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CHANGES IN PERCEIVED AND EXPERIENCED CHALLENGES AND LEARNING STRATEGIES THROUGHOUT THE SECOND YEAR TRANSITION

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BACKGROUND

The second year slump is a well-recognised phenomenon affecting students' engagement, performance and transition through university (Wilder, 1993; McBurnie, Campbell & West, 2012). Although Australian studies have identified common causes (Loughlin, Gregory, Harrison & Lodge, 2013; Ainscough, Stewart, Colthorpe & Zimbardi, 2018), relatively less is known about students' perceived and actual challenges, and the dynamic use of strategies whilst transitioning through their 2nd year.

METHODS

Undergraduate 2nd year biomedical science students (n=511) were asked about their goals, anticipated challenges and strategies at the start of 1st semester, then the challenges they experienced and strategies used at the end of semester.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Almost all students identified academic goals, most frequently being desired performance (45% of responses) and progressive study to stay on top of content (38%). Students perceived time management (67%), increased content complexity/volume (38%) and balancing work-social-study commitments (20%) as the greatest challenges, which they aimed to overcome largely through planning and organisation strategies. Most experienced perceived challenges, however, often to a greater degree than anticipated. Unexpected challenges were frequently reported, managed by dedicating more time or adopting 1-3 new strategies. Academic resilience through the 2nd year transition may therefore require students to be highly adaptable in their learning approaches.

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