



## **Meet you in the liminal space: The role of emergent partnerships to engage and support students**

### **Key Words**

student experience, student lifecycle, holistic, grassroots, emergent communities

### **Abstract**

Academic language and literacy practitioners are generally adept at working collaboratively. The value of embedding academic literacy within academic programs and units is well documented as "a necessary feature of the internationalised modern university" (Briguglio & Watson, 2014, p. 72). However, while students in key units (typically first or second year) know and benefit from our resources, disheartening questions and statements such as 'What is the Learning Skills unit?' and 'I didn't know I could speak to someone about my assignment' are still all too common. The communication of our very existence to the student body in general, much less communication about our services and resources has always provided us with challenges. How do we inform, then engage students to access academic literacy services and resources? The ongoing focus in higher education on transition, progression and retention has emphasised the importance of offering support throughout the student lifecycle. Many groups on a university campus contribute support, although sometimes support is siloed into "pockets of excellence" (Kift, Nelson & Clarke, 2010, p. 2) resulting in duplication of services or a clunky, piecemeal experience for students. This paper reflects on strategies and activities used by one academic language and learning unit to work collaboratively, inspired by best practice in academic language and literacy and also their library's strategic ethos (EPIC: Connect - Communicate - Open). Rather than coming from a top-down institutional imperative, these practices have developed at a grassroots level as we have developed new ways of connecting and collaborating with academic and professional staff across campus. We describe how these connections have led to newly formed or strengthened initiatives; the ways in which these initiatives have in turn produced emergent, more collaborative approaches to student support; and the impact of a more holistic campus experience on engaging and supporting students throughout the student lifecycle.

### **References**

- Briguglio, C. & Watson, S. (2014). Embedding English language across the curriculum in higher education: A continuum of development support. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 37 (1), 67-73.
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