

A cross-disciplinary approach to embedding: A pedagogy for developing academic literacies

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Literacy, numeracy skills below minimum standard

The Australian Jan 30, 2015

One in 10 Australian university graduates is semi-literate and would fail to interpret the instructions on a box of headache tablets, an international study shows

Better academic support for students may help lower university attrition rates

The Conversation Oct 5, 2016

How strong academic support can change university students' lives

The Conversation March 3, 2017

Background/Context

Four Corners Report: Degrees of Deception (2015)

A *Four Corners* investigation has unearthed alarming new evidence of a decline in academic standards at institutions around the country. ...after meeting universities' entry requirements, [foreign students]... don't have the level of English needed to successfully undertake a degree course.

Universities blame others for plagiarism.

They need to look at themselves

The Guardian Feb 27, 2017

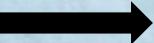
Why internationalization matters in universities

The Conversation March 6, 2017

Universities Australia (2017)

"Recognition of [the]...complex nature of English language proficiency has...led to a move away from...'front-end' considerations....to supporting the development of English language proficiency and academic literacies throughout a degree within disciplinary learning"

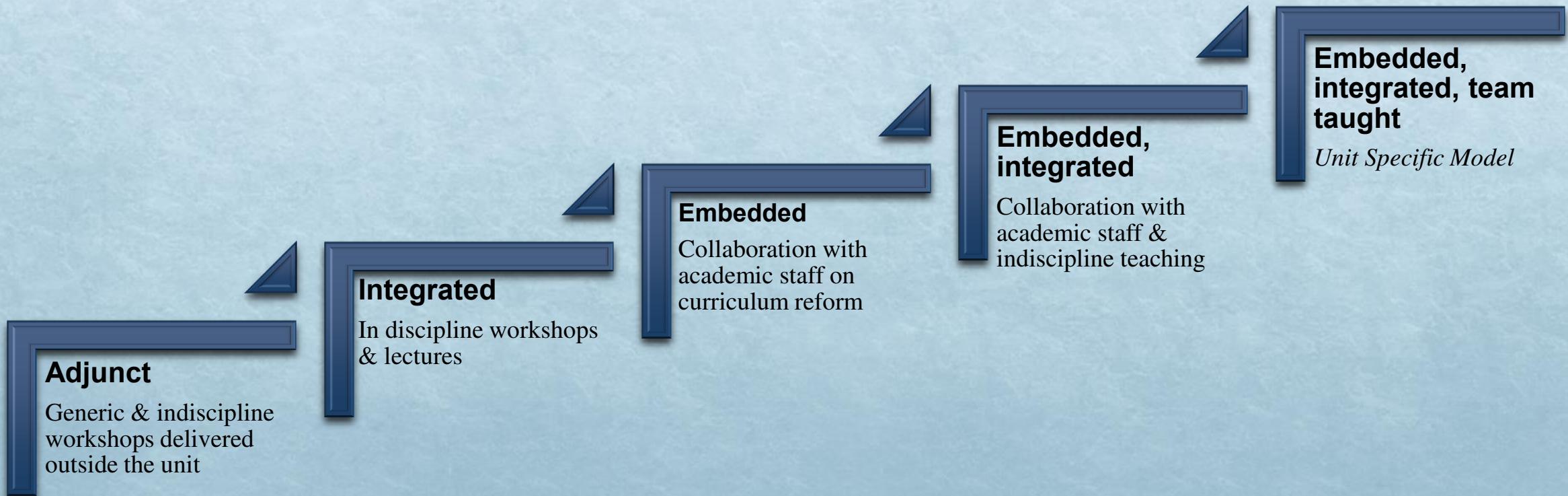
Introduction

- ❖ Embedding practices & models
- ❖ Institutional context
- ❖ Unit Specific Model  Unit Support Program (USP)
- ❖ Cross-disciplinary process
- ❖ Negotiating shared teaching & learning space
- ❖ Benefits of program: students and academic staff
- ❖ Sample of quantitative data

A case for the embedded approach

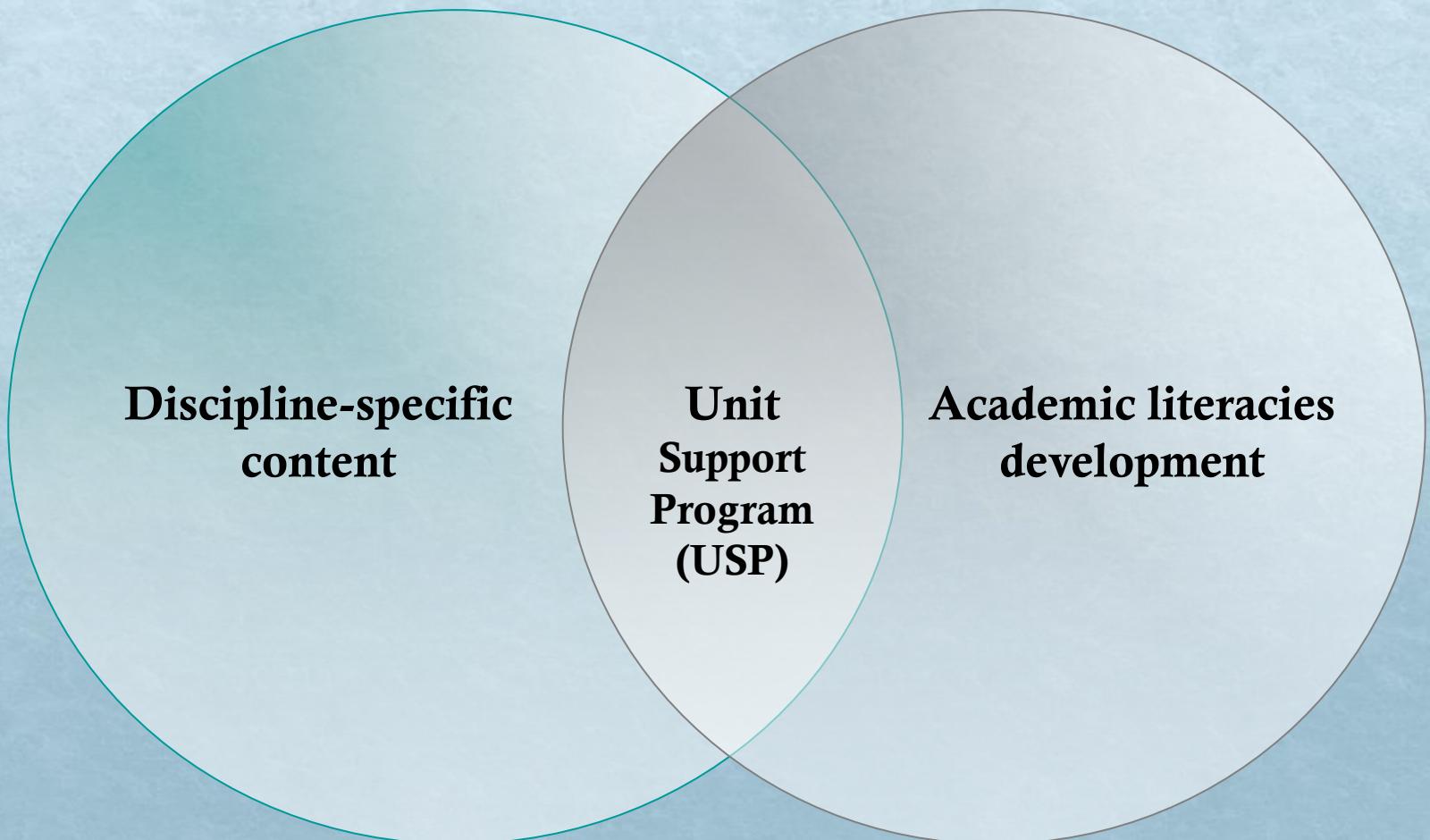
- ❖ “the explicit instruction, practice and assessment of [academic language and literacies] into the curriculum of [the student’s] degree” (Chanock, 2012, p. 1)
- ❖ Multiple benefits of embedding:
 - ❖ student success in terms of higher pass rates and grade improvements (Baik & Greig, 2009; Maldoni & Lear, 2016; Mort & Drury, 2012)
 - ❖ increase in student engagement in terms of improved participation in units (Beatty et al, 2014; Kift & Moody, 2009)
 - ❖ improvements in English language proficiency (Maldoni & Kennelly 2009)
 - ❖ enhancement in student learning (Brooman-Jones et al, 2011; Maldoni, in press)

Models of embedding



(Adapted from Jones et al, 2001; Harris & Ashton, 2011)

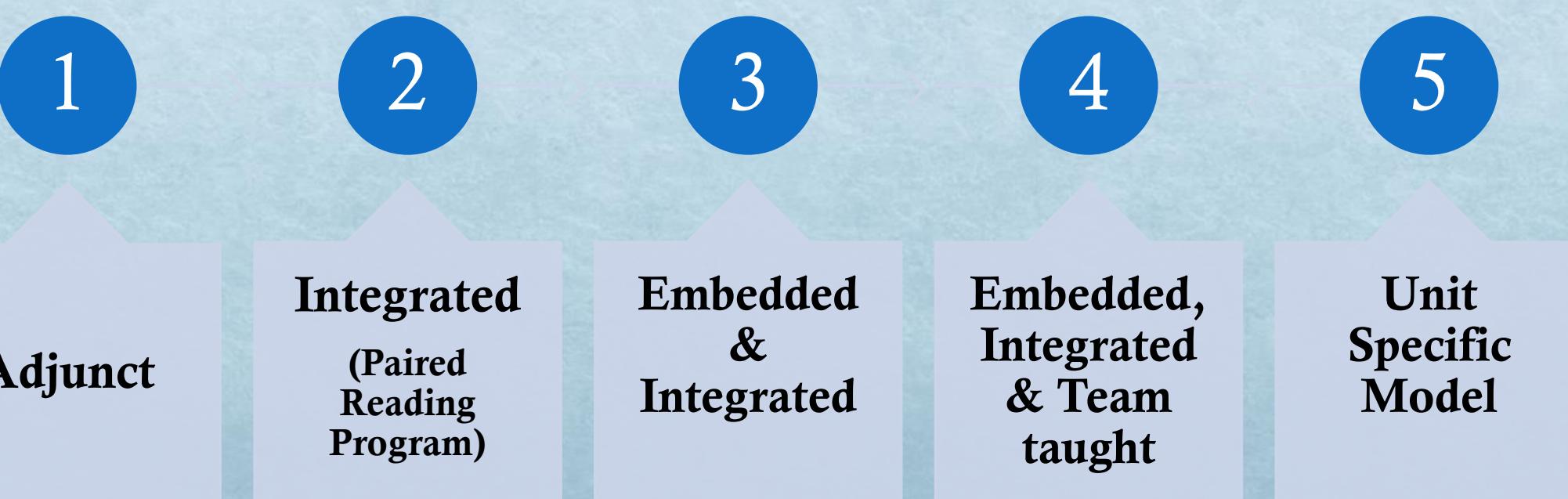
Unit Specific Model



Theoretical Approaches

- ❖ Academic Literacies Model (Lea and Street, 1998)
 - ❖ Literacy acquisition is complex, nuanced, socially-based, situated and developmental.
- ❖ Social constructivist theories of learning
 - ❖ Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is “potential for new learning” (Vygotsky, 1978)
- ❖ Concept of a ‘third space’
 - ❖ “*point of intersection of both specialisations*” (Briguglio, 2014)
 - ❖ overlapping section “where disciplinary values and expectations are counter posed and interwoven with those of academic support” (Crosling and Wilson, 2005)
 - ❖ resource-rich environment improves student learning

Embedding over 14 years: 2003-2017



UC Project

- ❖ Unit Support Program, an embedded, integrated and team taught program implemented across first, second and third years in three units across two disciplines:
 - ❖ *Introduction to Management (1st year)* – 525 students
 - ❖ *Organisational Behaviour (2nd year)* – 220 students
 - ❖ *Contemporary Issues in Society (3rd year)* – 160 students
- ❖ One-hour workshop (immediately after lecture) over 12 teaching weeks of semester.

Unit Support Program (USP) design

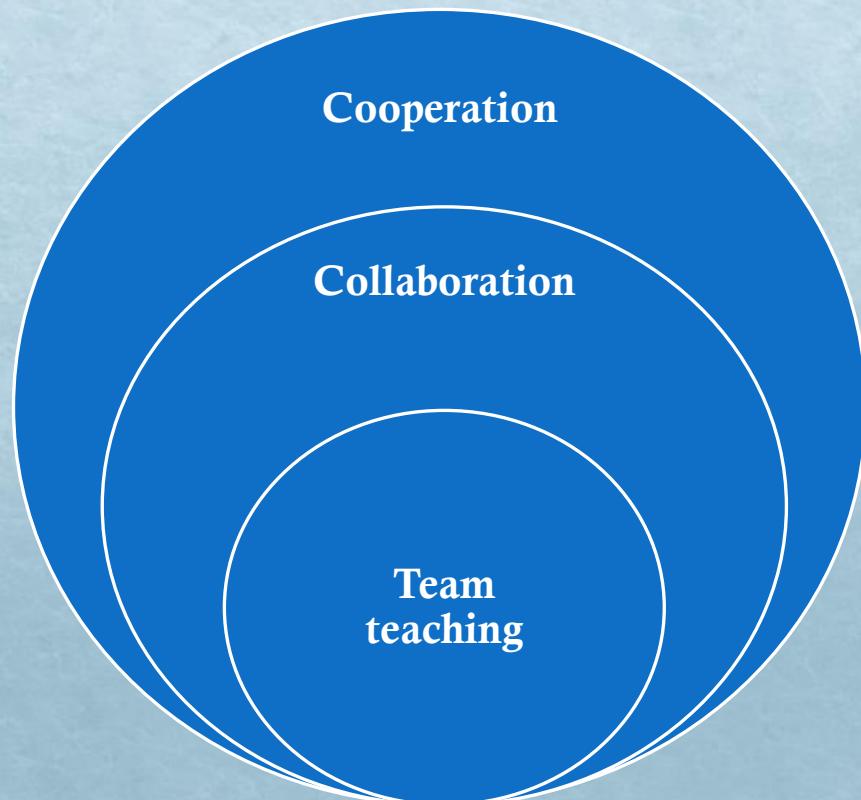
❖ Workshops:

- ❖ paralleled weekly unit content as presented in each lecture
- ❖ focused concurrently on imminent assessment tasks
- ❖ facilitated by two teachers : an academic literacies teacher and discipline expert
- ❖ Focus on:
 - ❖ academic literacies: critical-analytical reading (Wingate, 2011)
 - ❖ disciplinary literacies: discipline knowledge in a manner appropriate for university

Embedding the Unit Support Program

Modelling cross-disciplinary collaboration

Model of Collaboration (Dudley-Evans, 2001):



Step 1: Cooperation

- ❖ Liaison with academic staff
- ❖ Commitment from faculty and UCC:
 - ❖ “buy-in” from BGL, who recognised the USP as part of a faculty-based program (Thies et al, 2014)
 - ❖ UCC which acknowledged USP as an integral part of the targeted units.
- ❖ “Team approach” and joint responsibility for improving student learning outcomes.

Step 2: Collaboration

- ❖ Literacy staff involved in the development of the program in partnership with unit convenors and tutors responsible for teaching in the USP workshops
 - ❖ mapping academic literacies to learning outcomes, and linking them to assessment tasks
- ❖ UC -
 - ❖ Staff training
 - ❖ Promotion of the program
 - ❖ All students encouraged to attend and participate
 - ❖ At risk student identified through diagnostic pre-testing
 - ❖ Unit tutors and convenors invited to participate in USP workshops when focus was on assessment tasks.

Step 3: Team teaching

- ❖ Two teachers co-teaching or pair-teaching in the same unit and in the same classroom (Liebel et al, 2017)
- ❖ Expertise of staff in disparate disciplines to enhance student learning, the development of academic literacies and success
- ❖ Team teaching featured in *all* workshops
- ❖ ‘Content’ expert and ‘literacies’ expert take equal responsibility for the teaching and learning process

Negotiating shared teaching & learning space

- ❖ Roles of literacy teacher:
- ❖ scaffold literacies (compared to scaffold content)
 - ❖ deconstruct assignment tasks
 - ❖ unpack implicit elements of questions
 - ❖ give more “attention to the nature of taken-for-granted processes in the discipline”
(Bury & Sheese, 2016, p. 6)
 - ❖ “intermediary role” (Dudley-Evans, 2001)
 - ❖ responsibility for inducting students into the discipline transferred from subject tutors to “agents” outside the discipline (Dudley-Evans, 2001, p. 227; Hunter & Tse, 2013).

Pedagogical Principles

- ❖ Active knowledge construction (learn by doing) -
 - ❖ Learner-centred teaching and learning tasks
- ❖ Scaffolded approach -
 - ❖ High challenge-high support model (Mariani, 1997)
 - ❖ Designed-in (planned) and contingent (unplanned) tasks (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005)
 - ❖ Scaffolding Literacy Cycle (Rose, Lui-Chivizhe and Smith, 2003)
- ❖ Process-oriented approach (Haggis, 2006)

* (see sample 1st year program)

Supporting assessment

- ❖ Academic literacies development incorporated into all assessment tasks across the three units:
 - ❖ **Scaffolding academic essay:** *analysing and deconstructing essay questions; selecting and evaluating information sources; synthesising information from multiple sources and incorporating these into students' own writing; and planning and drafting the essay.*
 - ❖ **Sub-set of learning tasks:** *navigating through a journal article; identifying relevant ideas from a variety of genres; using appropriate note-taking strategies; paraphrasing and summarising techniques; conventions of citations; preparation of essay outlines.*

Student perceptions of USP

Team teaching:

- ◊ “good having multiple teachers” because each had “different ways to approach a topic.”
- ◊ “two teachers provided two different professional perspectives on the subjects.”
- ◊ “They work together extremely well, one is very good at theory and the other is really good with connected with students,”
- ◊ “one teacher does not provide enough points, another teacher can add” and “the second teacher was always able to answer questions and help more students.”

Staff perceptions of USP

- ❖ Increased understanding of value and role of USP:
 - ❖ “*The collaboration of a discipline ... and an academic skills tutor produce a powerful source of learning for all students, seeking to develop their understanding of the relevant discipline, and approach the unit assessment (and equally, other university tasks) with greater confidence.*”
- ❖ New insights into academic language and literacy issues of students:
 - ❖ “*developed an appreciation for the use of clear and structured communication to meaningfully engage students, and ... the impact of [investing] time in explaining a concept thoroughly.*”
- ❖ Professional development for academics:
 - ❖ “*my professional development is undoubtedly enriched. The opportunity to work with, and observe the practices of an academic skills tutor could be characterised as a form of indirect training, whereby university tutors discover tools to improve their own approaches to teaching.*”

Quantitative findings

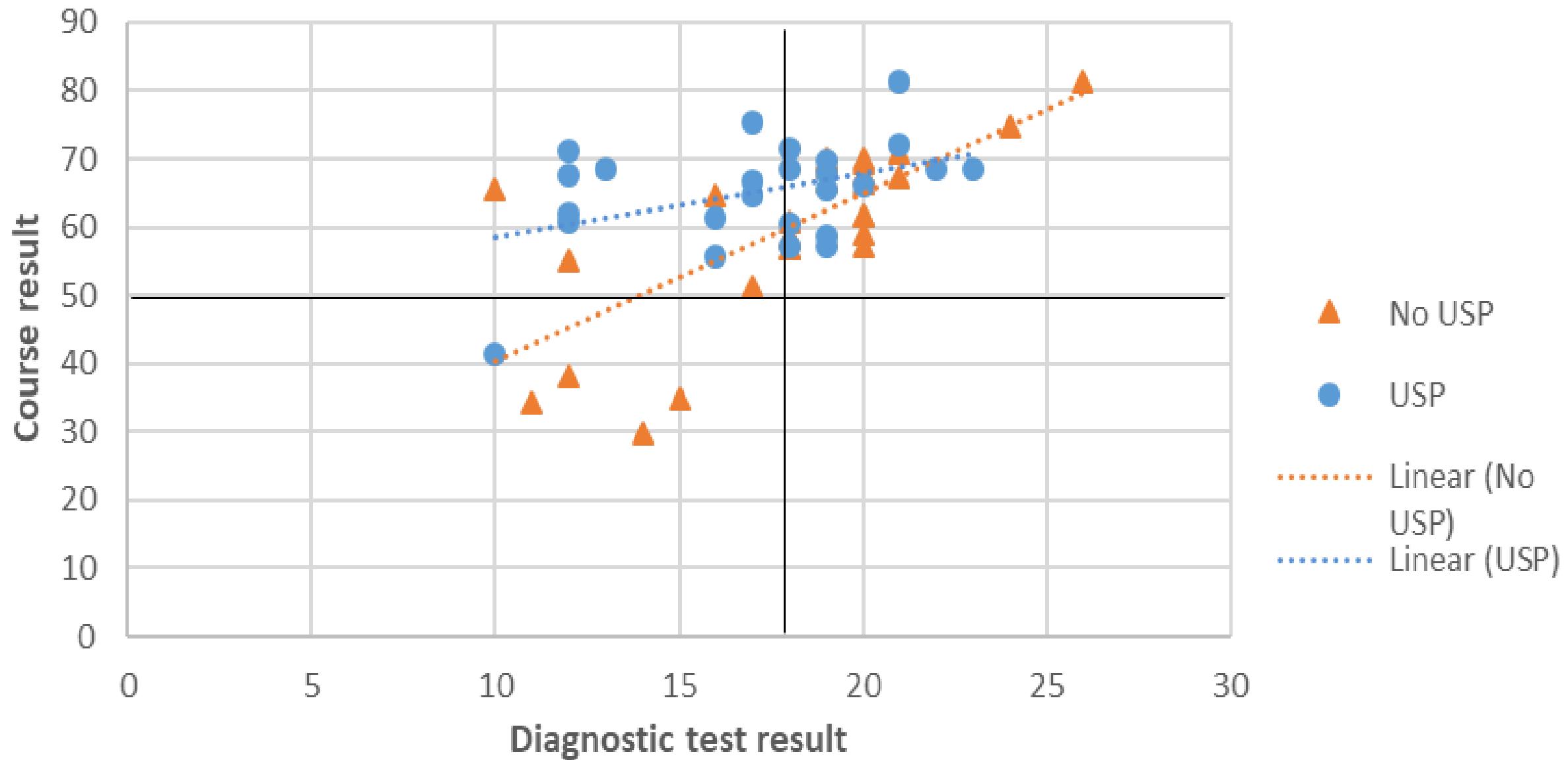
- ❖ Data based on student attendance, retention data, pass-fail rates, final student results
- ❖ Benefits of USP program:
 - ❖ Better engagement
 - ❖ Greater retention in the unit
 - ❖ Higher pass rates in first and third years
 - ❖ Above average final marks
 - ❖ Increased understanding of unit content

Pass-fail rates across the years

Unit	USP		Non-USP		p^a
	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	
ITM ($N= 487$)	89	91.0 (81)	398	77.1 (307)	0.003
OB ($N= 221$)	34	100 (34)	187	91.9 (172)	— ^b
CIA ($N= 129$)	45	80 (36)	84	63.1 (53)	0.048

^b The z -test for proportions requires at least five students in each category (i.e. pass or fail), and so would not be valid to apply for the OB cohort.

Overall Result and Diagnostic Test



Conclusion

- ❖ Institution wide approach to developing first year students' academic literacies
- ❖ Limitations of model - costly, complex, resource-intensive, unsustainable
- ❖ Cost-effective use of resources
- ❖ Unit Specific Model represents a model of best practice
- ❖ Short term: faculty-wide program
- ❖ Long term: university-wide approach

Any questions?

Maldoni, A. (2017). A cross-disciplinary approach to embedding: A pedagogy for developing academic literacies. *Journal of Academic Language and Learning*, 11(1), A104-A124.



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