a scaffolded math support strand. We have successfully applied for further funding from the Social Inclusion Program to progress this stage of development.

Dr Jeannette Stirling, Project Coordinator
2 Body / Methodology

2.1 Teaching philosophy:
The Successful Transitions project derives from a philosophical commitment to teaching models that involve students as active participants in their own learning processes. To this end, students are engaged in a series of varied learning experiences that provide opportunities for the co-production of understanding about what constitutes critical thinking, analysis and academic writing in their disciplines. The program facilitates:

- the development of inclusive learning environments that promote academic success for new enrolling undergraduate students from diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds;
- the provision of active, process-linked approaches to the development of academic literacies and numeracy.

2.2 Methodology:
We began the research for the Successful Transitions project in 2009 (for project timeline see Figure 1) by surveying students in the two core subjects of the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Commerce degree programs with anonymous questionnaires and a series of interview sessions. We then sought to identify when students are most likely to access learning support in their first semester. We wanted to know: what motivates, inhibits or impedes their access to this kind of support; what kind of learning support they felt most valuable to their needs; and whether current learning development models were appropriate or sufficient to the multimedia, multi-location learning and teaching environments of the regional campus network. The questionnaire — which was circulated at the beginning of their first semester — was designed to elicit information relevant to student transition into university study. At the commencement of the second semester, we followed up with a series of focus groups comprised of willing participants to re-evaluate their attitudes to and perceptions about learning support.

We also surveyed the relevant literature on providing learning support in these sorts of academic contexts (for example: Laurillard 1995; Laurillard 2002; Lefoe et al. 2002a; Lefoe et al. 2002b; Simpson & Yunfei, 2004; Kolb & Kolb 2005; Haggis 2004, 2006; Stirling & Rossetto 2007). The value of student-focused teaching has been noted by other higher education researchers (Postareff et al. 2008; Haggis 2008; Ainley 2008; Christie et al. 2008) as has the value of early scaffolded learning support as a significant predictor of successful degree completion (Haggis 2006; Tumen et al. 2008).

Through this stage of our research (Figure 2), it became apparent that the missing component for many South Coast and Southern Highlands students seemed to be the opportunity for the contextualised application of those first-level academic principles and this is where the Successful Transitions project came into play. It has been designed to provide: contextualised learning; experience in identifying and responding productively to challenges; experience in developing goal-setting strategies.
2.3 Design:
The Successful Transitions project is designed to intersect with new students’ learning experiences at three key points by: providing Immersion or ‘I’ Day as a bridge that connects Orientation with the commencement of academic; scaffolding the development of discipline-specific academic literacies with a series of degree-linked learning seminars that extend across the first nine weeks of Autumn semester; offering a mid year, day-long academic writing intensive program designed to provide students with the opportunity to test their progress to date and to move their academic capacities to the next level.

We argue that this style of tiered program is a sustainable and innovative response to an identified gap in these students’ pathways to higher educational experience because it is well-grounded in research about the specific cultures of these regional campuses and is designed to address the
needs of equity students accessing higher education in a multimedia, multi-location teaching and learning environment.

2.4 Quality Assurance:

In order to deliver the Successful Transitions program across the South Coast and Southern Highlands network and assure that all students have equitable access to high quality learning support, the efforts of a multi-location teaching team and the support of campus managers has been essential. ‘I’ Day also includes the assistance of selected senior students in a range of roles because of their familiarity with the campus, their ability to liaise with the new enrolling students, and their embodiment of the potential and possibilities of higher education. The involvement of senior students at this pre-semester stage has the added benefit of facilitating the development of ongoing mentoring relationships.

A resource booklet (see Figure 3) that outlines the aims and parameters of the project as well as the roles and responsibilities of teaching team members has been created to provide a shared base of reference and ensure a quality-assured standard of practice across all campuses. This resource is particularly important for new and inexperienced Learning Development lecturers in a multi-location teaching context. Another way that we have sought to address some of the complexities of multi-location teaching is with the creation of a project web site for the teaching team. The site allows the development and sharing of resources such as archival materials from the design pilots; seminar PowerPoints and activity sheets from the 2011 programs (see Figure 4); and an administrivia folder for the storage of necessary governance forms and evaluation proformas.

The most valuable section of the project web site is, perhaps, the virtual staff room. It has been crucial in maintaining the lines of communication and encouraging a sense of collegiality in spite of the geographical distance between the campuses. Research suggests that teachers who are supported in this way feel included and connected to the University (See Stirling, Hopkins, & Riddick 2010; Beaumont, Stirling & Percy 2009). Although the technical provision of this resource is relatively straightforward, building robust collegiality where discussion takes place has taken time to develop because of the varying levels of experience of team members. Nevertheless, the virtual staff room allowed each team member to raise issues with colleagues as they engaged their students in the learning seminars, regularly review teaching materials and scheduling, and problem solve. It also
offered members an opportunity to seek and give advice or vent when situations were frustrating. In this collaborative environment, problems could be shared. Furthermore, the space was important for the ongoing professional development of staff in responding to the sometimes complex learning needs of students.

3 Results / Discussion

3.1 Immersion (‘I’) Days:

Immersion or ‘I’ Day is designed to help students connect the plethora of information they receive at Orientation to the first few weeks of academic endeavour. The day’s program consists of a series of staged interactive activities and small group work intended to de-mystify for new enrolling students what will be expected of them in those early weeks of semester; have them plan and implement some basic short-term survival strategies; introduce basic ‘first principles’ of preparing for academic study; introduce them to peer learning and problem solving. The day’s learning sessions are supplemented by an activity book (see Figure 5) that focuses on four areas of concern for students: engaging with and understanding subject outlines, as well as how to use them to plan workloads; understanding what constitutes plagiarism and why it is an issue at university; understanding and developing a practical guide to Netiquette; understanding how to develop effective eCommunication styles and document management techniques appropriate to a university context.

It is crucial at ‘I’ Day that students are not overwhelmed by too much information; this can compound a sense of information fatigue in light of their recent enrolment and Orientation experiences. The day is intended only as an introductory step to the academic demands of a new learning experience (Figure 6) and we have found that providing too much detail about particular areas yet to be encountered causes unnecessary anxiety at this point and students disengage. This observation has been supported by student feedback (see 5.2). For example, the temptation to take the ‘Mysteries of Microsoft Word (document management)’ to a lesson on Microsoft shortcuts or to expand the introductory seminar on citation protocols into a discussion about the philosophy of referencing styles should be resisted at all costs. Both scenarios have happened in past iterations with guest teachers and while providing interest for the smallest minority of attending students, tend to launch
the majority into spiralling confusion. The importance of a considered, context-appropriate teaching plan to the success of the day for students cannot be overstated.

Overall, the 2011 ‘I’ Days at the South Coast and Southern Highlands campuses and the Woolyungah Indigenous Centre were positively received by students. Despite a broad range of abilities and skills, all attending students at each of the campuses engaged enthusiastically with the seminar program (Figure 7) and the majority of the evaluation comments affirmed the value of the experience. Most feedback comments on the individual sessions ranged from ‘very useful’ to ‘useful’ (see 5.1). Students indicated that the Immersion Day sessions alleviated some of their anticipatory anxiety about entering a new educational environment because the learning modules afforded an accessible introduction to academic expectations. Most of the evaluation comments strongly suggested that at the conclusion of ‘I’ Day students felt more confident to begin their academic study. Students who had not previously had any experience of higher education found their initial experience to be congenial and informative. We noted that during the morning tea and lunch breaks at the various campuses students continued to engage with each other — some exchanging contact details (see Figure 8). This aspect of the day helped create bonds that they were then able to build on once semester began.

A significant proportion of students who attended ‘I’ Days (see Table 1 for attendance figures) at the South Coast and Southern Highlands campuses went on to enrol in the Successful Transitions Learning Seminar programs which commenced in Week 2 of semester and concluded in Week 9.

At the request of Woolyungah Indigenous Centre staff we designed and taught ‘I’ Day @ Woolyungah in February, 2011. The day was organized to work collaboratively with the Centre’s own initiative, iStart@Woolyungah. The efficacy of this collaboration has resulted in zero attrition rates for Indigenous students in the 2011 first semester. In July 2011 a further request was made to deliver a truncated version of the ‘I’ Day program to a block-release cohort of Indigenous Drug and Alcohol counsellors who were enrolled in ongoing professional development in the Health and Behavioural Science Faculty.

### Table 1: Student attendance at Immersion Days – February 2011*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Bega</th>
<th>Batemans Bay</th>
<th>Shoalhaven</th>
<th>Moss Vale</th>
<th>WIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bega</td>
<td>72.5%</td>
<td>62.8%</td>
<td>53.5%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentile of new enrolling UG students at each location
3.2 Autumn Learning Seminar Series

The degree-linked learning seminar series is where we get ‘up close and personal’ about those details purposely glossed over at ‘I’ Day. The series is designed to scaffold the development of students’ academic literacies in the context of their disciplines and to an extent parallel preparation for their various assessment tasks. The seminars also provide opportunities for the contextualised application of those ‘first principles’ of academic literacy. While we engage with discipline-specific academic literacies and familiarise ourselves with subject content so that each seminar has a clear and explicit connection to relevant study areas, we are scrupulous in directing all specific content-based questions back to the subject teachers.

The program framework for the seminar series is set by the beginning of the semester; however, in the first introductory seminar students are encouraged to identify their own learning priorities from week to week. This aspect of the project requires a flexible and innovative approach to teaching and resource development and evaluations of this part of the program confirm the efficacy of the model. Students across the campus network who attended some or all of the seminars rated them ‘very useful’ to ‘useful’ (5.3). A small minority indicated they were ‘neutral’ about a specific seminar while finding others in the series more relevant to specific aspects of their academic development. Indeed, a proportion of students at each campus only attended those seminars they deemed most relevant to their academic progress (5.3). Most students indicated that the series had a positive impact on their academic progression and qualitative comments about the seminar series strongly suggest its value.

3.3 Day-long writing intensive: Writing Boot Camp

The final component of this three-tiered, first semester model is the Writing Boot Camp day which consists of three linked seminars with graduated activities that move students through the various stages of critical thinking, analysis and academic writing. This day-long intensive is designed to provide students with the opportunity to test their progress to date and to move their academic capacities to the next level. Students are again provided with an activity book (see Figure 10) to facilitate their work on the day and to provide them with a tangible asset to take with them into their second semester of study.
The 2011 iteration of Writing Boot Camp did not have the high number of attendees present at the 2010 intensives. The evidence suggests that this drop in overall numbers is likely due to the successful implementation of ‘I’ Day and the learning seminar series at all campuses. Attendance records from all components of the Successful Transitions project indicate that the majority of students who participated in the 2011 mid-year writing intensive did not attend other parts of the program. Moreover, at each campus attending students came from 200 and 300 levels of study, from postgraduate programs, and a couple of attendees were tutors who wanted to improve their writing. All attendees identified the value of the day. Given the profile of the attending cohort in 2011 we will broaden the reach of the content of this component for the 2012 iteration.

The qualitative comments from students affirm the pedagogical efficacy of the layered structure of the day’s seminars and activities (see 5.4).

We purposely delivered this day’s activities during the session break, after the examination results were posted and as students were gearing up psychologically for their next semester. Again, the value of this scheduling was reflected in the feedback: for example, “All of it was useful, especially after spending a few weeks away from lectures and study for semester break.”

As with ‘I’ Day, the Writing Boot Camp work book was designed with the idea that students would complete the day with tangible evidence of their work and its process which they could then review during their next stint of study (Figure 11). As the following comment clearly indicates, students understood the purpose of this approach: “The most useful activity was the paraphrasing which helped with techniques. As a third year student it will still help me with future writing at uni & the workplace. I can use the book provided when writing my essays as it has helpful referencing.”

3.4 Writing Circles

The philosophical underpinnings of the Successful Transitions model to involve students as active participants in their own learning processes resulted in a small number from each of the campuses requesting a continuation of their academic development journey. To this end, in Spring semester we devised and provided a series of Writing Circles that offered students opportunities to consolidate their first semester learning through interdisciplinary peer discussion, writing and review procedures. As with other parts of the program, these sessions were evaluated by students (5.6) to ensure the program aligned with their needs. There were two outcomes of note: the first indicated the positive results of the Successful Transitions commitment to encourage active, engaged learners; the second demonstrated that a significant proportion of students who attended
the first semester program were now able to actively control their ongoing learning journey with confidence.

4 Recommendations

4.1 Short term impact on attrition rates

Although the short term differentiated attrition numbers between those students who attended all or an aspect of the Successful Transitions program and those who did not are small, they are nonetheless encouraging. Clearly, though, these early statistics only provide a limited perspective on a more complex process. We are also interested in the longitudinal academic development and achievement of these students and will continue to track their progress through their 200 level of study. In 2012 we noted that a significant majority of student mentors for new enrolling students at all South Coast and Southern Highlands campuses were 2011 attendees at Immersion ‘I’ Day. This willingness to become active contributors to the learning communities of their home campuses may also be an unanticipated aspect of the Successful Transitions project and one that we will examine further.

4.2 Concluding comments

We recommend that the Successful Transitions model of staged, degree-linked learning support becomes embedded by 2013 as a key component of Learning Development practice at all South Coast and Southern Highlands campuses. As we have suggested, this style of tiered program is a sustainable and innovative response to an identified gap in these students’ pathways to higher
educational experience in a multimedia, multi-location teaching and learning environment. The value of student-focused teaching has been well documented and early scaffolded learning support has been identified as a significant predictor of successful degree completion. The Successful Transitions program implements both of these pedagogical practices.

Moreover, the implementation of the 2011 Successful Transitions project across all campuses in the South Coast and Southern Highlands network has a demonstrated value for the first semester learning experience of new undergraduate students in a multi-location, multimedia learning environment. The success of the model is predicated on the overall design which is based on current research, but more importantly, on what the students themselves have identify as specific learning needs at satellite campuses. Making sure that the content of each part of the program meaningfully connects with the students’ learning trajectories across all campuses is another component in the model’s success. We have been able to construct activities and teaching plans that scaffold the learning of students from a variety of equity groups, many of whom are ‘first in family’ or mature-age. Implementation of each part the model at specific times to coincide with the needs of the students as they traverse the academic terrain is crucial. The qualitative comments on each part of the program attest the efficacy of this approach.

In spite of the quality of the Successful Transitions project and advertising through print, email and encouragement from tutors we know that not all students enrolling at the satellite campuses accessed all or part of the programs on offer. However, we are committed to providing relevant support when required to all satellite campus students so we continually review our practices, our resources and our teaching models.

Teaching guidelines and a project web site were created to facilitate professional development, the ongoing review of resources and practices as well as facilitate collegiality and quality assurance. The value of this sort of teaching support infrastructure for multi-location teaching teams has been confirmed in The RED Resource (Australian Learning and Teaching Council, 2008).
5 Evaluations

5.1 ’I’ Day Evaluations:

### Age Demographic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
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<th>Moss Vale</th>
<th>WIC</th>
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<td>15-20</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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</table>

### Is this your first experience at university?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
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<th>Shoalhaven</th>
<th>Moss Vale</th>
<th>WIC</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>15</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</table>

### Are you the first in your family to attend uni?

<table>
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<th>Response</th>
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<th>Moss Vale</th>
<th>WIC</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>34</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>16</td>
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5.2: Student comments

Bega:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Too easy</th>
<th>Informative</th>
<th>Fun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Enjoyed the humour!”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Friendly &amp; well explained”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I very much appreciated the booklet which included information about how to plan for assignments while some of the I.T. information was common knowledge for myself. Looking forward to the course 😊”</td>
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Batemans Bay:

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Too easy</th>
<th>Informative</th>
<th>Fun</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The day was very informative. However as a younger student the computer side of the day was quite pointless for myself.” [age 15-20]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The Mysteries of Microsoft Word was very useful because it was a hands on example and was specific, the other activities were just general.” [age 15-20]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I have got some very useful notes to use throughout my study.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I think for an introductory to the Uni environment today has been very informative &amp; not daunting which is important – Thank you😊”</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Shoalhaven:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Too easy</th>
<th>Informative</th>
<th>Fun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Other:**
- “The activities were useful however very confusing at times as there was a lot of content.”
- “Challenging - some of the information was confusing, so I got lost.”
- “I have done the UAP but I still picked up one or tips out of the day.”
- “Loved it! Thanks”
- “Because I did UAP I found some quite easy, but it was evident that this was not the case for others who were attending for the first time.”
- “Wonderful, especially the computer session.”
- “Good general overview. Able to go home & experiment.”

Moss Vale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Too easy</th>
<th>Informative</th>
<th>Fun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Other:**
- “Ranged from basic skills to things not covered in high school – unique to university.”
- “[I would have liked some things] more broken down day because some things were hard to understand, other than that, all good.”

Woolyungah Indigenous Centre:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Too easy</th>
<th>Informative</th>
<th>Fun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Other:**
- “Informative, but also fun. Very useful.”
- “Was somewhat simple.”
- “Good & useful info. Activities reflected what we were taught.”
- “It was great! Thanks!”
- “I would have loved to have had a [sic]even longer session! But I understand your [sic] only human & your poor voice boxes need a rest. I really enjoyed the day!”
- “I found that it was informative without being overwhelming. Incredibly useful.”
- “Loved the course! I now have a lot more confidence to start uni.”
- “I found that I don't know much but know a lot more now.”
- “Extend the program and do a session on essay writing. Thank you!”
5.3: Autumn learning seminar evaluations and qualitative comments:

Bega:

We surveyed the Bega students to understand whether they felt that the seminars influenced their academic performance. **Figure 12** suggests that the majority of students who attended all or part of the program found it had a significant impact on their performance.

**Figure 12: Bega student evaluations of seminar program**

![Bar chart showing student evaluations of seminar program in Bega.]

**Student comments:**

"I think what has been covered has been extremely helpful!"
Batemans Bay:

While the attending numbers for the Batemans Bay Learning Seminar series were low, those who were able to attend still found them valuable to their academic development (Figure 13). The results suggest that we need to review our approach at Batemans Bay and examine the reasons for these low numbers in spite of advertising.

**Figure 13: Batemans Bay student evaluations of seminar program**

![Bar chart showing student evaluations of seminar program in Batemans Bay.](image)

**Student comments:**

"Needed to do more of the seminars"

".. It is very good!!"
Shoalhaven:

The healthy attendance numbers recorded for Shoalhaven campus suggest that these students readily engaged with the seminar program. This may be due to several factors: this type of seminar program has been offered to students at the campus since 2007 and has become a core aspect of the campus’s learning culture; the seminars are enthusiastically promoted by ancillary and teaching colleagues at the campus.

Figure 14: Shoalhaven student evaluations of seminar program

Approximately 70% of the students commented that their academic progress as a result of their attendance at the seminars improved significantly, while 30% were neutral. However none suggested that it had little or no impact. Their comments at the end of this part of the program suggest that students found these seminars had useful applications in their study.

Student comments:

“In my opinion these seminars were very helpful and relevant to my purposes.”

“All good!”

“I found seminars very useful.”

“This all worked well.”
Moss Vale:

There was a core cohort of students who attended the seminar program consistently throughout the semester. Interestingly, they were all mature-age students. Despite a slow start, students did begin to access the seminar series in increased numbers as the semester progressed.

**Figure 15: Moss Vale student evaluations of seminar program**

### Students’ comments:

“I think that Learning Development seminars are sufficient”

“I find the one on one appointment system very helpful and hope this continues to be part of the Learning Development program.”
5.4 Evaluations of ‘Writing Boot Camp’ learning modules

### 1. Getting into the Zone

![Bar chart showing evaluation of 'Getting into the Zone'.]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Very useful</th>
<th>Useful</th>
<th>Too easy</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Not useful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shoalhaven</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batemans Bay</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bega</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moss Vale</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2. Picking up the Pace

![Bar chart showing evaluation of 'Picking up the Pace'.]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Very useful</th>
<th>Useful</th>
<th>Too easy</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Batemans Bay</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bega</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moss Vale</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.5 Qualitative comments about the ‘Writing Boot Camp’ learning experience

Bega:

The scaled evaluations of Writing Boot Camp (see above) are significantly positive and indicate that all students who attended felt that the day-long intensive was a valuable learning experience. This is further reinforced in their comments below. The final comment from the Bega cohort indicates that the scaffolded and progressive design of the day’s activities contributed to a growing
confidence for students in their own academic capacities. It is also evidence of the pedagogical soundness of our approach.

**Students’ responses to: “Which was the most useful activity? Why?”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity 4</td>
<td>reassured me that my interpretation [was]on track and [it was] helpful to hear others’ technique.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pump it up</td>
<td>a chance to put it all together and see what you need to work on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In your own words</td>
<td>Using paraphrasing effectively and also developing argument strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraphrasing (In your own words)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably the last – putting it all together – but did find the instruction on what to do a little vague.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All of it was useful – it was layered and each part was important and built on the previous activity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Batemans Bay:**

The students at Batemans Bay engaged enthusiastically with the program and despite noted difficulties with some of the activities, they appreciated the purpose and benefits of the day.

**Students’ responses to the question: “Which was the most useful activity? Why?”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I found the last activity the hardest but very useful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraphrasing because we know the rules &amp; guidelines but still find the doing very difficult.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Shoalhaven:**

Shoalhaven students also responded positively to the Writing Boot Camp day and found the sessions ‘Useful’ to ‘Very Useful’. What is notable is the comment by the self-identified third year student who was able to engage positively with the day and also felt able to see its value for the future both in academia and in the workplace. We also note that an attending Grad. Dip. Ed. student identified the value of writing intensive day to their academic development.

**Students’ responses to the question: “Which was the most useful activity? Why?”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Picking up the pace: makes one think of the concept for our essay. Very well presented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraphrasing: never realized how wrong I was doing it. It was good to learn the proper way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In your own words and Pump it up! Because it enabled me to gain a broader understanding of putting stuff in my own words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picking up the Pace”: This broke the passage [of text] up for me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraphrasing – Activity 3: Usually find this part of the writing the hardest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 3: “I found the paraphrasing exercises very helpful. I need to learn to become more confident in my own writing rather than writing a series of quotes.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Activity 3:** “The most useful activity was the paraphrasing which helped with techniques. As a third year student it will still help me with future writing at uni & the workplace. I can use the book provided when writing my essays as it has helpful referencing.”

**Activity 3:** “Paraphrasing helped me use other words and extend my vocab.”

“The last activity was initially totally confusing but eventually it began to “gel” 🖐. It was also a lesson in group co-operation and ideas and I found it very productive.”

**Activity 3:** “Quoting/paraphrasing activity. This was most useful as it helped me to use reporting words and transitional signals.”

“How to source/evaluate references because there is so much to read/find. Any way of finding/skimming relevant materials is helpful.” (Grad. Dip. Ed. Student)

“Pump it up!: This segment forced students to depend on their own knowledge & in doing so, isolated all the vacant spots in their academic writing knowledge (which was great!).”

“Picking up the Pace: Why? I am too slow and need to pick up in this area.”

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**Moss Vale:**

Although the students who attended the writing intensive at Moss Vale were mainly in their first year of undergraduate study, there was also a self-identified tutor, who had just enrolled as a PhD student and felt the day’s focus would help to further enhance her academic writing. All students engaged with the activities enthusiastically as indicated by their evaluations.

**Students’ responses to the question: “Which was the most useful activity? Why?”**

“All of it was useful, especially after spending a few weeks away from lectures and study for semester break.”

“I enjoyed the last exercise. It helped me to structure the sentences coherently.”

“The paraphrasing & writing the paragraph. The exercise was very helpful in critically reading the quotes & adapting the evidence for the exercise.”

“I can’t pick one particular session. Some of the most memorable help I will take away are the practical tips on how to organise information.”

“Quoting & paraphrasing. This section allowed us to write & think about what we wanted to say which in turn is a good exercise.”

“Work on quick and effective reading of articles – particularly in assessing the value of an item. Also suggestions for cross referencing & generally organising notes & printouts. Thanks for the MATRIX on p.10.”

“In your own words and Pump it up! Were useful, although I felt a little under pressure.”

“Meaningful paraphrasing as I find this difficult ad I learnt a helpful technique; also the 3 parts of the paragraph – especially how to conclude the paragraph.”
5.6 Evaluations of the *Writing Circle* Spring series

**Bega:**

**Surveyed comments about the *Writing Circle* series**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you attended only one session, what prevented you from attending further ones?</th>
<th>“Time constraints. Sessions were during our lunch hour.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“No need. Clashed with other commitments.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I have done writing courses outside of university and felt that I did not need to do another course.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Another class or finishing assignment work commitments.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think we could do to improve the <em>Writing Circle</em> program?</td>
<td>“Not having it on a day when we don’t get a lunch break then more people would come.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Ensure part-time students can attend. Try to make time other than lunch hour. Don’t make time/day after the last class of the week as everyone just wants to go home.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Was fine.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Writing Circle program was very interesting and productive.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think by attending the seminar sessions have improved your knowledge?</td>
<td>“They helped with my assignments.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Helps with planning &amp; organisation strategies.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Only because I attended a few and because I have done similar courses.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“By attending seminars I gained experience as to how essays are organised.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Batemans Bay:
Surveyed comments about the *Writing Circle* series

| If you attended only one session, what prevented you from attending further ones? | “I don’t think students realized how helpful this could be, they think it is the same as the other learning development seminars.”
|---|---|
| What do you think we could do to improve the *Writing Circle* program? | “I like having the weekly classes. Interaction with other students. Could improve on scheduling writers’ circle to be available to students”
| | “Could do with setting projects or programs for the breaks then use those for discussion during term maybe. Better advertising to get better involvement from students. Guest speakers, i.e., from PhD students on tips, etc.”
| | “Having members from 3rd year would have been useful as we probably would have discussed structure etc, together outside of the writing circle. I’ve also gained a lot from sharing essays with other students – learning from each other’s styles. I’d prefer it later in the day as the morning is the best essay writing time and I get most done before lunch while the lab is relatively quiet.”
| Do you think by attending the seminar sessions have improved your knowledge? | “Have benefitted towards my writing and reports [sic]. Improved my marks.”
| | “Confidence in writing, having faith in your own writing style – the tips of practicing, other tips to get the writing to flow have been extremely helpful as have the analyzing others’ work to see how things are done or not done and discussing them.”
| | “It was useful to focus on the structure of essays in particular looking closely at student essays from the past and analyzing why they were either very good or less good. Taking a good introduction to pieces was also a good exercise. Learning to write frequently on any topic to build up writing muscle was very useful. All in all it was very useful to take time to analyze how you write and consider different approaches.”
| | “It was revision, so helped me to focus once again on certain points regarding the writing, presentation etc. It was helpful to look at different levels of writing, to understand what a well written essay contained, with sentence structure, referencing. Suggestions to improve writing skills by daily practice is good … doing it is another thing, of course. Maybe homework such as this might forcefully help improve skills … more likely for students to participate early in session with writing skill homework. The one hour time frame is good, not too long and not too short.”
Shoalhaven:
Surveyed comments about the Writing Circle series

| If you attended only one session, what prevented you from attending further ones? | “Lack of time and conflicting course demands on time.”
| | “Nothing, I enjoyed them.”
| What do you think we could do to improve the Writing Circle program? | “Template example. Short essay construction. Practice elements of essay construction. Citation made easy?”
| | “It was very good.”
| | “Tell people what an asset the seminars are to their work and how thoroughly it deals with basic concepts that all students need to know!”
| | “The young ones don’t seem to go to these things even though I found it invaluable. They seem happy just to pass subjects, but the mature students aim higher. It was well planned and well organised. Maybe visit initial tutorials to tell people about it fact to face.”
| Do you think by attending the seminar sessions have improved your knowledge? | “Pointed out some fundamentals I was not paying attention to.”
| | “Really helped to prioritise and sequence assessments.”
| | “Gained knowledge I did not previously have.”
| | “Because only 2 of us attended Writing Circle consistently, we had very helpful & direct advice from Kimberley; which was obviously a huge benefit to both of us.”
| | “We were able to take questions/issues we were having there and it was a great forum for collectively solving them.”

Moss Vale:
Surveyed comments about the Writing Circle series

| If you attended only one session, what prevented you from attending further ones? | “Time and other commitments.”
| | “Time and other commitments.”
| | “I recently lost my mother and have been very busy attending to her estate.”
| | “Time is always a constraint.”
| What do you think we could do to improve the Writing Circle program? | “All good.”
| | “More often – we got to choose what we wanted.”
| | “I think it works well as it is.”
| | Seeing a title for a seminar or circle is sometimes a deterrent to coming. Because of time constraints and weighing up if the subject is relevant. I like the open forum type of circles to share problems and
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you think by attending the seminar sessions have improved your knowledge?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>get help and advice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Less structure to program. More ‘chewing the fat’ sessions.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Provide more seminar coordinators to be made available during the week. Once a week for one person to share their sessions for over one hundred students is insufficient.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Need to spend more time there to be sure.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Helps a lot, learned about things relevant to essay writing and PowerPoints.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I was able to think more critically about my essay and the way I was writing it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Excellent to hear other students’ views and experiences. Great to share work.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6 Reference List


Stirling, J & Rossetto, LC 2009, ‘Weaving the academic and social: the teaching / learning nexus at Australian networked campuses’, Peer-reviewed research paper. Conference Presentation,

