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A Good Practice Guide: Safeguarding Student Learning Engagement



Karen Nelson
Tracy Creagh

<https://safeguardingstudentlearning.net>



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Tracy Creagh

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Preface



Welcome to *A Good Practice Guide: Safeguarding Student Learning Engagement*. We hope you find this guide both practically useful and philosophically sound. In particular, we hope that you are able to use the guide in ways that enhance the implementation of initiatives in your institution that have as their aim to assist students stay engaged, make the most of their learning experience and, importantly, persist to complete their studies.

Creating this guide has been a learning experience for us and we thank all our colleagues who have come with us on this journey. We thank you for the guidance, contributions and comments that have enabled the development of the theoretical and practical resources contained in this guide. We are very grateful to have had the opportunity to work with you and your institutions and we have been delighted by your willing and active participation in this project. We extend special thanks to our Project Evaluator, and, reflecting the nature of this project, critical friend Professor Janet Taylor, who was engaged with us from the outset and provided her insights and wisdom throughout.

This is the first time that a project of this type has been attempted in the Australasian context and we found that the task we set ourselves became inevitably more complex as we discovered more about our topic. Gratifyingly, and although we now have more questions than we have answers, we have been able to articulate what it means to safeguard student learning engagement and we share that understanding with you in this guide.

We have attempted to provide a resource for the sector that is both relevant and practical as well as one that embraces a sound philosophical foundation. We have showcased the good practices in the work undertaken by our colleagues across the sector in their monitoring student learning engagement activities. However, it is inevitable and regrettable that we may have missed other examples of good work. Thus, we apologise for any errors of omission or interpretation, particularly if they relate to your own or your institutional work.

We hope you enjoy using this *Good Practice Guide* and that it finds a useful place in the suite of resources you use to promote the engagement of students in higher education.

Kindest regards

Karen Nelson
Tracy Creagh
Queensland University of Technology

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The project was guided by the advisory group that comprised: Mr John Carlson, Director of Student Services and Academic Register, Auckland University of Technology (2011); Mr Kitea Tipuna, Manager University Performance, Planning, Auckland University of Technology (2012); Professor Beverley Oliver, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Education, Deakin University; Professor Trevor Gale, Chair in Education Policy and Social Justice, Deakin University; Mr Victor Hart (formally Queensland University of Technology); Ms Mary Kelly, Equity Director, Queensland University of Technology; and Professor Janet Taylor, Southern Cross University, who was also the project evaluator.

Further project details are located at: <https://safeguardingstudentlearning.net>

Executive summary



The concept of student engagement is a key factor in student achievement and retention. Knowing this, many Australasian universities have been designing and implementing initiatives that monitor student activities for signs that students are at risk of disengaging and initiate timely support interventions to encourage (re)engagement. We refer to these initiatives as programs for *monitoring student learning engagement* (MSLE). Given the aspiration for social inclusion in higher education, it is absolutely critical that MSLE initiatives are approached from a philosophical, moral and ethical position that is fundamentally aimed at enabling and facilitating attainment and success of all students. These philosophical underpinnings are critical if we are to ensure that students from groups for whom social and cultural disadvantage has been a barrier to participation and achievement in higher education have the opportunity to participate as fully as possible and are not further disadvantaged by the perpetuation of dominant culture and power paradigms. Consequently, it is our belief that MSLE initiatives should be consistent with the concept of social justice and be guided by a set of principles that provide a philosophical foundation for practice.

Through engagement with eight participating universities, this project has established a *Social Justice Framework* underpinned by a set of five principles and has created a suite of resources to guide good practice for safeguarding the management and practice of MSLE initiatives. These resources are contained in this guide along with a series of case studies that reflect these principles by describing eight MSLE initiatives. The case studies provide examples of good practice in MSLE activities and these are described along with a collection of artefacts that exemplify good practice in MSLE.

The overall approach to the project has been participatory action learning with teams from eight Australasian higher education institutions cooperatively engaged in the production of the theoretical and practical outcomes. The value to the sector is that the framework has been developed and agreed by a significant number of institutions and that it is aligned with and explicitly supports international imperatives for higher education reform, while at the same time provides a practical suite of resources to assist in safeguarding institutional MSLE activities.

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Part 1
Context



The project



The project *Good practice for safeguarding student learning engagement in higher education institutions* commenced in 2010 as a Competitive Grant with funding provided by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council. Since 2012, the project was supported and overseen by the Office for Learning and Teaching within the Australian Government Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (Innovation).

The concept of student engagement is a key factor in student achievement and retention. Knowing this, many Australasian universities have been designing and implementing initiatives that monitor student activities for signs that they are at risk of disengaging, and initiating timely support interventions to encourage (re)engagement. We refer to these initiatives as programs for *monitoring student learning engagement* (MSLE). Given the aspiration for social inclusion in higher education, it is absolutely critical that MSLE initiatives are approached from a philosophical, moral and ethical position that is fundamentally aimed at enabling and facilitating attainment and success of all students. These philosophical underpinnings are critical if we are to ensure that students from groups for whom social and cultural disadvantage has been a barrier to participation and achievement in higher education have the opportunity to participate as fully as possible and are not further disadvantaged by the perpetuation of dominant culture and power paradigms. Consequently, it is our belief that MSLE initiatives should be consistent with the concept of social justice and be guided by a set of principles that provide a philosophical foundation for practice.

Therefore, the purpose of this project was to lead the design of a suite of resources to guide good practice for safeguarding student learning engagement, so that the design and implementation of MSLE practices are consistent with the notions of equity and social justice. Key outcomes of the project are:

- **a social justice framework and a set of principles** to guide the design, development and implementation of initiatives for monitoring student learning engagement.
- **a good practice guide** that reflects the expertise of personnel in existing good practice programs, and exemplifies the principles. The guide describes and explains examples of good practice by making available a set of resources to support initiatives that seek to monitor student engagement.

The significance of the project is that it attends to the notions of social justice and equity and thus is aligned with and explicitly supports national imperatives for higher education reform. It is also a timely response to the widening participation imperative facing the sector that includes performance funding based on the participation and retention of students from low socio-economic backgrounds.

The value to the sector is that the framework has been developed and agreed by a significant number of institutions so that while it is aligned with and explicitly supports imperatives for higher education reform it also provides a suite of practical resources to assist in safeguarding institutional MSLE activities.

Scope of the Good Practice Guide

The *Good Practice Guide* contains the Social Justice Framework and the principles that sit within it. The guide describes each of the principles and provides examples of good practice that exemplify each principle. The guide also contains a suite of resources including case studies of the MSLE initiatives in the project's eight participating institutions and artefacts associated with the good practice examples. Finally, the guide presents the review and synthesis of the literature compiled to develop the Social Justice Framework for MSLE.

Format of the guide

The *Good Practice Guide* is organised in a top-down theory to practice way to assist with the understanding and then application of the framework to monitor and therefore safeguard student learning engagement. The sections of the guide are:

Part 1

- An overview of the project including the philosophical stance adopted for the development of the social justice framework.
- A synopsis of the relevant and informing literature on social justice, widening participation and student engagement to provide context for development of the guide.

Part 2

- The Social Justice Framework and principles that emerged from the literature and refined through the action learning cycles.
- A comprehensive examination of each principle including implications for staff and students, challenges, and examples of good practice.

Part 3

- A series of eight case studies of each of the participating institution's MSLE activities and descriptions of artefacts that illustrate their good practice (the institutional working groups have given their permission to share these artefacts)
- A summary of the examples of good practice as they relate to the principles
- A complete list of the artefacts that have been made available by the participating institutions for this guide; and finally

Part 4

A full review and synthesis of the literature on social justice and higher education.

Using the guide

The *Good Practice Guide* and the social justice principles are not intended to be prescriptive but are provided to assist higher education institutions and the sector initiate and implement MSLE initiatives and to guide the review and improvement of existing MSLE initiatives.

It is proposed the *Good Practice Guide* will be a practical resource as well as an informative document and thus it includes a suite of activities to help readers engage in a practical way with the framework, examples of good practice and case studies – these activities are located throughout the guide under the heading *Reviewing practice*.

The guide also provides web links to the website *Safeguarding Student Learning Engagement*, which provides detailed information about the project and additional artefacts related to MSLE good practice. The website is complementary to and augments the resources found in this guide.

Developing the guide

The overall approach to the project has been participatory action learning where teams from eight Australasian higher education institutions have been cooperatively engaged in the production of the theoretical and practical outcomes. An overview of the key stages involved in developing the guide follow below.

Identifying social justice principles

Principles often provide the basis for a strategic approach to a process that supports good practice. The benefit of identifying quality principles has previously been advocated by Nicol (2007, p. 2), who developed a set of principles for assessment and feedback in higher education. Describing what he believed to be the qualities of principles, Nicol noted that principles should capture research evidence to support implementation; that the principle should be broad enough and flexible to guide a practitioner; that if in a set, they should be 'defined independently' and be synergistic when operationalised; and they should assist with evaluation. Following Nichol's work on assessment, other examples of the higher education sector employing a set of principles as benchmarks for good practice can be found in *Good Practice Principles for English Language Proficiency for International Students in Australian Universities* (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2008); the *National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities* (Universities Australia, 2011), which elaborates on a set of five guiding principles for Indigenous cultural competency in Australian universities; and most recently, *Principles to Promote and Protect the Human Rights of International Students* (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2012).

In this project, defining and developing a set of social justice principles was an essential first step for developing the sector guidelines for good practice. The framework arising from the principles needed to:

- reflect the notions of equity and social justice
- provide a *strategic* approach for MSLE activities
- be supported by resources for practice in the sector.

Examination of themes in the social justice literature and its applications to education and research and practice about widening participation and student engagement in the higher education sector enabled an initial conceptualisation of a set of five principles: *Self-determination*, *Rights*, *Access*, *Equity* and *Participation*. Each principle was then defined and described by a rationale and the implications of the principle for practice.

Verifying the principles

Early work with project representatives from each of the eight participating institutions (the project working party) explored the social justice principles in relation to their own institutional MSLE activities and considered possible alignment and critical considerations for applying the principles. A preliminary Social Justice Framework for safeguarding student learning engagement was proposed and feedback was solicited from both academic and professional staff participating in project-related activities and sector forums, and by gathering qualitative data through a series of workshops in the participating institutions (the project working groups). The institutional working groups considered the principles in terms of institution-specific activities and programs that monitor student learning engagement and discussed their relevance and potential value within each institutional context. These discussions were guided by questions such as:

Which of these principles do you see are a part of your institution/program?

Which of these principles do you think your program could/should aspire to?

The initial framework and the principles within it, were considered in light of new confirmatory or conflicting data and were further refined. The significant adjustment was that the principle *Participation* was repositioned as a central construct of safeguarding MSLE within the conceptual model. Figure 1 indicates the current conceptualisation of the principles and the relationships between them.



Figure 1: Conceptual model — A Social Justice Framework for good practice in safeguarding student learning engagement

The conceptual model, therefore, embodies the philosophical stance of the Social Justice Framework and the principles that underpin it, and ultimately defines good practice and the resources contained in this guide.

Refining the guide

Piloting the *Good Practice Guide* involved an in-depth re-examination (with the participating institution's working group) of each MSLE initiative to explore and understand how the individual principles and the complete Social Justice Framework applied to their particular initiative. This activity also assisted in the identification and unpacking of good practice examples and in the identification of artefacts (resources and tools) that exemplify the good practice in each institution's MSLE program. The *Good Practice Guide* is therefore a record of the various MSLE initiatives currently in place across the sector and these are expressed as case studies in Part 3 of this guide.

Identifying examples of good practice and MSLE artefacts

Examples of MSLE good practice in the eight participating institutions that align with each of the principles were identified (see Part 2). In addition artefacts (tools and resources) that exemplified these good practices were captured for the guide and include:

- Institutional policies specific to MSLE
- Training resources for staff (student advisors)
- Service level agreements, or equivalent, with subject coordinators
- Phone script (for student advisors doing outreach calls)
- Email script (sent to students)
- Action plan email
- Program evaluation materials
- Interactive feedback mechanism (for example, University of New England's Vibe word cloud)
- Additional mechanisms embedded in student portals
- Reporting systems
- Websites that disseminate information about the program.

Framing the project



The application of social justice principles to ensure good practice in safeguarding student learning engagement in higher education institutions.

The *Good Practice Guide: Safeguarding Student Learning Engagement* has been specifically developed for academic and professional staff responsible for the design and implementation of programs and initiatives designed to proactively monitor and safeguard student learning engagement. The guide presents a *framework* consisting of a set of social justice *principles* that are derived from the philosophical stance of recognitive social justice and have been interpreted for safeguarding student learning engagement. The purpose of the guide is to inform MSLE implementation strategies by describing examples of good practice and making available a set of resources (good practice examples, case studies and artefacts) to support policy and practice for various initiatives to safeguard initiatives that monitor student learning engagement.

The *Good Practice Guide* has been developed in consultation with eight higher education institutions in Australia and New Zealand who have implemented institutional MSLE initiatives. An Advisory Group consisting of the Project's Evaluator and senior academic and professional staff have provided significant input into the development of the framework as well as the progress of the project.

Philosophical stance

Contemporary discussion of social justice focuses on three perspectives and most recently has been discussed in an educational context by Gale (2000) and Gale and Densmore (2000). These authors explore social justice from an educational perspective and classify explanations of social justice as: *distributive* (summarised as a fairness around the distribution of basic resources), *retributive* (summarised as fairness around competition for social goods and materials)

and *recognitive* (summarised as recognising differences and commonality amongst cultural groups).

The development of the Social Justice Framework, set of principles and case studies embedded in this Good Practice Guide employs a recognitive approach to social justice. In a recognitive social justice stance, everyone is able to participate and contribute within a democratic society. A recognitive perspective includes not only a positive consideration for social difference but also the centrality of socially democratic processes in working towards its attainment. In essence, the recognitive perspective of social justice emphasises process and action over state and form.

This Social Justice Framework is designed to challenge thinking about dominant power structures, cultures and ways of knowing in higher education. The framework provides a set of principles that when considered together enable the reconstruction of existing relationships based on an examination of identity and needs. The intent of the social justice principles is that they will:

- guide MSLE program growth and innovations
- inform students and staff in the areas of policy, procedure and communication
- foster a sense of connection and partnership between academic and professional areas
- realise or instantiate programs and innovations
- offer a mechanism for reconciling value conflicts
- provide filters by which programs and processes can be evaluated.

Social justice

The notion of social justice stems from the reigns of the peasant-born sixth-century Roman emperor Justin and his nephew Justinian who succeeded him (Evans, 1996). Although there does not appear to be a single definition of social justice, the contemporary literature suggests that the notion coexists with expressions of human rights, fairness and equality (Bates, 2007; Sturman, 1997). For Theophanous (1994) the modern concept of social justice stems from the Greek theories of justice, and the ideas of two prominent Enlightenment philosophers Kant and Rousseau, so that social justice reflects the idea of equality, which is deemed as a necessary condition of democratic life. Sturman notes that theorising about social justice is reflected in recent debates about equity and equality adding, 'The concept of "social justice" ... is not clearly defined (in fact, the term is often used as a synonym for "equal" opportunities or "equity")' (p. 1).

Usefully, Gale draws on Justinian who described social justice as 'the constant and perpetual will to render to everyone their due' (Isaacs, 1996 cited in Gale, 2000), while Singh (2011) defines the pursuit of social justice as being the fair distribution of what is 'beneficial and valued' (p. 482).

Gale and Tranter (2011) provide a comprehensive historical analysis of social justice in Australian higher education policy detailing policy developments in the period from World War II through to the 2008 *Review of Australian Higher Education* (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales, 2008). Their account of social justice in higher education policy illuminates the authors' views that perspectives on social justice can be described as 'distributive, retributive and recognitive' (p. 29). For Gale and Tranter, periods of expansion in the higher education system have attended to the 'notions of social justice' and have resulted in new opportunities (p. 41) and access to higher education. During consolidation phases of higher education provision, retributive notions of social justice become more obvious and Gale and Tranter note that from this perspective, the inclusion of larger numbers of students from disadvantaged backgrounds may be perceived as destabilising the benefits of higher education, cautioning '... the inclusion of more people from disadvantaged backgrounds may be seen to undermine the talent and hard work of "deserving individuals" and traditional notions of merit and standards' (p. 42).

Gale and Tranter suggest that these perceptions should be addressed by policy and practice that embraces a recognitive perspective on social justice so that public and policy initiatives related to widening participation and social inclusion are not viewed in terms of the comparative representation of various groups.

Widening participation and social inclusion

Social inclusion strategies are targeted at the inclusion of students from under-represented social or cultural groups, while widening participation strategies aim to increase the participation of non-school leavers in higher education with the aim of increasing the proportion of people in the population who have post-secondary qualifications. Goastellec (2008) assesses participation in higher education using a historical analysis of the evolution of greater access to higher education and outlines a series of international case studies that exemplify the 'equity principle' in terms of how access to higher education is organised (p. 71). Marginson (2011) discusses social inclusion as a way 'to progress fairness' and finds that social inclusion is advanced by the broadening of access of under-represented groups (p. 24). In this sense, social inclusion in higher education in the Australian context has manifested in public policy for widening participation linked to performance-based funding.

David (2010) provides a general definition of widening participation which '... is taken to mean extending and enhancing access to and experience of HE, and achievement within HE, of people from so-called under represented and diverse social backgrounds, families, groups and communities ...' (p. 15). Widening participation also accounts for the emergence of several trends, notably that the new norms around access have led to higher education now being described as moving from selective (elite) to mass and now universal (James, 2008; Marginson & van der Wende 2007; Marginson, 2011), while at the same time globalisation has made education more accountable to public scrutiny, international evaluation and comparisons. Goastellec notes 'we are witnessing a permanent reinvention of tools aimed at widening access or at making [education] more fair' (p. 82).

Student engagement

Student engagement is a wide-ranging phenomenon that includes both the academic and non-academic activities of the student within the university experience and there is a significant body of evidence that shows that engagement is a significant factor in student attainment and retention (Krause & Coates, 2008; Kuh, 2009; Tinto, 2010). The commitment of institutions to students is a critical factor in retention – Tinto (2010) maintains that institutions should not only take some responsibility for but also encourage student involvement, while, in a similar but more specific vein, Nelson, Kift and Clarke (2008) contend that universities need to instigate, sustain and promote student personal, social and academic engagement, particularly for those students who face the greatest challenges in transition.

It is widely accepted that engagement is particularly critical during students' first year in higher education and that strategies that promote engagement should be intentional and deliberate aspects of first year curriculum design and enactment (Nelson, Smith, & Clarke, 2011). This strongly suggests that learning and the classroom experience through an intentional curriculum are the key to first year success and engagement with recent literature (Gale, 2009) reiterating the Nelson et al. (2008) contention of the importance of a 'holistic' (an integrated personal, social and academic) approach to engagement.

Usefully, Kuh defines engagement as 'the time and effort students devote to activities that are empirically linked to desired outcomes ... *and what institutions do to induce students to participate in these activities*' (Kuh, 2001, 2003, 2009a cited in Trowler, 2010).

Monitoring student learning engagement

Given that the concept of student engagement is well accepted as leading to student achievement and retention, many international and Australasian universities have introduced a variety of specific initiatives aimed at monitoring and intervening with students who are at risk of disengaging.¹ On the international scene, the most well-known

intervention program is Purdue University's Signals project. Within Australasia, Auckland University of Technology (Australian Universities Quality Agency, 2007), the University of New England (Office for Learning and Teaching, 2011) and Queensland University of Technology (Office for Learning and Teaching, 2012) have been recognised for their initiatives in this space.

Good practice in these types of retention initiatives is described by Coley and Coley (2010) as institutions that 'have determined a clear methodology to define and identify "at-risk" students, to reach out to students with appropriate resources and support, and to track and monitor student engagement' (p. 6).

Monitoring student learning engagement involves the consolidation of existing corporate data with a range of descriptive and academic indicators including attendance, assessment submission details and participation in face-to-face and online activities. These types of early intervention strategies have appeared in first year experience literature and range from isolated case studies (for example, Johnston, Quinn, Aziz, & Kava, 2010; Potter & Parkinson, 2010) to reports of institution-wide programs (for example, Carlson & Holland, 2009; Nelson, Quinn, Marrington, & Clarke, 2011; Wilson & Lizzio, 2008).

Examples of early intervention activities provide illustrations of the intervention process. The Signals project at Purdue University in the United States operates as an early warning of potential student attrition and actively demonstrates the potential of applying academic analytics with the provision of 'near real-time status updates of performance and effort in a course ... (providing) the student with detailed, positive steps to take in averting trouble' (Arnold, 2010, para. 5). The Student Success Program (SSP) at the Queensland University of Technology utilises a custom-built Contact Management System (CMS) to retrieve data available within other student systems and to import data from external sources. In the SSP:

Proactive highly individualised contact is attempted with all students identified as being at-risk of disengaging. A managed team of discipline-experienced and trained later year students employed as Student Success Advisors (SSAs) makes the outbound contact by telephone. ... When at-risk students require specialist support, the advisors refer them on (e.g. to library staff) or in some cases, manage the referral process with the student's permission (e.g. to a Counsellor).

(Nelson, Quinn, Marrington, & Clarke, 2011, p.86)

¹ In this specific project, *Good practice for safeguarding student learning engagement in higher education institutions*, we refer to these initiatives as monitoring student learning engagement. The literature commonly refers to the context of this as early intervention strategies.

Early evidence of the impact of the SSP has been documented (Nelson, Duncan, & Clarke, 2009) and Nelson et al. (2011) provide qualitative and quantitative data that shows that the impact of the SSP interventions on student persistence has been sustained and has positively influenced student retention at the university (p. 83). Nevertheless, programs such as SSP and Signals, while actively monitoring student learning engagement, need to be mindful of the diverse student cohort and not make assumptions about the conditions that may lead to a student indicating as 'at-risk'.

Supporting engagement

The type and approach to student support offered by institutions is therefore crucial to student engagement. With this in mind Zepke and Leach (2005) suggest that rather than expecting students to fit into the institutional culture, the institution should adapt its culture to accommodate the diversity of the students. They add:

Central to the emerging discourse is the idea that students should maintain their identity in their culture of origin ... Content, teaching methods and assessment, for example, should reflect the diversity of people enrolled in the course. This requires significant adaptation by institutional cultures ... The foreshadowed outcome of this institutional change is better student retention, persistence and achievement.

According to Nelson (2010), activities that are designed to engender engagement should be founded on a philosophy of social justice and equity, particularly given the pressures on the sector to widen participation and improve the retention of students from social groups who are currently under-represented in the higher education sector. Nelson adds:

To be consistent with these national imperatives requires constructive alignment between on the one hand policy and practice aimed at widening participation and on the other efforts aimed at increasing the retention of these same students.

(p. 4)

Part 2

A social
justice
framework
for
safeguarding
student
learning
engagement



Introducing the social justice principles



The set of social justice principles that are described and illustrated in the sections that follow were developed through an analysis and synthesis of existing and informing literature and were then further refined through the examination of a rich set of qualitative data that was collected from a series of workshops and forums during 2011 and 2012. Consistent with the literature, the principles reflect general notions of equity and social justice, embrace the philosophical position of recognitive social justice, and are presented in an interconnected and codependent way as a conceptual model within a strategic framework. The framework and principles presented in this guide are accompanied by a suite of resources to enable good practice in safeguarding student learning engagement in the higher education sector.

The principles, developed from a recognitive perspective and then interpreted for to safeguard MSLE initiatives are summarised briefly below. The complete framework and detailed descriptions of each principle follows.

Self-determination

Students participate in program design, enactment and evaluation, and make informed decisions about their individual participation in the program.

Rights

MSLE initiatives should ensure that all students are treated with dignity and respect and have their individual cultural, social and knowledge systems recognised and valued.

Access

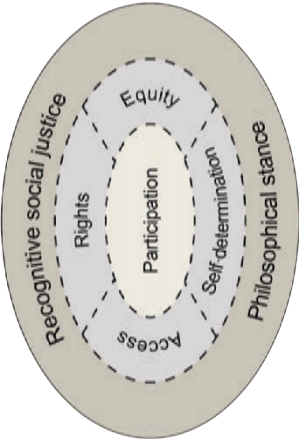
Programs are designed to serve as active and impartial conduits to the resources of the institution (for example, curriculum, learning, academic, social, cultural, support, financial and other resources).

Equity

Programs are designed to demystify and decode dominant university cultures, processes, expectations and language for differently prepared cohorts.

Participation

MSLE programs lead to socially inclusive practices and students experience a sense of belonging and connectedness.

PHILOSOPHICAL STANCE	CONCEPTUAL MODEL	INTENT OF THE SOCIAL JUSTICE FRAMEWORK	APPLICATION OF THE SOCIAL JUSTICE FRAMEWORK
<p>This Social Justice Framework adopts a <i>recognitive approach to social justice</i>.</p> <p>A recognitive stance values all members of society, has positive regard for social difference and is achieved through socially democratic processes that involve individuals and groups determining outcomes that impact on them.</p>		<p>This Social Justice Framework is designed to challenge thinking about dominant power structures, cultures and ways of knowing in higher education. The framework provides a set of principles that when considered together enable the reconstruction of existing relationships based on an examination of identity and needs.</p>	<p>For this project, the Social Justice Framework has been interpreted for initiatives or activities that actively monitor and intervene with students to promote learning engagement. Thus, the Social Justice Framework is expressed as a set of <i>interconnected and codependent</i> principles that are designed to safeguard the people and processes involved in monitoring of student learning engagement (MSLE).</p>
Social Justice Principles for Safeguarding Student Learning Engagement			
<p>The principles of recognitive social justice:</p>	<p>Interpreted through the lens of safeguarding MSLE initiatives:</p>	<p>Adapted for good practice in MSLE:</p>	<p>Applied for good practice in MSLE:</p>
<p>SELF-DETERMINATION: Fundamental to recognitive social justice; individuals participate in democratic processes to ensure self-control over their lives.</p>	<p><i>In the context of monitoring student learning engagement, this principle is interpreted to mean that students are actively involved in the design and enactment of programs and in the review of program outcomes.</i></p>	<p>SELF-DETERMINATION: Students participate in program design and enactment and evaluation, and make informed decisions about their individual participation in the program.</p>	<p>RIGHTS: MSLE initiatives should ensure that all students are treated with dignity and respect and have their individual cultural, social and knowledge systems recognised and valued.</p>
<p>RIGHTS: Individuals have the right to be treated with dignity and respect and to have their individual cultural, social and knowledge systems valued.</p>	<p><i>MSLE activities are mindful of the rights of students to be treated fairly with dignity and respect, as well as their rights to obtain information ... and to have these rights recognised by institutions that expect compliance with institutional policies.</i></p>	<p>RIGHTS: MSLE initiatives should ensure that all students are treated with dignity and respect and have their individual cultural, social and knowledge systems recognised and valued.</p>	<p>ACCESS: Programs are designed to serve as active and impartial conduits to the resources of the institution (e.g. curriculum, learning, academic, social, cultural, financial and other resources).</p>
<p>ACCESS: All individuals have access to social, cultural, political and economic resources.</p>	<p><i>Access is intentionally determined by inclusive structures, systems and strategies that promote learning engagement, particularly for students whose access to higher education has been previously compromised by their social, political and/or economic backgrounds.</i></p>	<p>ACCESS: Programs are designed to serve as active and impartial conduits to the resources of the institution (e.g. curriculum, learning, academic, social, cultural, financial and other resources).</p>	<p>EQUITY: Programs are designed to demystify and decode dominant university cultures, processes, expectations and language for differently prepared cohorts.</p>
<p>EQUITY: Social difference is understood so that responses can be designed and applied to particular situations to counteract the barriers that impede participation.</p>	<p><i>In the context of monitoring student learning engagement, the focus is on counteracting barriers to participation such as finances, and broadening knowledge and experiences of higher education to previously under-represented groups.</i></p>	<p>EQUITY: Programs are designed to demystify and decode dominant university cultures, processes, expectations and language for differently prepared cohorts.</p>	<p>PARTICIPATION: MSLE programs lead to socially inclusive practices and students experience a sense of belonging and connectedness.</p>
<p>PARTICIPATION: Participation is not predicated on previous opportunity or privilege.</p>	<p><i>All students have the opportunity to succeed and complete their qualification(s) in ways that are harmonious with their individual backgrounds and circumstances.</i></p>	<p>PARTICIPATION: MSLE programs lead to socially inclusive practices and students experience a sense of belonging and connectedness.</p>	<p>PARTICIPATION: MSLE programs lead to socially inclusive practices and students experience a sense of belonging and connectedness.</p>

Self-determination

Social justice literature defines 'self-determination' as:

Self-determination refers to the rights of an individual to have control over their life and is also an outcome of recognitive justice, discussed in Gale and Densmore (2000) and further in Gale and Tranter (2011). A sense of self-determination provides a foundation for democracy and basic democratic processes. Self-determination is also expressed in the literature on the participation of indigenous people in education, and more generally in society through the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007.

From a recognitive social justice perspective, this principle is expressed as:

Fundamental to recognitive social justice; individuals participate in democratic processes to ensure self-control over their lives.



... which, when interpreted for MSLE initiatives considers that

In the context of monitoring student learning engagement this principle is interpreted to mean that students are actively involved in the design and enactment of programs and in the review of program outcomes.



... and therefore, to achieve good practice in MSLE initiatives, the Self-determination principle is interpreted as:

Students participate in program design, enactment and evaluation and make informed decisions about their individual participation in the program.

Rationale

- There is a moral and ethical obligation to facilitate self-determination.
- Student participation acknowledges shifts in power relations and in the construction of dominant institutional cultures.

Implications for MSLE programs

- Programs meet students' needs because students are actively involved in their design, enactment and evaluation.
- Programs focus on early intervention to enable student-determined success.
- Programs allow students to self-identify for or opt-out of support.
- Programs enable students to make informed decisions about the type and nature of support they receive.
- Membership of one or more equity groups does not mean participation is necessary.

Challenges

- How to engage students in determining the shape of the program/initiative.
- How to re-engage with students if they decline to participate in the program.

Examples of good practice

The development of an 'action plan' with contacted students involves students and helps self-identification of learning and non-learning issues impacting on their studies and assists in the design of individually useful and relevant support activities.

Feedback from student advisors is used to revise the MSLE program and advisor training materials to incorporate issues or trends articulated in student responses into interventions so that both advisors and students are involved in the design of the program.

The MSLE program incorporates an evaluative mechanism (for example, a student survey) to gather feedback from the students on their contact experience.

R

Reviewing practice



Thinking about the *Self-determination* principle and the design and enactment of your institutional initiative:

How are students actively involved in the design and enactment of the program?

The incorporation of an evaluative mechanism allows for feedback to be incorporate directly into the program. Consider including academic and professional staff who have a direct role in supporting students in the design and enactment of program as well as the students they support.

What strategies are in place to continuously evaluate and review your MSLE initiative?

Often training activities are an opportunity to 'debrief' on situations and conversations between student and advisors and provide opportunities to reflect on practices.

How much control does the student have in developing an 'Action Plan' for themselves in regards to levels of support?

Students are empowered through improved understandings of the support opportunities that are available to them and are supported to make informed choices in the direction and nature of their access to this support.

Rights

Social justice literature defines 'rights' as:

The literature on social justice emphasises the notion of individual rights and specifically that these rights include appropriate consideration of the forces that shape an individual's cultural and social backgrounds.

From a recognitive social justice perspective, this principle is expressed as:

Individuals have the right to be treated with dignity and respect and to have their individual cultural, social and knowledge systems valued.



... which, when interpreted for MSLE initiatives considers that

MSLE activities are mindful the rights of students to be treated fairly with dignity and respect, as well as their rights to obtain or withhold information ... and to have these rights recognised by institutions that expect compliance with institutional policies.



... and therefore, to achieve good practice in MSLE initiatives, the Rights principle is interpreted as:

MSLE initiatives should ensure that all students are treated with dignity and respect and have their individual cultural, social and knowledge systems recognised and valued.

Rationale

- All students have the right to know what is expected of them and to have the attributes of successful participation made explicit.
- The purpose of MSLE programs is to provide pathways for support, not a judgement based on circumstances.
- Ethical approaches to the collection, interpretation and use of student data are fundamental.
- Students have rights about the information they supply to the institution to be used in ways that are beneficial to them in their learning.

Implications for MSLE programs

- The program creates an environment that is conducive to learning and is inclusive of supporting the range of learning and life issues encountered by diverse cohorts of students.
- The program's interventions are responsive to individual student's circumstances.
- The mode and models of communication are inclusive of all students.

Challenges

- Reconciling policy written from uni-dimensional perspective with the rights of individual students and groups of students.
- Ensuring that programs are designed to accommodate and respond to diversity in the student cohort.

Examples of good practice

Programs adhere to ethical protocols around the use of student information.

Actions plans for students are tailored to meet their individual circumstances by listening to their responses and issues.

Information gathered in the program is confidential and there is explicit training and published guidelines for maintaining confidentiality.

Training of advisors incorporates appropriate communication strategies, for example, culturally appropriate and inclusive practices, speaking with students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

R

eviewing practice



The purpose of the program is to provide information and negotiate pathways to support students in their learning rather than making a judgement based on assumptions. Thinking about the *Rights* principle and your own institutional initiative:

How does the program make students aware of what is expected of them?

How does the program help communicate or demonstrate 'successful participation'?

What sort of probing questions do you use to help identify particular issues to tailor the level of support you provide?

How does the program provide or explain information in ways that are appropriate to students' individual circumstances?

Access

Social justice literature defines 'access' as:

In the social justice literature, particularly Young (1990) and Gewirtz (1998), the notion of distributive justice considers issues of access, specifically equality of access and participation. The literature notes that social justice occurs when all individuals have equal access to social, cultural, political and economic resources.

Australia's higher education equity framework also espouses the access theme, both within the equity framework and the current government's widening participation agenda.

From a recognitive social justice perspective, this principle is expressed as:

All individuals have access to social, cultural, political and economic resources.



... which, when interpreted for MSLE initiatives considers that

Access is intentionally determined by inclusive structures, systems and strategies that promote learning engagement, particularly for students whose access to higher education has been previously compromised by their social, political and/or economic backgrounds.



... and therefore, to achieve good practice in MSLE initiatives, the Access principle is interpreted as:

Programs are designed to serve as active and impartial conduits to the resources of the institution (for example, curriculum, learning, academic, social, cultural, support, financial and other resources).

Rationale

- Institutions must ensure all students can access the hidden curriculum of university language, practices and social mores.
- Institutions should facilitate access to knowing what is important through multiple points/routes of access, for example, social media, face to face, person to person, peer to peer, student to educator, educator to student.

Implications for MSLE programs

- Programs are people-rich to ensure relevant transfer of tacit information and specific knowledge.
- Programs address impediments to accessing institutional ‘resources’ by empowering students with knowledge of, information about and direct referrals to learning support services.
- Programs promote access through sustainable relationships and service agreements with central and local academic and professional staff for the provision of timely support.
- Programs facilitate access through connections to peers.

Challenges

- Ensuring programs are designed to facilitate access to institutional ‘resources’ for the most disadvantaged and potentially most at-risk of disengaging.
- How the program addresses issues of access by reporting back and acting on student feedback.

Examples of good practice



The program focuses on making connections to support engagement. The program has strong relationships and/or service agreements with support programs across the institution, such as mentoring, counselling and academic skills development programs.

Training of advisors involves understanding the institutional support ‘map’ and services available to students both within and outside of the university.

Training of advisors emphasises historical, social and economic barriers to access.

R

eviewing practice



The Access principle ensures that MSLE programs are designed in ways to facilitate access to university resources both within and outside the curriculum and ensures that all students have the opportunity to make the most of their university experience.

How does your MSLE program provide/facilitate access to the hidden curriculum of university language, practices and social mores?

How could your program proactively broker access to developmental opportunities?

What strategies should your MSLE program adopt to ensure that previous social or economic disadvantage does not further impede students' ability to engage in learning?

Equity

Social justice literature defines 'equity' as:

Equity implies that social differences are understood and that different responses are therefore designed and applied to particular situations to redress previous imbalances. The notion of equity features heavily in the literature about Australian higher education and there has been a history of endorsement of equity policy, targets and programs. Unfortunately the terms equality and equity are often used interchangeably in practice as well as in the literature. Usefully Patton, Shahjahan and Osei-Kofi (2010) remind us that equality refers to the equal distribution of goods or equality in treatment, whereas equity focuses on the removal of noted barriers for individuals and groups who have been traditionally disadvantaged by dominant cultures and power structures.

From a recognitive social justice perspective, this principle is expressed as:

Social difference is understood so that responses can be designed and applied to particular situations to counteract the barriers that impede participation.



...which, when interpreted for MSLE initiatives considers that

In the context of monitoring student learning engagement the focus is on counteracting barriers to participation such as finances and broadening knowledge and experiences of higher education to previously under-represented groups.



... and therefore, to achieve good practice in MSLE initiatives, the Equity principle is interpreted as:

Programs are designed to demystify and decode dominant university cultures, processes, expectations and language for differently prepared cohorts.

Rationale

- Students need differentially beneficial outcomes.
- Systems, data and analytics are necessary to provide evidence rather than assumptions for identification of students 'at risk' of disengaging.

Implications for MSLE programs

- The program decodes university language and culture and deciphers institutional processes and protocols with particular attention to differently prepared students.
- The program normalises 'support' and encourages help and information seeking behaviours.
- The program assists in defining academic expectations and negotiating conceptualisations of success.
- There needs to be proactive brokering rather than reactive responses to ensure previous disadvantage does not further impede students' opportunities to engage in learning.

Challenges

- How to set triggers for intervention in ways that are not based on generalisations or indicators of previous disadvantage.
- Dealing with mass systems while understanding the needs of individual students to connect them to appropriate support – one solution does not fit all.

Examples of good practice

Students working as advisors helps to normalise the 'student experience' via the use of student 'language' and may be effective in dispelling myths or preconceptions about approaching academic staff for assistance. Often the student advisor is recruited from a pool of student mentors who has prior knowledge of processes and protocols. Student advisors who have previously completed the same course of study are well equipped to discuss relevant issues. Consider matching advisors to particular cohorts of students when scheduling outreach activities.

A 'student readiness survey' is emailed to students prior to the commencement of their studies. The questions and response alternatives help define various expectations that help define what 'success' might look like as well as identify potential non-academic barriers that may impede their university experience and make connections to tertiary-readiness activities or programs.

R

Reviewing practice



Thinking about the *Equity* principle and your institutional initiative:

How does the program identify and use performance and demographic factors known to increase likelihood of early disengagement?

How objective is the process of data and analytics in providing evidence rather than assumptions for intervention?

Participation

Social justice literature defines 'participation' as:

In the social justice literature, both Gewirtz (1998) and Young (1990) note that participation arises if and when there is equality of opportunity. Recognising inequities Gale and Tranter (2011) point out that participation needs to be considered a recognitive stance. In terms of the higher education literature, participation has been discussed extensively in terms of government activities and initiatives (the widening participation agenda in both the United Kingdom and Australia are key examples).

From a recognitive social justice perspective, this principle is expressed as:

Participation is not predicated on previous opportunity or privilege.



... which, when interpreted for MSLE initiatives considers that

All students have the opportunity to participate in university activities and to complete their qualification(s) in ways that are harmonious with their individual backgrounds and circumstances.



... and therefore, to achieve good practice in MSLE initiatives, the Participation principle is interpreted as:

MSLE programs lead to socially inclusive practices and students experience a sense of belonging and connectedness.

Rationale

- Active participation of all students arises from the instantiation of the principles of self-determination, rights, access and equity.
- There is recognition of the importance and power of peer-to-peer interactions and in engaging with fellow students who normalise the student experience and create a sense of belonging.

Implications for MSLE programs

- Programs facilitate connections between peers, students and staff within the curriculum and with services, resources, processes and systems.
- Programs value learning partnerships and communities of learners.
- Programs enable students to make informed decisions about their participation in university life.
- A holistic approach is required to remove barriers and to assist students to participate fully in learning.

Challenges

- Respecting an individual's choice in their degree of desired engagement in university life and the involvement of family, peers and significant others.
- Understanding personal and professional boundaries.

Examples of good practice



A 'welcome call' to students not only assists in inviting a dialogue about the hidden curriculum but it also offers a friendly voice — assists in breaking down or alleviating pre- and misconceptions about university life and creates a sense of belonging.

Make the student experience a visible one via social media tools to increase connections between peers (for example, a blog site, a Facebook page).

Avoid language based on stereotypes or assumptions when communicating with students; use inclusive language.

R

eviewing practice



At the core of the Social Justice Framework is the *Participation* principle whereby the program or initiative through the enactment of the other principles fosters a sense of belonging and connectedness to the university. With your institution in mind:

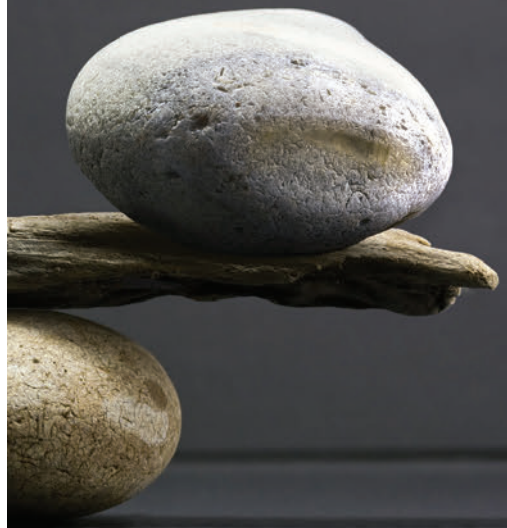
What strategies does your program incorporate to facilitate connections between peers, students and staff?

At a very fundamental level, the conversation between the advisor and the student is a way of creating a sense of belonging and sense of connection to the institution. This can be achieved by redirecting attention to the curriculum and by assuring the students of the approachability of academic staff.

How are these relationships fostered in terms of services, resources, processes and systems?

Building strong relationships and networks with the various student support entities across an institution is an efficient way of developing appropriate responses and intervention activities.

Part 3
Case
studies



Introducing the case studies



Brief case studies of the monitoring student learning engagement initiatives in the eight participating institutions appear in this section.² Each case study provides an overview of the institutional initiative: the scale of the activity, organisational processes, outcomes, critical success factors and challenges and any key resources associated with the activity. At the conclusion of each case study is a program artefact that exemplifies good practice. Further details of the artefact and any additional artefacts from the institution can be located on the artefacts page of the project website:

https://safeguardingstudentlearning.net/?page_id=420

As well, a concise profile of the institution containing relevant enrolment and demographic details is provided at the conclusion of the case study.

The eight case studies are:

- Auckland University of Technology (AUT) – FYE Programme
- Charles Sturt University (CSU) – Student Success Team (SST)
- Curtin University – JumpSTART
- Edith Cowan University (ECU) – Connect for Success (C4S)
- Queensland University of Technology (QUT) – Student Success Program (SSP)
- RMIT University (RMIT) – Student Success Program
- University of New England (UNE) – Early Alert Program
- University of South Australia (UniSA) – Enhancing Student Academic Potential (ESAP)

² The case studies are also available to access and download individually at: https://safeguardingstudentlearning.net/?page_id=64

Case study 1

Auckland University of Technology (AUT) *First-Year Experience (FYE) Programme*

Tāwhaitia te ara o te tika, te pono me te aroha, kia piki ki te taumata tiketike.

Follow the path of integrity, respect, and compassion; scale the heights of achievement.

Context and purpose

The First-Year Experience (FYE) programme is a university-wide student engagement and retention initiative, supporting students at-risk of disengaging from their studies. Once identified, proactive intervention occurs in the form of advice and referrals to student support services, faculty or external community services. This contact is made by FYE Assistants who are senior students employed as casual staff. As the university's only outbound contact centre, ad-hoc campaigns take place to support other university initiatives.

Established in 2003, the programme was developed in response to high first-year attrition rates.³ It was decided that a focussed, methodological approach was needed to identify and proactively support 'at-risk' students. Acknowledging that student success and retention is a complex matrix of responsibility between academic staff, support staff and the student themselves, the programme was designed to identify at risk students via a series of 'trigger points'.

An FYE assistant calls the student to discuss their studies, offer advice and, if necessary, make a referral to the appropriate student support service. After the initial contact is made, FYE assistants will make a follow-up call within the next fortnight to see if any further assistance is required. If a student decides to withdraw, they will conduct an exit interview to identify any areas where the University could better support its students, finalise any administrative issues, and ensure the student leaves with a positive experience.

The Programme is consistent with AUT's position as a university of opportunity, and its mission to increase access to higher education to traditionally under-represented groups. The programme is designed to ensure all new students receive the targeted assistance to ensure successful educational outcomes, thereby improving retention and success rates across the University. The FYE Programme is recognised as a leading retention initiative within the New Zealand tertiary sector.

³ First year attrition is termed as student enrolled in year 1 but does not return onto any programme in year 2.

The primary goals of the FYE Programme are to contribute to:

- The reduction of the first year student attrition rate
- The improvement of AUT's Educational Performance Indicators (Successful Completion and Retention)
- The increase of student knowledge and engagement with student support services
- The effective resolution of student concerns and issues
- The improvement of AUT's reputation.

Key stakeholders

- Student Service, responsible for the provision of professional services such as orientation, tertiary readiness, student advice, careers, cultural support, financial support, support for international students and students with impairments.
- Learning Development & Success, based in Student Services and responsible for academic skills development, advice and resources.
- Faculty-based paper⁴ and programme leaders.

Key institutional references

AUT Strategic Plan 2012–2016. Retrieved from:

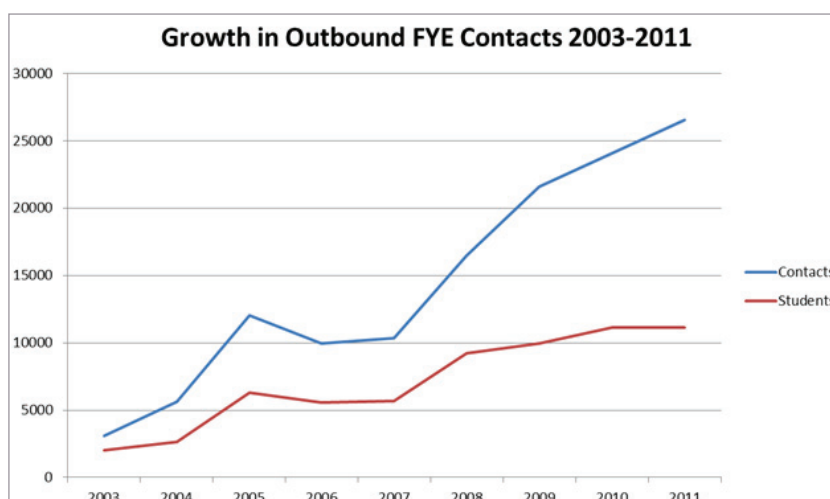
http://www.aut.ac.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/263139/AUT_Strategic_Plan_2012-16_FINAL.PDF

AUT Annual Report 2011:

http://www.aut.ac.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0012/272010/AUT_AnnualReport2011Web.pdf

Scale of the activity

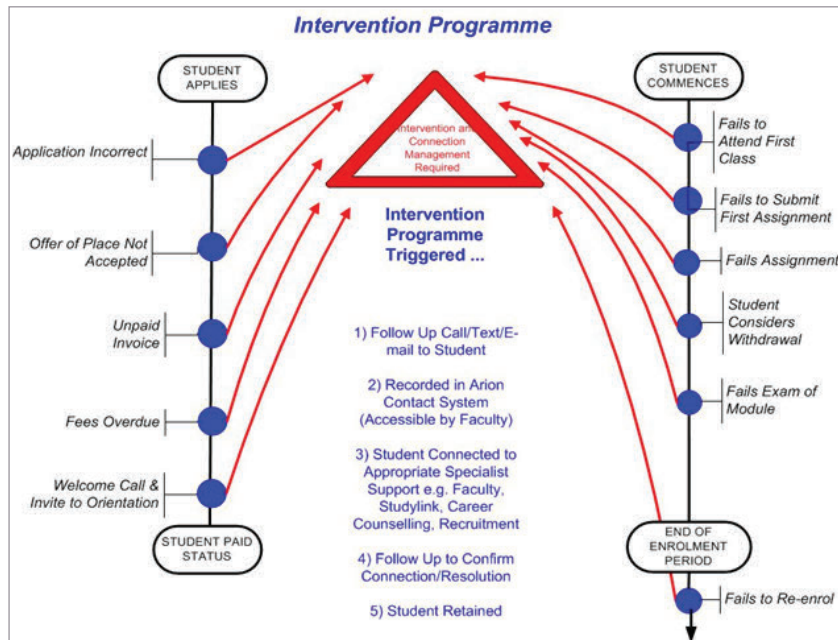
The FYE programme has grown dramatically since 2003, driven by student population growth, and an increase in the scope of the programme in terms of campaigns and intervention points. The graph below shows both the annual number of contacts, and the number of distinct students contacted at least once.



⁴ A 'paper' is a term synonymous with 'unit' or 'course' as a semester-long teaching activity.

Organisational process

The FYE Programme monitors the progress of first-year undergraduate students, with intervention triggers at points where students tend to experience stress or disengagement. However, ad-hoc campaigns may target additional cohorts at the request of university stakeholders. The diagram below shows the different points at which an intervention may be triggered.



Each campaign is subsequently broken down into several sub-campaigns which are operationalised through a series of call lists. A summary of the campaigns, objectives, sub-campaigns and examples of 'at-risk' indicators are provided on the following page.

Campaign	Sub-campaigns	Objectives	Examples of 'at-risk' indicators
<p>Application management</p> <p>When: Applicants at varying points during admissions season</p>	<p>Lapsed applications.</p> <p>Firm offer made.</p> <p>Re-enrolment calls.</p>	<p>To provide advice about university processes and support.</p> <p>To assist with administrative issues related to enrolment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delay in accepting offer • Has not re-enrolled
<p>START (New for 2012)</p> <p>When: Once applicant is confirmed student (weeks -6 to 0)</p>	N/A	<p>To assess all new incoming students to AUT for tertiary readiness and establish early proactive contact with high-priority students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrance type • Low NCEA score • Low school decile • Performance of programme • High student readiness survey (SRS) score
<p>Orientation calls</p> <p>Weeks -3 to 0</p>	<p>Welcome call inviting students to attending Orientation and Tertiary Readiness Programmes.</p> <p>Follow up orientation survey to select cohort.</p>	<p>To support commencing students by providing university and course specific information and advice.</p> <p>To reduce anxiety and uncertainty about commencing tertiary study.</p> <p>To encourage attendance at university Orientation events.</p>	N/A — all new students
<p>At-risk intervention</p> <p>(Weeks 2–13 of semester)</p>	<p>Students in particular courses/programs.</p> <p>Students enrolled in particular units.</p> <p>Follow up after intervention — case management approach.</p>	<p>To improve persistence and achievement of at-risk students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence from classes • Not accessing AUT Online (Blackboard) • Failure to submit or failure in progressive assessment items
<p>University exit interviews</p>	<p>All students that have withdrawn from a programme.</p>	<p>To gain insights as to reasons for university exit.</p> <p>To assist the student with any remaining administration issues.</p> <p>To leave the student with a positive experience of AUT.</p>	<p>Students that withdraw</p>
<p>Ad-hoc campaigns</p>	<p>Student feedback on specific initiatives/events.</p> <p>Case management and information gathering for students transferring from institutions in Canterbury region during earthquakes.</p>	<p>Varied.</p>	N/A

Student Analysis of Readiness Tool (START)

Despite the effectiveness of the FYE Programme, there was an identified need to become even more proactive in supporting students, in particular new incoming students making the transition to tertiary study. Issues could be more effectively remedied if AUT staff were aware of them earlier, but even the student themselves may not be aware of these prior to starting study. In an effort to gather more intelligence, the START initiative was developed.

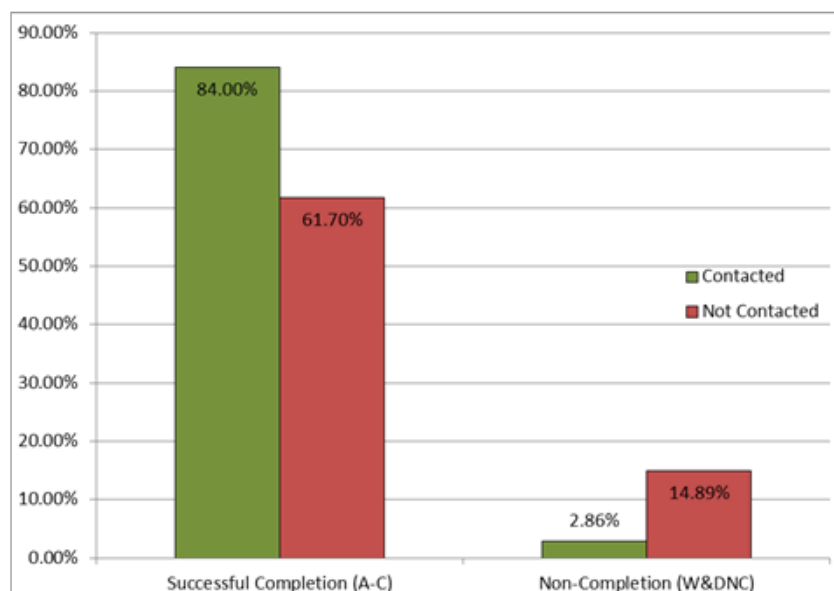
START is designed to assess all new AUT students to determine readiness for tertiary study. All new students receive a survey after their enrolment at AUT is confirmed, seeking information on a range of demographic factors shown to influence likelihood of success. These include work and other external commitments, family educational background, and internet/computer access. Survey responses are then combined with a series of quantitative measures, including entry qualifications, school decile and programme of study, to identify those students considered as being at higher risk of failure. These students are termed high priority, and are contacted by a Student Advisor to offer appropriate advice and support.

Depending on when the new student completes the application process, this contact may be several weeks prior to Orientation. The aim is to begin the relationship with the advisor earlier, to more effectively mitigate any academic, personal or situational issues that may affect a student's successful completion of their studies.

Outcomes and evaluation

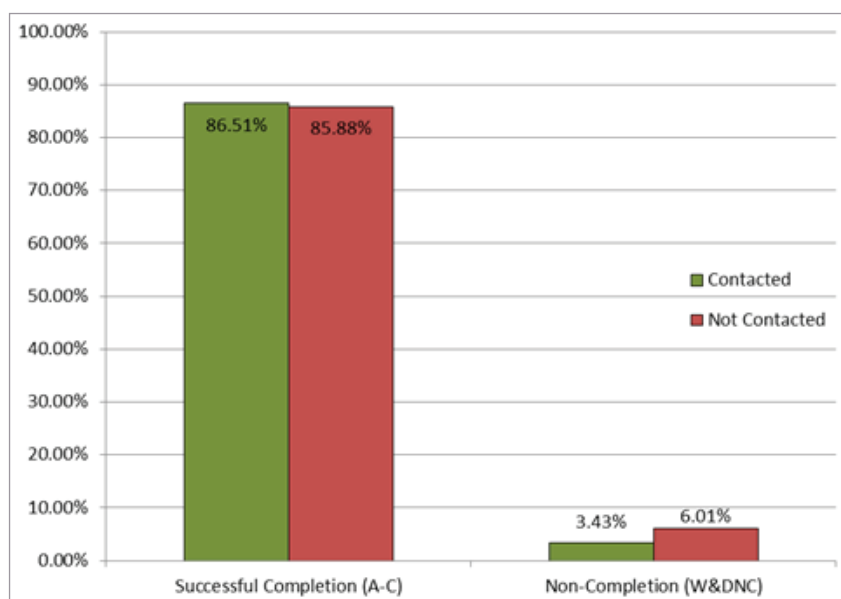
The FYE Programme is an integral retention strategy at AUT, operating in partnership between central student support services and the faculties. Annual evaluation is undertaken on the programme selections of the most recent (2011) findings are below:

- Failure of assignment/test/exam:** Where students showed either failure of an assignment/test or failure to submit an assignment/test, successful contact from the FYE team had a very positive impact on student success. Students that were contacted showed significantly higher successful paper completion rates (84%) when compared with those unable to be contacted (61.70%).



Successful contact from the FYE team also had positive impact non-completion rates. Students that were contacted showed significantly lower rates of Did Not Complete (DNC) and Withdrawn (W) grades (2.86%) when compared with those unable to be contacted (14.89%).

- **Not accessing AUT online (Blackboard):** Where students were contacted because they had no activity on Blackboard, successful contact from the FYE team had a very positive impact on student success. Students that were contacted showed significantly higher successful paper completion rates (86.51%) when compared with those unable to be contacted (85.88%).



Successful contact from the FYE team also had positive impact non-completion rates. Students that were contacted showed significantly lower rates of Did Not Complete (DNC) and Withdrawn (W) grades (3.43%) when compared with those unable to be contacted (6.01%).

Critical success factors

These include:

- Key partnerships with institutional stakeholders
- Support and engagement of senior officers
- Philosophical basis that ensures operations are not based on a deficit model
- Continuous development of technological solutions to support staff interaction
- Acceptance and buy-in of academic staff
- Institutional take up for scale and reach
- Respecting the expertise of AUT staff (both professional and academic).

Challenges

- Extension of FYE Programme into programmes/papers with low performance
- Maintaining relationships with key stakeholders
- Timely reporting to meet the range of audience needs.

Contacts and key staff

- Joanna Scarbrough, Group Director Student Services
- Kurtis Bell, Manager Projects & Insights, Student Services.

Key dissemination

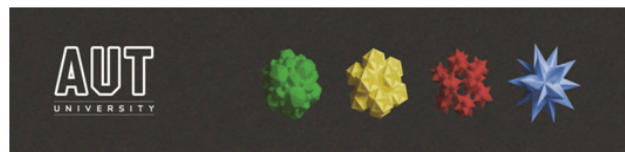
Australian Universities Quality Agency. (2007). *Good practice database. First year experience intervention and support programme*. Retrieved from http://www.auqa.edu.au/gp/search/detail.php?gp_id=2907

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Carlson, G., Scarborough, J., & Carlson, J. (2010). Holistic Intervention Program for At-risk Students. In D. Nutt & D. Caldern (Eds), *International Perspectives of the First-Year Experience in Higher Education*. (pp. 75–80). Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina. National Resource Centre for the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition.

Artefact A

Type: Student Survey
The AUT Student Readiness Survey (SRS)



At the beginning of 2012 a survey was sent to approximately 7,500 students that were new to AUT and had confirmed their offer of place. The survey is sent to the students' personal email address a week after they had confirmed their offer of place. The email explains that the survey is optional, will not affect their offer, and is designed to let AUT staff know more about their personal situation so they can effectively offer support and advice.

Once a student completes the survey, they see immediate responses based on how they have answered the question. These are included below each question. These responses are also emailed back to the student so they have a copy they can refer to throughout the year. The survey scores are arbitrary in nature, in that they are designed to highlight multiple factors, rather than weighted. However, work in 2013 will examine if certain responses should carry more weight than others. The total survey score is factored into the START tool as one of five indicators.

The average response rate throughout 2012 was approximately 50%. Work in 2013 will investigate using an incentive to raise this, with a target of 75% of all new students to complete the survey.

Alignment to the Social Justice Principles

This resource clearly articulates both the principles of *Self-determination* and particularly *Access* whereby the student, even prior to their commencement of study, is equipped with information tailored to their particular circumstances.

Sample survey question

Q6: Do you have any other commitments besides studying or employment? Please include looking after family members, sport, church, or other activities that you regularly take part in.

Yes (8) No (0)

Q6A: If yes, please tell us about them below:

Q6C: How many hours in total do you spend per week on your additional commitments?

0 1 2 3

1-9 10-19 20-29 30+

YES: It is important for you to consider how the additional commitment(s) you have besides study and any part-time job will affect your study. We recommend that you talk to a Student Advisor to discuss strategies that will help you to manage your study and other areas of commitment effectively.

(Click here for Student Advisor contact information)

(Click here for Māori Liaison Services contact information)

(Click here for Pasifika Student Support contact information)

NO: It's great that you can focus more of your time onto your study. However as you progress, don't forget to keep a balance between study and your personal life. Be aware of the time commitment it takes you to be involved in any activity. You can talk to a Student Advisor to discuss possible strategies that will help you to manage your study and other areas of commitment effectively.

(Click here for Student Advisor contact information)

(Click here for Māori Liaison Services contact information)

(Click here for Pasifika Student Support contact information)

To access the complete survey and view other artefacts from AUT please visit:

https://safeguardingstudentlearning.net/?page_id=430

Institutional profile*

Auckland University of Technology (AUT) is a New Zealand university that was established in 2000 with its origins as an education centre going back to 1895. AUT has three main campuses around Auckland: City, North Shore, and Manukau. It also has two specialised campuses, AUT-Millennium Campus based on the North Shore and Radio Astronomy based at Warkworth.

Total student enrolment	26,243
Undergraduate	76%
Postgraduate	13%
Domestic	87%
International	13% (NZ's second largest enrolment of international students)
Priority student groups	
Māori	9%
Pasifika [^]	12%
Mature age (over 25 years)	37%
Student study options	
Full-time	68%
Part-time	32%

*This profile differs slightly in content to the Australian institutional profiles in accordance with the varying measures of student participation. All profile information is from Auckland University of Technology 2011 Annual Report. Retrieved from http://www.aut.ac.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0012/272010/AUT_AnnualReport2011Web.pdf

[^]Pasifika describes a diverse grouping of people from Pacific nation heritages living in New Zealand. With more Pasifika people born in New Zealand than overseas, 'Pasifika' are no longer an immigrant population. Retrieved from www.tec.govt.nz/.../TEC-Pasifika-Strategy-2013-2016-DRAFT.pdf

Case study 2

Charles Sturt University (CSU) *Student Success Team*

Context and purpose

Since January 2011 Charles Sturt University (CSU) has undertaken a program to actively identify and support students identified as at-risk of disengagement from the university. This proactive intervention activity was a primary outcome of CSU's Transition Project⁵ which examined how the institution could increase the participation and success of students. CSU is a multi-campus institution, providing access to higher education from its various campuses across two states. CSU has a substantial cohort of distance education students (over 50 per cent), adding to the challenges of providing targeted and timely support to students.

The Student Success Team (SST) are a group of trained students who make phone calls to first year students to support them in their transition to university. Students are identified according to the various campaigns (discussed below) via data collected from a variety of institutional sources including Student Administration, IT systems and information ascertained from engagement in assessment activities.

Key institutional references

CSU Academic Support Operational Plan 2012 – Student Experience Plan 2.1:
http://www.csu.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/214878/Operational-Plan-2012.pdf

Scale of the activity

This intervention activity is a centrally coordinated approach to student success and retention. Currently, the SST programs concentrate on domestic, undergraduate students who are categorised in a low socio-economic status (low SES) or are enrolled in a course included in CSU's Student Transition and Retention (STAR) Plan.⁶ In 2011, 3000 students were contacted via phone and/or email and by late 2012 to 8000 students had been contacted.

⁵ CSU's Transition Project (2009) details and a summary can be found at <http://www.csu.edu.au/student/transition/project-scope.htm>

⁶ CSU's STAR Plan – details located at <http://www.csu.edu.au/academic-support/welcome/star>

Organisational process

The SST refers and directs students to a variety of support services including Learning Advisors, Student Services and the library depending on the circumstances of each student. Each call is followed up by an email outlining the plan of action discussed in the phone call. The SST works closely with Student Transition and Retention (STAR) academics and their support staff appointed to each of the four institutional faculties who identify triggers for disengagement.

The team operates five campaigns each session⁷, as outlined below:

1. Welcome to CSU

This campaign begins around six weeks before the start of session and continues until around week two of session to catch late enrollers. Students from low SES backgrounds and students enrolled in one of the twelve STAR courses are the targets for this campaign. Students are welcomed to CSU and are told about some of the support services available to students and the orientation website as part of this campaign.

2. No Access to Subject Outline

The Division of Information Technology can produce a list of students who have not accessed their subject outlines for one or more of the subjects in which they're enrolled. Not accessing subject outlines, which contain information vital for success in a subject, is a very strong indication of a student's disengagement from a subject. This campaign seeks to proactively contact these students and attempt to direct them to support services that can help them re-engage in these subjects.

3. STAR Course Campaign

This campaign is tailored to each of the courses within the STAR courses. STAR Academic Leads and lecturers assist with the identification of subject-based triggers that indicate that students are at risk of disengagement. These students are then called by members of the Student Success Team, who offer general and subject specific advice to help students remain engaged in their learning.

4. At Risk of Exclusion

Students who fail to make satisfactory academic progress, in the first instance, receive a notice that they are At Risk of Exclusion. The Student Success Team will make contact with these students and discuss the sort of help that exists for students.

5. Fail a Subject

Any commencing STAR or low SES students who fail one or more subjects in their first session receive a call from the SST. This call aims to identify areas for improvement and direct students to the appropriate support services at CSU.

Outcomes and evaluation

Contacted students are offered the chance to participate in a short survey to provide feedback on their contact experience. Feedback and comments from students are also reported back to stakeholders, including STAR staff, after each campaign.

⁷ A 'session' is also referred to as a 'semester' or 'term'. CSU has three sessions per year.

Critical success factors

- High call success rate
- Professionalism, knowledge and empathy of SST members
- Key relationships with institutional stakeholders
- Program based on higher education sector research and other effective intervention programs.

Challenges

- Call rates can be dependent on variables (time of day)
- Study commitments of SST members means rostering can be a challenge.

Website

<http://www.csu.edu.au/academic-support/welcome/student-success-team>

Key contact

Mr Peter Greening, Team Leader, Student Success Team

Key resources

- Training documentation for SST
- Call scripts
- Emails to students
- Support Services Guide
- Student Satisfaction Survey.

Artefact B

Type: Training

Student Success Team Role Playing Activity – Day Two

The role play activity is the culminating activity in the Student Success Team (SST) training package. It enables the team members to utilise all of the skills that they have learned in the last two days, including interacting with other students, recommending appropriate support services, and using the technology (computer programs, websites, telephones, etc). The activity takes place in the workplace, and as a result the team members have access to all of the resources that they have on the job.

The Student Success Team members break into pairs. Within each group one person is the SST member and one is the target student. Below are the scenarios, to be given to the target students. Each scenario is developed in line with the five campaigns run in the program (Welcome to CSU; No Access to Subject Outline; STAR Course Campaign, At Risk of Exclusion; and Fail a Subject). The SST member will have the necessary interactions on Talisma (CRM).⁸ The SST member logs into Talisma, views their interactions, makes the calls, talks to the target students, sends a follow up e-mail and resolves the interaction. This simulates the complete range of actions that an SST member would make on the job. The shift lasts for approximately 20 minutes after which the group shares their experiences and debriefs the other groups.

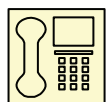
⁸ CRM stands for customer relationship management, a model used by an organisation or institution to manage interactions with customers and clients.

Alignment to the Social Justice Principles

This resource articulates both the principles of *Access* and *Equity*. The information transfer from advisor to student interprets university systems and protocols. Engagement with another student humanises the support activity easing the sense of confusion or isolation the student may be feeling. Essentially the scenarios assist in articulating the multiple issues student face at crucial times during the year.

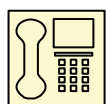
Scenario selections

Scenario A – Welcome to CSU



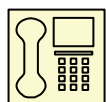
You are thankful for the call and agree to look at the orientation website. You want to know more about scholarships – what they are, how to apply, who to apply to, when do applications close, what scholarships are right for me? You also want to know what resources are available at the library for an on-campus student. Be very appreciative.

Scenario B – STAR Based



You have failed the first assignment in Microeconomics. You did not use enough references and journal articles. Those you did use were not referenced correctly in-text. You have since downloaded the CSU referencing guide and now understand how to reference.

Scenario C – At Risk of Exclusion



You have read the eBox message and have been worrying about it ever since. You are happy to have someone to talk to that will not judge them. You have failed a core subject Human Bioscience 2 and if you fail it again you will be kicked out of uni. You have troubles with writing assignments, you worry about plagiarism and you struggle with applying what you learn in class to the assignment questions. If the SST offers you an appointment with an LSA you take it.



To access the complete scenarios utilised in the CSU SST Training activity please visit:
https://safeguardingstudentlearning.net/?page_id=433

Institutional profile*

Charles Sturt University (CSU) is an Australian public university with regional campuses across New South Wales (NSW) and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). Established in 1895 and becoming a university in 1990, campus locations include Albury-Wodonga, Orange, Bathurst, Dubbo, Parramatta and Canberra.

Total student enrolment	34,627
Undergraduate	22,729
Postgraduate	8,586
Domestic+	86.4%
International+	13.6%
Student demographics	
Indigenous	2% this is high compared to other institutions
Regional/remote students+	44.5%
Low SES+#	18.42%
Non-English speaking background+	1.7%
Mature age (over 25 years) undergraduates	48% this is very high compared to other institutions
Student study options	
Undergraduate part-time	47% this is very high compared to other institutions
Undergraduate external or mixed mode	54% this is very high compared to other institutions
Postgraduate part-time	84% this is high compared to other institutions
Postgraduate external or mixed mode	87% this is high compared to other institutions
Student entry details	
School-leavers	12% this is very low compared to other institutions
Prior TAFE credits	22% this is very high compared to other institutions
International undergraduates	3,384 this is a big number compared to other institutions
International postgraduates	1,522 this is an average number compared to other institutions

*Except for items marked with '+' all profile information is from The Good Universities Guide (2012). Retrieved from <http://gooduniguide.com.au/ratings/compare/CSU?studyType=UG&state=NSW&actionSearch=Search>

+This profile information is from the Australian Government website MyUniversity with data collected for the 2011 year. CSU information is retrieved from <http://www.myuniversity.gov.au/Charles-Sturt-University/Statistics/3005>

#Currently in Australia the SES of higher education students is determined by the geographic area or postcode of the student's home. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) Index of Education and Occupation (IEO) is used to rank postcodes. The postcodes that comprise the bottom 25% of the population aged between 15 to 64 years at the date of the latest census, based on this ranking, are considered low SES postcodes. Students who have home locations in these low SES postcodes are counted as 'low SES' students.

Source: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (2009) *Measuring the Socio-economic Status of Higher Education Students*. Discussion Paper. Retrieved from http://www.innovation.gov.au/HigherEducation/Documents/LowSES_Discussionpaper.rtf

Case study 3

Curtin University *JumpSTART*

Context and purpose

The JumpSTART program takes a proactive approach to contacting students who are identified as 'at-risk' of either failing a unit, or leaving university prematurely. JumpSTART deals with a myriad of issues including transitional matters not directly related to study (such as family and work commitments), academic adjustment issues (e.g. Expectations and motivation) and various intra-personal concerns. Advisors from the Student Transition and Retention Team (START), in collaboration with academic staff, contact students who meet the following indicators:

- Not attending required classes by Week 3, or other key classes later in the semester
- Submitting the first major assignment late, or not at all
- Failing any major assignments, or
- any other key indicators as deemed appropriate by the Faculty.

START members are able to assist students with a range of issues or queries – essentially the goals are to:

- Clarify what issues may be affecting the student's study
- Inform the student about the services that Curtin has available which could assist them to make the most of their learning experience while at University
- Connect the student to any relevant services or, if possible, resolve any issues or concerns the student may have at point of contact.

START aims to see higher pass rates and lower fail rates with students they successfully contact compared to those that they are unable to have a conversation with. START members also help inform students of the correct administrative procedures for withdrawing from units. Previous experience at Curtin indicates that at the beginning of semester some students have no intention of completing the unit but do not realise that there are specific administrative protocols to undertake to avoid financial penalties.

Scale of the activity

The scale of project has varied since early piloting activity in 2010. In Semester 1, 2011 the program was expanded to ten first year units across the campus and in 2012 it is anticipated that the implementation of *Starfish Retention Solutions* software – an early warning student tracking system – will assist in revising future JumpSTART activities.

Organisational process

Currently the JumpSTART Program targets first year, first semester undergraduate students in selected first year units. The units selected are chosen in collaboration with the Faculty Deans and have so far been made up of common core units. It is noted that if students are struggling in these core units then this may be indicative that they are having similar academic issues in other units.

Key stakeholders in the JumpSTART program include:

- Faculty Deans of Teaching & Learning
- Unit Coordinators of the selected units
- Administrative staff of the selected units
- Curtin Information Technology Services (CITS)
- Student Mentors
- START Student Advisors.

Initially trialled in 2010 in a total of six units, the program was expanded to fifteen units in 2011. Prior to the Starfish implementation JumpSTART operated using Microsoft Excel to record and track all student data and contact information. The student data is manually compiled by START staff from two central databases; 'Student One' for the administrative data and 'Blackboard' for the academic data. Senior student mentors are hired on a casual basis and trained by the START Advisors to make the initial outreach calls. Students requiring additional assistance or information are assigned to a START Advisor for further support. Trying to expand JumpSTART into a greater number of units across the University without any dedicated technology to support the program has proved to be a significant challenge in regards to staff resources. Consequently, the program has been reduced in 2012 in order to sustain the program and to accommodate the implementation of the Starfish software activities.

Starfish comprises of two main systems: **Starfish EARLY ALERT** makes it possible for instructors, advisors and campus staff to help at-risk students by identifying and flagging them through the program's integration with course management systems and specific institutional systems; **Starfish CONNECT** facilitates contact between students and their teaching staff or advisors by providing a personalised rolodex of everyone who can assist the student, and allowing students to make online appointments with staff.

It is anticipated Starfish will replace the use of Microsoft Excel and automatically integrate with the relevant Curtin databases reducing the manual processes involved in JumpSTART. The Starfish trial will take place during semester two 2012 and if successful it is anticipated JumpSTART will be integrated across the institution.

Outcomes and evaluation

At the end of Jumpstart's 2010 pilot semester results of the program indicated that the students contacted experienced higher pass rates and lower fail rates. A survey sent to students who were contacted through JumpSTART at the end of 2010 indicated that students responded very negatively to being contacted. The final results for the semester were also poor with the statistics showing that students who student advisors managed to successfully contact actually experienced higher fail rates than those that were not contacted.

In 2011 significant revisions to the program were made, including reassessing the indicators used to identify at-risk students, retrieving the data from more accurate sources and importantly, revising the communication scripts for the program to reflect a more inclusive tone, rather than exclusive. From semester one, 2011 the program started to yield more positive results. *See the table following for the combined statistics for all the units that JumpSTART operated in for 2011.*

	Pass	Fail	Withdrawn	Other
Students contacted (772)	267 (34.6%)	315 (40.8%)	179 (23.2%)	11 (1.4%)
Students not contacted (697)	205 (29.4%)	360 (51.7%)	122 (17.5%)	10 (1.4%)

2011 JumpSTART statistics

Surveys were sent to students following semester one, 2011 and the results were significantly better with 93.9% of respondents agreeing that JumpSTART is a positive initiative that is useful in assisting first year students with an assortment of issues. Positive feedback from surveys sent to the Unit Coordinators participating in JumpSTART indicated that the program had been of benefit and had enabled them to follow-up with students that they would not ordinarily have had the time to do.

Critical success factors

- Support and engagement of Unit Coordinators and Faculty Deans
- Highly trained and confident senior mentors to make the outgoing calls to students
- Ongoing support of Curtin's IT Services Team
- Availability of START Student Advisors
- The language of program communications to be inclusive, rather than exclusive.

Challenges

- Lack of dedicated technology to support the program's expansion
- Retrieving the at-risk student data from Unit Coordinators in a timely manner
- Calling students in a timely manner
- Retrieving accurate data from Unit Coordinators
- Maintaining the integrity of the data stored on the Excel spread sheets despite several callers making changes to them.

Website

JumpSTART program http://unilife.curtin.edu.au/staff/jumpstart_program.htm

Contacts

- Ms Jade Habib, START Student Advisor
- Dr Jim Elliot, Associate Director Student Transition.

Key resources

- Email Action Plans for students
- Phone scripts
- Survey sent to students as part of evaluation of the program
- PowerPoint Presentation about JumpSTART in first lecture/class
- Student handouts given out to students in their first lecture/class.

Dissemination

Elliott, J. (2011, December). JumpSTART: *The Challenges faced by Curtin University when implementing a program targeting 'at-risk' student*. Paper presented at The Australia and New Zealand Student Services Association Biennial Conference. Retrieved from <http://anzssa.epicconferences.com.au/program.htm>

Artefact C

Type: Promotion and Marketing

JumpSTART advertising material: PowerPoint and handout

At the beginning of the semester (in the first or second week of lectures) students in a particular first year foundation course receive a brief overview of the JumpSTART program and the services available to them as university students. This overview of the project, as well as a handout for all students, are presented in lecture time. Information with the PowerPoint slide assists the lecturer in articulating JumpSTARTs purpose:

When reading this slide please ensure that you emphasise that as Curtin students they have a wealth of services available to them. Many students have a negative view of what 'support services' entail, so please address this by saying that support services encompass a wide range of services including our new gym facilities, Curtin Volunteers!, and our Health Service – not just our Counselling service as some students may think. Curtin's support services are not just services for people with 'problems' – they are for everyone!

It is students' responsibility to ensure that they use as many of these services as possible to enhance their university life experience!!

Inform students that START is the area on campus that helps students make a smooth transition into University study. The call is a non-invasive, friendly contact to see how the student is going with their study and to see if there is any info that START can provide them with in regards to Curtin's support services or any other areas.

If students have any questions about the program, or would like any general info they are welcome to contact START on the contact details at the bottom of the slide.

Alignment to the Social Justice Principles

These resources exemplify both the *Access* and the *Rights* principles making information about the service and specific expectations explicit to the student early in the teaching period.

JumpSTART PowerPoint

JumpSTART

Do you know what Curtin support services are available for you to use?

The JumpSTART program is designed to reach out to new students who may not know of these services, or know how to access them.


If you:

- Do not regularly attend classes for the first three weeks of semester
- Do not complete the SUCCESS English Test
- Do not register for the SUCCESS classes (if required to do so)
- Do not submit; or fail the Assignment Outline with less than 50%


Then you will receive a friendly email and call from someone at the Student Transition and Retention Team (START) to see if there is any info that they can provide you with.

The calls are confidential and you have the right not to participate if you wish.


START: Building 102, start@curtin.edu.au or ph 9266 2662




Find the service
YOU need here




Counselling &
Disability




Curtin Careers
Centre




Curtin
Volunteers




Early Childhood
Centre



Student
Wellbeing



The Learning
Centre



Work-life
Balance

To access both the PowerPoint and the handout please visit:

https://safeguardingstudentlearning.net/?page_id=436

Institutional profile*

Curtin University is an Australian public university and was established in 1967, becoming a university in 1987. Curtin has its main campus in Perth (Bentley), Western Australia (WA) with other WA campuses including Albany, Armadale, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Midland and Port Headland plus offshore campuses in Singapore and Malaysia.

Total student enrolment	43,620
Undergraduate	32,554
Postgraduate	9,899
Domestic+	60.3%
International+	39.7%
Student demographics	
Indigenous	2% this is high compared with other institutions
Regional/remote students+	14.28%
Low SES+#	11.33%
Non-English speaking background+	4.27%
Mature age (over 25 years) undergraduates	20% this is average compared to other institutions
Student study options	
Undergraduate part-time	19% this is average compared to other institutions
Undergraduate external or mixed mode	4% this is average compared to other institutions
Postgraduate part-time	56% this is low compared to other institutions
Postgraduate external or mixed mode	26% this is average compared to other institutions
Student entry details	
School-leavers	48% this is average compared to other institutions
Prior TAFE credits	7% this is average compared to other institutions
International undergraduates	14,080 this is a very big number compared to other institutions
International postgraduates	3592 this is a big number compared to other institutions

*Except for items marked with '+' all profile information is from The Good Universities Guide (2012). Retrieved from <http://gooduniguide.com.au/ratings/compare/CURTIN?studyType=UG&state=WA&actionSearch=Search>

+This profile information is from the Australian Government website MyUniversity with data collected for the 2011 year. Curtin University information is retrieved from <http://www.myuniversity.gov.au/Curtin-University-of-Technology/Statistics/2236>

#Currently in Australia the SES of higher education students is determined by the geographic area or postcode of the student's home. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) Index of Education and Occupation (IEO) is used to rank postcodes. The postcodes that comprise the bottom 25% of the population aged between 15 to 64 years at the date of the latest census, based on this ranking, are considered low SES postcodes. Students who have home locations in these low SES postcodes are counted as 'low SES' students.

Source: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (2009). *Measuring the Socio-economic Status of Higher Education Students*. Discussion Paper. Retrieved from http://www.innovation.gov.au/HigherEducation/Documents/LowSES_Discussionpaper.rtf

Case study 4

Edith Cowan University (ECU) *Connect for Success (C4S)*

Context and purpose

Connect for Success (C4S) is a proactive, ECU-wide student retention and success initiative that systematically identifies students who may require additional support to undertake and complete their studies. Students are identified using predictive analytic models produced by ECU's Enterprise Information Management (EIM) system. Students are then contacted and case-managed by Student Connect Officers if they choose to 'opt-in' to the initiative.

C4S aims to improve the success of students at ECU, and subsequently, retention and graduation rates. The program was developed after formative consultation with ECU staff. C4S has several key objectives:

- Improvement of the University-wide retention rate (1% per annum)
- Positively impact the retention rate of case-managed students
- Positively impact the success rate of case-managed students
- Positively impact the Weighted Average Mark (WAM) for case-managed students
- Positively impact the progress of students placed on formal interventions.

Scale of the activity

C4S was granted funding in September 2011. Project initiation began in January 2012 with first contacts with newly commencing students beginning Semester 1, 2012. C4S is being progressively rolled out supporting all commencing and continuing undergraduate and post graduate students from all faculties. The program has been funded for three years with extension of funding dependent upon outcomes.

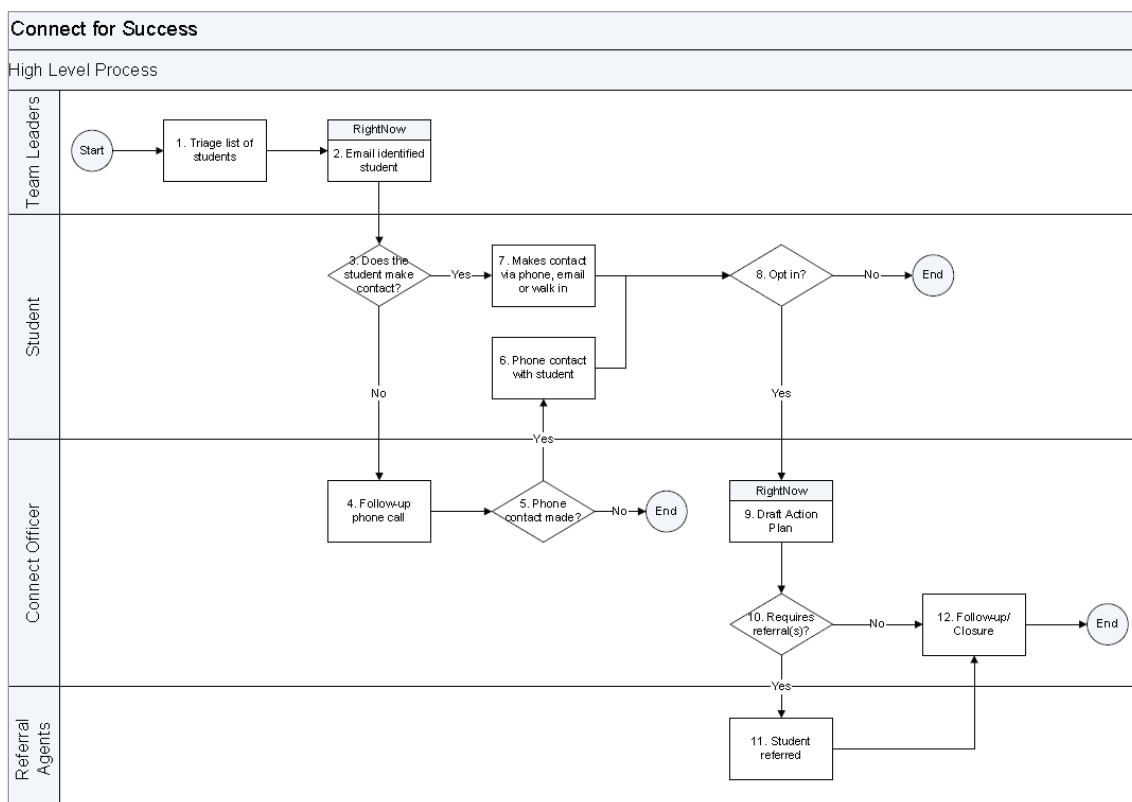
Organisational process

C4S aims to case-manage all students who may require additional support to complete their studies at ECU. In the initial pilot phases of the project, only commencing undergraduate students were included in the project scope. Now that business processes have been developed, refined and streamlined all commencing and continuing students are supported by C4S.

C4S is managed by the Student Services Centre with full support of Schools, Faculties and other Service Centres. Project progress and design is guided by the Project Board which includes the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic, Deputy-Vice Chancellor Teaching, Learning and International, an Executive Dean, the Director of the Student Services Centre, the Chief Financial Officer and the Chief Information Officer. The Senior User Group (working party) comprises of senior managers within the Student Services Centre, as well as senior managers from Faculties. This group works in conjunction with the Project Board to lead the roll-out of C4S at ECU.

Data available in ECU’s Enterprise Information Management (EIM) system (COGNOS) was used to develop statistical models in SPSS that provide an indication of each student’s possible need for support. Students identified by the C4S program are contacted by Student Connect Officers. Student Connect Officers are a specialist student support role responsible for addressing and resolving complex student issues and enquiries by implementing a wide range of high level support strategies. These include, but are not limited to, one-on-one student consultations, the implementation of action plans and interventions, referral to services internal and external to ECU and specialist visa advice for international students.

Reports from the EIM are generated regularly and the students identified as most in need of support are contacted via email (using campaigns in the CRM, RightNow). The initial student email provides a hyperlink where students can nominate to opt in or out of the program. Students who opt into the program and those who do not reply to the email are contacted by a Student Connect Officer by telephone. An overview of the high level process is provided below.



Outcomes and evaluation

Regular evaluation of C4S is conducted to ensure the initiative is meeting the program Performance Indicators (PIs) as well as positively impacting relevant ECU Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

It is anticipated the C4S initiative will directly impact ECU’s Retention KPI. Research indicates that with an aggressive retention strategy, university-wide retention rates can be increased by 1% per annum.

Measure	Target
Commencing Retention KPI	1% improvement over 2011 retention results. Target to be review for subsequent years.

In addition the following PIs will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the program at the end of each semester.

Measure	Target
Percentage of contacted students who 'opt into' the service.	30%
Case-managed students WAM.	Average WAM higher for students opting for support than those who opt out of the program.
Case-managed students' retention rate.	Case-managed students' retention rate higher than that of the students who opt out of the program.
Case-managed students' progress rate.	Case-managed students' progress rate higher than that of the students who opt out of the program.
Success of formal interventions for case-managed students.	No change or a positive change in a student's Academic Progress Status.

Critical success factors

- Trained and knowledgeable Student Connect Officers
- Partnerships with institutional stakeholders
- Knowledge of clear roles and boundaries with other ECU services
- Procedures that work (on a day-to-day basis)
- Strong executive support.

Challenges

- Institutional perspectives of 'the program'
- Integrity of the data – interpretations and the manual activity at the beginning phases
- Resourcing the program at peak times – for example during Orientation
- Integration of systems at an institutional level – for example Callista and RightNow
- Student suspicion.

Website

<http://intranet.ecu.edu.au/staff/projects-and-initiatives/connect-for-success/overview>

Contacts

- Dr Glenda Jackson, Director Student Services Centre
- Mrs Jackie Moffatt, Manager Student Liaison
- Mr Nick Martin, Manager Student Connect Team.

Key resources

- Communication scripts (Email and Telephone)
- Action Plans for students (custom space built in RightNow).

Key dissemination

Jackson, G., & Read, M. (2012, June). *Connect for Success: A proactive student identification and support program*. Presented at the 15th International First Year in Higher Education Conference. Retrieved from http://fyhe.com.au/past_papers/papers12/Papers/9B.pdf

Artefact D

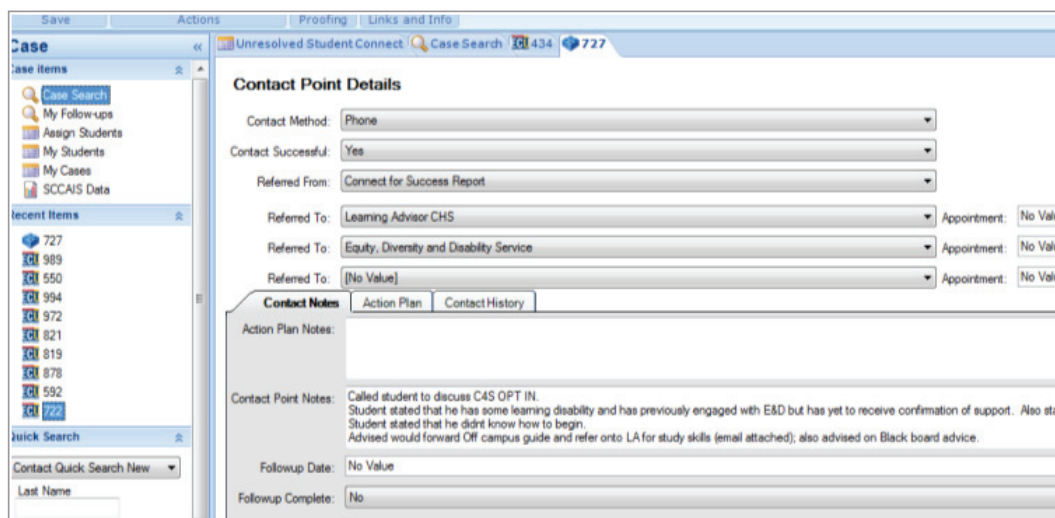
Type: Process

Connect For Success (C4S) – RightNow

ECU's C4S Program has a custom built space in their RightNow (CRM) interface to record the case notes of each contact made with respective students. Once a student has chosen to opt in, a case is created in RightNow, with the Case Summary being the front screen that gives an overview of the student details. The Contact Log provides a snapshot of every contact with a student, whilst the Contact Point/Notes and Action Plan screens provide the space for more detailed notes to be recorded. C4S also has the capability to book further appointment times with the student via an interface with TimeTrade (an appointment management system) and also quickly check other CRM enquiries the student has made via the system.

Alignment to the Social Justice Principles

This resource illustrates both the *Self-determination* and the *Participation* principles. The student has the option to opt-in or out of the contact activity and also participates in the development of an 'action plan' becoming an active participant in their support pathway.



To access the de-identified RightNow screenshots please visit:

https://safeguardingstudentlearning.net/?page_id=439



Institutional profile*

Edith Cowan University (ECU) is a public university in Western Australia and was established in 1902, becoming a university in 1991. ECU has three campuses in the state: Joondalup, Mount Lawley and South West.

Total student enrolment	26,583
Undergraduate	17,833
Postgraduate	7,372 this is a high number compared to other institutions
Domestic+	80.1%
International+	19.9%
Student demographics	
Indigenous	1% this is average compared to other institutions
Regional/remote students+	18.64%
Low SES+#	13.44%
Non-English speaking background+	2.72%
Mature age (over 25 years) undergraduates	33% this is high compared to other institutions
Student study options	
Undergraduate part-time	28% this is high compared to other institutions
Undergraduate external or mixed mode	14% this is high compared to other institutions
Postgraduate part-time	52% this is low compared to other institutions
Postgraduate external or mixed mode	31% this is average compared to other institutions
Student entry details	
School-leavers	37% this is low compared to other institutions
Prior TAFE credits	13% this is high compared to other institutions
International undergraduates	3,842 this is big number compared to other institutions
International postgraduates	3,181 this is big number compared to other institutions

*Except for items marked with '+' all profile information is from The Good Universities Guide (2012). Retrieved from <http://gooduniguide.com.au/ratings/compare/ECU?studyType=UG&state=WA&actionSearch=Search>

+This profile information is from the Australian Government website MyUniversity with data collected for the 2011 year. ECU information is retrieved from <http://www.myuniversity.gov.au/Edith-Cowan-University/Statistics/2235>

#Currently in Australia the SES of higher education students is determined by the geographic area or postcode of the student's home. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) Index of Education and Occupation (IEO) is used to rank postcodes. The postcodes that comprise the bottom 25% of the population aged between 15 to 64 years at the date of the latest census, based on this ranking, are considered low SES postcodes. Students who have home locations in these low SES postcodes are counted as 'low SES' students.

Source: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (2009). *Measuring the Socio-economic Status of Higher Education Students*. Discussion Paper. Retrieved from http://www.innovation.gov.au/HigherEducation/Documents/LowSES_Discussionpaper.rtf

Case study 5

Queensland University of Technology (QUT) *The Student Success Program (SSP)*

Context and purpose

The SSP is a University-wide student engagement and retention initiative that focuses on the early identification of students who may be at-risk of disengaging from their studies or university providing support before they lose confidence, stop participating, fail assessment or leave. The SSP provides proactive, purposeful advice and referrals to these students. The overall purpose of SSP is to increase student engagement and mitigate the issues related to failure and therefore prevent unnecessary attrition. The SSP monitors all students in a cohort, however, it is particularly focused on the experiences of students from under-represented social groups and those students for whom completion of a university course presents more challenges.

Key institutional references

QUT First Year Experience and Retention Policy

http://www.mopp.qut.edu.au/C/C_06_02.jsp

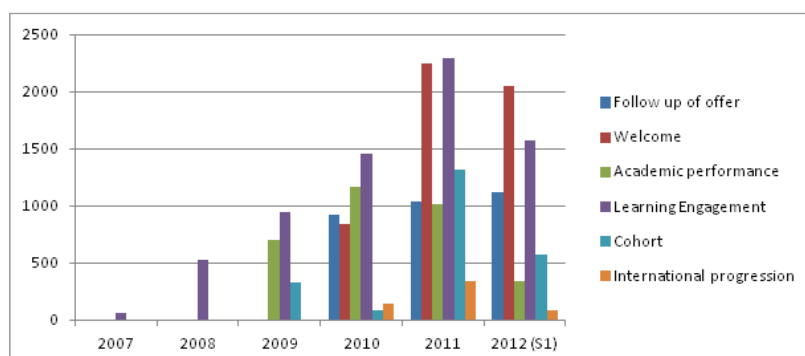
QUT Blueprint 3 2011–2016

http://cms.qut.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0013/71113/qut-blueprint-2011.pdf

Scale of the activity

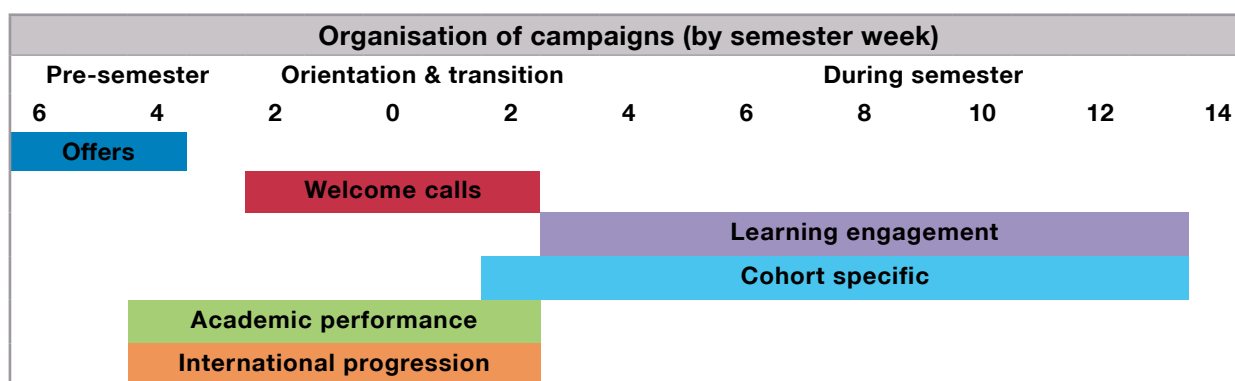
The SSP emerged from early work in one faculty during 2004-2005 and a series of feasibility and pilot studies of increasing scope and reach which were funded by internal learning and teaching grants during 2006–2008. By 2009 the SSP was contacting students in all QUT faculties and has continued to grow in scale since then.

The scale of the activity has grown steadily since 2008 as represented in the figure below.



Organisational process

The SSP is organised around a series of campaigns – all of which have specific objectives – related to the student life cycle.



Although originally implemented to support first year commencing students it is now applied to identify students at all stages of their undergraduate program. Drawing on the principles of the SSP, a similar intervention initiative exists for research students at key candidature milestones. Each campaign is subsequently broken down into several sub-campaigns which are operationalised through a series of call lists. A summary of the campaigns, objectives, sub-campaigns and examples of ‘at-risk’ indicators are provided on the following page.

Campaign	Sub-campaigns	Objectives	Examples of 'at-risk' indicators
Follow up of offers When: 48 hours post offer of a place, prior to semester (approx weeks -6 to -4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Late to accept. Course specific (e.g. engineering). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide advice about university processes and support. To assist with administrative issues related to enrolment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delay in accepting offer Cohorts under-represented in HE. Under-represented in course (e.g. female applicants for engineering).
Welcome calls Weeks -1 to 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students who do not attend faculty or other 'required' orientation events. Welcome and welcome back to students from specific cohorts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support commencing students by providing university and course specific information and advice. To emphasise and promote behaviours related to success for commencing cohorts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absent from key orientation events. Member of known 'at-risk' cohort (e.g. rural students). Students without 'assumed knowledge'.
Learning engagement (Weeks 2–13 of semester)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students in particular courses/programs. Students enrolled in particular units. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To improve persistence and achievement of at-risk students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absence from classes. Low or very high levels of on-line activity (LMS). Failure to submit or failure in progressive assessment items. Students in 'at-risk' courses (e.g. external courses).
Cohort-specific (Weeks 2–13 of semester)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative campaigns. Secondary school students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To reduce enrolment issues caused by administrative errors. To support school students undertaking a unit of study while simultaneously finishing senior. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring over-enrolled with a low GPA. Enrolled without unit activity. Being a secondary school student.
Academic performance (weeks -4 to 2 and 5–6 of semester)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First year at-risk students. First year students 'on-probation'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To reduce the number of 'at-risk' students progressing to probation. To reduce the number of the 'on probation' students being excluded. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grade point average (GPA) < 4 in first and second semester. Meeting the criteria for on-probation.
International student progression (weeks -4 to 2 and 5–6 of semester)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All international students identified as 'at-risk' or 'on-probation'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To monitor international student progression (ESOS requirement). To provide advice, support and referral to services for International students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International students with GPA < 4 in first or second semester. International students who meet the criteria for probation.

Student Support Services which is responsible for organising orientation and other student life events and the provision of professional services such as counselling, careers, health services are key partners in the SSP, however, most functional areas of the university are involved in aspects of the SSP, including Student Business Services (student administration), faculty student support and student affairs, course and subject coordinators, international student services, academic skills advisers, language learning advisers.

The SSP is supported by a custom built contact management system – called *Outreach* which supports operations, evaluation and reporting of outcomes.

Outcomes and evaluation

The SSP is now an integral retention strategy at QUT that operates in a federated model between centrally provided services and in all QUT faculties and most undergraduate courses. Evidence of the impact of the SSP on student engagement and retention for various campaigns includes:

- **Follow up of offers:** An increase in acceptances by +1.8% and a corresponding decrease in rejected, lapsed and no responses. 74% of students who had not yet accepted a QUT offer and were successfully contacted by the SSP subsequently accepted their offer. 25% of students, who had not accepted an offer and reported to the SSP that they were undecided, subsequently accepted a QUT offer. Of the students who were not able to be contacted only 41% accepted a QUT offer.
- **Learning engagement:** An average difference in unit persistence (+10%) and achievement (+1 point on the 7 point scale) for students successfully contacted during the semester between 2008 and 2010.
- **Learning engagement:** A difference in student retention of +13%, in 2009 and 2010 of at-risk students successfully contacted in 2008 and 2009 respectively.
- **Academic performance:** A +10.6% difference in achievement and a +12% increase in enrolment status of students with a GPA less than 4 and successfully contacted at the end of semester.
- **The total impact** of the SSP intervention on student re-enrolment (across all campaigns) in 2011 was +4.8%. Analysis of the student data shows that 227 more students who were at-risk and successfully contacted by the SSP re-enrolled in the following semester (semester 2, 2011 or semester 1, 2012), compared with those students who were at-risk and not able to be contacted.
- **The estimated retained income** through the retention of an additional 227⁹ students is \$3,745,000 for every remaining year of their enrolment.

SSP was recognised at the **QUT 2012 Vice-Chancellor's Awards for Excellence**. The Program took out a team award (Mixed – Professional and Academic) and was nominated for the following areas: Learning and teaching; Partnerships and engagement; Innovative and creative practice; and Leadership.

SSP was awarded with an **Australian Award for University Teaching Citations for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning** in September 2012. Announced by Australia's Minister for Tertiary Education, Senator Chris Evans, the Program was awarded for '... a sustained commitment to proactively delivering tailored advice and referral to students so that they are empowered to reach their individual academic goals'.

In November 2012, the SSP was awarded with an **Award for Programs that Enhance Learning** in the *2012 Australian Awards for University Teaching*. Announced by Senator Chris Evans, the Minister commented that the Program '... has set a benchmark for ongoing learning and teaching activities in Australian higher education institutions and the dedication of your team will continue to significantly impact student learning.'

Student Success Program website

<http://www.intranet.qut.edu.au/teaching/support-and-development/student-success-and-retention/student-success-program>

⁹ Estimated average total income \$16,500 per student.

Critical success factors

These include:

- Key partnerships with institutional stakeholders
- Support and engagement of senior officers
- Philosophical basis that ensures operations are not based on a deficit model
- On-going maintenance and support of IT team
- Acceptance and buy-in of academic staff
- Institutional take up for scale and reach
- Transparency of activities to students.

Challenges

- Maintaining relationships with key stakeholders
- The ad-hoc nature of some sub-campaigns
- Timely reporting to meet the range of audience needs.

Contacts and key staff

- Professor Karen Nelson, Director Student Success & Retention
- Ms Carole Quinn, Manager Student Success Program
- Ms Jo Bennett, Lecturer and FYE & Retention Coordinator.

Key resources

- Scripts, email templates for contact and follow-up contact
- Customised contact management system (Outreach)
- Blackboard information on SSP
- PowerPoint information slides in lectures
- Training programs for SSAs
- Action plan for the student
- Service Agreement with Academic
- Report – to Unit Coordinator.

Dissemination

Duncan, M. & Nelson, K. (2008, July). The Student Success Project: Helping students at-risk of failing or leaving a unit - a work in progress. In *Proceedings of 11th Pacific Rim First Year in Higher Education Conference, An Apple for the Learner: Celebrating the First Year Experience*. Retrieved from <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/28396/1/28396.pdf>

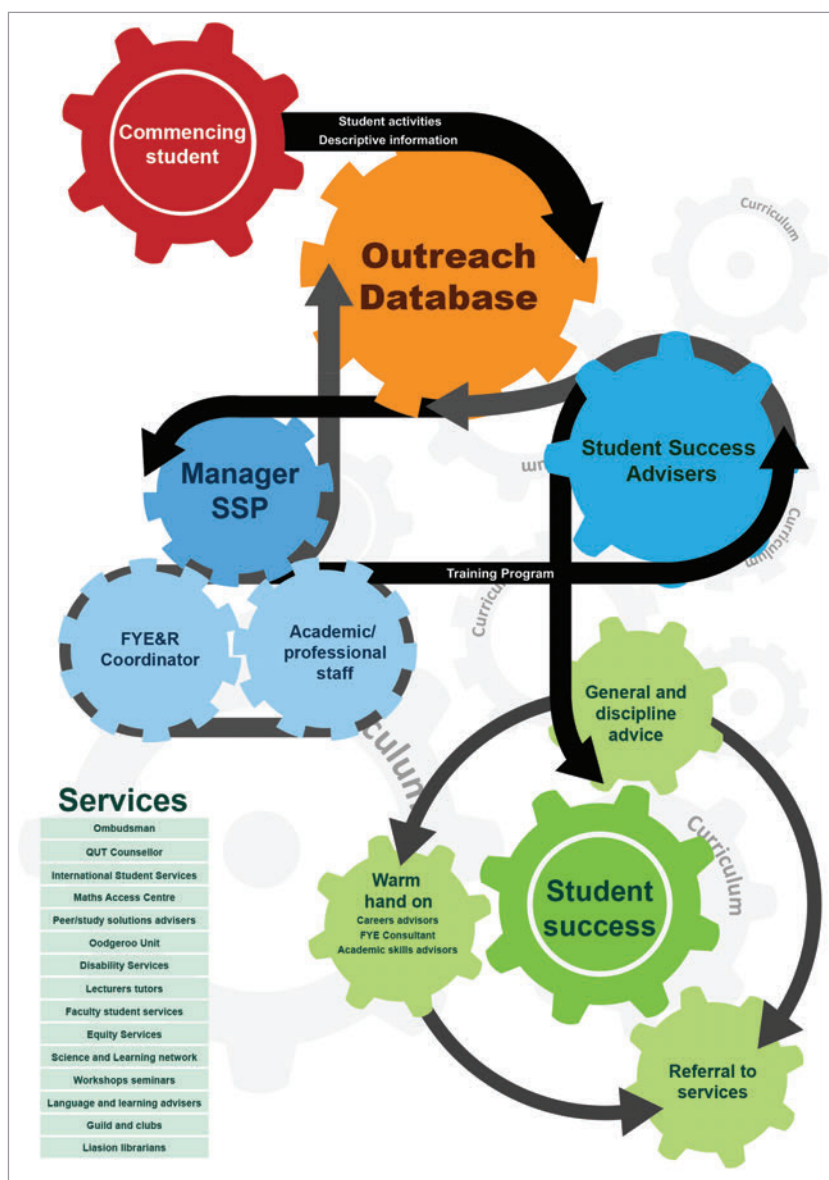
Quinn, C., Bennett, J., Clarke, J. & Nelson, K. (2012, June). The evolution of QUT's Student Success Program: 20,000 students later. In *15th International First Year in Higher Education Conference*, Brisbane, QLD. Retrieved from http://www.fyhe.com.au/past_papers/papers12/Papers/15A.pdf

Quinn, C., Bennett, J., Humphreys, J., Nelson, K. & Clarke, J. (2011, June/July). Students as advisors in an intervention program for at-risk students : The QUT experience. In *14th Pacific Rim First Year in Higher Education Conference: Design for Student Success*. Retrieved from http://fyhe.com.au/past_papers/papers11/FYHE-2011/content/pdf/15E.pdf

Marrington, A., Nelson, K., & Clarke, J. (2010, June). An economic case for systematic student monitoring and intervention in the first year in higher education. In *Proceedings of 13th Pacific Rim First Year in Higher Education Conference, Aspiration, Access, Achievement*. Retrieved from http://fyhe.com.au/past_papers/papers10/content/pdf/6D.pdf

Nelson, K., Duncan, M., & Clarke, J. (2009) Student success: The identification and support of first year university students at risk of attrition. *Studies in Learning, Evaluation, Innovation and Development*, 6(1). 1–15. Retrieved from <http://sleid.cqu.edu.au/viewissue.php?id=19>

Nelson, Karen J., Quinn, Carole, Marrington, Andrew, & Clarke, John A. (2012). Good practice for enhancing the engagement and success of commencing students. *Higher Education*. 63(1), 83–96. doi:10.1007/s10734-011-9426-y



Artefact E

Type: Training

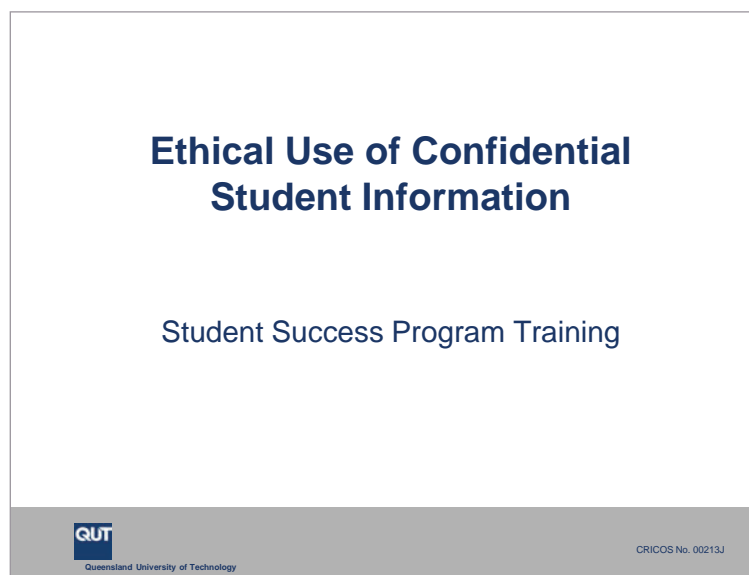
Student Success Program (SSP) – Ethical Use of Student information

A critical inclusion in the training activities of the Student Success Advisors (SSA) is the incorporation of information about the ethical use of confidential student information.

In addition to complying with the QUT Code of Conduct (MOPP B/8.1), Student Success Advisors must comply with this code of conduct for dealing with personal information. SSA's have access to confidential personal information about QUT students obtained from information systems, personal communications with QUT staff or students and discussions within the Student Success Program team. This information includes:

- any information disclosed to them by a QUT student during a telephone call or in an email in their role as a Student Success Advisor
- any information about QUT staff or students (past or present) to which they have access through QUT Virtual, and
- any information about QUT students to which they have access through the Outreach Contact Management System.

The training involves a PowerPoint presentation and group discussion on the ethical use of student information specific to QUT's Manual of Policies and Procedures (MOPP) and SSAs receive this training prior to their first contact with students. Additionally, and as part of their employment with SSP, new Advisors must sign a 'Student Success Advisor Code of Conduct for Dealing with Personal Information'.



Alignment to the Social Justice Principles

This particular resource aligns with the principle of *Rights* whereby the program ensures the rights of the student and complies with a mandated code of conduct within the institution.

To access both the PowerPoint presentation and the SSA Code of Conduct contract, plus other artefacts associated with SSP, please visit https://safeguardingstudentlearning.net/?page_id=442

Institutional profile*

The Queensland University of Technology (QUT) is an Australian public university that was established in 1882, becoming a university in 1988. The university has three main campuses in South East Queensland: Garden's Point and Kelvin Grove (Brisbane) and Caboolture.

Total student enrolment	40,802
Undergraduate	30,736
Postgraduate	9,026
Domestic+	83.7%
International+	16.3%
Student demographics	
Indigenous	1% this is average compared to other institutions
Regional/remote students+	11.03%
Low SES+#	11.01%
Non-English speaking background+	2.55%
Mature age (over 25 years) undergraduates	21% this is average compared to other institutions
Student study options	
Undergraduate part-time	17% this is average compared to other institutions
Undergraduate external or mixed mode	4% this is average compared to other institutions
Postgraduate part-time	54% this is low compared to other institutions
Postgraduate external or mixed mode	24% this is low compared to other institutions
Student entry details	
School-leavers	52% this is average compared to other institutions
Prior TAFE credits	6% this is low compared to other institutions
International undergraduates	3,896 this is a big number compared to other institutions
International postgraduates	2,464 this is a big number compared to other institutions

*Except for items marked with '+' all profile information is from The Good Universities Guide (2012). Retrieved from <http://gooduniguide.com.au/ratings/compare/QUT?studyType=UG&state=QLD&actionSearch=Search>

+This profile information is from the Australian Government website MyUniversity with data collected for the 2011 year. QUT information is retrieved from <http://www.myuniversity.gov.au/Queensland-University-of-Technology/Statistics/3042>

#Currently in Australia the SES of higher education students is determined by the geographic area or postcode of the student's home. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) Index of Education and Occupation (IEO) is used to rank postcodes. The postcodes that comprise the bottom 25% of the population aged between 15 to 64 years at the date of the latest census, based on this ranking, are considered low SES postcodes. Students who have home locations in these low SES postcodes are counted as 'low SES' students.

Source: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (2009). *Measuring the Socio-economic Status of Higher Education Students*. Discussion Paper. Retrieved from http://www.innovation.gov.au/HigherEducation/Documents/LowSES_Discussionpaper.rtf

Case study 6

RMIT University *Student Success Program*

Context and purpose

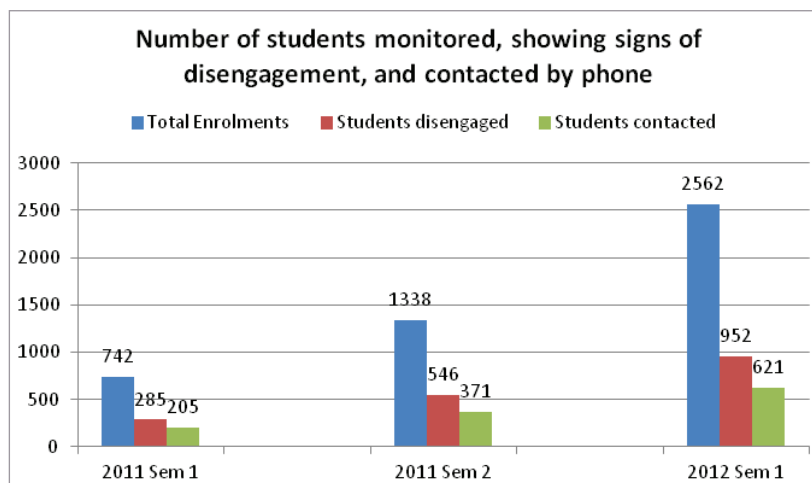
RMIT's Student Success Program takes an early, proactive approach to retention by contacting students before they disengage from their study. Specifically, the Student Success Program monitors first year students' engagement and performance in selected courses, and contacts those students showing early signs of disengagement or poor performance. The program model is a 'third generation', whole-of-institution approach to student engagement and learning, whereby students' success and retention in their first year is increased.

Scale of the activity

The Student Success Program began with a small pilot project in three Schools – Global Studies, Social Science and Planning (GSSSP, now GUSS); School of Electrical and Computer Engineering (SECE); and Business TAFE – at the beginning of 2011. Courses for monitoring are selected as they are part of the common core architecture for the programs with relatively strong enrolments of students from low SES backgrounds.

During 2011, the Student Success Program monitored over 2000 students in 12 courses, from all Colleges. Overall 831 students (40%) were identified as showing signs of disengagement or poor performance; the Student Success Program contacted 576 (69%) by phone.

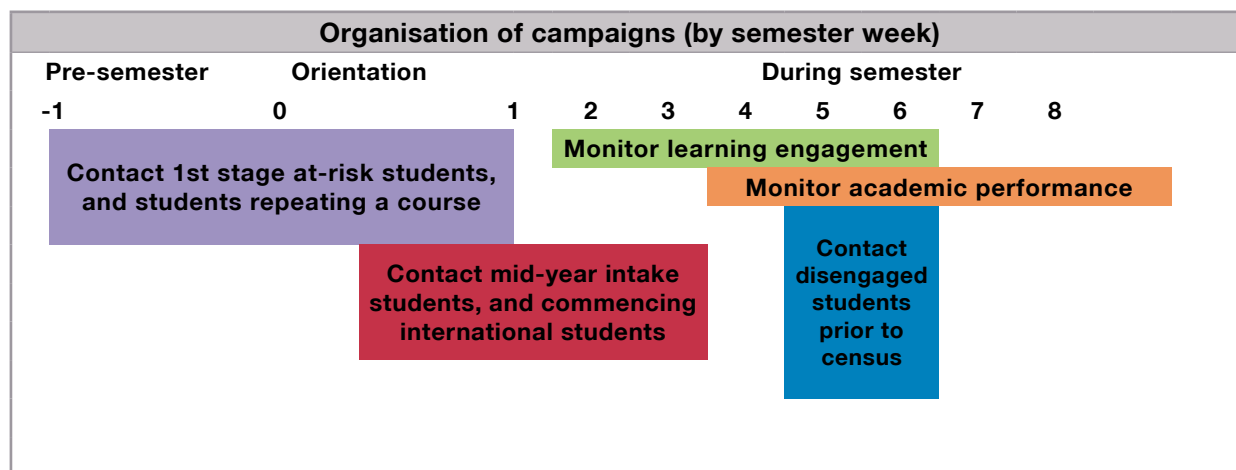
In semester 1, 2012, 2,562 were monitored in eight courses, with 952 (37%) showing signs of disengagement or poor performance; the Student Success Program successfully contacted 621 (66%) of these students by phone or text message.



Organisational process

RMIT’s Student Success Program takes a ‘whole-of-person’ approach to student success, as students’ personal, social and academic circumstances impact on their learning engagement and performance. Students benefit from a range of personal and academic supports. Specifically, the Program takes a particular interest in the performance and retention of students from low socio-economic status (low SES) backgrounds. Together with the College of Business ‘Early Intervention for Student Success’, the two programs support the Australian Government’s agenda of increasing the participation of students from low SES backgrounds in Higher Education across all three Colleges. The Student Success Program currently partners with Schools within RMIT and monitors particular courses from programs with high numbers of students from low SES backgrounds.¹⁰

A Typical Student Success Program through the semester



Signs of students’ disengagement or poor performance are identified by monitoring their Blackboard use, attendance in class, submission of work, and reviewing assessment results. Attempts are made by a Student Success Contact Officer (SSCO) to contact by phone all students at risk of disengagement. SSCOs are senior students in each discipline selected on their academic competence and strong interpersonal skills. They receive extensive training and supervision about the supports and resources available to students at RMIT. SSCOs provide advice, information, clarity, encouragement, and referrals to support services to strengthen specific learning domains as required utilising Lizzio’s

¹⁰ Low SES enrolments were drawn from the Performance Annual Review (PAR) data for the years 2008–2011.

Five Senses of Success model (2006)¹¹ to assess students' capacity to engage and succeed in their learning at RMIT (these five senses are addressed below according to RMIT's Student Success Program). This peer-to-peer contact also provides peer modelling for success, and fosters a sense of belonging to the University community.

After each phone call, a summary of the steps that were identified with the student to address their difficulty is written up as a Plan of Action and emailed to the student. Plans of Action include contact details and access points to administrative and student support service areas, and what the student can expect when they contact these areas. Where student administration steps are required, the Plan explains these and attaches any relevant forms. Students overwhelmingly reported that they appreciated being contacted by Student Success Program and being provided with advice when they were having difficulties. Not all students are successfully reached by phone, in which case an email is sent to them with details of relevant resources and supports.

Five Senses of Success – the Student Success Program

The Student Success Program increases the sense of 'Connectedness' by:

- employing senior students with previous leadership experience who model successful attitudes and learning practices
- encouraging students to connect with others by joining in organised student activities
- normalising and encouraging students to engage with their teaching staff.

I feel this program instils a sense of belonging in new students; being contacted by RMIT and more specifically fellow students of RMIT, and establishing a support avenue for them.

(Student Success Contact Officer, 2012)

The Student Success Program develops a student's sense of 'Purpose' by:

- connecting them with senior students in their discipline
- strengthening the connection between their study and their vocational direction
- referring them to the Careers Service for advice.

The Student Success Program increases a student's sense of 'Capability' by:

- providing effective learning strategies
- referring students to learning supports provided by their School and Student Services
- clarifying with students what is expected of them to succeed at RMIT.

Hello: I want to meet one from student success team to help me understand some issues regarding how to study for the online test. It's my first time having this kind of test as I'm an international student.

(Student Success Contact Officer, 2012)

The Student Success Program improves a student's sense of 'Resourcefulness' by:

- showing where to find resources and support on campus and online
- showing how to 'navigate' their way through RMIT procedures
- advising on how to achieve a balance between study and other commitments.

Awesome, thanks Jennifer :) I just checked out the RMIT counselling service on the net and may give them a call soon. thanks again!

(Student feedback, 2012)

¹¹ Five domains contributing to student's capacity to engage and succeed in their learning: sense of connectedness; sense of purpose; sense of capability; sense of resourcefulness; sense of academic culture. Lizzio, A. (2006). Designing an orientation and transition strategy for commencing students. A conceptual summary of research and practice. Griffith University: First Year Experience Project. Retrieved from http://www.griffith.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/51875/Alfs-5-Senors-Paper-FYE-Project,-2006.pdf

The Student Success Program enhances a sense of 'Academic Culture' by:

- enlisting peers to tell students 'how things are done' at RMIT and in their School
- communicating messages that increase students' identity as an independent learner in Higher Education.

As a Contact Officer within the SSP, I've enjoyed communicating with students and working together with them to find solutions to their problems and learning more about how to ensure success at University.

(Student Success Contact Officer, 2012)

Outcomes

Retention was increased

Students who were contacted by the Student Success Program in 2011 were retained at a rate of 64.8%. Non-contacted students were retained at a rate of 57.8%. This additional 7% – or 40 students – being retained in their programs, is estimated to retain \$1,135,000 (based on \$20K per student per year EFTSL, and after taking out costs for the Student Success Program) of projected student funding revenue (McMillan, 2005).¹²

Persistence was increased

There was a significant association between students being contacted by the Student Success Program and them persisting to attempt their final assessment in the course. 28% of students *not* contacted did not submit their final assessment, whereas only 21% of students who *were* contacted did not submit their final assessment for the semester.

Performance was increased

The Student Success Program has, through increasingly tailored interventions for student cohorts in 2012, increased the rates at which contacted students pass their course. The Student Success Program successfully improves student outcomes when:

1. Student cohorts known to be at risk of poor academic outcomes are provided with academic supports and resources by week one of semester.
2. Specific cohorts of students receive a 'welcome call' to facilitate their transition and sense of belonging at RMIT.
3. In addition to student services referrals, specific academic supports are provided at the time of intervention.
4. One trigger is a piece of assessment which provides formative feedback and is due no later than week 3.
5. Significant deficits in academic literacies are identified early and referred on for continuous skills development.
6. Student engagement in class and online is monitored for the first five weeks of semester.
7. The provision of information to the Student Success Program regarding student information, their engagement and performance is well supported by the use of administrative and online learning systems.

¹² 58% of student attrition occurs in the first year of study, the remaining 42% occurs during the second year. McMillan, J. (2005). Course change and attrition from higher education. *LSAY Research Reports*. Longitudinal surveys of Australian youth research report; n.39. Retrieved from Australian Council for Educational Research website http://research.acer.edu.au/lsay_research/43

Performance of low SES background students

In the courses monitored, students from low SES backgrounds generally had comparable results to their peers. In the courses where low SES background students' average score was lower than their peers, the Student Success Program, Study and Learning Centre, and the Schools addressed this issue in 2012 by proactively providing additional learning resources.

A regression analysis of student cohorts revealed three groups of students who are particularly at risk of poor outcomes: those who reported having chosen the wrong course or program; midyear intake students; and students already at formal academic risk.

At my most distressed, I couldn't help myself. The Student Success Team helped me get through. Much appreciated.

(Student feedback, 2011)

We were also able to help some of the struggling students who felt regenerated after being contacted and wanted a second chance.

(Academic staff feedback, 2011)

Critical success factors

These include:

- strong cooperative partnerships amongst academic and professional staff working in the Student Success Program
- comprehensive training of Student Success Contact Officers.

Challenges

Now that the SSP has succeeded in identifying the student cohorts for intervention, established partnerships with school and program staff, and developed protocols to contact students, the challenges it faces are concerned with the expansion of the program into an Institution wide initiative. The challenges then are to make the initiative 'generalisable', 'sustainable' and 'measurable' across increased undergraduate first year programs.

Other challenges identified include:

- Moving to a commercial database that will assist in the management and reporting of the increasing volume of data
- Identifying suitable premises from which to operate the call centre
- Move the intervention design towards a unified approach for all courses being monitored
- Ensuring protocols are established that will provide data on student engagement and performance within set timeframes
- Accessing student demographic data that is provided on enrolment up to one month before semester commences
- Recruiting SSCOs from the diverse range of discipline areas that RMIT offers
- Coordinating its activities with an increasing number of embedded academic supports (e.g. PASS, English language development)
- Identifying additional student cohorts who are at risk of disengagement or failure
- Publishing the program's initiatives and findings to a wider audience of both academic and professional staff
- Ensure the program's communication strategies remain current and relevant to students
- Track an increasingly large numbers of student outcomes including course results and retention.

Future directions

In the light of the experience so far, the goal now is to achieve a strategic, university-wide, consistent approach to frontloading retention efforts via a coherent, consistent, coordinated and high quality orientation and transition experience for all students. In 2013 the Dean of Students and the Dean of Learning and Teaching will collaborate to lead a body of work on the first year experience – both within the curriculum and the co-curriculum at RMIT. This work will reference and build on RMIT's Transition principles as well as the large body of work done by Queensland University of Technology and other universities internationally on the First Year Experience. Key to the expansion of retention strategies such as the Student Success Program to all first year courses will be the establishment of business analytics to support data collection, systemic response, and reporting processes.

Contacts

- Mr Andrew Brown, Senior Program Coordinator, Student Services Group
- Dr Kitty Vivekananda, Assistant Director, Student Services Group.

Key resources

- Contracts with RMIT Schools stating the outcomes that the intervention is designed to bring about
- Training resources for SSCOs – e.g. You Tube, role playing activities, guest speakers
- Phone/Email/SMS scripts to students.

Artefact F

Type: Engagement with institution and staff Student Success Program Contract with Schools

RMIT's Student Success Program enters into 'contracts' with the various schools the Program is active in at a particular time. The contracts with schools state the outcomes that the intervention is designed to bring about providing clarity around expectations for both academic and professional staff supporting students.

The contract is typically aimed at the Course Coordinator (lecturer) and is negotiated face-to-face with and then documented by the Student Success Program co-ordinator for circulation. Other professional staff key to the intervention are also included in the negotiations.

A portion of a contract is presented below:

In conjunction with the School of XXX, the SSP aims to:

1. Identify students with language difficulties and connect them to the S&LC, and their resources.
2. Identify students requiring additional instruction to meet the academic requirements of the course and connect them with the S&LC, and their resources.
3. Ensure that students repeating the course are aware of what they need to do to be successful, and what supports are available to help them do this.

Round 0: Supporting students repeating the course		
Nominated outcomes	Identification	Intervention
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students will know what they are required to do so be successful in the course this year. 2. The students will be orientated to the new XX Resource in the S&LC Learning Lab. 	<p>The SSP will download the course enrolment list on the Thursday 16th Feb.</p> <p>Students who are repeating the course will be identified.</p> <p>Students repeating the course may or may not be at First Stage At Risk of Unsatisfactory Progress.</p> <p>The list will be forwarded to XX prior to contact for approval and/or comment.</p>	<p>The identified students are contacted by phone commencing Monday 20th Feb</p> <p>The conversation will identify with the student where changes and/or improvements are required for them to be successful in the course this year.</p> <p>Where students are at First Stage At Risk, confirmation that they have received their APIP, and that they understand the document will be sought.</p> <p>If they have not attended their APIP interview, the conversation will state the urgency to address any issues to avoid moving to second stage At Risk.</p>

Alignment to the Social Justice Principles

This resource illustrates both the *Equity* and the *Rights* principles.

To access a copy of this resource, plus other artefacts associated with RMIT's Student Success Program, please visit https://safeguardingstudentlearning.net/?page_id=445

Institutional profile*

RMIT University (RMIT) is an Australian public university that was established in 1887, becoming a university in 1992. RMIT has three main campuses around Melbourne, Victoria with two offshore campuses in Vietnam.

Total student enrolment	49,337
Undergraduate	37,586
Postgraduate	11,441 this is a high number compared to other institutions
Domestic+	49.3%
International+	51.7%
Student demographics	
Indigenous	0.43% this is low compared to other institutions
Regional/remote students+	10.39%
Low SES+#	15.13%
Non-English speaking background+	6.66%
Mature age (over 25 years) undergraduates	18% this is average compared to other institutions
Student study options	
Undergraduate part-time	19% this is average compared to other institutions
Undergraduate external or mixed mode	2% this is low compared to other institutions
Postgraduate part-time	48% this is low compared to other institutions
Postgraduate external or mixed mode	10% this is low compared to other institutions
Student entry details	
School-leavers	56% this is high compared to other institutions
Prior TAFE credits	20% this is very high compared to other institutions
International undergraduates	20,278 this is a very big number compared to other institutions
International postgraduates	4,292 this is a very big number compared to other institutions

*Except for items marked with '+' all profile information is from The Good Universities Guide (2012). Retrieved from <http://gooduniguide.com.au/ratings/compare/RMIT?studyType=UG&state=VIC&actionSearch=Search>

+This profile information is from the Australian Government website MyUniversity with data collected for the 2011 year. RMIT information is retrieved from <http://www.myuniversity.gov.au/RMIT-University/Statistics/3034>

#Currently in Australia the SES of higher education students is determined by the geographic area or postcode of the student's home. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) Index of Education and Occupation (IEO) is used to rank postcodes. The postcodes that comprise the bottom 25% of the population aged between 15 to 64 years at the date of the latest census, based on this ranking, are considered low SES postcodes. Students who have home locations in these low SES postcodes are counted as 'low SES' students.

Source: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (2009). *Measuring the Socio-economic Status of Higher Education Students*. Discussion Paper. Retrieved from http://www.innovation.gov.au/HigherEducation/Documents/LowSES_Discussionpaper.rtf

Case study 7

University of New England (UNE) *Early Alert Program*

Context and purpose

The University of New England's (UNE) Early Alert Program is the foundation of student engagement and retention activities at UNE. Around 70 per cent of UNE's students are enrolled externally, 40% of students overall come from rural and remote locations and 4% are from isolated areas. In total, more than 50% of UNE students identify as part of low socio-economic groups. Monitoring student learning engagement, therefore, requires a proactive approach to create a sense of community amongst the dispersed students and staff.

Early Alert uses multiple data sources to highlight students who may be at risk of attrition supporting these students in a case-by-case managed basis to actively improve retention at the institution. A key purpose of this program is that targeted interventions with students will positively highlight the student experience and promote attitudes of perseverance amongst identified students.

Scale of the activity

The Early Alert Program was developed by the Student Support Team within the institution's Student Centre. Early Alert commenced in March 2011 and followed the successful Emoticons¹³ identification activity embedded in the online UNE student portal trialled in 2008. The emoticons activity allowed students to post emoticons along with comments to summarise their emotional reaction to an individual unit or subject of study. In 2010 UNE developed and trialled an Automated Wellness Engine (AWE) built by Atlis Consulting.

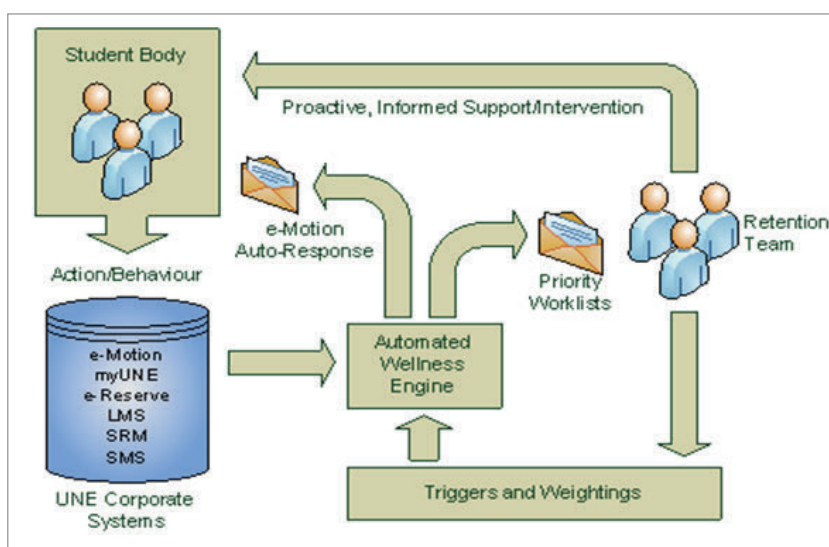
¹³ Emoticons are a pictorial representation of a facial expression using punctuation marks and letters, usually written to express a person's mood (Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emoticon>). UNE uses coloured pictorial representation of emoticons: Happy, Neutral, Unhappy, Very Unhappy.

Organisational process

Early Alert uses contemporary technology to collate data and identify students who may be at risk of disengagement and attrition. AWE is a purpose-built system based on a data warehouse that extracts student-related information from eight separate UNE systems and analyses this data against 34 different triggers representing different behaviours which the institution deems as indicating the student may be at risk. Part of the data is self-reported - such as emoticons in the MyUNE portal, a Unit Discontinuation Poll and an interactive online feedback mechanism presented in a word cloud known as *The Vibe*.¹⁴ Other data comes from reported activity from unit and subject co-ordinators.

The Student Support Team consists of three staff members who actively monitor data 'wellness' reports. The team make contact with students via phone, email and/or social media tools and the student is given the option of opting in or out of further support. Communication with students is based on a suite of different media but all are based on the principle of 'closing the feedback loop'.

Information offered by students through the Insider's Guide blog, Facebook, Twitter or the Vibe provide the theme for daily communication, either directly to individual students or collectively to the wider student population. Communication is timely, personalised and responsive to the identified student need. A Daily Wellness Report from AWE identifies individual students potentially at risk and the team send the student an email offering support. This provides the invitation to the student to access case management. Subsequent individual contact is delivered via the student's preferred medium. A Weekly Wellness Report identifies any trends across schools or units allowing the team to give feedback to a particular school in a timely manner.



Outcomes and evaluation

- In 2009-10 the AWE project, while in its early stages, received an **Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) Commendation** because it was *considered to be potentially transferable and to be of benefit to other organisational settings (AUQA 2009)*.¹⁵ Specifically AUQA commended UNE's Retention Project (Early Alert), and the use of the e-Motion indicators, for early intervention with students who may be at risk of disengagement and attrition. This recognition continued in 2011 by:

¹⁴ A swirling word cloud that allows students to collectively share their thoughts about their studies, thereby minimising the isolation often experienced by distributed communities of learners — please see 'Artefacts' for more information and a detailed representation.

¹⁵ Australian Universities Quality Agency, Report of an Audit of the University of New England (2009). Section 4.4.4 Retention Report.

- **Australian Learning and Teaching Council Citation** (one of six received by UNE in 2011) recognises the value of this innovative program.
- **Australian Learning and Teaching Award – Award for Programs that Enhance Learning – Recipient 2011** recognised the significance of this program in supporting students.
- In 2012 **Campus Review Awards ‘Highly Commended’ for Innovation in Higher Education**. The citation states: *‘The UNE Early Alert Innovation is a highly creative use of available social media and other technologies, using student-relevant communication formats and tools such as emoticons and vibe, to help at risk students. This pastoral care system uses an amazingly large number of indicators allowing students to self report their satisfaction or happiness) levels. Every student who reports an unhappy or very unhappy is contacted personally within 24 hours’.*
- Evaluation of the success of this model is measured from a progression perspective and a student engagement perspective. Unit attrition is the core measure of success from a progression perspective and in each teaching period since this model has been deployed, unit attrition for case managed students has been significantly lower than for the general student population. Student engagement with the model is measured by direct student feedback. Each individual case management period is evaluated by student feedback.

Critical success factors

- Relationships with all key student support staff such as first year advisors in faculties
- The student experience is made visible via social media tools
- The dynamic feedback and monitoring of the student experience provides immediate opportunities for intervention.

Challenges

- Acceptance of the use of ‘social media’ as a legitimate platform for student learning engagement
- Support for a centralised approach to identification of student need
- Ability to create a sense of community for distributed learners
- Acceptance of the role of data intelligence to drive student support activities.

Websites

<http://blog.une.edu.au/studentexperience/2011/03/22/early-alert-new-student-support-tool-details-how-it-works>

<http://blog.une.edu.au/earlyalertune/2012/09/22/hello-world>

Contact

Ms Rhonda Leece, Associate Director Student Services.

Key resources

- Student Email generated by Early Alert
- Early Alert – case study video
- Insiders’ Guide @ UNE (<http://blog.une.edu.au/studentexperience>)
- The Vibe – see <http://blog.une.edu.au/studentexperience/2010/03/31/student-support-the-vibe-new-feedback-tool-in-myune>
- Emoticons – see <http://blog.une.edu.au/studentexperience/2010/10/08/feedback-why-its-important-whos-listening-its-between-you-and-us>
- Early Alert mobile app.

Dissemination

The Early Alert team have received requests to present and or collaborate from Edith Cowan University, University of Sydney, Macquarie University, University of Technology Sydney, Monash University, Victoria University, the University of Technology Sydney, Queensland University of Technology, Newcastle University and Auckland University of Technology. These institutions have commented that UNE is at the forefront of this type MSLE initiative and they are seeking to replicate aspects of this model within their own institutions.

Leece, R. (2012, June). *Using technological solutions to create a sense of community for the distributed learner in higher education: implications for student-institutional engagement and retention*. Presented at the 15th International First Year in Higher Education Conference. Retrieved from <http://fyhe.com.au/conference-2013/past-papers>



Alignment to the Social Justice Principles

This resource exemplifies the social justice principles *Equity*, *Access* and particularly *Self-determination* whereby the support is determined by the key themes expressed via the Vibe.

To access more information about The Vibe please visit https://safeguardingstudentlearning.net/?page_id=448

Institutional profile*

The University of New England (UNE) was the first public university to be established outside of an Australian capital city. UNE was first established in 1938 and became a university in 1954. The university has one campus in Armidale, New South Wales.

Total student enrolment	18,189
Undergraduate	11,484
Postgraduate	5,726
Domestic+	93%
International+	7%
Student demographics	
Indigenous	2% this is high compared to other institutions
Regional/remote students+	46.9%
Low SES+#	20.2%
Non-English speaking background+	0.8%
Mature age (over 25 years) undergraduates	59% this is high compared to other institutions
Student study options	
Undergraduate part-time	55% this is very high compared to other institutions
Undergraduate external or mixed mode	77% this is very high compared to other institutions
Postgraduate part-time	79% this is average compared to other institutions
Postgraduate external or mixed mode	89% this is high compared to other institutions
Student entry details	
School-leavers	7% this is low compared to other institutions
Prior TAFE credits	9% this is average compared to other institutions
International undergraduates	419 this is an average number compared to other institutions
International postgraduates	682 this is small number compared to other institutions

*Except for items marked with '+' all profile information is from the 2012 Good Universities Guide. Retrieved from <http://gooduniguide.com.au/ratings/compare/UNE?studyType=UG&state=NSW&actionSearch=Search>

+This profile information is from the Australian Government website MyUniversity with data collected for the 2011 year. UNE information is retrieved from <http://www.myuniversity.gov.au/University-of-New-England/Statistics/3039>

#Currently in Australia the SES of higher education students is determined by the geographic area or postcode of the student's home. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) Index of Education and Occupation (IEO) is used to rank postcodes. The postcodes that comprise the bottom 25% of the population aged between 15 to 64 years at the date of the latest census, based on this ranking, are considered low SES postcodes. Students who have home locations in these low SES postcodes are counted as 'low SES' students.

Source: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (2009). *Measuring the Socio-economic Status of Higher Education Students*. Discussion Paper. Retrieved from http://www.innovation.gov.au/HigherEducation/Documents/LowSES_Discussionpaper.rtf

Case study 8

University of South Australia (UniSA) *Enhancing Student Academic Potential (ESAP)*

Context and purpose

The Enhancing Student Academic Potential (ESAP) program is a proactive student retention initiative. It is currently in trial mode and will be evaluated in the final quarter of 2012. It is modelled on the Queensland university of Technology's (QUT) *Student Success Program (SSP)* and shares many of its characteristics, such as: identifying students whose behaviour might classify them as being at risk of disengagement; courses and course owners as conduits and partners in the intervention; risk identified via early assignment results or attendance, call centre intervention campaigns personed by experienced students, support and referral as intrinsic goals, success and retention as key extrinsic goals.

Scale of the activity

The contact process of ESAP underwent an early trial aimed at approximately 1400 students across six courses in 2011. This was an extension of a very similar program in operation, the main difference in this trial was the use of experienced students rather than University staff to make the calls. It is currently monitoring 3,400 students across eight courses and expects to attempt to contact 700 students by the close of 2012.

Organisational process

The target of the initiative is currently commencing first year students in the first six weeks of their studies. These first six weeks of university study are known to be crucial to student success and retention. ESAP is designed as a proactive intervention to support students to succeed by removing any impediments (for example, psychological issues such as mistaken concepts about required course workload or physical barriers such as disabilities) to their engagement with their studies. ESAP also has a limited number of campaigns assisting students in the second half of the year. It is anticipated that if the program is successful it may be expanded to other years and particular cohorts.



ESAP is managed jointly by the University's Student and Academic Services unit (SAS) and the Learning and Teaching Units (LTU), with substantial support from the Information Strategy and Technology Service (ISTS). The manager of the ESAP program is the central figure in the day-to-day operation of the program and is the connection between the academic community and these key support units. In practice this means that the manager works with the course coordinators of selected courses to identify the triggers that will indicate at-risk behaviour and result in students being added to the call list. The manager also supervises the technical and interpersonal aspects of the call centre operation, feedback to stakeholders, process improvement and project evaluation.

In early 2012 a new Client Relationship Management system (CRM) became the key pivot for the call centre process. The CRM facilitates the operation of the call centre (by managing call lists, student information, and automating emails and referrals), stores the outcomes and interaction history with each student, and accommodates the data that will later be used for evaluation.

The students identified as at risk of disengagement are contacted by phone by trained, experienced students who are employed as staff (called Student Advisers) for this purpose. These Student Advisers are selected from a pool of 'Ubuddies', who are students trained as front line support for student enquiries. Once selected the students are given additional training in the interpersonal skills required to perform the contact work. The principle aim of the phone contact is to offer collegial support, advice scripted by the course coordinator and, where necessary, referral to Learning and Teaching Unit experts in the relevant area: Language and Learning, Counselling, Disability, Careers, or International Student Support Services. Where contact by phone cannot be made an email offering the course coordinator information and other relevant tips and information is sent.

Evaluation

2012 is considered a trial period. There will be an end of year evaluation and Senior Management Group approval will be necessary for full rollout of the Program in the future. Preliminary results indicate that ESAP is well received by students who perceive it as a helpful process and often change their study practices as a result of contact. Students contacted are 8% more likely to pass their courses than otherwise equivalent students that ESAP was unable to contact personally (but who did receive an email with Course Coordinator information and other advice). The retention rates between these groups do not differ, however.

Critical success factors

- The prior knowledge and experiences of the student advisors (their U-Buddy background)
- Peer to peer phone contact may assist in normalising the student experience and de-mystify the relationship between the student and their lecturer/tutor
- Stakeholder engagement
- The timing of the student contact e.g. around census date.

Challenges

ESAP is designed to help students with essentially extra-curricular issues and overarching aspects of their study (such as strategies for engaging with tests or essays). The program does not currently have a ready mechanism for assisting students with content specific issues and these can be quite common. In some courses extra support has been offered and so the students can be advised to attend these. In others courses there may be no available additional support and ESAP may only be able to refer students to their tutor.

The integration of the CRM and the development of various processes around it has been a significant undertaking and the time allocated to managing this significant technological integration has been considerable.

Contact

Dr Tim Rogers, Manager ESAP.

Key resources

- Recruitment materials (used to advertise Student Advisor role)
- Training materials for student advisors – scenarios and scripts
- UniSA Teaching & Learning Strategies
- Follow-up emails to contacted students.

Artefact H

Type: Training ESAP Support Scenarios

This two-person exercise allows the trainee Student Advisers to practice dealing with common scenarios. The idea is that the student advisers will get into a sufficiently deep conversation to uncover not just the surface issues but also the underlying, and often hidden, issues.

The trainee ESAP Student Advisers undertake this exercise after two three-hour sessions on interview skills that include non-judgemental questions, open questioning and various strategies for keeping the conversation going such as paraphrasing and summarising.



In total there are seven scenarios and each scenario has three cards: The 'Student's notes'; the 'Adviser's notes' and finally, the 'Elements of a solution' card.

Instructions

- Form pairs and pick one scenario. There are two roles in each scenario. One adviser trainee role plays the Student Adviser role; the other takes the role of the student. Each role has a written background description. These student and adviser role descriptions are on separate cards so that the advisers in a scenario will not be aware of the student's underlying issues.
- The 'student' and 'Student Adviser' now read their cards. When both are ready, the Adviser 'makes the call'. The aim is to engage the student and tap into the underlying issues the student has. When finished (should take no longer than 5 minutes) the trainees swap notes to see the other half of the role play back-story. They can then discuss the strategies the adviser took in the call and how they might be improved to get at more of the underlying story.
- Finally, they can look at the 'Elements of a Solution' card to see if that adds important considerations.

Alignment to the Social Justice Principles

This resource articulates both the principles of *Access* and *Equity*. The information transfer from advisor to student interprets university systems and protocols. Engagement with another student humanises the sense of confusion or isolation the student may be feeling at university.

To access more information regarding the training scenarios please visit:

https://safeguardingstudentlearning.net/?page_id=451

Institutional profile*

The University of South Australia (UniSA) is a public university established in 1991. The University has six campuses in South Australia including Magill, Wyhalla and Mawson Lakes with two campuses in Adelaide city.

Total student enrolment	36,853
Undergraduate	26,676
Postgraduate	8,850 this is a very high number compared to other institutions
Domestic+	70%
International+	30%
Student demographics	
Indigenous	1.5% this is high compared to other institutions
Regional/remote students+	16.76%
Low SES+#	20.33%
Non-English speaking background+	4.16%
Mature age (over 25 years) undergraduates	33% this is high compared to other institutions
Student study options	
Undergraduate part-time	26% this is high compared to other institutions
Undergraduate external or mixed mode	13% this is high compared to other institutions
Postgraduate part-time	53% this is low compared to other institutions
Postgraduate external or mixed mode	29% this is average compared to other institutions
Student entry details	
School-leavers	60% this is high compared to other institutions
Prior TAFE credits	10% this is average compared to other institutions
International undergraduates	8,645 this is a very big number compared to other institutions
International postgraduates	4,306 this is a very big number compared to other institutions

*Except for items marked with '+' all profile information is from The Good Universities Guide (2012). Retrieved from <http://gooduniguide.com.au/ratings/compare/UniSA?studyType=UG&state=SA&actionSearch=Search>

+This profile information is from the Australian Government website MyUniversity with data collected for the 2011 year. UniSA information is retrieved from <http://www.myuniversity.gov.au/The-University-of-Adelaide/Statistics/3010>

#Currently in Australia the SES of higher education students is determined by the geographic area or postcode of the student's home. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) Index of Education and Occupation (IEO) is used to rank postcodes. The postcodes that comprise the bottom 25% of the population aged between 15 to 64 years at the date of the latest census, based on this ranking, are considered low SES postcodes. Students who have home locations in these low SES postcodes are counted as 'low SES' students.

Source: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (2009). *Measuring the Socio-economic Status of Higher Education Students*. Discussion Paper. Retrieved from http://www.innovation.gov.au/HigherEducation/Documents/LowSES_Discussionpaper.rtf

Summary

Examples of good practice

Principle	Examples of good practice	Name of artefact
Self-determination	<p>The development of an 'Action Plan' with contacted students involves students and helps self-identification of learning and non-learning issues impacting on their studies and assists in the design of individually useful and relevant support activities.</p> <p>Feedback from student advisers is used to revise the MSLE program and Advisor training materials to incorporate issues or trends articulated in student responses to interventions so that both Advisors and students are involved in the design of the program.</p> <p>The MSLE program incorporates an evaluative mechanism (for example, a student survey) to gather feedback from the students on their contact experience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Readiness Survey (AUT) • Connect For Success – RightNow (ECU) • Early Alert – The Vibe (UNE)
Rights	<p>Actions plans for students are tailored to meet their individual circumstances by listening to their responses and issues. Information gathered in the program is confidential and there is explicit training and published guidelines for maintaining confidentiality.</p> <p>Programs adhere to ethical protocols around the use of student information.</p> <p>Training of advisors incorporates appropriate communication strategies – i.e. Culturally appropriate and inclusive practices, speaking with students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JumpSTART PowerPoint and handout (Curtin) • Student Success Program – Ethical Use of Information (QUT) • Student Success Program Advisor Code of Conduct (QUT) • Student Success Program Contract with Schools (RMIT) • Student Success Program Communication Strategies (RMIT) • Student Success Program Text Messages (RMIT)
Access	<p>The Program focuses on making connections to support engagement. The Program has strong relationships and/ or service agreements with support programs across the institution – such as mentoring, counselling and academic skills development programs.</p> <p>Training of advisors involves understanding the institutional support 'map' and services available to students both within and outside of the university.</p> <p>Training of advisors emphasises historical, social and economic barriers to access.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Readiness Survey (AUT) • FYE Group Supervision (AUT) • Student Success Team Role Playing Activity (CSU) • Student Success Team Support Services Guide (CSU) • JumpSTART PowerPoint and handout (Curtin) • Student Success Program Script (RMIT) • Student Success Program Script (RMIT) • Student Success Program Communication Strategies (RMIT) • Student Success Program Text Messages (RMIT) • Early Alert – The Vibe (UNE) • ESAP Support Scenarios (UniSA)

Principle	Examples of good practice	Name of artefact
Equity	<p>Students working as advisors helps to normalise the ‘student experience’ via the use of student ‘language’ and may be effective in dispelling myths or preconceptions around approaching academic staff for assistance. Often the student advisor is recruited from a pool of student mentors who has prior knowledge of processes and protocols. As well, a student advisor who has previously completed the same course of study will be better equipped to talk through issues to do with a particular subject. Consider matching advisors to particular cohorts of students when scheduling outreach activities.</p> <p>A ‘Student Readiness Survey’ is emailed to students prior to the commencement of their studies. The questions and response alternatives help define various expectations which help define what ‘success’ might look like as well as identify potential non-academic barrier that may impede their university experience and make connections to tertiary-readiness activities or programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FYE Group Supervision (AUT) • Student Success Team Role Playing Activity (CSU) • Student Success Program Contract with Schools (RMIT) • Early Alert – The Vibe (UNE) • ESAP Support Scenarios (UniSA)
Participation	<p>A ‘Welcome Call’ to students not only assists in inviting a dialogue about the hidden curriculum but it also offers a friendly voice – assists in breaking down or alleviating pre and misconceptions about university life and creates a sense of belonging.</p> <p>Make the student experience a visible one via social media tools to increase connections between peers (e.g. a blog site, Facebook page).</p> <p>Avoid language based on stereotypes or assumptions when communicating with students; use inclusive language.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect For Success – RightNow (ECU) • Student Success Program Script (RMIT) • Student Success Program Script (RMIT)

List of artefacts

Artefact	Institution	Type	Guide page number and/or website link
(A) Student Readiness Survey	AUT	Student Survey	Guide page 47 https://safeguardingstudentlearning.net/?page_id=430
FYE Group Supervision	AUT	Training	https://safeguardingstudentlearning.net/?page_id=430
(B) Student Success Team Role Playing Activity	CSU	Training	Guide page 53 https://safeguardingstudentlearning.net/?page_id=433
Student Success Team Support Services Guide	CSU	Training	https://safeguardingstudentlearning.net/?page_id=433
(C) JumpSTART PowerPoint and handout	Curtin	Marketing and Promotion	Guide page 60 https://safeguardingstudentlearning.net/?page_id=436
(D) Connect For Success – RightNow	ECU	Process	Guide page 66 https://safeguardingstudentlearning.net/?page_id=439
(E) Student Success Program – Ethical Use of Information	QUT	Training	Guide page 75 https://safeguardingstudentlearning.net/?page_id=442
Student Success Program Advisor Code of Conduct	QUT	Employment contract	https://safeguardingstudentlearning.net/?page_id=442
(F) Student Success Program Contract with Schools	RMIT	Engagement with institution and staff	Guide page 82 https://safeguardingstudentlearning.net/?page_id=445
Student Success Program Script	RMIT	Scripts/Emails	https://safeguardingstudentlearning.net/?page_id=445
Student Success Program Communication Strategies	RMIT	Training	https://safeguardingstudentlearning.net/?page_id=445
Student Success Program Text Messages	RMIT	Scripts/Emails	https://safeguardingstudentlearning.net/?page_id=445
(G) Early Alert – The Vibe	UNE	Engagement with students	Guide page 89 https://safeguardingstudentlearning.net/?page_id=448
(H) ESAP Support Scenarios	UniSA	Training	Guide page 93 https://safeguardingstudentlearning.net/?page_id=451

Part 4
Literature



The literature review



The aim of the literature review was to examine the literature on social justice and equity in the higher education sector in order to develop the set of social justice principles that form the foundation of the *Good Practice Guide* and resources. Principally, the review examines the meanings of ‘social justice’ and then applies this knowledge to monitoring student learning engagement in higher education. In this sense, the review provides a starting point for understanding the theoretical underpinnings and issues related to social justice in higher education and provides the foundation for the set of principles for guiding institutional MSLE policy and programs.

The project also produced an annotated bibliography, which presents a summary of the literature reviewed as part of the development of the literature analysis and synopsis. The full annotated bibliography can be found on the project website at https://safeguardingstudentlearning.net/?page_id=97

Introduction

This literature review has been developed purposely to inform the Australian Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) project *Good practice for safeguarding student learning engagement in higher education institutions*. The goal of the project is to develop a set of principles, guidelines and resources, based on the principles of social justice, to *safeguard* programs and practices designed to monitor student learning engagement. To achieve the project's aim, this review draws on relevant literature from three key domains: social justice, contemporary higher education and the notion of student engagement.

In light of government targets for wider participation and social inclusion in higher education, many institutions, including the eight universities who participated in this project, have initiated programs that aim to identify students who may be at risk of disengaging from their studies. Students identified by these programs are then contacted in a timely way and offered advice and support (early intervention) to assist them to re-engage and progress with their program of study. In this project, these initiatives are referred to collectively as programs that monitor student learning engagement (MSLE).

The concern of this project is that MSLE initiatives must be designed and enacted appropriately and ethically, and, in particular, that they are consistent with the philosophical underpinnings and traditions of social justice. In this way, the outcomes for students who are identified through the program's activities will be *safeguarded*. This alignment is essential to ensure that MSLE programs militate against the impediments to successful participation that exist because of previous inequitable access to social, financial, political and cultural resources. Thus MSLE that are consistent with notions of social justice will also *safeguard* activities designed to enhance students' participation and engagement.

In this sense, the project is timely and the literature summarised here provides a starting point for understanding the philosophical underpinnings and issues associated with social inclusion in higher education. The review then serves as a foundation for the formulation of a set of social justice principles to guide institutional MSLE policy and programs. The review commences with an examination of the concepts and perspectives of social justice, and then describes their application in contemporary education contexts. The issues associated with participation in higher education, otherwise known as social inclusion or widening

participation, are then canvassed followed by a discussion of the notion of student engagement. The review then proposes a suite of instructive themes on which the social justice principles are based. Finally, this document presents a set of social justice principles interpreted *specifically for this project* based on the literature reviewed.

The meaning of 'social justice'

The following two sections focus on the first of the domains of literature and introduce the concept of and perspectives on social justice, its application within education, and set the scene for a discussion about the interpretations of social justice within the higher education sector.

Concepts of social justice

The notions of social justice stem from ancient Greek and Roman times, and, in particular, from the period that commenced with the development of Greek classical thought and ended with the demise of the Western Roman Empire in the fifth century BC. During this thousand year period, the notions of justice and equality were used to organise political and social life (Lane, 2011). According to Theophanous (1994), the modern concept of social justice stems primarily from the Greek theories of justice, which were taken up by two prominent Enlightenment philosophers Kant and Rousseau. Whereas for Evans (1996), social justice arises from the reign of the peasant-born sixth-century Roman Emperor Justin and his nephew Justinian who succeeded him (Evans, 1996). However, for both schools of thought, 'justice was about treating equals equally and only the equals as full citizens' (Lane, 2011). Nevertheless, these equal citizens were usually from the elite classes and generally also wealthy. Unsurprisingly, given these roots, a single definition of social justice is not apparent; however, the literature suggests that contemporary notions of social justice coexist with expressions of human rights, fairness and equality (Bates, 2007; Sturman, 1997). Sturman notes that theorising about social justice is reflected in recent debates about equity and equality, adding 'the concept of "social justice" ... is not clearly defined (in fact, the term is often used as a synonym for "equal" opportunities or "equity")' (p. 1). Thus, the notion of equity often replaces politically motivated conceptions of equality, and social justice reframed in this way is deemed as necessary for democratic life (Theophanous, 1994).

More recently, Gale draws again on Justinian who described social justice as ‘the constant and perpetual will to render to everyone their due’ (Isaacs, 1996, as cited in Gale, 2000, p. 260), while Singh (2011) defines the pursuit of social justice as being the fair distribution of material and non-material resources that are ‘beneficial and valued’ (p. 482).

Perspectives on social justice

In *A Theory of Justice* (first published in 1971 and revised in 1999), John Rawls attempted to reconcile freedom and equality in a principled way and described ways of achieving just social structures, stressing that civil arrangements needed to be in place to support these structures. Underpinning Rawls’ theory of justice is the concept of ‘justice as fairness’ and Rawls offers two principles of justice: (1) the ‘liberty principle’ where each person should have equal right to an extensive system of equal basic liberties; and (2) the ‘equality principle’ where in a departure from classical Roman and Greek conceptions, social and economic inequalities would be rearranged so that they are to the greatest benefit for the least advantaged (1999, p. 53). Thus, for Rawls, the equality principle requires the rearrangement of social and economic goods to be guided by considerations of opportunity and by the differences that arise from individual circumstances.

Miller (1999) draws extensively on the work of Rawls and provides an overview of the empirical research and popular conceptions of justice – focusing specifically on the scope of social justice. In his interpretation of Rawls’, Miller contends that society will attain a culture of social justice when both individuals and institutions adhere to the principles of social justice. After Rawls, Miller interprets social justice from the standpoint of distributive justice. The main constituents of distributive justice are three principles or elements: desert, need and equality:

Desert is a claim that one has earned reward based on performance.

Need is a claim that one is lacking basic necessities and is being harmed or is in danger of being harmed.

Equality refers to the social ideal that society regards and treats its citizens as equals, and that benefits such as certain rights should be distributed equally.

Other theorists have challenged the distributive perspective of social justice, because it essentially focuses on the ways in which goods and services are shared among members of society, with a specific focus on the distribution of material goods. For example, Iris Young (1990) argued that this interpretation of social justice does not attend to the institutional context of social structures that may predetermine access to or the distribution of resources. Lummis (1996, as cited in Gale, 2000) considers that a reformist approach to social justice is required and Gale (2000) contends that this perspective includes ‘acting’ as well as ‘making’ just social structures. Gale labels this approach as a recognitive perspective on social justice and this perspective is discussed further in the following section. Nancy Fraser (1995) explored the relationship between redistribution of material resources and recognition of social determinants and found that there is a need to consider both approaches to achieve social justice.

In a more radical perspective on social justice, Amartya Sen’s (2009) recent critique of *The Idea of Justice* (Rawls, 1999) proposes that social justice is an ongoing activity that cannot be evaluated in terms of whether it has been achieved, but in terms of how it is understood in context. Sen’s view emphasises the comparative merits of different societies and at the core of his thesis is respect for reasoned differences and understanding what a *just society* really is. Sen’s view reflects Gale’s (2000) position that social justice should value a positive regard for group differences and include democratic processes based on the participation of various social groups.

Social justice in education

The literature on social justice and education exists in a complex space that focuses on the development of society and the role of education in creating just social structures. McInerney (2004) highlighted three forms of injustice that manifest within educational contexts: socioeconomic disadvantage, racism and cultural oppression. In her summary of the social justice and education literature, McInerney (2004) specifically refers to the work of Raewyn Connell (1993), who investigated the concept of dominant cultural hegemony. Connell advocated for curricular justice and made a case for curriculum reform based on a redistributive approach to social justice. Similarly Sturman’s (1997) examination of social justice in education – specifically in the Australian secondary education context – is

reflective of an active and philosophical orientation of social justice. In concluding that Australian public education policy is fundamentally based on the principles of distributive justice and that these principles are applied in ways that are intended to equalise, Sturman found that three aspects of social justice are required to achieve equity for the most disadvantaged: (1) a distributive component – equipping students so that they receive equality of opportunity both within current and post-education; (2) curricular justice – ensuring that curriculum design and enactment attends to the principles of social justice; and (3) a non-material component – equipping students with non-material goods and skills ‘such as decision making’ (p. 118). Reflecting these views, McInerney found that whole-of-school reform, reviews of curriculum and pedagogy, and responses to government policies were the most prevalent social justice strategies in the education-based social justice literature. Bates (2007) also focused on the primary and secondary systems and found there an emphasis on redistributive and on recognitive approaches to social justice in educational administration.

In terms of both purpose and outcomes, educational institutions are directly involved in reflecting as well as shaping the social, cultural and economic activities of society.

Singh (2011) summarises this complexity, explicitly for the context of higher education:

The social justice goal of constructing societies which are more inclusive, fair and democratically enabling remains a central normative and policy challenge, both in relation to the contribution of higher education to societal progress as well as within higher education itself.

(pp. 491–492)

Usefully, Gale (2000) and Gale and Densmore (2000) explored social justice in education contexts and categorised approaches to social justice as: *distributive* (fairness achieved through the redistribution of basic resources); *retributive* (fairness achieved through competition for social goods and materials; and *recognitive* (fairness achieved through positive recognition of the differences between cultural groups). Table 1 provides a summary of these perspectives and differentiates distributive and retributive from recognitive justice by arguing that a recognitive perspective on social justice not only includes positive considerations of social difference but also considers the centrality of socially democratic processes in working towards the attainment of just societies. In essence, a recognitive perspective on social justice emphasises processes and action to achieve socially just structures over the existing state and form of those structures.

Table 1: The distributive, retributive and recognitive perspectives on social justice.

Perspectives of justice	<i>The will</i> What should social justice desire? Whose desire?	<i>To render</i> How should social justice be achieved?	<i>To everyone</i> Who should social justice benefit?	<i>Their due</i> What should social justice deliver?
Distributive	Freedom, social cooperation and compensation. Individuals/groups represented by government/authorities.	Proportional distribution.	Disadvantaged individuals groups.	Basic material and social goods/ opportunities.
Retributive	Liberty, protection of rights, punishments for infringements. Individuals in free market.	Open competitive and government protection of life and property.	Individuals who contribute to society.	Material and social goods/opportunities commensurate with talent and effort.
Recognitive	Means for all to exercise capability and determine their actions. All people within and among social groups.	Democratic processes that include/generalise from the interests of the least advantaged.	All people differently experienced within and among social groups.	Positive self-identity. Self-development; self-determination.

(Adapted from Gale, 2000, p. 268)

Social justice and the higher education context

As can be seen from the literature that appears in the previous section, various understandings of social justice exist in the context of education. Practically, the term social inclusion is used when referring to initiatives aimed at creating a socially just educational system. O'Connor and Moodie (2008) discussed the concept of *social inclusion* to mean the inclusion of an individual, group or particular community in society in general and in higher education in particular. Armstrong and Spandagou (2009) note that the use of the term social inclusion has changed from a narrow meaning applied to specific groups of students, for example students with disabilities, to a broader interpretation that is applied to the provision of higher education to diverse groups of students.

As academics and policymakers engage with concepts such as special education, globalisation, education for all and inclusion other terms such as social justice, equity, equal opportunity, human rights and diversity in education, citizenship and social inclusion have crept into the populist international vocabulary as well as the language of academia.

(p. 2)

Gewirtz (1998, 2006) and North (2006), examine the work of Young (1990), and note that a distributive view of social justice may well be inadequate in terms of achieving social inclusion in education. A distributive approach to social justice overlooks the role that the processes and social structures of educational institutions play as mechanisms in determining the inequitable distribution of resources. Singh (2011) provides a response to this conflict by considering social justice in terms of higher education's socio-economic role in establishing knowledge societies in a globalising world. She suggests that access and inclusion strategies need to be structured within a discussion about the role of knowledge societies, noting 'Social justice has kinships and associations with notions of human and socio-economic rights, social inclusion, equity, and access to resources and capabilities for human wellbeing' (p. 482).

More broadly still, Patton, Shahjahan and Osei-Kofi (2010) contend that social justice in higher education 'requires a multi-faceted, holistic, and contextual approach to understanding the concept of social justice in a broader sense' (p. 269) and in addition:

... in light of the questions we raise, what we are certain of is that higher education must deliberately move toward advancing a social justice agenda comprised of more theoretical scholarship and data driven research, grounded in social justice that can inform policies, practices, and decisions that influence postsecondary institutions.

(p. 276)

Gale and Tranter (2011) provide a comprehensive historical analysis of policy and regulatory initiatives aimed at achieving social justice in the Australian higher education context by analysing changes in the environment from World War II through to the 2008 *Review of Australian Higher Education* (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales, 2008). Their review is framed by Gale's (2000) and Gale and Densmore's (2000) previous categorisation of social justice perspectives being 'distributive, retributive and recognitive' (p. 29). Gale and Tranter note that the periods of expansion in the Australian higher education system have attended to the 'notions of social justice' and have resulted in new opportunities (p. 41) and access to higher education. These authors also point out that during periods of consolidation in the provision of higher education, retributive notions of social justice tend to become more apparent and they caution that from this perspective, the inclusion of larger numbers of students from disadvantaged backgrounds may be perceived as destabilising the benefits of higher education, stating '... the inclusion of more people from disadvantaged backgrounds may be seen to undermine the talent and hard work of 'deserving individuals' and traditional notions of merit and standards' (p. 42). Reflecting Gale's (2009) notion of a truly inclusive approach to higher education, Gale and Tranter (2011) conclude that higher education policy and practice should embrace a recognitive perspective on social justice so that public policy initiatives aimed at widening participation and social inclusion take into consideration systemic processes leading to disadvantage are not constructed in terms of the comparative merit of various groups.

Philosophical stance adopted for the project

The material reviewed so far shows that contemporary discussions of social justice focuses on three perspectives (distributive, retributive and recognitive) and these three views have been articulated for education systems by Gale (see Gale, 2000; Gale & Densmore, 2000; Gale & Tranter, 2011).

In the specific context of the project – *Good practice for safeguarding student learning engagement in higher education institutions* – a recognitive approach to social justice has been adopted for developing the Social Justice Framework and the *Good Practice Guide*. A recognitive social justice stance suggests that everyone is able to participate and contribute within a democratic society. A recognitive perspective includes a positive consideration for social difference and also focuses on the centrality of socially democratic processes in working towards its attainment. In essence, a recognitive perspective on social justice emphasises process and action to change underlying structures over the existing state and form of those mechanisms. In this context, the Social Justice Framework that arises from this work is designed to challenge thinking about dominant cultures and ways of knowing in higher education institutions. Central to the Social Justice Framework is a set of principles to guide and inform the design and enactment of MSLE initiatives so that existing relationships based on power, identity, assumed rights and needs are not privileged over socially just and democratic processes.

Therefore, from a recognitive position the intent of the social justice principles are to:

- guide monitoring student learning engagement initiatives and innovations
- inform students and staff in the areas of policy, procedure and communication
- foster a sense of connection and partnership between academic and professional areas
- realise or instantiate programs and innovations
- offer a mechanism for reconciling value conflicts, and finally
- provide filters by which programs and processes can be evaluated.

Enacting social justice within higher education

The higher education sector in Australia and elsewhere has responded to public policy-driven social, political and economic imperatives to both increase participation in and broaden access to post secondary education. This section focuses on the second domain of literature, the manifestation of social justice within higher education context. Strategies fall into two general categories – social inclusion and widening participation.

Social inclusion and widening participation

Social inclusion strategies are targeted at the inclusion of students from under-represented social or cultural groups while widening participation strategies aim to increase the participation of non-school leavers in higher education with the aim of increasing the proportion of people in the population who have post-secondary qualifications. Goastellec (2008) assesses participation in higher education using an historical analysis of the evolution of greater access to higher education and outlines a series of international case studies that exemplify the ‘equity principle’ (p. 71) in terms of how access to higher education is organised. Adopting a recognitive stance, Marginson (2011) discusses social inclusion as a way ‘to progress fairness’ (p. 24) and finds that social inclusion is advanced by the broadening of access of under-represented groups.

David (2010) provides a general definition of widening participation that ‘... is taken to mean extending and enhancing access to and experience of HE, and achievement within HE, of people from so-called under represented and diverse social backgrounds, families, groups and communities ...’ (p.15). Widening participation efforts also account for the emergence of two trends. Firstly that the new norms around access have led to higher education now being described as moving from selective (elite) to mass and now universal (James, 2008; Marginson, 2011; Marginson & van der Wende, 2007). While secondly, globalisation has made education more accountable to public scrutiny, international evaluation and comparisons. Goastellec (2008) notes ‘we are witnessing a permanent reinvention of tools aimed at widening access or at making [education] more fair’ (p. 82).

Internationally, the issue of widening participation has mirrored policy developments determined by broad political and democratic movements for social or human rights (David, 2010; Vignoles, 2009). The United Kingdom’s commitment to widening participation is exemplified in specific funding activities undertaken by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (2011) and the Higher Education Academy (2011). More recently, some concern has been expressed that participation may decrease with the introduction of a fee-based system (Yorke as cited in Nelson, Clarke, & Kift, 2011), although this is not an agreed concern (Thomas as cited in Nelson, Clarke, & Kift, 2012) and the impact of these changes

has yet to be analysed. In the United States, widening participation initiatives are complicated by the use of 'ethno-racial dimensions' as the main categories used to measure participation (Clancy & Goastellec, 2007, p. 139). In contrast, the approach adopted in Aotearoa (New Zealand) has been substantial reform of the entire tertiary sector (including higher education) to align with the government's social and economic agenda (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2006, pp. 15–16). This reform has been specifically focused on increasing participation in programs at bachelor levels and, more recently, has focused on the participation of Māori and Pacific Island students and students with disabilities, as well as on the participation of students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (pp. 72–73).

Australia's approach to widening participation has been documented in *Transforming Australia's Higher Education System* (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR], 2009b) and is focused on a social inclusion agenda. In this sense, social inclusion in higher education in Australia manifests as public policy for widening participation linked to reward and performance-based funding.

Participation in Australia's higher education sector

Public policy changes aimed at promoting participation in higher education have been occurring in Australia since the mid-1960s. These have incorporated a range of measures including merit-based scholarships, the policy reforms of the Whitlam government, which included the establishment of the National Student Assistance Scheme and the federal government assuming complete control of funding for higher education (Meek, 1991). In the 1990s, the massification of the sector was driven by the Dawkins reforms announced in *Higher Education: A Policy Statement*, known as the Dawkins' White Paper (Department of Employment, Education and Training [DEET], 1988). These changes have moved the provision and context of higher education in Australia from selective to mass participation.

Foundational policy work to increase the participation of students from equity groups in Australian higher education was undertaken through a review of the sector in 1990 and reported in the discussion paper *A Fair Chance for All* (DEET, 1990). This report placed responsibility for improving student equity in higher education with the institutions themselves. Critically, this paper identified six equity groups as requiring particular

attention: people from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds; people in rural or isolated areas; people with disabilities; Indigenous people; women in non-traditional areas of study and; people from non-English speaking backgrounds. For Gale (2010), this report was an inflexion point and marker of significant change of social justice practices in higher education because it reassigned responsibility for equity (particularly for those from under-represented groups) to universities themselves. Specifically, it required universities to:

- *develop strategic plans and targets to achieve equity (with separate Indigenous education strategies and targets); and*
- *report on progress towards these as part of their annual educational profile submissions to government.*

(p. 8)

By 1996, there had been an improvement in participation for most of these designated groups except for the low SES and rural and isolated groups (National Board of Employment, Education and Training Higher Education Council, 1996). In 2003, the Australian Government announced further support for several equity groups in learning scholarships, an increase in funding for the Higher Education Equity Program and a reform package to increase participation and outcomes for both Indigenous students and staff in higher education (B. Nelson, 2003). The under-representation of particular groups was further addressed in 2008 in the *Review of Australian Higher Education* (Bradley et al., 2008), which found that increased participation in higher education had not resulted in increased social equity. Denise Bradley and her colleagues reported that three groups were still under-represented in higher education: students from low SES backgrounds, students from regional and remote areas and Indigenous students. In response, the Rudd/Gillard Government set out participation targets, specifically a social inclusion target that the participation of students from low SES backgrounds should increase from approximately 15 to 20 per cent by 2020 and continued the support for wider participation in that the target proportion of the population aged 25–34 with at least an undergraduate degree would rise from approximately 33 to 40 per cent by 2025 (DEEWR, 2009a).

Reflecting this history, Silver (2010) believes that Australia has a distinct approach to social inclusion that can be understood in terms of having a vision for 'membership, belonging and social integration' (p. 184). She argues that in a mass globalised world, higher education is

positioned to assist individuals, groups and communities to engage at a more informed level. However, Gale and Tranter (2011) caution that ‘widening participation in higher education and ‘social inclusion’ more generally have only been considered possible during periods of expansion’ (p. 42). A thorough analysis of the impact of these recent wider participation and social inclusion targets has not yet been possible.

Nevertheless, a range of structural mechanisms exist to support the achievement of the Government’s goals. Gale and Tranter (2011) note the establishment of the Ministry of Social Inclusion within DEEWR.¹⁶ The Ministry’s Australian Social Inclusion Board (ASIB) has adopted two principles to guide their agenda: principles of *aspiration* (what is required) and principles of *approach* (how social inclusion can be achieved) (ASIB, 2010). Sharma (2008) focuses on the massification of higher education and the issues of access and equity, and notes the establishment of the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA)¹⁷ as a means to ensure academic quality in a mass higher education system. More recently and in a related series of developments there is a focus on implementing the Australian Qualifications Framework (2012), the establishment of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) and the release of the TEQSA Threshold Standards.

However, the key enabling mechanism underlying the 2009 participation and inclusion strategies was the introduction of the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP), which provides funding for institutions to implement strategies aimed at increasing the access and retention of students from low SES backgrounds (DEEWR, 2010). Gale and Tranter (2011) provided an early review of this initiative and described institutional programs and identified alternative access pathways that have arisen since its inception.

Invariably, government funding of these types of activities involves measures of quality and the application of performance indicators (Yorke & Longden, 2004). However, measures of participation, particularly of students who are members of equity groups, is important as it provides a way to monitor change in the sector (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and

Development, 2010). Clancy and Goastellec (2007) warn against attempts to make comparisons between countries because of the differences in the criteria for participation and varying definitions of what constitutes higher education. Within Australia there has been considerable debate about how to measure and track the access and participation of target groups. James (2007) considers that equity is one of the three measures of the effectiveness (alongside quality and efficiency) of higher education. However, recently Gale and Tranter (2011) cautioned that the shift from an ‘elite to mass to near universal higher education ...’ (p. 30) does not necessarily imply equality in opportunity for participation. Evaluation of the effectiveness of strategies is complicated by a reasonably ‘blunt’ identification of low SES using residential postcodes or on a slightly more granular level using census data collection area codes. Further complicating impact evaluation is a reluctance to single out target group students for special attention once they enter institutions, with many institutions favouring universal strategies and good practice.

A focus on student engagement

Public policy linked to higher education funding and changes to the higher education regulatory environment have been accompanied by concomitant discussions about the notions of student engagement in higher education. This section discusses the third domain of literature of relevance to this project – student engagement and institutional initiatives designed to monitor and support student engagement.

Student engagement

Student engagement is a broad construct widely understood to encompass both academic and non-academic activities. Further, student engagement (however idiosyncratically defined) is generally accepted as being a significant contributor to student attainment and retention (Krause & Coates, 2008; Kuh, 2009; Tinto, 2010).

For George Kuh, the founder of North America’s National Survey of Student Engagement, the ‘engagement premise’ is straightforward and easily understood:

¹⁶ The higher education portfolio moved from DEEWR to the Australian Government Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIISTRE or Innovation) in 2011.

¹⁷ AUQA operations have now transferred to the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA).

The more students study a subject, the more they learn about it. Likewise, the more students practice and get feedback on their writing, analyzing, or problem solving, the more adept they become. The very act of being engaged also adds to the foundation of skills and dispositions that is essential to live a productive, satisfying life after college. That is, students who are involved in educationally productive activities in college are developing habits of the mind and heart that enlarge their capacity for continuous learning and personal development.

(Kuh, 2003, as cited in Trowler, 2010, p. 36)

In the Australasian context, Hamish Coates has written extensively on engagement in the context of his affiliation with the Australian Survey of Student Engagement (Australian Council for Educational Research, 2011) and through regular annual *Research Briefing* publications. He (Coates, 2007) describes engagement as 'a broad construct intended to encompass salient academic as well as certain non-academic aspects of the student experience' (p. 122). Krause and Coates (2008) explain the importance of measuring the degree to which students engage with their studies and their institutional environment, and contend that higher levels of engagement appear to lead to higher-quality learning.

The commitment of institutions to fostering student engagement is also seen to be a critical factor in retention. Tinto (2010) maintains that institutions should take responsibility for and encourage student engagement, while, in a similar but more specific vein, Nelson, Kift and Clarke (2008) argue that universities need to instigate, sustain and promote students personal, social and academic engagement, particularly for those students who face the greatest challenges in transition. Similarly, Trowler's (2010) recent literature review on student engagement identifies and defines engagement as being concerned with:

... the interaction between the time, effort and other relevant resources invested by both students and their institutions intended to optimise the student experience and enhance the learning outcomes and development of students and the performance, and reputation of the institution.

(p. 3)

Critically, and in the context of this project, Kuh defines engagement as 'the time and effort students devote to activities that are empirically linked to desired outcomes of college and what institutions do to induce students to participate in these activities' (Kuh, 2001, 2003, 2009a, as cited in Trowler, 2010, p. 7).

Tinto (2008), and earlier still Kift and Nelson (2005), posit that institutional activities designed to engage students should be located within the curriculum and Gale's (2009) notion of a *Southern Theory of Higher Education* requires the embodiment of the students' social and cultural knowledges within the curriculum.

It is about how we structure the student learning experience in ways that open it up and make it possible for students to contribute from who they are and what they know. It is about an enriched learning experience for all students.

(p. 12)

Nelson, Smith and Clarke (2011) and Nelson, Kift and Clarke (2012) argue that successful engagement, particularly in the critical first year of university experience, requires an inclusive and intentional approach to first year curriculum design and enactment. They reiterate the Nelson et al. (2008) contention of the importance of an *holistic* (an integrated personal, social and academic) approach to engagement.

Trowler (2010) returns to the importance of student engagement in the context of equality and social justice and cites the work of Harper and Quayle (2009) who note that:

... we are persuaded by a large volume of empirical evidence that confirms that strategizing ways to increase the engagement of various student populations, especially those for whom engagement is known to be problematic, is a worthwhile endeavour. The gains and outcomes are too robust to leave to chance, and social justice is unlikely to ensue if some students come to enjoy the beneficial by-products of engagement but others do not.

(p. 24)

Therefore, there seems to be general agreement in the literature that engagement is achieved through a combination of students' efforts and institutional activities and that all students, irrespective of their backgrounds, should be able to participate in activities designed to promote engagement and the institution has an active role to play in creating academic structures in which engagement is possible.

Zepke and Leach (2005) go further and suggest that rather than expecting students to fit into the institutional culture, that the institutions should adapt their culture to promote the engagement of all the students. They add that:

... central to the emerging discourse is the idea that students should maintain their identity in their culture of origin ... Content, teaching methods and assessment, for example, should reflect the diversity of people enrolled in the course. This requires significant adaptation by institutional cultures ... The foreshadowed outcome of this institutional change is better student retention, persistence and achievement.

(p. 54)

Given that the concept of student engagement is well accepted as important and critical to student achievement and retention, many international and Australasian universities have introduced a variety of specific initiatives aimed at monitoring and intervening with students who are at risk of disengaging.¹⁸

In the context of this project, which seeks to identify an appropriate ethical framework to guide these MSLE initiatives, good practice in retention initiatives has been described by Coley and Coley (2010) as institutions that ‘have determined a clear methodology to define and identify “at-risk” students, to reach out to students with appropriate resources and support, and to track and monitor student engagement’ (p. 6).

The following section details specific programs and activities that are designed to monitor student learning engagement.

Monitoring student learning engagement

Monitoring student learning engagement involves the combination and use of existing corporate data and a range of descriptive and academic indicators (such as attendance, assessment submission details and participation in face-to-face and online activities) to make supportive interventions with students who appear to be at risk of disengaging. Arguably the most well-known international intervention program is Purdue University’s Signals project. Within Australasia, Auckland University of Technology (Australian Universities Quality Agency, 2007), the University of New England (Office for Learning and Teaching, 2011) and Queensland University of Technology (Office for Learning and Teaching, 2012) have

been recognised for their MSLE initiatives. The early intervention strategies appearing in the first year experience literature range from isolated case studies (for example, Johnston, Quinn, Aziz, & Kava, 2010; Potter & Parkinson, 2010) to institution-wide programs (for example, Carlson & Holland, 2009; Nelson, Quinn, Marrington, & Clarke, 2011; Wilson & Lizzio, 2008), and are indicative of recent developments in this area.

The Signals project at Purdue University in the United States operates as an early warning of potential student attrition and actively demonstrates the potential of applying academic analytics by providing ‘near real-time status updates of performance and effort in a course ... [providing] the student with detailed, positive steps to take in averting trouble’ (Arnold, 2010, para. 5). The Student Success Program (SSP) at the Queensland University of Technology utilises a custom-built Contact Management System (CMS) to retrieve data available within other student systems and to import data from external sources. In the SSP:

... proactive highly individualised contact is attempted with all students identified as being at-risk of disengaging. A managed team of discipline-experienced and trained later year students employed as Student Success Advisors (SSAs) makes the outbound contact by telephone. ... When at-risk students require specialist support, the advisors refer them on (e.g. to library staff) or in some cases, manage the referral process with the student’s permission (e.g. to a Counsellor).

(Nelson, Quinn et al., 2011, p. 86)

Early evidence of the impact of the SSP has been documented (Nelson, Duncan, & Clarke, 2009) and Nelson, Quinn et al. (2011) have provided qualitative and quantitative data to suggest that the impact of the SSP interventions on student persistence has been sustained and has positively influenced student retention at that institution (p. 83). Nevertheless, programs such as SSP and Signals, while actively monitoring student learning engagement, need to be mindful of the diverse student cohort and not make assumptions about the conditions that may lead to a student indicating as *at risk*. However, we contend (K. Nelson, 2010), that MSLE activities must therefore be founded on a philosophy of social justice and equity, particularly given the pressures on the sector for wider participation and improved retention of students from social groups currently under-represented in the higher education sector. We argue that ‘to be consistent with these national imperatives requires constructive alignment

¹⁸ In this specific project, *Good practice for safeguarding student learning engagement in higher education institutions*, we refer to these initiatives as monitoring student learning engagement (MSLE). Reports of these initiatives commonly refer to them as early intervention strategies or programs, and these terms are used interchangeably in this review.

between on the one hand policy and practice aimed at widening participation and on the other, efforts aimed at increasing the retention of these same students' (p. 4).

Social justice principles for higher education

As discussed earlier in this review, the aspiration to achieve social justice in higher education policy is exemplified by programs aimed at social inclusion and widening participation. These programs have been accompanied by a focus on student engagement and on the expansion of activities aimed at measuring and monitoring students' learning engagement. The following section considers criteria for quality principles and then briefly revisits the themes that emerged from the social justice literature to elicit a set of principles. These principles are readily applicable to activities and initiatives that monitor student learning engagement in higher education institutions.

Developing a set of social justice principles

Defining a set of social justice principles to guide MSLE initiatives provides an important foundation for sector guidelines and assists in determining good practice. David Nicol (2007) developed a set of principles for assessment and feedback in higher education and articulated the characteristics of a quality principle. Notably in the context of this project, he recommends that principles should capture the salient research and provide enough evidence to support implementation, and that principles should be broad enough and flexible to guide practice. Nicol added that these characteristics would indicate that the principle could be implemented independent of context; that where there are several principles, there should only be minimal overlap between them so that they can be defined independently; and finally, that good principles should assist in the evaluation of the practice. These guidelines were adhered to during the development of a set of social justice principles for MSLE.

Following Nicol's work on assessment, other higher education examples that employ a set of principles as benchmarks for good practice can be found in Good Practice Principles for English Language Proficiency for International Students in Australian Universities (DEEWR, 2008); the National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities (Universities Australia, 2011), which elaborates on a set of five guiding principles for Indigenous cultural competency in Australian universities; and, most recently, Principles to Promote and Protect the Human Rights of International Students (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2012).

Therefore, the development of a quality set of principles for MSLE should not only be consistent with the notions of equity and social justice but should also provide a strategic approach to the design of initiatives and be accompanied by resources to facilitate the uptake of those principles in the sector.

The literature canvassed earlier in this document on social justice in education and research- and practice-based evidence on widening participation and student engagement in the higher education sector has revealed several recurring themes. These themes are *equity*, *access* and *participation* (James, 2007, 2008). Two additional themes, *self-determination* and *rights* emerge strongly from the recognitive justice literature and are particularly pertinent when considering the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the participation of students from low SES backgrounds. Each of these five themes — *Self-determination*, *Rights*, *Access*, *Equity and Participation* — are briefly discussed below in the context of social justice in higher education. These themes form the foundation for developing a set of social inclusion principles for safeguarding the conduct of MSLE initiatives.

Self-determination

The idea of self-determination is best articulated in seminal literature about social justice. Young (1990) noted that a sense of self-determination forms the basis of democracy and basic democratic processes. She argued in her discussion on the five faces of oppression (pp. 39–63), that social justice entails freedom from oppressive relations and domination that are constraints on self-determination. Self-determination is also an outcome of recognitive justice, discussed in Gale and Densmore (2000) and further in Gale and Tranter (2011).

The need for self-determination is expressed in the literature on Indigenous inclusion in education, more generally in society, and specifically in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2011). This focus is of particular interest in terms of the social justice in higher education agenda for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia and for Māori and Pacific Island people in Aotearoa (New Zealand). Applying this principle in the context of MSLE would aim to ensure that a particular MSLE initiatives program adhered to democratic processes in terms of the involvement of students in the program.

Rights

Social justice as *fairness* is concentrated on the rights of the individual. The literature on social justice infers that individual rights are often pre-determined (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007) by their cultural and social backgrounds. Retributive justice concerns itself with the protection of rights (and often the punishment of individuals who infringe these rights) (Gale, 2000).

Iris Young (1990) summarises the social justice perception of rights as 'rights are relationships, not things; they are institutionally defined rules specifying what people can do in relation to one another. Rights refer to doing more than having, and to social relationships that enable or constrain action' (p. 25).

Processes used to monitor student learning engagement activities would therefore need to be mindful of student rights (to be treated fairly with dignity and respect) as well as their right to obtain information and expectations — as would be reciprocated by the institution who expects compliance with institutional policies.

Access

In the social justice literature, particularly Young (1990) and Gewirtz (1998), the notion of distributive justice considers issues of access, specifically equality of access, and participation. The literature notes that social justice occurs when individuals have access to social, cultural, political and economic resources. Australia's higher education equity framework also espouses the access theme, both within the equity framework and the current Government's widening participation agenda.

Essentially, access in higher education can be interpreted as being access to institutional resources (for example, culture and language of higher education, the curriculum, learning and life support services, staff and advice). As with equity, access is determined by the inclusive structures, systems and strategies an institution might utilise to facilitate student support, which has implications for design and practice in MSLE.

Equity

The notion of equity is closely aligned to the theme of access in the higher education literature (Clancy & Goastellec, 2007; David, 2010; Sharma, 2008). However, in this project they are treated as distinct constructs.

An equity framework implies that social difference is understood so that different responses can be applied to a particular situation. Equity issues feature heavily in the literature on Australia's higher education sector with a specific endorsement of equity policy, targets and programs. The National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (2010), in defining equity, proposes that:

... equity is predicated on recognition that social systems (including education systems) tend to produce unequal outcomes (advantage and disadvantage) and that in part this is because individuals' starting positions and the processes involved in the production of social and economic outcomes are unfair. In this context, equity is a commitment to adjusting social systems for socially just means and ends.

Implicit in this view is that 'equity' and 'social justice' are different but closely related. Equity is conceived as a strategy: (a) based on a commitment to achieving (more) socially just ends; and (b) developed from a theory about why a particular social system is not socially just.

(para. 4)

The terms *equality* and *equity* are often used interchangeably in the literature, however their meanings are not the same. Patton et al. (2010) clarify the terminology, noting that equality refers to the equal distribution of goods whereas equity refers to strategies that lead to equal access and the removal of known barriers for groups traditionally disadvantaged in existing social processes and systems.

Applying the principle of equity to the context of MSLE would enable the MSLE activities, support and service interventions to be tailored to actively address barriers or impediments to engagement caused by students' previous educational, cultural or social backgrounds.

Participation

Gewirtz (1998) and Young (1990) discuss participation as arising from equality of opportunity. Gale and Tranter (2011) discuss participation from a recognitive social justice stance. In the higher education literature, participation is discussed extensively with regards to the specific government activities and initiatives in the last decade (the widening participation agendas in both the United Kingdom and Australia are key examples).

In its application to initiatives that monitor student learning engagement, participation is enabled through the instantiation of the previous four principles in MSLE initiatives and reflects effectiveness of activities designed to engender engagement.

A set of social justice principles for safeguarding MSLE

The following section summarises the social justice principles presented earlier and then rearticulates each of these principles specifically as they relate to activities and programs that actively monitor student learning engagement.

Self-determination

Self-determination refers to the rights of an individual to have control over their life and is also an outcome of recognitive justice (Gale & Densmore, 2000; Gale & Tranter, 2011). A sense of self-determination provides a foundation for democracy and basic democratic processes. Self-determination is key to the participation of Indigenous people in education, and more generally in society through the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007). From a recognitive social justice perspective, this principle can be expressed schematically as follows:

Fundamental to recognitive social justice; individuals participate in democratic processes to ensure self-control over their lives.

In the context of MSLE, this principle is interpreted to mean that students are actively involved in the design and enactment of programs and in the review of program outcomes.

Therefore, to achieve good practice in MSLE initiatives, the Self-determination principle is interpreted as:

Students participate in program design, enactment and evaluation and make informed decisions about their individual participation in the program.

Rights

The literature on social justice emphasises the notion of individual rights and specifically that these rights include appropriate consideration of the forces that shape an individual's cultural and social backgrounds. From a recognitive social justice perspective, this principle can be expressed schematically as follows:

Individuals have the right to be treated with dignity and respect and to have their individual cultural, social and knowledge systems valued.

When this principle is interpreted for MSLE initiatives, consideration has to be given as to whether MSLE activities are mindful of the rights of students to be treated fairly with dignity and respect, as well as their rights to obtain or withhold information and to have these rights recognised by institutions that expect compliance with institutional policies.

Therefore, to achieve good practice in MSLE initiatives, the Rights principle is interpreted as:

MSLE initiatives should ensure that all students are treated with dignity and respect and have their individual cultural, social and knowledge systems recognised and valued.

Access

In the social justice literature, particularly Young (1990) and Gewirtz (1998), the notion of distributive justice considers issues of access, specifically equality of access and participation. The literature notes that social justice occurs when all individuals have equal access to social, cultural, political and economic resources.

Australia's higher education equity framework also espouses the access theme, both within the equity framework and the current Government's widening participation agenda. From a recognitive social justice perspective, this principle can be expressed schematically as follows:

All individuals have access to social, cultural, political and economic resources.

In the context of MSLE, this principle is interpreted to mean that access is intentionally determined by inclusive structures, systems and strategies that promote learning engagement, particularly for students whose access to higher education has been previously compromised by their social, political and/or economic backgrounds.

Therefore, to achieve good practice in MSLE initiatives, the Access principle is interpreted as:

Programs are designed to serve as active and impartial conduits to the resources of the institution (e.g. curriculum, learning, academic, social, cultural, support, financial and other resources).

Equity

Equity implies that social differences are understood and that different responses are therefore designed and applied to particular situations to redress previous imbalances. The notion of equity features heavily in the literature about Australian higher education and there has been a history of endorsement of equity policy, targets and programs. Unfortunately the terms 'equality' and 'equity' are often used interchangeably in practice as well as in the literature. Usefully, Patton et al. (2010) reminds us that equality refers to the equal distribution of goods or equality in treatment, whereas equity focuses on the removal of noted barriers for individuals and groups who have been traditionally disadvantaged by dominant cultures and power structures. From a recognitive social justice perspective, this principle can be expressed schematically as follows:

Social difference is understood so that responses can be designed and applied to particular situations to counteract the barriers that impede participation.

In the context of MSLE, this principle is interpreted to mean that the focus is on counteracting barriers to participation such as finances and broadening knowledge and experiences of higher education to previously under-represented groups.

Therefore, to achieve good practice in MSLE initiatives, the Equity principle is interpreted as:

Programs are designed to demystify and decode dominant university cultures, processes, expectations and language for differently prepared cohorts.

Participation

In the social justice literature, both Gewirtz (1998) and Young (1990) note that participation arises if and when there is equality of opportunity. Recognising inequities, Gale and Tranter (2011) point out that participation needs to be considered from a recognitive stance. In terms of the higher education literature, participation has been discussed extensively in terms of government activities and initiatives (the widening participation agendas in both the United Kingdom and Australia are key examples). From a recognitive social justice perspective, this principle can be expressed schematically as follows:

Participation is not predicated on previous opportunity or privilege.

In the context of MSLE, this principle is interpreted to mean that all students have the opportunity to participate in university activities and to complete their qualification(s) in ways that are harmonious with their individual backgrounds and circumstances.

Therefore, to achieve good practice in MSLE initiatives, the Participation principle is interpreted as:

MSLE programs lead to socially inclusive practices and students experience a sense of belonging and connectedness.

Conclusion

This review was designed to frame the development of a set of principles for establishing good practice in MSLE. It has canvassed the literature of social justice, in particular social justice in higher education, and has reviewed how social justice manifests in public policy as well as efforts to achieve wider participation and social inclusion. The notion of engagement in leading to better outcomes for students has been examined noting that successful engagement occurs as a result of both student and institutional efforts. Higher education institutions have recognised the importance of engagement to student attainment and retention with many institutions implementing programs and activities that seek to monitor student engagement. The aim of these programs is to provide early supportive interventions to prevent students from disengaging. However, these programs are information-rich and must be designed and enacted consistent with the notion of social justice if they are to achieve beneficial and socially just outcomes for all students.

The literature covered by this review has provided an overview of the concept of social justice in higher education and has revealed various historical and contemporary perspectives and interpretations of social justice. The widening participation agenda in Australian higher education and the terminology used in the literature around social inclusion is closely aligned with the issues that are traditionally regarded as of interest to social justice and equity – for example, the recent focus in Australia on increasing the participation of students from low SES backgrounds. Importantly the review has led to a philosophical stance of recognitive social justice being adopted to guide the development of the Social Justice Framework in this project.

Examination of the social justice literature in light of contemporary issues around student participation and engagement has enabled five key themes to be identified. Refinement of these themes – *Self-determination, Rights, Access, Equity and Participation* – has resulted in a set of five interconnected and co-dependent principles that provide the underpinnings of a Social Justice Framework for Safeguarding Student Learning Engagement. The outcome of this work is that the framework and the principles that underpin it are available to be used to guide the development and implementation of MSLE initiatives. Used in this way, the Social Justice Framework will ensure that these MSLE programs and the students that participate in them are safeguarded against unethical and inappropriate actions.

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