

ABSTRACT

Multilingual Academic Coaching: Supporting International and Multicultural Students through Peer Facilitated Academic Skills Workshops

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Learning Centres, as part of their mandate to support student success and development, work alongside other campus services to support International students, as well as domestic students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Peer tutoring and peer academic coaching are an integral part of these support services, contributing to improved learning outcomes for tutees, and the development of presentation and leadership skills for tutors (Mikyong Minsun Kim, 2015; Arco-Tirado, Fernandez-Martn, & Fernandez-Balboa, 2011). Furthermore, the development of strong social support networks contributes to the success of International students in their transition to host country educational systems (Hendrickson, Rosen, & Aune, 2011). Trained peer tutors and coaches can play a vital role in facilitating this networking by modelling effective learning skills and encouraging new students to engage in campus student life activities.

This presentation describes a project to increase International student engagement with Learning Centres, in particular with Academic Skills Workshops. These workshops endeavour to build basic study skills in a participatory, peer-learning environment. Student surveys conducted before the implementation of the program indicated that some students would prefer to attend such workshops if they were available in the students mother tongues (e.g. Mandarin, Arabic). In response, a pilot program, where experienced peer tutors and coaches were trained to develop and facilitate three Academic Skills Workshops, was developed.

Peer tutors participated in a structured program of training each semester, which included training in basic adult learning theory, critical questioning, and study strategies. In the pilot program, they were given additional training in workshop Diversity development, and were supported by Learning Centre faculty to plan and deliver two Academic Skills Workshops in their mother tongues. During orientation events, International Students were informed of the sessions and encouraged to register. However once the international students engaged with this process we found that there were high priorities that students from different cultures needed to address before any learning skills development tool place. Our program aims included developing strong links between International students and peer mentors as well as highlighting the importance of negotiating priorities when it comes to students transitional needs.

Participants in this session will:

- Identify the benefits of engaging peer tutors/mentors in the facilitation of Academic Skills workshops;
- Discuss a model for training experienced peer tutors as workshop facilitators;
- Discuss initiatives for connecting International Students with learning support services in culturally relevant ways