STUDENT PEER LEARNING & THE AALL PROFESSIONAL

EVOLUTION, EQUITY & INNOVATION

Students Supporting Student Learning (SSSL)
Symposium 2012

Victoria University, City Convention Centre, Level 12, 300 Flinders St, Melbourne
Hosted by the School of Language & Learning, VU College, Victoria University
Sponsored by the Association of Academic Language & Learning (AALL) & VU College, Victoria University

Wednesday 21st November 2012
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WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

On behalf of Victoria University and the team of staff and students in Students Supporting Student Learning, a very warm welcome to you all.

Student peer learning (sometimes referred to as student peer mentoring) has emerged in the last ten years as a particular pedagogical response to meeting the academic support needs of students. Significantly, more and more AALL professionals are being given the responsibility to determine how such programs should run and what their design and aims should be. Subsequently more and more students are finding themselves engaged in such programs as either mentors, mentees or in some cases, both.

Given the relative newness of student peer learning for AALL staff and the increasing interest in its possibilities and challenges, this Symposium aims to provide an opportunity for staff and students to discuss this emerging trend in greater detail. We will be able to share our perspectives on how peer mentoring programs complement and extend other existing forms of learning support provision and demonstrate how harnessing the skills, knowledge and experiences of students can be a powerful mechanism for developing student learning.

We are looking forward to hearing everyone’s contributions and perspectives. We hope that you find today’s symposium energising and thought provoking and that you return to your various organisations feeling confident that students supporting students with their learning can be a very powerful learning support strategy, gaining a broader network of colleagues and friends who you can call upon for support, advice and guidance.

Best wishes,

Dr Gill Best
Senior Lecturer & Coordinator, Students Supporting Student Learning (SSSL)
School of Language and Learning, VU College, Victoria University, Australia
http://www.snap.vu.edu.au/sssl

About us

The VU SSSL Senior Mentor & Senior Rover team: Joseph Ianni, Jason McLaughlin, Juliana Hamit, Ashley Hodgkin, Ancy Ramasamy & alumni James Jensen

The students addressing the audience in our opening session are employed by Students Supporting Student Learning to work 10 hours per week in ‘students as staff’ positions to support the student mentors and the staff in SSSL. Senior Mentors must have been a mentor for at least one semester prior to being eligible for the Senior Mentor position. They are a vital part of the student and staff team. Precisely because they are students, they keep us honest, focussed and on our toes. Also joining us today is VU graduate and Senior Mentor alumni James Jensen.

David Gough, Associate Dean, Language, Literacy & Numeracy (LLN), VU College, Victoria University

David comes to Victoria University with a background in African languages and linguistics and an interest in folklore and the oral tradition, particularly narrative. He has published in academic literacies, language and power and discourse analysis. David’s past positions include most recently, the Dean of Health, Humanities and Science at the Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology (CPIT) one of the larger New Zealand Polytechnics. During his 12 years with CPIT he was also in seconded roles as Dean of Trades and Engineering. Before CPIT, David was Professor of Linguistics at the University of Western Cape, South Africa.

When asked why he chose to work at VU, David said “I followed my linguistic heart coming here … and my interest in supporting access and student success in complex multilingual environments”.

Dr Gill Best, Coordinator, Students Supporting Student Learning (SSSL), VU College, Victoria University

I have worked at VU since 1991. For many years I taught academic skills and language support to hundreds of students via one hour consultations, taught academic skills workshops and embedded skills into curricula. In 1998 I took my first step into the world of student peer learning by implementing a Peer Assisted Study Session (PASS) program into a biomedical science unit. Seeing both its power and its complexities I felt that such programs could extend the type of learning support offered by AALL units and do so in ways that build on student potential and harness and validate differences. From 1998 I experimented with student peer learning, creating a myriad of different programs to suit a wide variety of contexts. In 2010 this work culminated in the the creation of Students Supporting Student Learning (SSSL) and a suite of programs which has been tried and tested to work for our students and our organisational context. I consider SSSL to be an exciting, transformative system of learning support for VU’s students. Significantly the programs are a key to unlocking and developing the talents and knowledge of VU’s socially, culturally and linguistically diverse student population. It is the students’ energy and vitality and their willingness to help other students learn that are the foundations of the success of the programs and which ‘make me get up in the morning’.
## Symposium program

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### Registration
- 08:30:09:15
- OPENING: Room 1
  - The VU SSSL Senior Mentor & Senior Rover team; Dr David Gough, Associate Dean, Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN); Dr Gill Best, Senior Lecturer, Coordinator, Students Supporting Student Learning (SSSL), VU College, Victoria University

### ‘Show & Tell’ Sessions
- 10:00-10:30
  - ‘Getting to know you’: How peer to peer learning has enhanced the role of AALL professionals
    - Dominic Fitzsimmons (UNSW)
  - Through the eyes of the Writing Mentors
    - Sam Keest, John King & Jackie Hammill (VU)
  - Student 2 Student Union
    - Jack Boyd (Think: CLASS)

- 10:30-11:00
  - The Rover program at VU: What do students say?
    - Dana Chahal, Majok Doong & Serli Wjyaka (VU)
  - Undergraduate students as academic skills tutors: A transformative experience
    - Suzanne Dooley, Andrew McNiece & Jessica Martin (ACU)

### Morning Tea
- 11:00-11:30

### Evolution Sessions
- 11:30-12:00
  - Evolution of a student mentor program
    - Alan Calder (JCU)
  - Equity & social inclusion: An international issue
    - Jackie Hammill (VU)

### Equity Sessions
- 11:30-12:00
  - Equity & social inclusion: An international issue
    - Jackie Hammill (VU)
  - Twitter, wikis, SCVNGR: Using technology to facilitate collaborative learning and peer support
    - Rowan Michael (Griffith)

### Innovation Sessions
- 11:30-12:00
  - Twitter, wikis, SCVNGR: Using technology to facilitate collaborative learning and peer support
    - Rowan Michael (Griffith)
  - Virtual meet-up: Innovating to capture the essence of student peer learning
    - Lindy Kimmins (USQ)

### Student Swap Shop
- 12:00-13:00
  - Peer Assisted Tutorials: Embedding peer support in a core foundation unit
    - Brian Zammit (VU)
  - Maths mentoring - does it work? An experiment with Peer Assisted Tutorials
    - Sue Ferguson & Janelle Hill (VU)
  - Virtual meet-up: Innovating to capture the essence of student peer learning
    - Lindy Kimmins (USQ)
  - Developing peer learning across Deakin University: students helping students drop in station
    - Rachel Baron (Deakin)
Metaphors and understandings...

- Space, liminality, from the margins to the middle
- Discourses: Dominant and dominated
- Pluralities: diversity, literacies
- Problems and resources
- Inducting, Developing, Becoming...
- Health (fixing, supporting, ....)
- Journeys....
- Agency: Engagement, Persistence
Evolution, Equity, Innovation: My Evolving Journey

Dr Gill Best
Senior Lecturer
Coordinator Students Supporting Student Learning (SSSL) VU College, Victoria University

1. To pay or not to pay?

...instead of framing workplace learning as 'learning to work', it will be framed as a context for 'learning to learn' - or 'learningful work'. ...By engaging in 'learningful work' they are learning to be learners attuned to the demands of a complex world.
(McCormack, Pancini and Tout 2010 Victoria University)

2. What if they get it wrong?

“...The advantage of deploying students in this critical work of translation and mediation is that everyone involved understands that what the student says is not absolutely authoritative...” (McCormack, Best and Kirkwood, 2009)

3. Students will take our jobs

• Students come and go
• Students need teachers to help them learn how to become good learners
• The work is educational not administrative

4. What is best practice?

Instead...
• Ask a set of best questions & develop some answers
• What do you hope to achieve?
• Why are these things important?
• What needs can be better met through what you want to do?
(Rey Carr, Peer Resources Network http://www.peer.ca)

This...

...
Our Assumptions & Philosophy

...students want to be more deeply involved in the core business of the university - student learning - not just as individual learners or consumers but in community and sociality - engaged in their university. ...SSSL is a strategy that leverages the unique cultural, social and ethical resources characterising our students.

Thank you for listening....

Format of the rest of the day...
1. Toilets round by the lifts
2. Please keep balcony area tidy, don’t place cups on ledge and please put cigarette butts in bins!
3. Staff and students choose and attend presentations between 10 and 11:00.
4. Morning tea
5. Students and staff split.
6. Lunch
7. Everyone back together for lunch and rest of day

References

Rey Carr, Peer Resources Network http://www.peer.ca


McCormack, Best and Kirkwood, 2009 Students Supporting Students’ Learning (S3L). A report to the VU College Board of Studies. A Proposal for Supporting Student Learning
Victoria University.
Peer learning provides a valuable resource basis for the Academic Language and Learning area in two important ways. First, it is a valuable service to students who want to know the ‘rules of the game’ used in university assignments. Second, just as important it provides a kind of apprenticeship for postgraduate students to ‘learn the ropes’ of how to be an academic adviser. As a result the AALL is constantly enriched by people who cross the border between Faculties and Learning Centres. Perhaps AALL can best be described as a kind of borderland where different academic and lived experiences provide a constant reflection on the work we do. I argue that the apprenticeship for all early career academics, particularly during postgraduate studies, should include 2-4 semesters spent working in the AALL area as an academic peer to the early year students. This ‘show and tell’ session will focus on the experience of the Peer Writing Assistant program at UNSW which reveals that the peer learning undertaken here yields twin harvests: students learn how to study better, and their postgraduate peers learn something of the art and craft of teaching. This mutual benefit also leads to the more experienced AALL professional having more opportunities to conceive and teach programs in faculties, as well as work on innovative teaching materials across a broader range of teaching contexts.

Background to the Peer Writing Assistant program – a short history

- First intake in 1997
- Peer-to-peer learning: based on the idea that ‘authenticity’ and ‘credibility’ (Brookfield) contribute significantly to learning
- PWAs are mainly postgraduate students and from any academic discipline, generally PWAs are part of the program for 2-3 years. PWAs include both local and international students.
- 1 hr individual consultations which are driven by the student and facilitated by the PWA. A weekly shift is a set time of 4x1hr consultations.
- Consultations are focussed on ‘structure’ and ‘process’, rather than disciplinary content.
- PWAs are employed as Professional & Technical staff on casual basis. Approx 68 hours of consultations offered each week of semester, generally not available in breaks.

Mentoring of PWAs

- Orientation
- 2-3hrs session with Co-ordinator
- Meeting with existing PWAs
- Shadowing
- 2x 1hr sessions
- Observation of experienced PWA
- Debrief with PWA
- Monthly meetings
- 2hrs all PWAs
- Theme based on article
- Debrief on consults in previous month
- End of semester reflection
- Half hour meeting with coordinator
- Written 1-2 page critical reflection
‘Getting to Know You’: How peer to peer learning has enhanced the role of AALL professionals

Dominic Fitzsimmons

Mutual benefits

- Students’ perspective
  - Confidence & trust
  - Skills in academic work
  - Able to ask questions
  - Individual relationship
  - Neutral venue
  - To express half baked ideas

- PWAs’ perspective
  - Deep listening
  - Encountering a range of students
  - Becoming familiar with fundamentals
  - Building a tool kit of ideas – teaching and learning activities
  - Empathy
  - Develop perspective for own work

Impact on Learning Advisers

- Delegation
  - PWAs are able to do the fundamental work with students, which leaves LA with more time for teaching courses/workshops.
  - LAs able to work with faculty on embedding academic skills components directly into courses for credit.

- Mentoring
  - LA able to mentor PWAs in both academic skills and discipline-based teaching.
  - PWAs consultation area is in the Learning Centre, so questions can be asked at the moment when needed.

- Safety in dealing with stressed students
  - PWAs are able to learn the art and craft of teaching in workshops, and courses for credit.
  - LAs can work with PWAs in specific areas eg. how to work with students in dealing with plagiarism, or how to mark well and give appropriate feedback.

- Professional
  - Enhances the professionalism of the LA position, as it provides some kind of pathway into the ‘working philosophy’ of being an LA.
  - Being able to ‘get what it is we do’ at a time and applied practice.

PWAs are able to do the fundamental work with students, which leaves LA with more time for teaching courses/workshops. LAs able to work with faculty on embedding academic skills components directly into courses for credit.
A common strand within research into student learning is the way that students go about learning. A new take on learning is presented that uses meta-cognition or meta-learning. The idea of meta-learning is a model of student learning that involves relationships between students, the social context and the learning outcomes that are reconciled by the student’s meta-learning capability. Instruments have been designed to measure and evaluate the reliability and validity of student-to-student support within an online context.

The S2SU is an open education project that organises learning outside of institutional walls and gives learners the tools they need to attain their goals. S2SU has created a model for transferable academic skills alongside traditional formal higher education. Leveraging the educational materials that can be accessed via the internet, S2SU enables high-quality low-cost education opportunities. S2SU is an online academic environment developed to provide students an educational and social framework within which they can research, discuss and use academic skills, such as critical thinking and problem solving for their assignments.

One of the main appeals of S2SU is that it provides students with a context that is controlled by them, in which they can explore, create and exchange ideas and experiences. This enables them to acquire timeless skills and knowledge important for success not only in their university courses but also in their professional life. Engaging in meaningful communication is positively correlated with the integrative motivation and successful learning. The students seem more willing to participate in their culturally diverse peer groups where they share, discuss and ponder on their academic experiences.
Research Sample
1st Semester
Billy Blue Design Students
55 students
33 women / 22 men
average age 22.7 years
final numbers 12

Brainstormed: What is Learning?
- getting information
- school is just a information dumping ground
- teachers give me information I need for a test
- Tell me what I need to know

Survey & Interviews
8 week trial

Design students not interested in Academic Skills
What do you think of Academic Skills?
1 Facebook when you taking
How many like Academic Skills?
70 / 80
How many like Learning?
100 /

Questions Design Students Ask
- What do I need to know to pass
- Is this assessed?
- Do I need to come?

Crisis of Significance
- What does it mean for me?

Social, social media
- develop a learning community supported by technology specifically the cloud and social media.
Students use media tools basically just for entertainment.

Students don't know how to use media as a learning tool.

We curate the learning environment.

Theory

Constructivism

(John Dewey & Jean Piaget)

Contextual

Active

Collaborative

Community of Learners.

Knowledge is actively constructed by people talking, working and discovering together (in Vaille Lysaght & Veronikina 2008).

Social Constructivism

"Culture and Environment are part of the learning process. Learning is constructed through interactions." (Oliver & Carr, 2009)
Curated Participation

the process that nurtures new members' participation in community practices
crowd sourced learning

how it works

join the conversation

BLOG FORUM
Student 2 Student Union
Jock Boyd
3 forms of SLA

Network analytic: Links between students
Discourse analytic: What students talk about
Content analytic: What do students use

How learners build knowledge together in their cultural and social settings

Network analytic
- Links between students

Discourse analytic
- What students talk about

Content analytic
- What do students use

Network Analytic

Google Analytics:
- Visits
- New and return
- Page views
- Individual page view
- Page more
- Page exit
- Exit location
Discourse Analytic

Corpus linguistics

Forum interactions by keyword

Debate on the role of ML (Machine Learning)

3 types

- disputational
- cumulative
- exploratory

“I don’t believe, alternative, good point, relates too, does that mean, have you looked at, my understanding...”

These interactions were then visualized for the learners to show how well they were reasoning, evaluating, and extending the discussion.

This gives them an idea on their participation, engagement, and attitude in the discussion without directly interfering.

Some theory is probably missing from it.
We then advised them via Pinterest to resources that will challenge or extend their knowledge. For example:

- you’ve been looking for ideas on referencing have a look at this Pinterest page.
- jock boyd has talked about referencing, view jock’s most recent posts in the forum/blog/tumblr.

Student rate and review the resources.

We can then re-create a Pinterest board with new links.
Student Peer Learning & The AALL Professional
Evolution, Equity & Innovation

Results

Small study

12 interested students remained
Survey questions were directed at defining
Attitudes to Academic Skills
and then interview after 8 weeks.

Overall results
3 main themes

1. Preference for students to student learning rather than staff teaching
2. Improved confidence and self-esteem
3. More relaxed way of learning
This underpins the idea of S2SL as a better way to engage with the student on academic Skills

Conclusion
Research question explored a system that would enable skills sharing between students, autonomous of teachers and colleges.

We also investigated social learning analytics to make use of the mass of data generated by learners online activity when they are socially engaged, including:
- Direct interaction through forums
- Indirect interaction through clicks

Further research is required but the action research project showed that students prefer this approach.

Recommendations
The different analytics could be employed:
- Analyse a learner’s behaviour
- Support their individual learning

SNAPP (Social Networks Analyzing Pedagogical Practice) is a software application that visualises data from discussion forums posts to perceive behavioural patterns.

However the study did not ever investigate if students were learning.

Q & A
Through the Eyes of the Writing Mentors
Sam Keast, John King & Jackie Hammill
Victoria University

In 2011 Victoria University (VU) piloted a Writing Space at its Footscray Park campus. It is the latest addition to VU’s suite of Students Supporting Student Learning programs. Beginning with seven mentors and one campus the Writing Space expanded in 2012 to a second location at the St Albans campus and the number of writing mentors increased to ten. There are significant challenges in the development of the Writing Space and the ongoing support of writing mentors. This presentation will focus specifically on the challenges of this new peer support initiative as seen through the eyes of the Writing Mentors in being part.

I am myself only in relation to certain interlocutors: in one way in relation to those conversation partners who were essential to my achieving self-definition... A self only exists within what I call ‘webs of interlocution’. (Taylor, 1989)

The Writing Mentors:
Group Evolution

- Group Composition
  - NO Senior Writing Mentors
  - New & Returning Mentors

The Writing Mentors: Group Evolution

- Suggestion
  - Possibility of a ‘mentoring the mentors’ component

The Writing Mentors: Group Evolution

- Expansion
  - Mentors caught up informally
  - 75% said they felt they belonged to a group
  - 100% said some kind of group cohesion was important
The Writing Mentors: Group Evolution

- Suggestion
  - Smaller informal catch up / in session
  - Encouraging and facilitating informal relations

Students as Staff

- The Dichotomy
  - ‘Studentness’
  - Professionalism
  - Emails & Debriefs

Impact of the Role

- Did student mentors feel they developed
  - All agreed (50% strongly agreed, 50% agreed)

Communication Across the Group

- Wiki posts
- Debriefs
- Face to face
- Email
- Facilitated discussions

Wiki Posts

- Sharing experiences
- Place to store resources
- Diarising
- Sanitised/misinterpreted
- Discussion threads

Original Debriefs

- Connection with SSSL
- Administration concerns
- Employer/Employee relationship

Face to Face / Email

- Post-Consultation Debriefs
- Open and Honest
- In the moment
- Email used for administrative issues
Facilitated Discussions

- Informative and Helpful
- More open than Wiki Posts
- Time consuming
- Difficult to schedule

Going Forward

- Capturing shared information
- Best use for Wiki
- Managing facilitated discussions

Impact of Writing Space

“I am happy that there’s places like The Writing Space where people are there to help you to move in the right direction. Have received a lot of helpful information from Sam at The Writing Space. Now I can be a great success with the tools provided. Thank you.”

“Made my day! Feel more confident to hand assignment in. Very helpful in helping to clarify my understanding of the terms and concepts I was dealing with in my report. Thanks.”

“Absolutely amazing. I definitely understand my assignment now and I’m not stressed out!”

“Made me think for myself which was very impressive.”
The Rover Program at VU: What do students say?

Dana Chahal, Majok Doong & Serli Wijaya
Victoria University

In 2006, the School of Language and Learning at Victoria University (VU) initiated The Student Rover Program “as an on-campus, work-based program in which students are employed to provide ‘just-in-time’ and ‘just-in-place’ learning support to other students in the university’s Learning Commons” (Best et al., 2011, p. 3). Currently, it is one of the three key programs (Writing Space; Student Peer Mentoring; and Student Rovers) constituting Student Supporting Student Learning (SSSL), a central student support strategy endorsed by VU and directly linked to its mission objectives (Dawkins, 2011).

While the smooth running of the Rover Program is continuously ensured and its effective practices regularly maintained, a more formal evaluation process has been undertaken in 2012 which focuses on the perceived impacts of the program. This paper reports on key findings drawn from the perspectives of two survey participant groups: the Rovers and VU students. It focuses on how these groups perceive the program as impacting their studies, university experience, and future careers.

References
Who are the Rovers?

**VU students**

- Work in the Learning Commons of 5 VU campuses
- Represent VU’s diverse student population
  - Cultural/linguistic
  - Area of study/Faculty
  - Level of study

How are Rovers structured?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rover Program Coordinator</th>
<th>Senior Rover</th>
<th>Lead Rover CF</th>
<th>Lead Rover FN</th>
<th>Lead Rover FP</th>
<th>Lead Rover STA</th>
<th>Lead Rover WER</th>
<th>Rover Geek</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9 Rovers</td>
<td>5 Rovers</td>
<td>10 Rovers</td>
<td>10 Rovers</td>
<td>5 Rovers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Background & Purpose

Rover Program:
- Institutional recognition
- Model adapted locally and internationally

2012:
- Evaluating the success of the program using more formal and evidence-based methods

What do Rovers do?

- VU Students (service-desk)
- VU Students (mentors)
- Friendly & supportive conversations around being a student at university
- Learning and Professional Development
- Developing a Community of Practice
- Writing Space Mentors
- Basic technical problems in the Learning Commons
- Friendly & supportive conversations around being a student at university

THE ROVER PROGRAM EVALUATION SCHEME

Background & Purpose
The Rover Program Evaluation Scheme
Evaluation Process
Key findings: Satisfaction & Impact

The Rover Program Evaluation Scheme

Stakeholder groups:
- The Rovers (Rover Survey)
- The Students (Student Survey)

Key indicators:
- **Satisfaction**: the degree of satisfaction that the stakeholder groups show towards the program.
- **Perceived Impact**: the perceived impact of the program on these stakeholders.

Evaluation Process

**STAGE 1**
- Planning
- Data Processing
- Implementation

**STAGE 2**
- Design
- Report Generation
- Data Analysis

**STAGE 3**
- Implementation
- Public Dissemination
- Pretesting
- Question design
- Online format
- Finalization of questions
- Launching of survey
- Preparatory literature
- Review of past surveys
- Review of program and university missions
- Closed-ended and open-ended questions
- Online format

Stage 1
SATISFACTION: Internal Program Processes

Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am satisfied with:</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the number of Rovers working on each shift</td>
<td>4.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the number of Rovers</td>
<td>4.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extra shifts are distributed amongst Rovers</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Satisfaction Rating</td>
<td>4.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I find the following communication method in effective:</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Desktop</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>4.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile phone text</td>
<td>4.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone call</td>
<td>4.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, I am satisfied with:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the communication methods</td>
<td>4.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the extent of communication that Rovers have</td>
<td>4.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Satisfaction Rating</td>
<td>4.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am satisfied with:</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>rover training days</td>
<td>4.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>overall quality of training</td>
<td>4.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>overall amount of training</td>
<td>3.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Satisfaction Rating</td>
<td>4.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall Satisfaction Rating = 4.18

Stage 2

- Exportation of responses to MS Excel
- Separation of Closed and Open ended responses

Stage 3

- Report Generation
- Institutional Dissemination
- Public Dissemination

ROVER SURVEY

Key Findings:
- Satisfation with internal program processes
- Perceived Impact on Rovers’ Graduate Capabilities
- Student Experience, Engagement, Retention

IMPACT: Graduate Capabilities

Rating a Rover has helped me develop:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating Percentage</th>
<th>Mean Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GD (%)</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. training and speaking skills</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. writing skills</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. library research skills</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. IT skills</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. problem solving skills</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. the ability to work in a team</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. confidence</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. personal values and ethics</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. social and cultural awareness</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. a sense of community</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall Impact Rating (Graduate Capabilities) = 4.38

Overall Impact Rating (Student Experience, Engagement, Retention) = 4.54

The program has improved my skills in all areas. I am able to tick off most graduate roles criteria from team player to communications and problem solving skills. I am more confident because of this.” (Participant #9)

“The skills I have learnt from being a rover are very interchangeable in my study, everyday life and future career. Many employers are impressed by my multicultural, interpersonal and team skills. My experience in conflict resolution and problem solving from being a rover has gained me employment in many fields.” (Participant #17)

“Being a Rover is the best time of my student life at Victoria University, it has given me an opportunity to connect with the University’s life and community as well as encourage me to learn new things in workplace, expand my knowledge, develop my skills and be well-prepared for my future career.” (Participant #13)

“Being a Rover gives us the feeling of achieving something positive for the community and give the feeling of a strong belonging with the university.” (Participant #34)
STUDENT SURVEY

Key Findings:
Satisfaction with Rover support
Perceived Impact on Student Experience, Engagement, Retention

Impact: Student Experience, Engagement, Retention

Rovers have contributed to me:

Rating Percentage Mean Rating
GD N GA
1. Feeling more confident in asking for help and learning about VU systems and services 4.2 15.9 79.9 4.12
2. Feeling more connected and engaged with the university 5.1 24.6 70.3 3.94
3. Feeling more positive about my overall student experience at university 3.7 21.5 74.8 3.98
4. Wanting to continue studying at VU 7.3 30.9 61.8 3.81
Overall Impact Rating 3.96

% and Mean Rating N=353

Summary

Rovers
• strong levels of satisfaction with internal program processes (esp. shift work structure and training)
• outstanding agreement ratings on the perceived impact of the program (Graduate Capabilities; Student experience, engagement and retention).

Students
• strong levels of satisfaction with Rovers’ support (esp. Rovers addressing specific needs).
• strong impact of the program on the Students’ experience, engagement and retention at university.

Conclusion

The Rover Program aligning with
• its own conceptualisations of
  – teaching & learning philosophy
  – Curriculum
• VU’s mission

“empowering students from diverse countries and cultures, socio-economic and educational backgrounds [in this case Rovers], to be successful lifelong learners, grow their skills and capabilities for the changing world of work, and be confident, creative, ethical and respectful, local and global citizens (VU Strategic Plan 2011:1).”

FOR THE FUTURE...

Acknowledgement, recognition and continued support
Teaching and Learning philosophy
Curriculum

http://www.snap.vu.edu.au/sssl
‘Students helping students to achieve’: Student Learning Adviser Mentor’s (SLAM’s) assist in engaging students, providing academic learning support and building a sense of belonging

Lila Kemlo
RMIT University

A plethora of research exists exploring models of peer support for student learning in Higher Education. This paper reports on a unique student-led, student-run academic mentoring program conducted in the College of Business, RMIT University. The Student Learning Adviser Mentors (SLAMs) program has approximately 150 volunteer Business students who have achieved a High Distinction (HD) or Distinction (DI). They support new and commencing students in over 32 courses/subjects with their academic studies. Operating from a ‘home room’ SLAMs is open from 9.00am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday during weeks 4 - 11 and is supervised by two 3rd year students, employed by the University during their ‘Cooperative Education’ year thereby gaining valuable work experience while ensuring a high quality mentoring service.

This program is now in its eighth year and evidence indicates that this form of mentoring actively integrates international and local students in a common cause: assisting students in ‘learning how to learn’. Over 2,500 students used the SLAMs service in 2011. Analysis of data also demonstrates that students who attend SLAMs do significantly better in their studies than others. This paper demonstrates that SLAMs is a sustainable, quality support program, valued by both academic teaching staff and the student community. Mentors and mentees have an enhanced engagement with the university community, increasing motivation and desire to succeed with their academic programs. We believe that this unique model of academic peer assistance provides an example of ‘best practice’ in the provision of student support services.

One of RMIT University’s key mission statements ‘Global in outlook and action, offering our students and staff a global passport to learning and work’ aligns with SLAM’s mission statement ‘students helping students to achieve’. This mentoring crosses cultural barriers by providing opportunities for the development of a partnership-based learning environment between local and international students.

What is SLAMs?
- Week 4 to week 11, Monday-Friday 9.00am – 5.30pm
- 180 volunteering students who have achieve high distinction and distinction.
- 2 hours a week for 8 weeks.
- Offer course help and student guidance for 32 Business courses.
- Friendly and helpful social learning environment

What does SLAMs offer?
- Support for student learning by helping students to understand how to ‘learn to learn’.
- 16 Undergraduate
- 12 Post Graduate
- 7 TAFE – Associate Degree and Diploma of Commerce

SLAMs
Student Learning Adviser Mentors
‘Students helping students to achieve’

Vera Laisanna
Co-ordinator
Siwing Lee
Co-ordinator
Jessica Corso
Mentor
Jem Ali
Ex Co-ordinator & Mentor
Lila Kemlo
Manager Student Learning Support
Academic Development Group
College of Business
RMIT University

Why SLAMs – Transition challenges for new students

Academic and Social challenges
- cope in lectures of over 300 students
- navigate the RMIT e-resources and online learning environment
- Make new friends

What influences student learning success?
- a sense of connectedness to university and program
- understanding expectations
- Ability to proactively become independent self-directed learners able to monitor own learning
- take responsibility for own learning
Benefits of being a SLAM

- Satisfaction of helping others
- Making new friends
- Increase skills and abilities
- Increased engagement with the university community

Benefits of Being a SLAM

- Certificate of Appreciation
  - 1 semester (bronze)
  - 2 semester (silver)
  - 3 semester (gold)
  - 4 semester (diamond)
  - 5 semester (platinum)
  - etc
- Excellent reference

Celebrating our Success

- Each semester, RMIT Business conducts a presentation of certificates of appreciation and awards to successful mentors who have completed their required eight weeks of volunteer support

How Do We Operate?

- Manager & Two Full-Time Coordinators (3rd year Co-op Students)
- High Service Quality
  - Overlapping roles
  - Training
  - Code of Conduct
- Marketing
  - Advertising to students
  - Advertising for mentors
  - Advertising to staff

Accessibility

- Prime location in the business building
- Physical presence as well as phone support for students
- Promoted and supported by academic staff
- Services continually featured and updated via website www.rmit.edu.au/bus/slams
Evaluation

Three types of evaluation are conducted each semester:
- Mentor evaluation and feedback
- Student evaluation and feedback
- Course coordinators review
- Annual report

Testimonial from RMIT Melbourne Students

- "SLAMs is a great opportunity to meet other students, especially those from the same course." 2nd Year Law mentor
- "I joined SLAMs because I like helping out other people…it’s good to do what I can for someone else and help them through difficult subjects. It’s good fun, I really enjoy it." 3rd year Financial Accounting mentor

Eight years later…
- Over 180 mentors volunteer each semester
- Over 2,400 students received assistance 2012
- Very high levels of student satisfaction
- Course Coordinators seeking to assist in SLAMs training
- Expanding into Post graduate and TAFE
- SLAMs in Vietnam – both campuses.
Undergraduate Students as Academic Skills Tutors: A Transformative Experience

Suzanne Dooley, Andrew McNiece & Jessica Martin
Australian Catholic University (ACU)

Academic Skills Advising at ACU Ballarat hit a hurdle in February 2010 when a PhD qualified adviser resigned effective the Thursday of Orientation Week. A search for a new adviser, who could begin immediately, was unsuccessful. Thus the undergraduate student Academic Skills Tutor was born at ACU.

This paper draws from three years’ experience with students as Academic Skills tutors and from current research to describe the evolution of the undergraduate student tutor role at the Ballarat campus. The original initiative involved one student from fourth year primary education working 7 hours a week with the 0.6 Academic Skills Adviser. In 2011 there were three students employed, including two third year nursing students. 2012 has evolved to include the first young, male, fourth year paramedicine student in the role and the service extending to Saturdays.

This ‘Show and Tell’ will focus on recruitment, selection criteria, training, scope of position, pay scale and outcomes for the individual adviser and the student cohort. It will feature two students who currently work in the position reflecting on the advantages and disadvantages of student peer tutoring and its day to day working. The adviser will reflect on this initiative considering its strengths and its shortcomings.

This initiative was a risk for the management of Academic Skills at ACU. However, it now enjoys strong support from management, academic staff and from the student body, especially first years. The calibre and quality of the students recruited and the support and training they receive is pivotal to its success.

References

**Academic Skills Tutors**

**Evolution of a Service**

- Commenced February 2010
- One undergraduate education student employed 7 hours a week.
- Expanded in 2011.
- Three students employed 7 hours each a week. One BEd 4 and two BN3s.
- In 2012 the first Paramedicine and Early Childhood students employed.
- Added 4 hours for Saturday service.

**Scope of the position**

- Co facilitate orientation week workshops.
- Attend and contribute to academic skills classes embedded in first year subjects.
- Individual consultations with all undergraduate students except those in their cohort.
- Staff library ‘drop in’ one hour a week and Saturday.
- Staff and assist at maths lab one hour a week.
- Admin/team tasks as required.
- Act as a professional ACU staff member.
- Model student success.

**Selection Criteria**

- Final year undergraduate student
- Has experience of individual appointments
- Uses the ACU Study Guide and ACU Academic Skills web site.
- Passionately interested in reading, writing, critical thinking, paragraphing, grammar, punctuation, referencing and how adults learn.
- Confident with maths.
- Familiar with achieving HDs and Ds.
- Mature, flexible, responsible, with excellent time management skills, willing to learn and work as part of a national team.

**Recruitment Process**

- Advertised to final year student cohorts in semester two.
- Written expression of interest and appointment to discuss position.
- Several discussions to ascertain student meets criteria and understands position.
- Applicant shows assessed writing samples.
- Applicant names Academic as referee.
- Referee contacted.
- Pay rate clarified. HEW 4 Casual $30+ an hour.
- Student submits formal written application to National Manager.
- Interview with National Manager.

**Training and mentoring**

- Tutors encouraged to
  - reread ACU Study Guide
  - explore ACU Academic Skills website very closely. Read pamphlets on study tips.
- Tutors offered texts e.g. Essential Academic Skills (2009) by Turner, Ireland, Krenus and Pointon, (Rev. ed.)
- Informed of AALL website and Grammar gang etc.

**Moving into the role**

A range of emotions accompanied the transition into the role of an academic skills tutor.

- Anxiety
- Inadequacy
- Excitement
- Nervousness
The challenges of moving into the role

Various challenges accompanied the transition into the role of an academic skills tutor
- Comprehension of assignments outside of own discipline
- Establishing an effective routine around own study
- Being succinct and timely with individual student appointments

Negatives

- Some students and teachers are sceptical of the role
- It is difficult to give constructive feedback for unfamiliar discipline specific tasks due to limited exposure
- Sometimes challenging to juggle with university workload
- Some assignments that are brought in were difficult to understand
- Some students tried to engage in discussions about the quality of lecturers
- Sometimes students wanted indicative grades or wanted opinions on grades after they had been allocated

Gains from working in this role

- My writing and analytical skills have increased.
- Mostly, my communicative abilities have increased and flourished.
- I have gained self-confidence in my ability to speak publicly and to my peers.

From the literature

- Definition of peer tutoring...Grieshammer & Peters (2011)
  “...a consulting service in which students help other students with their writing.” [p.121]
- “…both participants in a tutoring session are equal partners.” (Kruse and Ruhmann, as cited in Grieshammer & Peters, 2011, p.121). Therefore collaborative learning.
- More accurate definition of ACU Ballarat Academic Skills tutors ‘...a middle person, the tutor, who inhabits a world somewhere between student and teacher.’ (Harris, as cited in Adams, 2011, p111).
- Not equal partners...

Positives

- Having the ability to convey experience and knowledge from a student perspective.
- Developing own language and communication skills
- The opportunity to hone teaching and communication skills
- The opportunity to experience the inner workings of the university
- Strong support team and meeting other students.
- Students having the opportunity to consult with a student who has experienced what it is they are experiencing. This is particularly the case for first years.
- Preparing and presenting consultation for the Clemente program was a great experience.

Anecdotes

“Thanks for your help with that assessment tools assignment – I got a HD” – 1st year student
“I really appreciate all that you and Suzanne and Jess do for me. I got a HD for the assignment about Joan and a DI for the assignment about Peggy” – 2nd year student
“Thanks for your help – that makes so much more sense now!” 1st year student

Many students reported that they really like having the opportunity to seek advice from peers who have a first hand understanding of their perspective.

Outcomes for other students

- Peer to peer learning promotes an environment where it is acceptable to do well.
- Opportunity to discuss assignments and university life with another student (someone who has “been there, done that”!)
- Sense of support for commencing students and having a familiar face around campus
- Hopefully we have helped to increase student’s academic skills!

From the literature

- Wide acceptance of peer learning and peer help in US Education...Grieshammer & Peters, 2011
- Accepted to a lesser extent in the UK.
- Scepticism a common problem in Europe especially from faculty
- Scepticism from Academics not reported on Ballarat Campus. Staff broadly supportive of any student assistance.
- Difficulty of tutoring in a ‘unknown’ subjects. Refer tutors to Unit Outlines early in a consultation.
For the individual academic skills tutor:
• Significant improvement in writing skills
• Recognized in prizes, awards, scholarships
• Insight into university – equity...
• Employability skills significantly enhanced

For the undergraduate student cohort:
• Academic skills learning is modelled as a student issue
• Academic skills has a student ‘face’
• Individual consultations enhance equity provision
• Availability for Clemente students enhances equity
• Models of student success.

For the Academic Skills Adviser:
• Provides immediate access to student concerns
• Allows for provision of more services e.g. library drop in, maths lab, Saturdays, more individual consultations, clashing workshops, equity concerns,
• Puts a younger, more accessible face on academic skills
• Provides admin/project assistance
• Presents academic skills as a team approach
• Provides models of student success accessible to all students.

References

What can be improved?
• Encouraging student tutors to establish a regular meeting time.
• Regular chats with Suzanne were extremely helpful and am sure other students undertaking this role would also find them to be helpful!
Evolution of a Student Mentor Program

Alan Calder
James Cook University

This year James Cook University (JCU) celebrates 21 years of student mentoring. This session reflects on the features that have survived and those that have been discarded in the interests of survival. The JCU Student Mentor Program is now seen as an essential part of a coherent institution-wide approach to transition (Kift & Nelson, 2005), with academic language and learning activities that are embedded through ongoing collaboration with academic and professional staff. Within a third generation first year experience that is ‘everybody’s business’ (Wilson, 2009; Kift, Nelson & Clarke, 2010), the voluntary Student Mentor Program now almost serves as a ‘pre-requisite’ for students to obtain paid work as Peer Advisers, Student Ambassadors, and in some cases Academic Language and Learning professionals. This session will also discuss how discipline-specific peer support strategies and collaborative learning spaces have contributed to the evolution of the program.

References

Evolution of the SMP

- Lyn Rooke

Evolution of a Student Mentor Program

21 Years of peer support
Equity & Social Inclusion: An International Issue

Jackie Hammill
Victoria University

Equity has become a focal point for tertiary institutes throughout the world. It is well understood that sectors of society that have lower education levels are more likely to have higher unemployment rates, and be higher consumers of health care services, all affecting the bottom-line of any economy. By removing blocks to accessing Higher Educational qualifications individuals are provided with an increased opportunity to reach their full potential and participate fully in society (Australian Government, 2011). Student peer learning programs can assist to increase confidence and study skills and decrease fear of failure. Having been born in Canada and worked in Higher Education in Canada, New Zealand, Bahrain and now Australia I have had the opportunity to work with various peer mentoring programs to support equity groups and assist with improving pass and retention rates within each given institution. This presentation will look at how I have perceived equity and social inclusion to be conceptualised in Australasia, North America and the Middle East in relation to student peer learning.

References

Equity & Social Inclusion: An International Issue
Jackie Hammill

Equity: Bahrain
“Education empowers people to reach their full potential in business, government and society. It will shape and develop the successive generations of leaders that our country needs and will provide Bahrainis with the skills, knowledge and values that they need to become the employees of choice for high-valued added positions.”
(Economic Vision 2030 for Bahrain, p.13)

Equity & Social Inclusion: a National Issue
Jackie Hammill

Equity: Australia

Social Inclusion:
The Australian Government’s vision of a socially inclusive society is one in which all Australians feel valued and have the opportunity to participate fully in the life of Australian society.

Fairness
Ability to develop their full potential
(Australian Government, 2011)

Peer Support @ Bahrain Polytechnic

2008
Remedial
Limited involvement with lecturers
Lack of advertising
Inflexibility

2010
Education of lecturers
Increased lecturer involvement
Increased promotion
Flexibility around structure

Peer Support @ VU

• Initial Training
  – Ongoing Training
  – Online reflections
  – Face to face de-brief
  – Class observations

Education of lecturers
Increased lecturer involvement
Increased promotion
Flexibility around structure

Study Space

Twitter, Wikis, SCVNGR: Using technology to facilitate collaborative learning and peer support

Rowan Michael
Griffith University

Social media and emerging technologies are having an increasingly powerful effect on our lives including the educational contexts in which AALL professionals function. Social media and emerging technologies such as Twitter, Wikis, and SCVNGR can be utilised to engage students in collaborative learning and enhance peer support. In this presentation the effects of social media and emerging technologies will be discussed to both raise and respond to questions about peer learning. The results of three research projects examining Twitter, Wiki, and SCVNGR in use in the Higher Education context are examined and practical examples of technology use are provided to equip AALL professionals with tools that could be applied in their own institutions.
Dr. Rowan Michael, School of Languages and Linguistics

**Twitter**

Discussing Outside Class

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

**Twitter**

Sky People Asking Question

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

**Twitter**

Asking About Course Content

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

**Twitter & Context Collapse**

Twitter User 1

My tendency towards journalistic-style writing is making it really fucking hard to write academically.

6 Jun Favorite Reply

Twitter User 01

University is full of boring motherfuckers, sex jokes for everyone! #needmorehumour #lakessjokes #inappropriatecomments

16 Mar Favorite Retweet Reply

Twitter User 03

Congratual to @God bless RT @KM: It’s official! I’m engaged! My new fiancé and bride to be @ml http://yfrog.com/

2 Mar Favorite Retweet Reply

**Wikis**

- **Pedagogical goals**
  - To increase student engagement with core lecture content;
  - To connect new knowledge with student’s existing knowledge; and
  - Facilitate student collaboration and learning around and beyond the course content.
Student Peer Learning & The AALL Professional Evolution, Equity & Innovation

Dr Rowan Michael, School of Languages and Linguistics

Wikis

t WittEr, W iKis, scvngr: u sing tEcHnology to facilitatE collaborativE lEarning and pEEr support

SCVNGR

• Pedagogical goals
  - Students discovered where support services were located
  - Student collaboration & teamwork
  - Student centered not teacher centered
  - Connected to assessment

You can watch the recording on USTREAM (Presentation 8): http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/26813186

SCVNGR Comments

Student F
"The SCVNGR orientation activity was insightful and quiet beneficial for those who are just starting their journey within their chosen programs within the Nathan Campus. It enabled students to know where various points on services are located within the campus, such as the common lounge, Cafe, the Post office and last but not least the library. These are the most useful services that a student would want to use within their period here at Nathan and having the opportunity to locate them at the beginning of their first here is quiet an advantage and could save the stress of having to look for a venue within 2 minutes of attendance. Having said that, the only problem was the availability of the required devices in order to complete the orientation successful, but overall it was a nice directional expedition."

Student R
"I would definitely recommend this activity to friends because I found it beneficial, as I got to know the campus better, engage with fellow students and recognize the service that are available to me. All this wore helpful to me therefore any one in my shoes (1st year) would need it"

Student HZ
"This way is really beneficial for us to get familiar with the GC campus. I never try this manner before. It is amazing to go around the campus with our smart devices. By doing this way, I feel much more impressive about the construction of the campus and the function of different departments. So it is a more effective way than only hanging around with guiders"

Student M
"Although SCVNGR orientation activity is very useful and helpful, it also has some limitations. For example, some students’ device cannot download the SCVNGR App. Consequently, they cannot complete this activity."

You can watch the recording on USTREAM (Presentation 8): http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/26813186
New social practices = new text types
Production of social media texts vs academic texts
Scaffolding use of the tool (training, instructions, tip sheets…)
Etiquette and expectations “context collapse”
Re-use tools for multiple activities
Student Learning Drop-in: Opening up our Service and Adapting our Culture

Sally Fuglsang & Stephen Newman
University of Tasmania

In 2011, the support services at UTAS were restructured to create a ‘one stop shop’ for international and domestic students. A site of integration of these two services was the student learning mentor drop-in space. This peer learning program (Adam, Skalicky, & Brown, 2011) provides a space for students to effectively acquire and develop academic skills through peer mentoring. The benefits of peer mentoring are well documented (Topping, 1996; Cooper, 2010). It appears perceptions of difference between domestic and international students, their needs and how to address them, posed difficulties for some of our peer mentors. There are many lessons to be learned from the integration, and the education and language used to train and support student learning mentors. Through analysis of records, discussions and reflections of staff, and student surveys, the success of the integration is being evaluated. This paper shares the evolution of the UTAS student learning drop in space and its continuing vision to deliver quality and equitable assistance to students. Early findings indicate that cultural competence training should be incorporated into the general training of peer mentors. In the future it is unlikely that either the emphasis on peer learning, nor the importance of international education, to Australian universities will diminish. As a consequence, such training will continue to be important to ensure the adequate preparation of our peer mentors for the important task of assisting students including those from a foreign language background.

References

Our initial concerns

- Reported SLMs lack of confidence when working with EAL students
- Realisation that we compartmentalise students
- Perceptions of EAL students

The research

- Focus groups
- SLM reflections
- Online survey of staff
- Online survey of students
- Attendance data

Student feedback

Did you feel welcome in Drop-in?

![Pie chart showing student feedback]

Student Learning Mentor feedback

- “So nice not to have to turn them away.”
- “International students need English language assistance but SLMs not trained in this area.”
- “Some international students say ‘yes, yes, yes’ but don’t really understand.”
- “Really nice to meet so many different people from different backgrounds, like I had a student this morning with a brain injury and we have international students, refugees and it is great to work with them all.”

Staff feedback

- “Positive - I felt that international students had been very isolated from the ‘mainstream’”
- “I felt positive about the proposed integration as it meant that we could become a much more inclusive and welcoming environment to all.”
- “Very successful as it has enriched our practice. Care must be taken, however, that the pendulum doesn’t appear to swing too far towards our support of international students, to the detriment of domestic students.”
- “Perhaps we need to explain more clearly to students when they should choose Drop-in, and when a consultation.”
Some areas of concern

1. Discrepancy compared with consultations regarding foreign language background students
2. Only modest increase achieved by opening up service to Internationals
3. Perceptions

The future

- Promotion
- Cultural awareness training
- General training
- More opportunities for student voice

Explanations

- History
- Lack of promotion
- Cultural factors

Questions and comments

“These people have always gone the extra step to alleviate[sic] any concerns. They always appear to have as much time as I needed. Thank you for them.”

References

**Maths mentoring - does it work? An experiment with Peer Assisted Tutorials**

Sue Ferguson & Janelle Hill  
Victoria University

The School of Education at Victoria University conducts a unit called Numeracy and Mathematics for students wanting to improve their mathematical knowledge for teaching. Most of the students who enrol in this unit have low levels of confidence in their ability to learn mathematics and have quite low levels of understanding. A student peer mentoring program referred to as a Peer Assisted Tutorial (PAT) was introduced where two student mentors help students within the formal tutorials. This paper will discuss the ways in which the student mentors support the students, the lecturer and the success of the program.

**References**


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**The context**

- VU School of Education requires students to demonstrate their understanding of the concepts underpinning Primary school mathematics
- Approximately 75 per cent of students across three courses are unable to do this in their first attempt and are required to undertake AEB1200 Numeracy and Mathematics

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**The students**

- “I’m a maths major, how come I have to do this extra unit?”
- “I HATE maths and nothing is going to change this!”
- “I’ve always been hopeless at maths and just can’t learn it!”
- “Go away. I don’t want to be here!”
- “I’m not going to show you how dumb I am so just don’t expect me to participate!”

---

**The test**

The TEST has become legendary in all courses preparing undergraduates to become teachers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section 1</td>
<td>Numeracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 2</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Section 3</td>
<td>Numeracy &amp; Mathematics</td>
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<td>Section 4</td>
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<td>Section 5</td>
<td>Numeracy &amp; Mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 6</td>
<td>Numeracy &amp; Mathematics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Numeracy and Peer Mentoring**

Sue Ferguson  
Janelle Hill  
VICTORIA UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

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**Student Peer Learning & The AALL Professional**  
Evolution, Equity & Innovation  
Page 43
The peer mentors
- MUST have passed the test.
- IDEALLY are maths majors.
- Nominated by maths education lecturers
  - Understand the concepts
  - Use correct language
  - Are going to be supportive NOT judgemental

The peer mentor role
- Support the students to increase their confidence in their ability to learn maths
- Assist students with their mathematics
- Contribute alternative strategies and methods to the lecturer
- Encourage students to ask questions
- Be honest about their own struggles/successes in maths

Time tables
- Mentor 1: ‘I don’t need to know 7 times anything, I always use my 5 times plus 2 times tables’
- Mentor 2: ‘I work out 10 times minus 3 times’
- Lecturer: ‘Does anyone else know another strategy? What is you know your 6 times table, would this help?’

Problem
- If you add 2 acute angles could you get another acute angle?
- Mentors and lecturers each work with a small group of students each to come up with a solution and an argument to support it.

Students say
‘I found it easier to ask Bridie (mentor) than Sue when I thought I had a dumb question.’
‘Ryan told me that he didn’t pass the test the first time and he’s a maths major!’
‘Rebecca was so patient and had lots of different explanations.’
‘Hoai was funny and made me see it didn’t matter if I didn’t get it first time. He helped me write my reflections’
‘Angie and Ash were so nice and really supported me.’
‘Gillian was really good at maths and showed me loads of models and drawings. I didn’t think I could use my visual skills in maths.’

Benefits
- Much greater confidence to try new strategies
- More acceptance of using models, drawings and concrete aids
- Greater realisation that maths is about understanding rather than rules
- Pass rate in test increased from on average 50% first time to 75%
- Happier students!!!!!!!!!!!

Experiences in both roles
- Peer mentor and lecturer in AEB1200
- Lecturer – can be seen as intimidating to students
- Peer mentor – seen as having more in common with students

As a lecturer:
- Students lacking in confidence and many have had negative experiences in mathematics learning
- Sometimes difficult to spend enough individualised time with struggling students
- Students are often hesitant to ask questions
- Having peer mentors provides extra assistance to students and alternate explanations of mathematical concepts
As a lecturer:
- Peer mentors had confidence in their own abilities but also felt that they gained much from being in class
- Team work between lecturer and peer mentors critical

As a peer mentor:
- Students are more willing to ask questions of mentors than lecturers
- Ability to spend time with individuals or small groups of students
- Students gain confidence in their abilities
- Students change their attitudes toward mathematics
Virtual Meet-Up: innovating to capture the essence of student peer learning

Lindy Kimmins
University of Southern Queensland

The University of Southern Queensland has been involved in student peer learning for almost twenty years. On-campus peer-assisted sessions were (almost from inception) complemented by sessions utilising the best and most appropriate external support platform that was supported by the university at the time. Audiographic tutorials were one of the first means of providing peer support to our distance students, followed by MSN Messenger, forums in Moodle and Wimba.

Similarly our peer learning program has morphed from its beginnings as Supplemental Instruction (SI), through PALS (Peer-assisted Learning Strategy) to currently, Meet-Up. The latest Meet-Up Program innovation that we are trialling for semester 2 2012, is the inclusion of online responses to student queries from Meet-Up leaders as part of a larger university-wide support project called Student Personalised Academic Road to Success (SPARS). Both the broader SPARS project and the Meet-Up component are based on a number of sound learning principles. For example, Green (as cited by Ladyshewsky & Gardner, 2008, p. 243) extends Vygotsky’s concept of spaces of influence to include five meta-spaces: spaces of action, spaces of explicit discourse, spaces of learning, spaces of practice development and spaces of trust. The project aims to provide these spaces in an online format where students can engage and learn with a variety of forms of support and support providers. This paper will share more about the innovation, and its progress and outcomes up until the time of the symposium.

References

**Virtual Meet-Up: Innovating to Capture the Essence of Student Peer Learning**

Lindy Kimmins

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**My student cohort! 1974**

---

**USQ 1975**

---

**Our Japanese Gardens**

---

**My previous building: 1975 - 2006**

---

**My new location**

---

**Currently**

- > 26000 students
- more than 75 percent of students studying via distance or online

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**So… to the story of our peer learning journey**

- SI program was run firstly in a nursing course in 1995
- 1998 a more USQ–specific peer program called PALS (Peer Assisted Learning Strategy) was born
- The Meet - Up program at USQ evolved from PALS in Semester 2, 2008.
The Meet-Up Program

So… What’s it based on? [Research]
What does it look like? [Structure]
Why are we persevering with it? [evidence]

Research into peer led programs and retention in Australia
- Enrolment in a PASS program was found to have a positive impact on students’ academic success.
- This relationship was found to be stronger for students participating in PASS programs for quantitative subjects.
- It was also found to be stronger for students on the lower end of the mark distribution.
- Furthermore, given the fact that PASS programs have a larger impact on the academic performance of most students at the lower end of the marks distribution, it is possible to suggest that PASS programs are also of more benefit to students at the cusp of failing university (Birch & Li 2009).

Geoff Scott 2008 cont’d
- the presence of a supportive peer group
- consistently accessible and responsive staff
- clear management of student expectations, including active briefings on ‘how things work around here’
- prompt and effective management of student queries
- ‘just-in-time’ and ‘just-for-me’ transition support, including the use of self-teaching and orientation materials written by students from a similar background who have successfully managed the transition, on how they did it
- efficient, conveniently accessed and responsive administrative, IT, library and student support systems; all working together to support the university’s operation

Meet-Up fits the brief
- The purple coloured factors on the previous slide are all met by Meet-Up sessions when they are fully integrated into a course or program, and are considered as integral to the learning experience provided.

Research into retention of students
- UWS Study in retention: Geoff Scott 2008
  - ‘This study (Scott 2006) shows that it is the total experience of a university that shapes students’ judgment of quality, motivates their engagement in learning and optimises retention’.
  - The following factors were found to be of particular relevance to retention:
  - the presence of a supportive peer group
  - consistently accessible and responsive staff
  - clear management of student expectations, including active briefings on ‘how things work around here’
  - prompt and effective management of student queries
  - ‘just-in-time’ and ‘just-for-me’ transition support, including the use of self-teaching and orientation materials written by students from a similar background who have successfully managed the transition, on how they did it
  - efficient, conveniently accessed and responsive administrative, IT, library and student support systems; all working together to support the university’s operation

The pedagogy behind Meet-Up
- Meet-Up is based on two basic learning principles: peer learning and collaborative learning
  - Peer-assisted learning:
    - Russian psychologist Vygotsky took Piaget’s idea of the benefits of peer interaction one step further to suggest that learning was advanced even more if one of the interactants was more expert than the other so that he/she could guide, encourage and stimulate the learner (Foot & Howe 1998).

Peer-assisted learning cont’d:
- Peer leaders use the same language and share the same problems as the students (Rogoff 1990, in Topping & Ehly 1998).
- Other advantages for the student include immediate feedback, lower anxiety levels, and greater ownership of the learning processes (Topping & Ehly 1998).
The pedagogy behind Meet-Up

- Meet-Up is also based on collaborative learning:
  - collaborative learning promotes the development of critical learning skills as a direct result of the active engagement involved in activities that rely on peer collaboration (Johnson & Johnson 1986 & Smith 1989, cited in Martin & Arendale 1993, p. 8)
  - the non-threatening informal learning environment is believed to build student confidence and with this comes increased academic success (Martin & Arendale 1993).

What is the essence of Meet-Up?

- run by students for students
- led by trained students who have previously done well in a course
- interactive, engaging informal and fun
- responsive to student needs
- designed to encourage discussion and develop understanding of course content and concepts through prepared activities, exercises, problems, and practice
- concerned with how to learn (discipline-based study tips) as well as what to learn

How is Meet-Up set up?

- Lecturers select a number of potential leaders
- These students are informed about Meet-Up and interviewed by the Meet-Up Co-ordinator or the lecturer
- Leaders are trained by the Co-ordinator for 8 hours (Toowoomba campus) on leading small groups and facilitating collaborative learning (leaders are provided refresher training each year they continue as leaders)
- Sessions are timetabled into courses so that Meet-Up
- Lecturers and students meet regularly to discuss, plan and debrief sessions
- Attendance are taken at every session
- All stakeholders are surveyed at the end of semester
- Reports/summaries are written by the Co-ordinator

Benefits to students:

- Provides social learning and networking for 1st year students
- Targeted assistance with course content in a non-threatening environment
- Improves academic success
- Enhanced academic skills
- Higher student satisfaction with course support
- Increases confidence and self-efficacy

S1 2012

- Meet-Up was run in 56 on-campus models
- Meet-Up Forums were available in 22 courses

Qualitative data example:

One thing [Meet–Up leader] said really put me at ease, it was along the lines of ‘last year I had absolutely no idea what I was doing and I got through it and you will too.’ It’s such a relief to know that I will be at that same level as [the Meet–Up leaders] next year, that I will be full of the knowledge and understanding that it takes to move through [course] confidently.

More on-campus data S1 2012

Student Surveys in 6 Faculty of Business and Law courses and Programs.
N = 42

My confidence in doing well in this course/program BEFORE I went to Meet-Up.
My confidence in doing well in this course/program AFTER I started going to Meet-Up.

My knowledge and skills in this course/program BEFORE I went to Meet-Up.
My knowledge and skills in this course/program AFTER I started going to Meet-Up.
VIRTUAL MEET-UP: INNOVATING TO CAPTURE THE ESSENCE OF STUDENT PEER LEARNING

Lindy Kimmins

Based on this data...

- In Semester 2, 2012 Meet-Up was extended to cater for students who wanted study related support/hints/advice from a fellow student
- This is the core or the essence of peer learning that we wanted to remain true
- Thus…
The Meet-Up Student Community (MUSC) was born

What is MUSC?

- A new model of Meet-Up
- Student leaders assist with study questions
- Discipline based rather than course specific
- Run by experienced Meet-Up leaders
- Available oncampus (Twba only for the pilot) and online
- Designed to link with SPARS

Here it is online!

Here it is on-campus!

And in action!

Link to AALL

- MUSC was situated in our Learning Centre
- MUSC leaders could refer students to tutor if appropriate
- AALL Tutors referred students to MUSC for the student perspective
Student Communication week 4

It’s already week 4 of the semester and we hope you are settling into your lifestyle as a USQ student.

Did you know?

Student leaders are available to help you learn from their experiences of university life and offer advice and study hints. They are current students with expertise in their area of study. To contact them, go to the Meet-Up Student Community, which is a free online environment on USQStudyDesk. Type in the enrolment key ‘meetup’ to log in. Once logged in, this is a great place for you to learn from the experiences of your fellow students and you can visit as often as you like.

Ask us!

If you need help, you can search for an answer or ask me a question via Ask USQ – I’ll be happy to help you find the answer.

How can I ask the student leaders a question about my studies?

The Meet-Up Student Community is a free online environment on USQStudyDesk where you can seek the advice of student leaders about university life and/or study. Type in the enrolment key ‘meetup’ to log in. Once logged in, this is a great place for you to learn from the experiences of your fellow students.

Please bookmark this course and you can visit as often as you like.

So far: On-campus support

20 consultations

Leaders have responded to a number of queries

What was your question about?

Referencing, assignment makeover, journal research on library databases, Header-footer on word document

NUR1200 assignment

Subject requirements for NUR2000, StudyDesk directions on this

Problem with Excel’s x axis and y axis

Audio Assignment NUR2000

I have discussed my concern with [leader] and I found that it was great help for me. Finally I cleared all my doubts.

Creating graphs in excel

A doctorate student wanting to find background readings. Went through Bing Civil to find relevant subjects for textbooks he may use. Discussed support services available and went over Uconnect where to find stuff.

Exams; Acc assessment

What was your question about?

Data Analysis

Microsoft Excel, creating charts

Excel/study modules

Using the computer, tips to use it better

Using power point - adding audio

Referencing in law subjects and how to use law databases

Essay/debate structure for Law

Help with the text

Helped me a lot with my assignment and in dealing with my stress

Missed orientation, How to use StudyDesk, assessment tips, grammar classes for International students

Feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The student leader understood my questions</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student leader was respectful and considerate</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, I found the advice helpful</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments

Thank you [leader]

Very helpful assistance provided. I will be back for any more help as I have found it very useful.

Extremely helpful
So far: Online community

Only one question on the community site

However students are visiting the site

Access figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Number of times accessed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Feedback from a student leader:

- MUSC is valuable to courses/programs/the university in general because it promotes learning in an informal environment.
- Students are able to interact with their peer-leaders easily in seeking guidance and support for their studies.
- It also caters to the needs of international students as they require extra support in an unfamiliar educational/social/cultural environment.

Further feedback:

- MUSC has been a platform to improve/demonstrate my peer-teaching ability, teamwork, and leadership skills.
- MUSC/meet-up leader experience will definitely be a stepping stone for my career development.
- Last but not least, it has been a great privilege to work with an outstanding MUSC Co-ordinator, friendly team of leaders, Lecturers, and the student community.

Biggest problems

Suggestions welcome

What I am doing

Here are the Meet-Up leaders!
Virtual Meet-Up: innovating to capture the essence of student peer learning

Lindy Kimmins

Thanks

Lindy Kimmins
Meet-Up Co-ordinator University of Southern Queensland

Lindy.Kimmins@usq.edu.au

07 46 311682
Peer Assisted Tutorials: Embedding Peer Support in a Core Foundation Unit

Brian Zammit
Victoria University

This presentation deals with the introduction of a Peer Assisted Tutorial Scheme (PATS) within a first-year interdisciplinary foundation unit that is offered to a student cohort primarily made up of mid-year intakes. Areas that will be covered include the mentors’ role in supporting students as they negotiate the transition to university life as well as the logistical challenges encountered in the implementation of this program. Evaluation data, including student self-reports regarding the program’s impact on knowledge and confidence will be drawn on during the presentation.

**Peer Assisted Tutorials: Embedding Peer Support in a Core Foundation Unit**

Brian Zammit
School of Communication and the Arts
Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development
21 November 2012

**Knowing and Knowledge A**

- core foundation unit in various courses incl Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Creative Arts Industries, Bachelor of Youth Studies, Bachelor of Social Work (Prelim Year)
  - strong focus on academic skills; generic content
- two-hour tutorials
- enrolment of app 450 commencing students in semester 1, 2012
  - 15-17 tutorial groups

**but in semester 2...**

- cohort of app 100 students in semester 2 made up overwhelmingly of mid-year intakes
- strategies to better support this cohort
  - in-tutorial skills workshops run by Student Learning Unit
  - …and PATs
  - academic as well as transition support
  - NB: no disciplinary content per se in K&K A

**Mentors in K&K A**

- participate in class discussions
- lead group work sessions
- mentoring commencing students
- feedback to teaching team

**PATs**

- Peer Assisted Tutorials
- mentors attend ‘regular’ tutorials for the duration of the semester
  - ideally, two mentors in each class
- “students who have previously studied and been successful in the unit attend the tutorial as a way to support students with their academic work and...academic skills” (Best, 2011)

**Evaluations – 2011**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>/w</th>
<th>N=</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helped develop my confidence</td>
<td>1.72%</td>
<td>15.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped me learn different ways of studying the material</td>
<td>1.72%</td>
<td>15.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped me improve my skills in other subjects</td>
<td>9.26%</td>
<td>27.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased my friendship networks</td>
<td>3.70%</td>
<td>3.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped me manage my time better</td>
<td>1.82%</td>
<td>7.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was a positive experience</td>
<td>3.45%</td>
<td>8.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should be rolled out for all courses</td>
<td>3.45%</td>
<td>18.97%</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Evaluations – 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Students Liked Most about Having Student Mentors in Tutorials</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>N.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working in groups</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>67.24%</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was easy to ask questions</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>62.07%</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting extra help</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>62.07%</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The helpfulness of Student Mentors</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>58.69%</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with other students</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>53.45%</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being able to ask questions my lecturer might think were silly</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>43.10%</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

qualitative data – key themes
- mentors as role models
- tutorial: “less stressful/more relaxed environment”

Some observations/tips...
- mentors selection, training and ongoing support
- set up pre-semester meetings introducing mentors to teaching team
- take an inclusive approach throughout semester: mentors part of teaching team
- important regularly to reinforce in class for the first few weeks why mentors are there
- allocate 15-20 minutes of tutorial time once or twice during semester for mentors to have some ‘alone’ time with students

Challenges
- difficulties due to mid-year enrolment timelines
- often uncertain up to the eve of start of semester how many tutorials we’ll have
- selection process
- tutors must be on board
- resources!!

Contact details
- brian.zammit@vu.edu.au
- 9919 2305 or 0438 306 719
An exploration of bilingual peer mentoring at Victoria University

Amanda Pearce
Victoria University

A Victoria University team of four Chinese International Student Peer Mentors won the National PASS Team Award in 2011 for their work in the subject Accounting Information Systems. They and subsequent 2012 Mentors have developed a ‘bilingual strategy’, using their first language (Chinese) as well as English in their sessions. This presentation reports on the initial findings of a small qualitative research project which explores the bilingual mentoring experiences of these PASS student mentor teams. While it is likely that the use of L1 (first language) in PASS at VU has occurred for many years, it has been officially endorsed and encouraged by PASS staff since 2010 when students raised the subject for discussion with staff and other mentors.

It is clear that some observers believe that students should mentor in English only. Such opinions may rest on beliefs about the importance of practice in developing language skills, and of English language skills in Australian HE. However this project has found that mentors make thoughtful choices about which language to use and when, based on a broad range of understandings about learning, the mentor role, the purpose of study in Australia and the requirements of the subject. Consequently, their use of Chinese in their sessions has ranged from exclusive to sparse and highly targeted. This exploration throws light on mentors’ perceptions of aspects of Australian HE including Transition, Learning and Teaching and Graduate Outcomes, and has significant implications for future PASS practice, informing future PASS training in an English-speaking institution.

The study

- Focus: PASS project in Accounting Information Systems (AIS) subject
- VU PASS mentors work in pairs, each with a group of mentees
- In AIS 2011–12, all but 1 mentors were Chinese International students (ISs), the other a Vietnamese IS
- VU team in AIS - 4 Chinese IS Peer Mentors – won National PASS Team Award in 2011
- Study arose from PASS staff discussions with mentors about the use of Mandarin Chinese in PASS sessions, and mention in the National PASS Team Award application
- This study conducted in Semester 1 2012 and involved 8 interviews of current and past IS mentors (7 x Chinese, 1 x Vietnamese background) by an interviewer unknown to the students and never directly involved in the PASS program

Themes and context

Three themes:
1. Use of L1 (Mandarin Chinese) – how much, when, why etc – how they managed its use
2. Relationship between PASS and approaches to learning that interviewees used in China
3. PASS as a site for interaction between domestic and international students (VU involved in ALTC project on this)

Context: A large proportion of AIS students have completed a Diploma of Business at a VU partner campus in China (in English, but taught largely by Chinese partner staff) and have credit for first year core subjects including the core Accounting subject. The vast majority of students enrolled in AIS (and therefore mentees) were from the VU programs in China. Many were personally known to the mentors or could be recognised by their accents.

Theme 1: English and Chinese

Mentoring had improved English
- confidence in their English had improved at least one level (low, average, good, very good) after being mentors due to
  - PASS sessions
  - Writing about their mentoring experiences on Central Desktop
  - Discussions with PASS staff and other mentors at mentor training, debriefs and informally

‘When I first came I was afraid to use English to people around me, if you speak to me I will be very quiet but after being a mentor I have conducted so many sessions in front of students, no matter how bad I speak it I should speak it!’
How much did they use Chinese?

- varied from very little – about 5% (to an individual when several attempts to explain in English had failed) - to virtually 100% (with English used only for notes, technical terms)  
- practice differed between first and second semester mentors  
- depended on the presence of non-Chinese mentors or mentees – all said English would be used if non-Chinese speakers were present

“I don’t want to use Chinese if local students are there. It would make them feel separated. It’s not what we want. If one or two students are Chinese I would definitely not use Chinese… even if they ask me in Chinese I would always explain in English”

“students … from other backgrounds … they might feel uncomfortable”

How did mentors deal with the presence of non-Chinese speakers?

- not using Chinese at all or heavily limiting use  
- asking permission for use in particular circumstances  
- ensuring non-Chinese speakers were included in every sub-group during the PASS session so mentors could not conduct group discussions in Chinese  
- asking other Chinese-speaking mentors to explain in Chinese and then back to the class in English to check understanding – helping them to practice their English  
- some mentor fours arranged between themselves to offer mentees a choice between PASS sessions run predominantly in English or Chinese  
- breaking a PASS group into Chinese and English speaking subgroups

Why did they use it?

Largely based on what they thought was best for the mentees:

- Transition: to make mentees feel at home, decrease their sense of isolation; “ice-break” (AIS is the first on-shore subject)

“You made a choice between helping them with their accounting understanding and their settling into Australia, and [practising] their English, because they were new to Australia … for the newcomers because they feel everything is strange I think that Chinese is better.”

“They are freshmen here actually ... when they hear someone talking with Chinese they will prefer to be [in] the group of that person … at first they are very helpless, they don’t know how to ask for help”

Why did they use it?

Other reasons:

- To ensure sound background knowledge so when they start other subjects ‘they don’t need assistance from us anymore, they don’t need to translate, they can say it the English way’.  
- To encourage Chinese students to participate in mixed groups – one student described groups with 90% Chinese mentees, where ‘The English speaking student always answers my questions’  
- Because mentees will need to be able to function in an accounting context in both Chinese and English when they returned to China

Why did they use it?

- Use of time: ‘efficiency’ in communicating about content quickly, particularly difficult concepts, and to enable mentees to more accurately express questions:

“We found they didn’t understand the concepts, so if you transfer to Chinese just one or two words they completely understand ... [for example] “conceptual framework” – what is “substance over form”? They understand each word but not the expression ... It’s a lot of work in English, it’s like circling, you never go out”

Why did they use it?

- But there were also benefits for mentors

  o To protect themselves – if they hadn’t used it in the session, the students would have asked them to explain in Chinese after the session, and they were concerned about ‘boundaries’
  o To retain students in one’s PASS group (or PASS in general) - some saw this pressure from mentees as something to be resisted, but one mentor said if the PASS sessions had been in English when she herself first arrived in Australia, she would not have attended as a mentee
  o To reduce nervousness and facilitate the relaxation and enjoyment of the mentors in running the sessions - one said she was confident to mentor in English the second time round; another said she felt confident to become a mentor due to knowing she could use Chinese

  And simply “…you try to speak English but it is out of control, you cannot control it”

But what about developing their English?

- Some saw creating opportunities to practise English skills as one aim of the PASS session – but others didn’t – there was little sense that English was necessary for success in this subject at least: “I just helped them with accounting, my purpose was to help them with accounting, not English”

- Reasons given for practising English included
  - encouraging the development of mentors’ language ability for success in an English-speaking institution
  - the expectations of employers in China

- Some regretted they had not used English more: “After graduation I think maybe if I have another time (mentoring again) I should speak more English in the sessions) Because the students have basic accounting knowledge but their English is not so good… and that’s important.”

Why did they use it?

Theme 2: Learning

There was general agreement that

- Asking questions of teachers is not encouraged or facilitated in China

- Group study is informal, organised among friends – there was no experience of any formalised learning related group interaction in China

- Mentors see PASS as founded on the idea of independent learning: “You should tell the mentees how to get the approach of study rather than the content of the study...[In China I would] directly ask my friends ‘What is the answer of this question?’ I just got one question answer, but I can’t do another one. But the approach use in the PASS sessions maybe when you got the approach of this kind of question you will be able to do a lot of questions. That’s what I think”
An exploration of bilingual peer mentoring at Victoria University

Amanda Pearce

Learning

One very reflective mentor strongly believed in working things out for himself as he had done in China too, then trying to communicate the way to do this to his mentees:

‘A lot of the time I study[ly] by myself so I can explain it in a “Chinese thinking way” so [the mentees] can understand. For example the accounting conceptual framework. At first I had no idea. After that chapter I write everything down and I figure out what that’s for. It’s a kind of way to make decisions … It’s like a formula.’

Several described designing mnemonics for mentees – a strategy brought from China but transferred to English.

Independent learning

For all, “independent learning” was linked to deeper and more lasting learning:

‘For the Chinese style, the class is just like a class, it’s not interesting, maybe the students just feel boring, they stop thinking and they just listen to us. But when we change the way activities the students feel more interesting, they think “Oh we like this! Oh this is so interesting.”, I also make small groups for them … they can help each other and learn with each other. When they got some problems or questions they don’t know, they just ask us, and we just say “Oh you don’t ask us, you can go to the tutorial or lecture notes, or you can go to the WebCT and look at what the teacher has already told you, you just forgot!” and they found the lecture notes and “Oh yes, that’s what we have learned already!”’, and they do the exercise again and I think it’s better if the mentees do the exercise themselves, they can remember deeply, they can remember all the time.

Independent learning

However there were different opinions about the value of independent learning in the context of this subject; one student said that independent learning is for a long time view, over your whole life, but for short term success, the Chinese strategy is more successful:

‘For example I have 10 points I want to tell the students. In Chinese strategy … I have enough time to tell them the 10 points. And they can go back home to remember [ie memorise] these 10 points. But in [the PASS] strategy I have 10 points but I have to just play with them with some kind of activity, I can have time only to tell them … 5 points. But they can remember these 5 points in class time. They don’t have to go back home and [memorise] … [but] learning 10 points is good for the examination!’

Independent learning

However several described changing how mentees learned and their own changing beliefs about learning:

‘[PASS staff] told me that the mentor should not … do reteaching they should balance the reteaching and redirecting. And don’t tell them the answer, help them to find the answer and make the activity more creative. So the second semester I changed. I’m not stand in front of class, I sit with the students in group and help them to find the answer, like use computer, ask them to look for answer in book. I think it is different … The first semester maybe comes from Chinese strategy but second semester I use here “5 strategy”

Independent learning

But even for those who prefer independent learning, there are difficulties in moving mentees to the new approaches:

‘Sometimes [mentees] feel they’re not learning. “Why don’t you tell us the answer?” it’s much more efficient! … In group discussion they don’t feel they’re learning. They don’t understand it, it’s a critical skill’

‘[On beginning mentoring] we feel very fresh and new, it’s very funny [ie it’s a lot of fun], we try to use [the strategies discussed in the PASS training] as much as possible, how to conduct activities, have backup plans, share opinions … but after second, third semester we tried to work activities by ourselves and involve them in discussion, but they still ask lots of questions and we try to avoid giving them the right answers … but some of them haven’t done the work, so they help each half way … the group thing, it’s difficult for them to change the way they think.’

Theme 3: Domestic-IS interaction

Several felt PASS provided a context for ISs to talk to other students and may lead to continuing study friendships because

• there was “less pressure” than in the classroom
• it improved both students’ confidence and their English which made them more confident in talking to local students: “I don’t like to make friends with English, because of my bad English… that’s the only reason.”
• there was more to talk about: “The Chinese students want to be friends with the local students but sometimes they feel shy and they don’t know what to say. Maybe they don’t have the same topic … because sometimes we say “Hello, how are you?” but then nothing, no topic, maybe we don’t have the same super star or something like that. Like Chinese students they have the same superstar like the movie or something like that so it’s quick and easy for them to talk because they have the same topic and the same situation but for local student and Chinese student they have different superstar.

Domestic-IS interaction

However Chinese students said that relationships between ISs (conducted using English as lingua franca) were more likely than relationships with local students because

• ISs have similar issues and can help each other
• they are not intimidated by the gulf in knowledge of English and cultural norms

Mixed language PASS groups and sitting arrangements in sessions were seen as crucial to encourage this interaction and relationships with other IS mentors and with local Senior Mentors was seen as particularly positive.
Domestic-IS interaction

Some were quite negative about relationships with local students:

“We have no connection with local students. Maybe they don’t trust us. Maybe local students think “What can Chinese students do for us?””

“Mentees didn’t make friendships with local students. It’s pretty hard to make a relationship with local students after the assignment or teamwork... It’s a culture thing. When you do teamwork or study you have a goal, but after that it’s a culture thing. [For example] they may go to a bar on Monday night. They may drinking when they do assignments but I wouldn’t do that... Local students didn’t work very hard during assignment [in group assignments]. It’s really hard.”

Some implications for PASS

- Their understandings of PASS and the role of the mentor – is the primary purpose of PASS as gaining higher marks in the subject?
- Is it the role of the mentor to decide on the language used, as suggested by one interviewee? Should this be part of training? If so, how to assist them to unpack the issue and, if appropriate, emphasise strategies to resist mentee pressure about language?
- Should we ensure either mixed groups or each pair of mentors to include one Chinese and one non-Chinese, so some of the benefits of using the L1 can still be gained while limiting its use?
- Should mentees have an opportunity to choose L1 sessions if they prefer them?

Some implications for domestic-IS interaction

- PASS does seem to be a significant site for interaction and relationship building between students, and could be designed more explicitly to promote this
- Numbers and patterns of recruitment of ISs from particular countries are a significant factor in constraining interaction
- English language confidence as a significant factor in promoting interaction needs to be given its due significance
- Cultural stereotypes exist on both sides
- English as a lingua franca between ISs may be underestimated

Some implications for learning in Australia

- Are these students correct in their belief that the best way to get higher marks in this subject is purely content knowledge, and that English is irrelevant? If so, what does this say about our Learning and Teaching, particularly regarding Graduate Attributes?
- These ISs are sophisticated and reflective high achievers, on the way to becoming bilingual and bicultural professionals. How can we participate in a real dialogue with them about the linguistic decisions they need to make, and engage in a transformative pedagogy that allows them to “own” the curriculum and shape it in ways that in their judgment will maximise their opportunities to develop this bilingualism and biculturalism?
DEAKIN UNIVERSITY PARTICIPATION & PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM - STRATEGY EIGHT

Student Peer Learning & The AALL Professional Evolution, Equity & Innovation

OVERVIEW

Overview: DUPPP Strategy Eight
- Model 1 - PASS: @ unit level
- Model 2 - Faculty Peer Mentor Program: @ Faculty level
- Model 3 - Students Helping Students Drop-In Station: @ University level

INTRODUCTION

Overview of DUPPP Strategy Eight:

Overall Aim:
- To improve the transition, retention and success of current and future cohorts of Deakin students, who are primarily from LSES background, as they enter University and progress throughout their chosen course.

MODEL 1 - PASS

Objective:
- Implement PASS program to 40 units in 2013, targeting units with high achievement rates of students with low background and academic support needs, across all Faculties.
- Peer Support – within unit and across units.
- Students and Faculties.
- Students receiving support.
- At least 15 units.

MODEL 2 – FACULTY PEER MENTOR MODEL

Objective:
- Develop suitable peer mentor program in Faculties and scale up to at least 10 students per faculty.
- Students and Faculty.
- Faculty based Peer Support.
- Students.
- Number of Mentors: 15
- Number of Mentees: 30
- Education.
- Number of Mentee's.
- High Satisfaction: 95%
- 5 Senses of Success.

MODEL 3

Objective:
- Implement Student Helping Students Drop in Station @ University level.
- 32% Disengagement;
- 20% High Disengagement;
- 48% retention, unit success are also being analysed across the three Models.
- How these models work together to provide an inclusive support system for student success.

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Strategy level:
- Evaluation framework guided by the CPP evaluative framework.
- 12% level of engagement with LSES.
- WAM, retention, unit success are also being analysed across the three Models.
- NTA; resources.
- Student led & driven projects.

Program level:
- Literature review.
- Pre & post surveys improved for each of the Models.
- Theoretical framework identified – 5 Senses of Success (Lizzio & Wilson 2008);
  - Connectedness, Capability, Purpose, Resources and Culture
  - Large amount of qualitative data.
  - Online database.

DEVELOPING PEER LEARNING ACROSS DEAKIN UNIVERSITY: STUDENTS HELPING STUDENTS DROP IN STATION

Rachael Baron
Deakin University

Deakin University secured funding through the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP), part of the government’s Widening Participation Agenda, to implement 12 strategies to support student aspiration, access and achievement. Strategy Eight comprises three peer learning models and is aimed at enhancing student success, transition and retention. The three models are: ‘Peer Assisted Study Sessions’ (PASS), ‘Faculty Peer Mentor Program’ and a ‘Students Helping Students Drop in Station Program’. These programs were also selected owing to previous success in the Faculty of Business and Law and to their three distinct models.

By bringing together these peer support models under one umbrella, an opportunity was created to build partnerships across academic, administrative and support areas, thereby improving understanding and awareness of peer learning at a strategic whole-of-university level, with the ultimate aim of improving the opportunities for enhanced learning for all who participate.

The first half of the presentation will showcase the activities as part of Strategy Eight including a brief outline of the evaluation framework, the uniqueness and similarities of the programs and how they may work together as an inclusive support system, providing opportunities for multiple spaces and places for peer learning. The second half of the presentation will be on the learnings from the Student Helping Students Drop In Station initiative driven by the students themselves from their perspectives.
DEVELOPING PEER LEARNING ACROSS DEAKIN UNIVERSITY: STUDENTS HELPING STUDENTS DROP IN STATION

Rachael Baron

MODEL 3 – STUDENTS HELPING STUDENTS DROP IN STATION (SHS DIS)

- Peer support: The Learning Space (B4.1 H Lot 1)
- 16 Peer Mentors from all 4 Faculties
- Supportive dialogue – study skills and approach to assessment
- Developing a community of Peer Mentoring among students
- Student driven
- One-to-one support
- Events

http://www.deakin.edu.au/current-students/study-support/students-helping-students/index.php

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR LEADERS

- Mentor Training
- Victorian First Year Network Meeting
- Victorian University Student Leadership Forum
- Myers Briggs Type Indicator Workshop
- National PASS Forum
- NU Peer Learning Conference
- Mentor Catch-up Meetings & Facilitated activities with Staff
- Peer Mentor Award Ceremony
- In 2013 development of centralised recognition for peer mentors

THE STUDENT PERSPECTIVE:

MODEL 3: STUDENTS HELPING STUDENTS DROP IN STATION

Background:
Faculty-level project to a University wide program

- Program evolved from a Faculty-specific initiative to a program that encompassed students from all four Faculties, requiring engagement with Faculties that previously did not have such programs.
- SAPP from a prescribed program structure in the Faculty of Business and Law to a student driven University wide program where all students could access the service.
- Inclusion of mentors from different Faculties brought significant innovation to the program.

http://www.deakin.edu.au/current-students/study-support/students-helping-students/shs-dropin.php

STUDENTS HELPING STUDENTS DROP IN STATION

Drop in style Program:
- No Appointments
- Any Students
- Any Enquiries
- Mentors have diverse set of skills and resources

Across ALL Faculties
- Business and Law
- Health
- Arts and Education
- Science and Technology

SHS DIS OVERVIEW

Sam Hall, current Team Leader

- Role Includes:
  - Mentoring, facilitation and guiding staff
  - Facilitating the development of our program
  - Organising the weekly roster
  - Planning and coordinating Team Meetings and Team Leader Meetings
  - Recruitment/program timeline development

DATA FROM MODELS 2 & 3

Students Helping Students Drop in Station
- Trimester 1 2012 Statistics:
  - Total number of students: 348
  - Total time spent with students: 4330 minutes
  - Average time spent per student: 12.6 minutes
  - Academic related enquiries: 52%

STRATEGY EIGHT PROJECT OUTCOMES

Resources for Deakin students and staff
- Updated overview of Deakin Peer Support programs
- Mapping of Deakin programs, from a staff and student perspective
- Identify ‘industry guidelines’
- Annotated bibliography of peer learning in Endnote database
- Environmental scan
- Website (stage 1)

Faculty of Arts and Education Peer Mentor Program
- Mentor Testimonial: “I found a friend who was always there if I needed help. Most rewarding part of being a mentor was hearing how what you say has an impact on those who matter”.

SHS DIS OVERVIEW

Operations
- Administrative tasks during shift
- Student drop in enquiries:
  - Weeks 1-2: What do we do, locations
  - Weeks 3-8: academic support
  - Weeks 9-12: exam technique/study tips, stress/anxiety

http://www.deakin.edu.au/current-students/study-support/students-helping-students/index.php
**STUDENT DRIVEN PROGRAM**

**Students Helping Students Drop In Station (SHS DIS)**
- The SHS DIS is a Program that is entirely student driven.
- All the Mentors and Program staff involved in the Program are current students in their 3rd, 4th and final year at Deakin University.

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

It is part of the Program Objective to provide Professional Development to its student Mentors.

- The Program provides opportunities for Mentors to develop their skills and knowledge.
- The Program encourages, provides opportunity and support to its Mentors in developing their own initiatives and coordinating their own activities if it is inline with the Program objectives.

Examples of the opportunities included:
- Victoria First Year Network Meeting
- Academic Advisory Group Meeting
- University Leadership Forum

**CURRENT PROJECTS**

**Deakin Learning Hub @ Dandenong**
- Low SES and off campus students.
- Majority of students are international or mature age.
- Provide weekly student support service.
- Have out of hours contact.
- Facebook, email, phone.

**INITIATVE AND INNOVATION**

The Program encourages, provides opportunity and support to its Mentors.

- The Program encourages, provides opportunity and support to the Mentors in developing their own initiatives and coordinating their own activities if it is inline with the Program objectives.

Examples of the opportunities included:
- Facebook page (Deakin Students Helping Students Drop In Station)
- Lecture Presentations
- Campus BBQ
- Meat and Greet BBQ

**Sam’s Reflections**

- Presenting at a Deakin University Academic Advisers Networking Forum
- Attending a First Year Networking Forum hosted at Monash University
- Working with an inspiring and enthusiastic group of students and staff on a continually developing program.

**THANK YOU!!**
SYMPOSIUM PRESENTATIONS

In closing...
Gill Best
Victoria University

In Closing:
- RMIT
- Macquarie
- Evaluations
- Hot off the press
- Thank you
- Afternoon Tea

CONFERENCE THEMES
- Demonstrating success
- Pathways and intersections
- The literacies nexus: English, maths, academic skills
- Peer learning
- Learners in TechnoWorld
- The 6th dimension: TalkTank

WHO SHOULD COME?
- Academic language and learning lecturers and advisers
- Learning support managers and coordinators
- Academic development staff, academic lecturers and teachers
- Those who support international students and students with disabilities

In closing...

Gill Best

Macquarie University

Mentoring Symposium
Learning, Mentoring, Leading
Building Resilience and Celebrating Diversity

Evalua0ons

Please complete and leave ....

Received 14th November 2012

... every one of them wanted to talk in depth about it. In fact, they were far more interested in my mentoring experiences than they were with my account and operations management roles in local and national student societies. There’s obviously a really clear link between the ‘new’ workplace and what you’re doing.

...I think it’s extremely important that you all know that what you’re doing has positive implications that stretch well outside of academia.

Regards

Anthony Rye

Thank you...!!!!

• AALL
• VU College, Victoria University
• The SSSL staff and student team, Jackie, Trudi, Dan, Jason, Juliana, Andy, Jo, Ashley, Amelia, Samantha, James
• Everyone here for presentations and input
• Our past and current students who have helped us develop our thinking and contributed so much....
• Safe travels....