THE IMPACT OF PREREQUISITES ON STUDENT SUCCESS AND ACADEMIC RIGOUR

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ABSTRACT

Discipline specific prerequisite requirements are integral to most course structures and discipline sequences. At Monash University a move to provide increased flexibility in subject choice at the undergraduate level was partially addressed by allowing students choice in pre-requisite requirements. To address concerns of the impact of these changes a study was designed to examine student success in Biochemistry in relation to their prior studies. The study cohort were students undertaking Biochemistry as part of the B.Sc. degree, in which students enrol in Biochemistry as single subjects or as part of required major/minor sequences. Biochemistry studies commence at year 2 and build on previously learned concepts taught by biology/chemistry departments. The relaxation in pre-requisite requirements resulted in students undertaking Biochemistry with prior studies ranging from strong backgrounds in both chemistry and biology to minimal backgrounds in these disciplines. Data was collated on student's prior studies including; final year of school (chemistry/biology), 1st year university (chemistry/biology), 2nd year Biochemistry and 3rd year Biochemistry. Analysis of examination results indicated that prior studies in related subjects correlated with academic success. The issues of how university decisions are made, how we improve student success and the impact on academic content and rigour must be considered.

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