



Transition to tertiary study: using self-assessment to guide teaching

Key Words

transition, diversity, self-assessment

Abstract

With increasing diversity in student populations and pathways to tertiary study, it cannot be assumed that all cohorts will arrive at university with the same expectations and follow a similar transition experience. Students' expectations and perceptions about their learning context impact upon their approaches to learning (Biggs, 2011; Trigwell & Prosser, 2004). Transition pedagogy recommends articulating expected behaviours clearly "in the critical first days of the first weeks of the first year" (Nelson & Kift, 2005, p. 229). In order to raise students' awareness of where their expectations may differ from the reality, and to help prepare them better for that reality, RMIT University has taken the approach of inviting new students to assess their own preparedness for university by completing two short online self-assessment quizzes under the banner of 'UniReady': StudyReady, which covers study skills, reading, writing and critical thinking; and LanguageReady, in which students assess their current English language capabilities. Both quizzes (located in the Getting started area of the RMIT Learning Lab) provide customised feedback and links students to relevant resources and services. This paper will outline the process for the development of the quizzes, present an analysis of the results of the UniReady quizzes completed by commencing undergraduate RMIT students in 2017, and report on a pilot study conducted in semester 2. The pilot study examines how the results of the UniReady quizzes can be used to promote awareness of the importance of academic acculturation in both students and teaching staff in one particular course. The students' responses to the quizzes are used to design and implement teaching interventions to support academic transition at RMIT. The pilot will serve as a model for other courses and programs to customise their transition practices for their own student cohorts. --- Barbara Morgan is the Manager, Curriculum Services in the Study and Learning Centre and oversees the work of the curriculum team, peer learning initiatives in the disciplines and flexible delivery via the RMIT Learning Lab. Barbara has worked extensively in academic language and learning initiatives across both Higher Education and TAFE sectors. She has considerable experience in online resource development and staff capability building. Joslyn Tait is the Senior Coordinator, Curriculum Integration in the Study and Learning Centre. Her role involves supporting the SLC Curriculum team in embedding communication skills into the academic disciplines. Joslyn has a broad background in academic skills teaching, ESL, IT education and staff development.

References

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