



## Not just ‘another workshop’: intensive study skills programs at UC

### Key Words

intensive, study skills, workshops, student engagement, transition, at-risk

### Abstract

Increasing numbers of students are entering Australian universities with varying levels of academic preparedness and social and cultural capital, including misconceptions of what to expect as well as what is expected of them. With this massification of higher education has also come lowered retention, with recent figures estimating an overall attrition rate of almost 15 percent in first year, double that of second year (Kift 2015). The high cost of early student departure for both the institution and the student is widely acknowledged. As such, reaching at-risk students in their first year of study has become an important part of supporting student retention and is now integral to the strategic initiatives of most universities. According to research by Astin (1984), student personnel workers may be uniquely positioned to foster increased student involvement, although they may struggle to find a sufficient “hook” to encourage such involvement. As Learning Advisors, we are always seeking ways to engage students to positively impact on success and retention. Like our colleagues at many institutions, Study Skills at the University of Canberra (UC) has offered a range of short workshops to try to achieve this; however we have struggled to engage significant students numbers. Building on the commonly accepted theories and best practice research, this presentation will explore programs that attract new students, enhance the first year student experience and encourage persistence. Discussion will centre on programs targeted at first year students, considering timing, content and delivery. This paper will showcase the successful Intensive English and the Study Skills for Success programs at UC and participants will be encouraged to share the programs they offer. Both UC programs are open to all students, although they are targeted at those in the first year of undergraduate study. Intensive English is a four day course covering skills in academic reading and writing, grammar, paraphrasing, note-taking, listening and oral presentations. Study Skills for Success is a full day transition program providing guidance and key strategies for navigating the University online environment, breaking down assignment criteria, assignment writing, note-taking, researching and referencing. Both programs encourage active participation with the content and promote study skills services as an ongoing part of the student journey. The benefits of this type of intensive course as opposed to shorter, individual workshops will also be explored. This includes the extended time for: • teachers to provide explanations and examples of study strategies; • students to practise the strategies and ask questions; • teachers to provide feedback; • the development of rapport among teachers and students. They also provide opportunities for students to acquire and consolidate the various skills and strategies needed to complete an assignment, rather than learning them in isolation.

### References

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HERDSA Review of Higher Education, vol.2, pp. 51-86, viewed 13 April 2017,