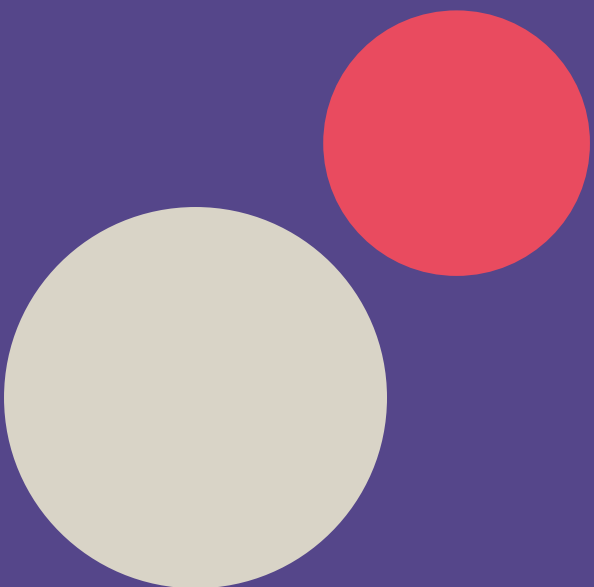
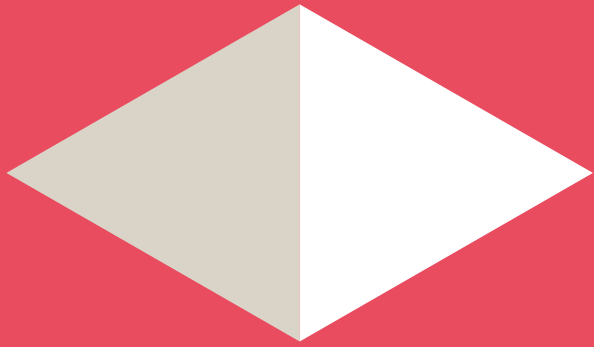


Global Impact Grants – Issue Three: Student Success



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Introduction

Advance HE made 17 awards of Global Impact Grants in July 2022 with the intention of sharing work conducted across our international membership that has had a demonstrable impact on staff or students. We received submissions from over 10 different countries across a range of areas of higher education practice.

This set of the Global Impact Grants brings together case studies that have supported student success and include work conducted across Australasia, Europe and Africa.

It begins with a case study from **Laura Tubino and Chie Adachi** conducted at Deakin University, which describes the pilot of using an Artificial Intelligence tool to support student feedback literacy.

Dr Lynette Pretorius's case study from Monash University highlights work conducted to build a culture of academic integrity using a variety of approaches.

Maggie Hartnett from Massey University in New Zealand describes approaches to develop postgraduate researchers using a Professional Inquiry course with supporting digital badges.

The case study from **Dr Elena Papadopolou** of Unicaf University describes a Graduate Conference the institution runs that supports the research skills and practice of doctoral students.

Nirman Wijenayake of the University of New South Wales explores the teaching of teamwork to students to improve their academic success.

Lyda Eleftheriou of Unicaf University reflects on the revision of their student induction programme to improve student engagement and satisfaction.

The final case study in this issue from **Aaron Cornwall and Dr Emeline Jerez** of Australian Catholic University shares their development of a Veterans Transition Programme to support the effective transition of Australian Defence Forces staff into higher education.

We hope you enjoy reading these case studies. We would like to thank all the authors for their time in sharing their inspirational work.

Ian Hall, Jenny Tester and Tonya Watts

Heads of Membership
Advance HE

Developing feedback literacy for students through the AI automated feedback tool

—
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Motivation

As part of its strategic teaching and learning project, Deakin University has partnered with FeedbackFruits, a Dutch edtech company that develops educational tools. It has joined its international consortium ('Do-tank') to help develop student feedback literacy through its artificial intelligence (AI) feedback tool. This tool aims to provide students with timely and actionable feedback to improve their academic writing. This is also intended to reduce academic workload by automating low-level feedback, allowing teaching staff to focus on providing feedback on more complex, or higher order thinking, aspects of the learning activities. The provision of immediate feedback is expected to increase the use of specific feedback by students, stimulating active learning and resulting in higher quality written submissions.

The tool

The FeedbackFruits AI tool enables immediate automated feedback on academic writing, focusing mainly on micro level features of texts, thus supporting the copy-editing stage of writing. The current version of the tool detects specific parameters in the text such as paragraph and sentence length, punctuation rules, grammar or text structure. The teacher sets the parameters and criterion relevant to their assessment design, but the student uses the tool independently. The tool highlights errors and either describes mistakes or directs the student towards additional information or learning resources so that students can respond and take action on the feedback without teacher involvement. Students also have the opportunity to provide feedback and comment on the tool's usefulness – particularly around the accuracy of the feedback. Thus, this AI tool allows students to develop and demonstrate their evaluative judgement (Tai et al, 2018) and feedback literacy, which refers to the understandings, capacities and dispositions required to benefit from feedback opportunities (Carless and Boud, 2018). Both evaluative judgement and feedback literacy skills are considered to be critical 21st century capabilities.

Piloting the tool

The aim of the initial pilot presented in this case study is to understand how students engage with the tool and its efficacy. Understanding what affordances students act on will inform the refinement of the tool and its framing, to further scaffold students' feedback literacy. The feedback literacy framework used for the evaluation of the data draws on the conceptualisation proposed by Molloy et al (2020).

A pilot project ran across three teaching periods on a total of 29 units, reaching more than 4,000 students from 2021 to 2022. Initially, recruiting participants proved challenging, with academics citing fear of added workload and change fatigue experienced through the pandemic-induced pivot to online. The first teaching period had six units piloting the tool, all within the Faculty of Science Engineering and Built Environments. The last teaching period had 20 units across all faculties (Science Engineering and Building Environments (SEBE), Arts and Education, Health, and Business and Law) participating in the pilot, with every unit involved in a pilot continuing to use this tool after the first instance.

Pilot units span across the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. However, undergraduate units piloting the tool had more students, with 70% of the total number of students with access to the tool being undergraduates. The writing tasks the tool has been piloted on are diverse and include theses, research reports, project reports, autoethnographies, essays and reflective tasks.

Impact

The tool was used on average by 13% of students enrolled in each undergraduate unit. In postgraduate units, the tool was used on average by 12% of the students, ranging from 0% to 34% of students enrolled in each unit. The nature of the task did not appear to have an impact on the use of the tool. For example, long academic writing tasks did not result in more use of the tool than small reflective pieces. Furthermore, academics indicated no added workload for the teaching team, increased students' confidence in their written work and significantly improved international students' language skills confidence. A teacher who has been using the tool for three teaching periods already, remarked "Ultimately, I'd like to provide detailed feedback for every single assignment but that's unrealistic. Automated Feedback did something I couldn't provide for students".

The evaluation of the pilots with the 29 units, in consultation with the university teachers and the usage data of the AI tool, suggest the following six key observations regarding students' feedback literacy:

- + proactive, high achieving students use the tool more
- + most common numbers of submissions are one, two or three submissions (in that order)
- + multiple submissions are commonly done in a single day
- + students commented on usefulness of feedback received
- + students highlighted errors/inaccurate feedback
- + students rated the feedback, with the average rating being very positive.

Future work

This pilot study has provided preliminary insights on how the AI-powered tool for automated feedback can be incorporated in a way that students engage with and develop feedback literacy and evaluative judgements. To make the most of it, the use of the current tool needs to be incorporated in the learning design work by teachers, making students aware of the different feedback literacy skills and including guidance or strategies on how to enact them. Looking to the future and the next iteration of the tool, the first step proposed is to make the tool student-facing. That will allow for the tool to be made available in all units so that each student is able to decide what task they will use it for and the aspects of writing skills for which they would like to seek feedback. This will further cultivate a space for developing student agency and feedback literacy in self-regulating their learning. The other feature

recommended for the next prototype is the inclusion of templates for three different drafting stages, guiding students through understanding the process of writing at each stage. This will raise awareness of the reciprocal nature of feedback and the role students need to play in it. It is expected that this will build an understanding of what an AI tool can and can't do, creating a partnership between student and AI in relation to feedback, a disposition that can be related to and extended to their teachers

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Improving students' understanding by building a culture of academic integrity

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In recent years, academic integrity has become an issue of significant concern at universities. This has resulted in the introduction of a suite of academic integrity policies as well as anti-cheating software to try to combat academic misconduct (Cutri et al, 2021; Dawson, 2020). In this space, educators are often asked to be either “pro-integrity” or “anti-cheating” (Dawson, 2020, 3).

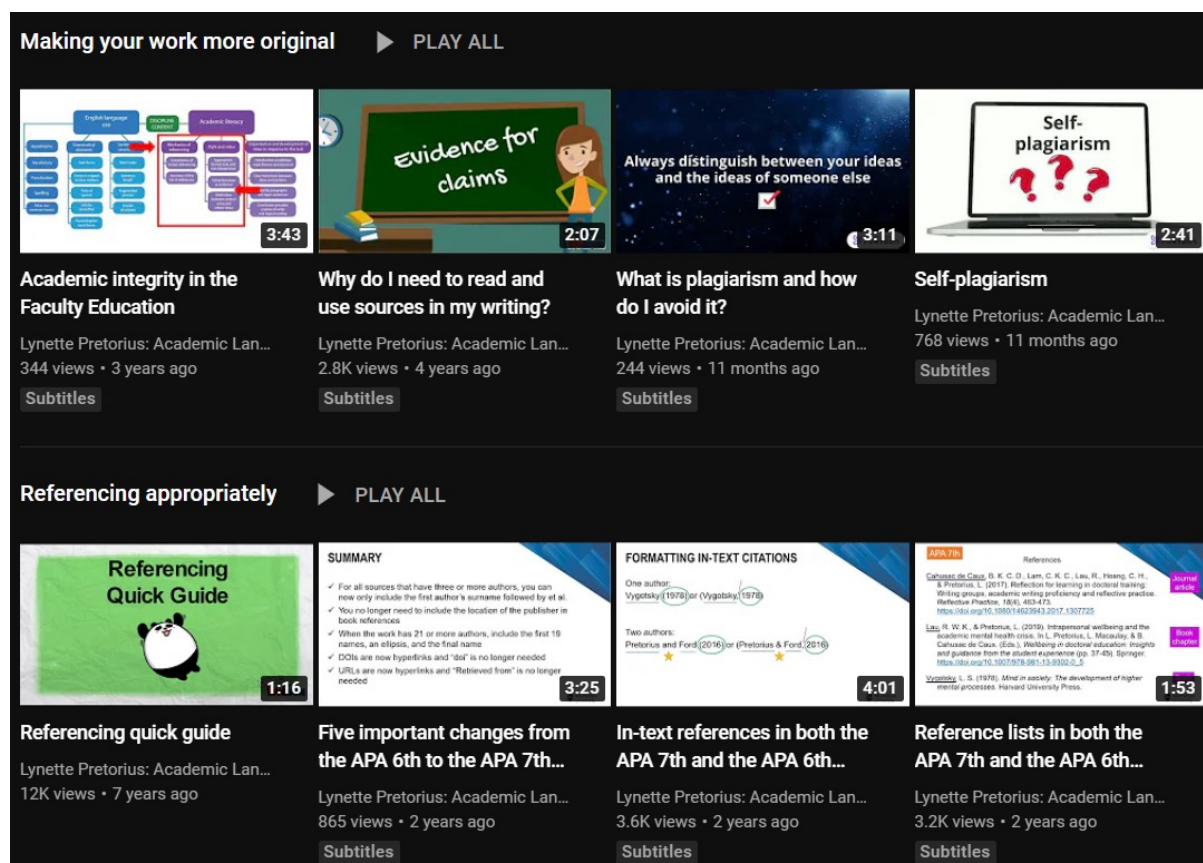
However, I believe this is a false dichotomy. Instead, I work to create a *culture of academic integrity* where there is a “greater awareness of academic integrity for both staff and students, [as well as] the involvement of students in creating and managing their own academic integrity” (Cutri et al, 2021, 2). This necessitates teaching about academic integrity explicitly, encouraging students to reflect on and improve their own academic integrity practices, and creating educative strategies for detected instances of plagiarism.

Explicitly teaching about academic integrity

I have developed several learning experiences to improve students' academic integrity practices over the past 10 years, including workshops, online videos and the Practice Turnitin Assignment. Each semester, I run a workshop called “Referencing and Academic Integrity” which is open to all students in the faculty. This workshop is designed to explain what plagiarism is, how to improve the originality of written work and how to reference correctly. All the notes for this workshop are provided before the workshop and are publicly available through our Doing Assignments Booklet (available on [our website](#)).

My academic integrity workshop is also supplemented by a series of short videos, which are made publicly available through my [YouTube channel](#) (see Figure 1). My videos are presented in a variety of styles and students can choose which videos they want to watch and in which order. These extremely popular resources (viewed more than 65,000 times) provide just-in-time information to help students learn about plagiarism, appropriate quoting, paraphrasing, summarising and effective referencing. My videos are also embedded in a variety of subjects in our faculty and have been incorporated in course materials at several other institutions. I have received many positive comments from staff and students. Indeed, over 6,500 people have subscribed to my YouTube channel so that they can get notified when new videos are created.

Figure 1. YouTube channel showing examples of videos developed to improve the academic integrity practices of students



Finally, I developed a resource called the "Practice Turnitin Assignment", available to all students in my faculty. My university uses Turnitin as its text-matching software to help educators detect instances of plagiarism. I believed that this software could also be used as a pedagogical tool to help students better understand academic integrity. Consequently, I created a Turnitin "assignment" not monitored by staff. Importantly, anything submitted to this "assignment" is not saved to the Turnitin database, which means that students can use it as a learning resource to see where they need to improve their summarising and paraphrasing *before* they submit their final assignments. This "assignment" is supplemented with online tutorials that help students learn more about Turnitin (eg how to understand the originality report that is produced) and understand how to improve the originality of their work (eg by learning that paraphrasing focuses on ideas, not words). The Practice Turnitin Assignment is the most used resource in the faculty (110,860 views by 4,717 users) and was also recognised by Turnitin at its 2015 Global Innovation Awards.

Encouraging students to reflect on and improve their own academic integrity practices

It has been noted that purposely reflecting on one's personal experiences, beliefs or knowledge increases understanding, encourages growth and improves practice (Cahusac de Caux et al, 2017). Consequently, I ensure that time is provided for students to reflect on their own academic integrity practices. For example, I recently worked with PhD students to conduct a research project where they explored the literature and their own practices. This allowed them to discover how their own academic identities influenced their academic integrity practices. For example, one student noted:

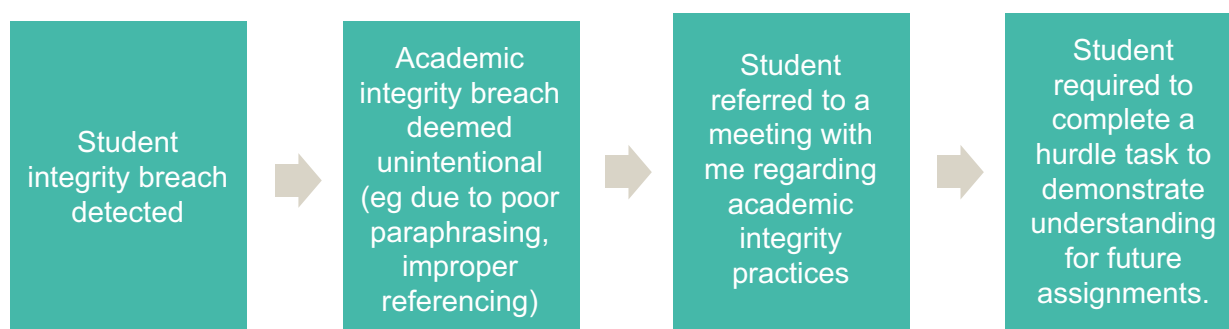
“As an individual, who has experienced the [education system in my country] that worship textbooks, I find it extremely challenging to critique other studies and fail to recognise the limitations in the findings, methodology or methods employed in the study. Culturally, this practice of reviewing other academics work and addressing the limitations and gaps was not preached, experienced or expected. Therefore, I tend to use a lot of direct quotes from original writing.”

As part of this project, students discovered that it was often their own lack of confidence in their abilities that caused them to write in certain ways. As a result, we created a model of academic integrity at doctoral level demonstrating the influence of the imposter phenomenon on textual plagiarism, academic dishonesty and research misconduct. This paper was [published open access in 2021](#) and has already been downloaded more than 6,000 times, with 10 citations to date. I have also received many positive comments from the students who participated.

Creating educative strategies for detected instances of plagiarism

Over the last decade, I have worked with colleagues to improve their assessment descriptions, marking rubrics and feedback practices to explicitly include the need to justify arguments with appropriate evidence. This emphasises to students the importance of appropriate academic integrity practices in their assignments. However, despite educators' best efforts, there will still be instances of plagiarism detected each semester. I have found that these instances are overwhelmingly forms of unintentional plagiarism, where students are unfamiliar with academic integrity conventions (eg, they do not know how to reference correctly). While this does necessitate penalties (such as failing the assignment), I believe this also offers an opportunity for educators to provide further learning opportunities. Consequently, I have developed a process in our faculty where students who are identified as having unintentionally plagiarised can be referred to me by their subject lecturer to help them improve their academic integrity practices in the future (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Helping students improve their academic integrity practice after unintentional plagiarism has been detected in an assignment



Once students have met with me, they are provided with an additional [formative hurdle task](#) I developed. This task contains a piece of text they need to paraphrase into a single paragraph, thereby requiring them to apply all the skills I discussed with them in the meeting. In this way, they are able to consolidate their understanding so that they can apply these skills in their future assignments.

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A new approach to postgraduate researcher development

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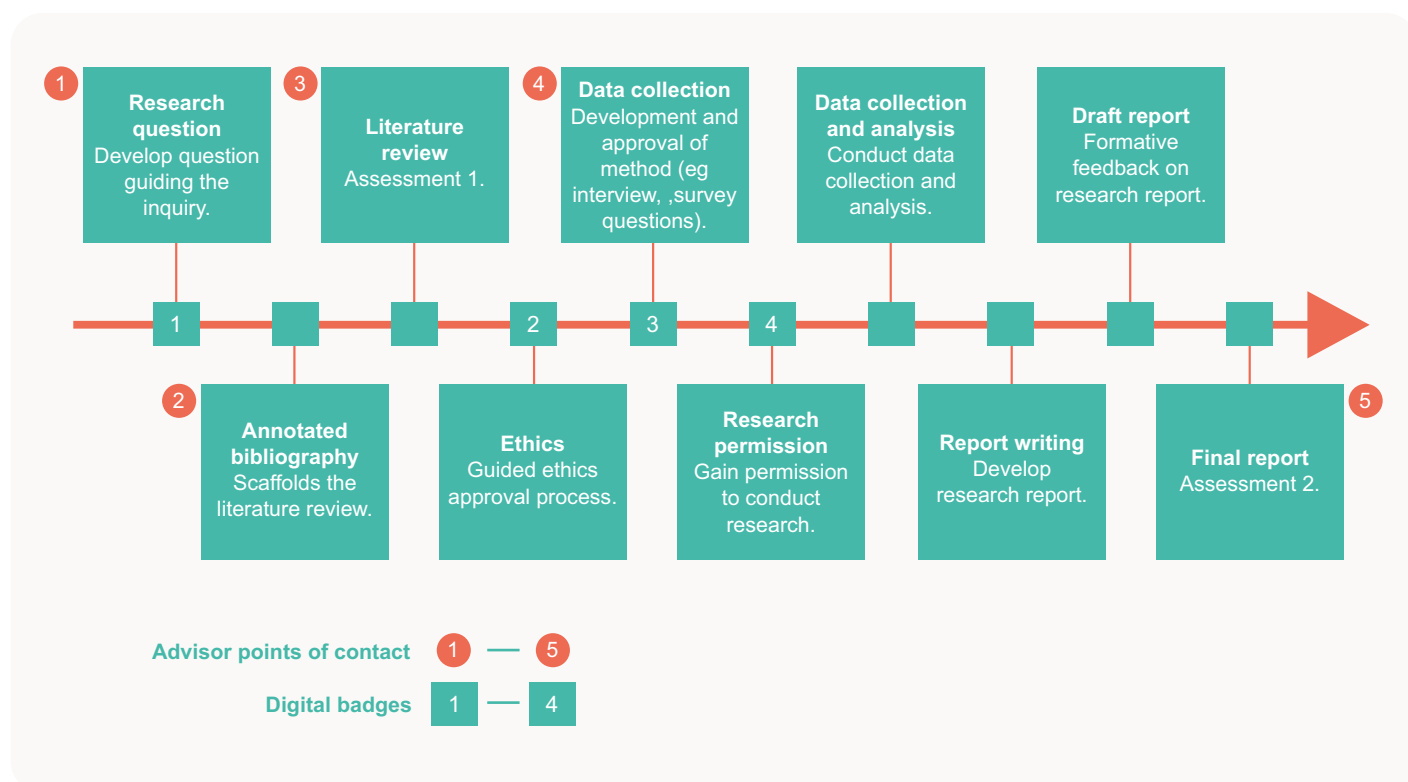
The Professional Inquiry (PI) is a researcher training and development course that is the capstone project of the Master of Education at Massey University. Students taking this course are a diverse group of mature-aged and geographically dispersed professional educators who want to develop applied, 'real-world' research skills in contexts that are directly relevant to them. Traditional postgraduate research pathways of on-campus, individualised research with one to two supervisor(s) do not meet their needs.

Resourcing was also an issue. With numbers projected to grow to 45 PI students per year, there was insufficient academic staff to meet supervision requirements through traditional postgraduate supervision processes. Therefore, a shift to more flexible, shared, partnership approaches was necessary. Consequently, a new team-based model of online postgraduate student research skills development was adopted that encouraged collaboration among students, and between students and academics, to build student research skills. It blended components of a taught course (ie guided modules and activities) with academic guidance (ie supervision) and created an online environment to support the formation of an active, supportive and inclusive community of postgraduate students and academics; and used digital badging to scaffold learning.

Using a collaborative approach encourages students who are new to research to work together, ask questions and support each other through an unfamiliar experience. A team-based approach allows each student to be guided and assisted by several experienced staff: an academic advisor who acts as a specialist on research-specific content, the teaching team who teach general research content, and experienced research academics who give feedback on draft writing. The academic team are part of a rich online community providing active research experiences for students.

The teaching team are responsible for all PI students, rather than individual academics being responsible for a single student, as in traditional postgraduate supervision. The teaching team teach the components of the course common to all student research (ie literature review, ethics, data collection and analysis, and report writing). Teaching core research content (eg ethics) across multiple student-specific projects is complemented by five planned interactions between the advisor and student, ensuring that students practise applying learned research skills to their project. Students are paired with an academic advisor with expertise in their chosen content area. The advisor/student contact points are developing the research question guiding the inquiry, formative feedback on an annotated bibliography and literature synthesis activity that scaffolds the literature review, literature review marking and feedback that feeds into the final report, development and approval of the data collection approach (eg interview or survey questions, observation protocol), and final research report marking and feedback (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Components of the Professional Inquiry Course



Professional inquiry learners are experienced postgraduate students but are new to doing research and are understandably anxious. They need regular reassurance that they are on the right track. Digital badges give students a way to track their own progress, where each badge represents the successful completion of a milestone. When used purposefully, digital badges are a motivational aid for learners, an aid for tracking progress, and recognise achievement, giving students a sense of confidence that they are on the right track.

Four digital badges are awarded at key points throughout the course (see Figure 1). Each badge signals that the student has met the standard in an important component that contributes towards the successful completion of the research project (see Table 1). Students need to collect all four badges before they start collecting data.

Table 1. Description of digital badges

	Badge name	Awarded
1	Project approval	On approval of your professional inquiry research question.
2	Ethics approval	On successful completion of the ethics approval process.
3	Data collection approval	On successful development of your data collection approach (eg survey questions, interview questions, observation protocol) and had it approved.
4	Research permission	Once you have gained access to your research site (eg location, institution, database).

Students see the value in the targeted use of digital badges as the following comment indicates:

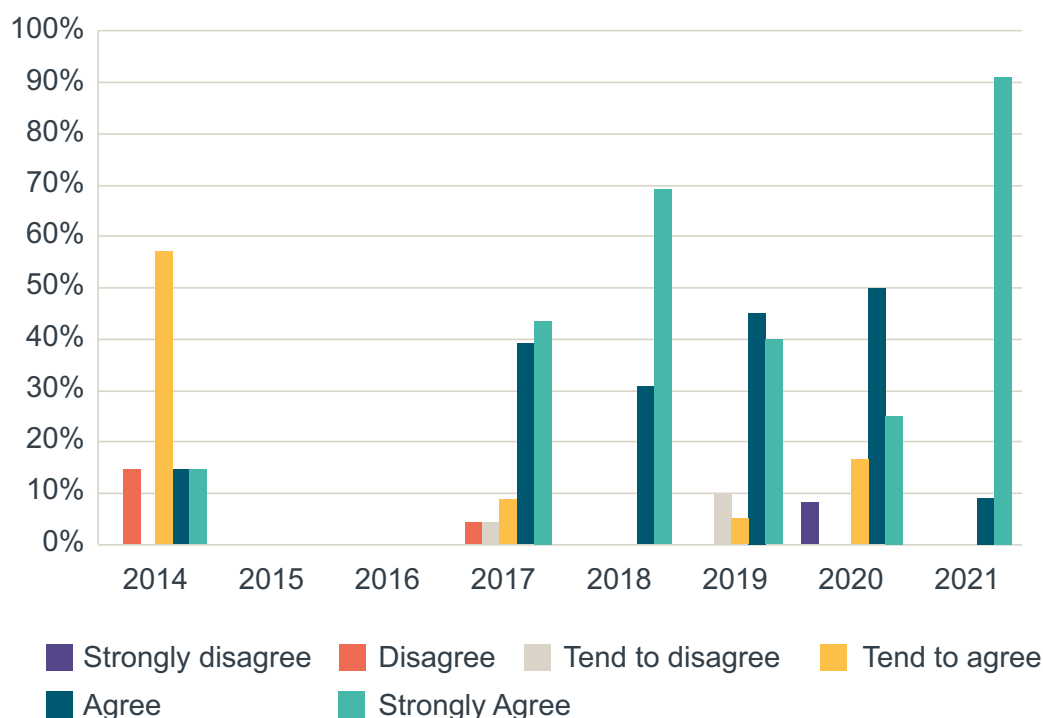
“They [digital badges] are a visual representation that you’re actually on track, you’re going fine. And you can see how much more you have to do to complete the goals. I really found it reinforcing”.

(2018 course survey)

The online community has grown from nine students and seven specialist academic advisors in the first cohort (2014) to 40-45 students and 25-30 academics in recent cohorts. Course feedback shows students are overwhelmingly satisfied with their learning experience, especially since the Covid pandemic. Official course feedback about overall satisfaction of the learning experience shows that at least 86% of respondents per year tend to agree or strongly agree that they are satisfied with the learning experience. Figure 2 shows the shift towards agreement responses since the course was first introduced in 2014.

More than 300 students have undertaken the PI course since 2014 with an overall successful completion rate of 92%. Completion rates for priority learners, namely Māori (the indigenous people of New Zealand) and Pacific are 87% and 86% respectively. These results compare positively with the all-of-NZ universities completion rates for Māori (81.5%) and Pacific (79.5%) learners at master’s level for combined age groups 25-39 and over 40 years old.

Figure 2. PI official feedback for overall course satisfaction 2014-2021 (2015 and 2016 – insufficient responses)



An added benefit is that staff digital skills (eg use of digital badges) have increased because of supervising within the course.

“Maggie was instrumental in my upskilling and development in the use of digital badges for the Literacy Course in the ITE [Initial Teacher Education] programme ... Subsequent feedback from students was overwhelmingly positive. The trialling of digital badging in the Literacy course has led to digital badging taking on a significant role in the new ITE programme. Students will have autonomy in choosing badges and we will be able to link digital badging directly to student’s portfolio evidence. This will be used as evidence for the [New Zealand’s] Teacher’s Council and for future employers. Maggie’s mentoring and knowledge in this area was critical to the success of this.”

(Lecturer, 2020)

Unicaf University Graduate Conference (UUGraC): a world impactful research dissemination event

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Unicaf University's Graduate Conference (UUGraC) is an annual interdisciplinary platform that allows the participation of multicultural, multinational doctoral students and candidates – with(out) (a)typical development – and faculty from over 20 countries. The conference covers a wide variety of topics ranging from sustainable development, inclusivity, equality and equity in education in developing countries, to child vaccine uptake and human resources risk management. It enhances research practice and dissemination, while providing opportunities for doctoral candidates to present, discuss and receive feedback on their ideas in a community of peers and experts.

Research events that promote research dissemination are needed in Africa, due to the research practice deficit and relative unavailability of higher education across the continent; more than 41% of 18-24-year-olds want to emigrate abroad in an attempt to receive better education (Ichikowitz Family Foundation, 2022). UUGraC, as part of the Unicaf's Doctoral Student Development Plan (DSDP), helps alleviate this problematic trend. In parallel, it enhances doctoral students' skills development, while aiming at research excellence and scholarship. Through DSDP, doctoral students receive transferable skills, such as analytical reasoning, critical thinking, efficient communication, leadership and project management, which are vital for professional advancement and personal fulfilment.

Previous events, protocols and procedures

The 2021 and 2022 conferences

The first UUGraC was held in 2021 and attracted 251 participants. It featured two plenary sessions from Unicaf faculty members and 35 oral and 9 poster presentations, spread over two days.

The second UUGraC, held in 2022, was a five-day event and attracted 589 delegates. It included three plenary sessions, 32 oral and 12 poster presentations, accompanied by two workshops on research methods in business and accounting and finance, and social sciences and humanities.

Protocols and procedures

Students, prior to presenting their research work at the event, submitted a research abstract, following the guidelines of the Organising Committee (OC). The subject-expert faculty members of the UUGraC Scientific Committee (SC) reviewed the abstracts and provided feedback to the students. Those accepted to present submitted their presentation/poster for review and attended a rehearsal during which technical aspects were addressed prior to the conference. Provision of feedback was essential in advancing students' presentation and writing skills. The OC has also developed workshops on presentation skills and research abstract writing that were given to students before their abstract submission.

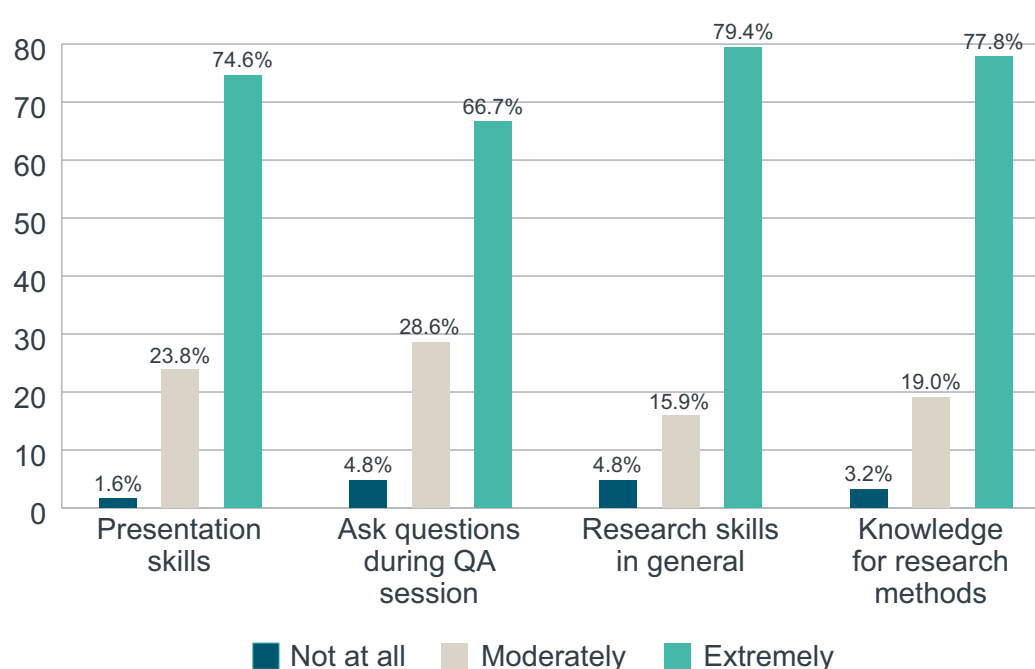
Evaluating the Unicaf University Graduate Conference (UUGraC)

Both conferences were considered a great success and have been evaluated by delegates as excellent (80% in 2021, 81.4% in 2022) and satisfactory (20% in 2021, 18.6% in 2022). The workshops included in the second UUGraC were positively received by all doctoral students; 67% evaluated the workshops as excellent and 33% as satisfactory. The Organising Committee, apart from receiving positive feedback, was also encouraged to “have two [conferences] each year so it gives more chances to PhD students to make their presentation” (DA1). The conference was also characterised as “an eye opener for us just starting our thesis journey and very inspiring” (DA12) and a “great opportunity for researchers to showcase their work” (DA30).

Attendance benefits

In the evaluation form sent to all conference attendees, 44.4% indicated that they attended both conferences held in the previous years and 44.4% attended only the 2022 event; 11.2% attended both events. Doctoral students stated that they have benefited significantly in the development of their hard and soft skills due to specific knowledge gained by attending UUGraC (Graph 1). 77.8% of students specified that their general knowledge of research methods has been positively affected by attending the conference and 19% indicated that it had moderately affected it. Similarly, 79.4% and 74.6% of the students said that their research and presentation skills, respectively, have benefited extremely by attending the conference; and 15.9% and 23.8%, respectively, said that their research and presentation skills were moderately improved.

Graph 1. Attendance benefits

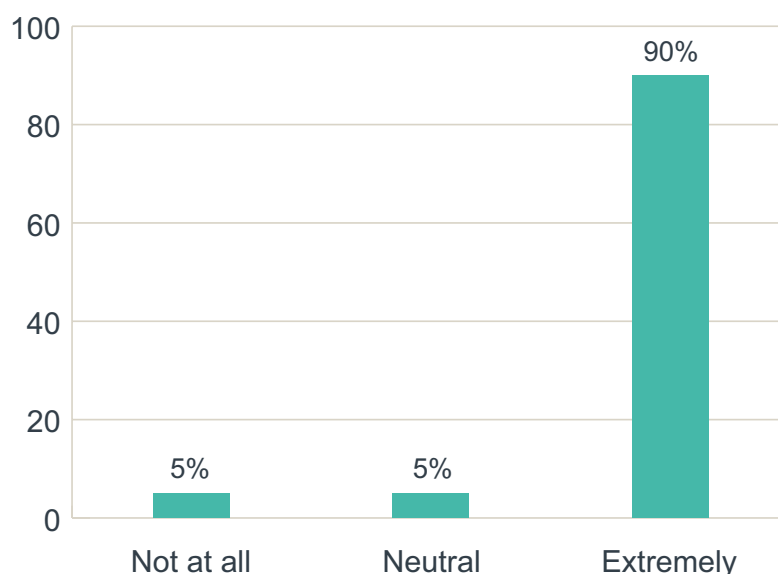


In addition, 66.7% and 28.6% indicated that they advanced their knowledge of how to ask questions during a question and answer (Q&A) session at a conference and benefited extremely and moderately, respectively, by attending the conference. Only 4.8% said that their attendance had no effect on their ability to ask appropriate questions within the research context of a conference. This is also supported by the average number of questions asked during the Q&A session at the end of each doctoral student presentation. An average of four questions were asked during the 2021 conference whereas an average of eight questions were asked during the Q&A session of the second conference; showing a 100% increase in the average of questions asked during each Q&A session. This positive tendency will be supported by providing more time for Q&A sessions following presentations and by organising round tables and scientific discussion clubs during the UGrac 2023 conference.

Motivation to continue their studies

Overall, at the end of the conference, 90% of the doctoral students and candidates felt more motivated to proceed with their own doctoral research (Graph 2). This was a result of the vibrant environment of the conference as well as the fact that, in order to enhance the research impact of the event, the presenters were invited to submit their paper for publication through the peer-reviewed Unicaf University Graduate Student Papers (UUGraSP) series to be published through the Unicaf Online Journal (UoJ). Developing these writing-for-publication skills is necessary for students' employment in academia.

Graph 2. Motivation to continue their studies



Moving forward

The Unicaf University Annual Graduate Conference (UUGraC) is a university-run, internal and established tradition of research dissemination and broadcasting, with inordinate impact on Unicaf's doctoral students' journey. It is an event that enhances the doctoral candidates' research skills and contributes to their research development and motivation to complete their own doctoral degree. The 2023 UUGraC will add to this reputable research practice as, in addition to previous improvements, it will feature a French-speaking section, presentations by the university's doctoral graduates and research round tables, enhancing further the student experience.

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Setting students up to succeed in teamwork

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Nirmani Wijenayake, Senior Lecturer – education focused

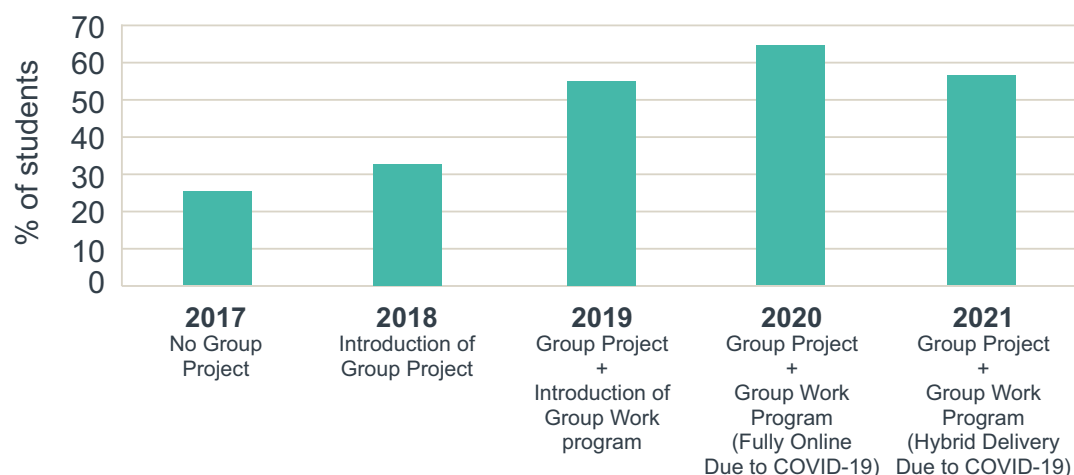
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In 2018, I designed a team-based assessment task to show my students the relevance of biochemistry to real life. Teamwork is an essential graduate attribute, and I thought this task would help them develop their teamwork skills and give them the chance to build a learning community. Around week seven of the term, I told my students to get into groups and get on with the task. Based on the end-of-term feedback, the biggest struggle for the students was not the task but working in a team. I assumed students would know how to work together. But it was clear that I first needed to teach students how to work effectively in a team before challenging them to work on a team-based assessment task.

After reading a lot of literature on teamwork, in 2019 I came up with a short programme to teach students how to work effectively in a team. Since the introduction of the programme, there has been an annual increase in students strongly agreeing that they felt part of a learning community (Figure 1). Outlined below is a brief overview of my teamwork programme.

Figure 1. The percentage of students strongly agreeing that they felt part of a learning community between 2017-2021. Data obtained from the end of term course survey conducted by the University of New South Wales



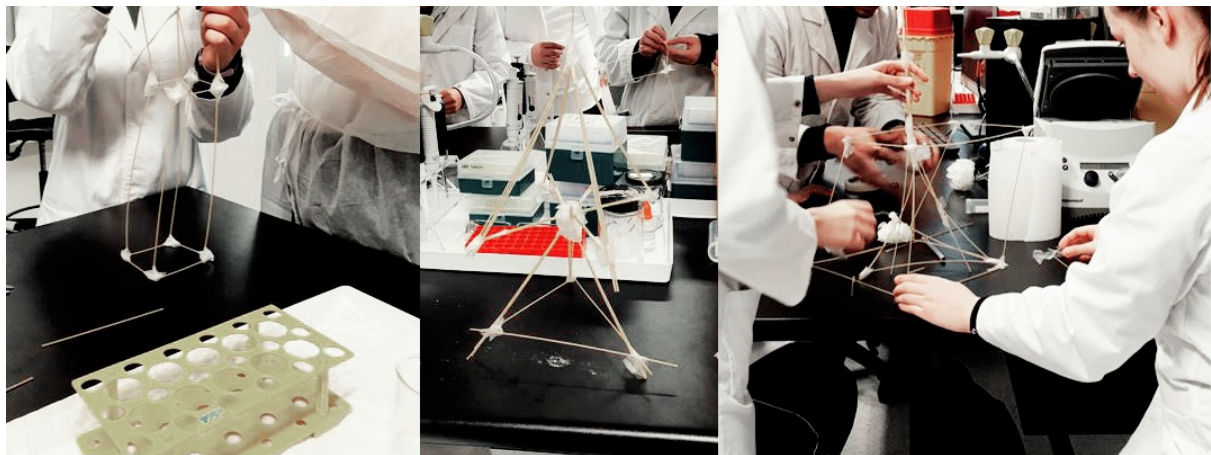
Week 1

Sorting: I want students to work with new people, so I sort the students into teams of four based on their programme, their performance and their background to keep the teams diverse.

Enabling communication: I create private Microsoft Teams chats for all the teams and encourage students to introduce themselves to each other. They use Teams for meetings and communication outside of class.

Low-stake group bonding activity: the first time they meet in class, I challenge them to build the tallest tower possible to hold a marshmallow using spaghetti sticks and cello tape (Figure 2). It has nothing to do with biochemistry, but it immediately forces the team members to talk, listen and agree on a solution to a fun problem. The different teams get competitive, and the classroom is full of chatter.

Figure 2. Different teams working together to build their spaghetti tower



Student feedback:

“Even though last week, our group was a bit sceptical about the tower building activity, I am able to see now what a good opportunity that was to get to know my members. This was because one of our members was absent during that task, and this week’s lab made me realise just how much I had gotten to know the other two members over the third. I hope we can get similar opportunities through lab activities to work as a group so that we can all get to know each other a bit more before starting on the bulk of the group project.”

Interactive ‘teamwork 101’ tutorial: I talk to the students about the Tuckman’s model of group development (Tuckman and Jensen, 1977), team roles, leadership, meeting agendas and minutes, and goal setting, providing practical tips on how they can succeed in teamwork.

Week 2

Pre-empting difficult conversations: I want my students to understand that sometimes conflict within the group is inevitable and know how to deal with it. I hold a conflict resolution workshop where each group is assigned a scenario of a conflict that could occur, and they need to decide how to deal with it. We then come together to discuss multiple scenarios and how to handle them.

Example scenario: *One of your groupmates is constantly missing the deadlines. They always have an excuse, but the rest of the group is getting stressed about not being able to submit the work on time. What should you do? How does the group overcome this hurdle?*

Week 3

Team contract: all the teams write and submit a team contract using a template. It contains a set of rules and guidelines they all agreed on at the start of the term. So, if conflict arises, they have something to refer to solve the issue.

Week 4

High-stake group bonding activity: students complete the same quiz individually and immediately after as a group. They get immediate feedback on their performance, teach each other and correct mistakes together. The average mark for the group quiz is 20% higher than the individual quiz, and the student feedback on this has been excellent.

Student feedback:

“I particular enjoyed the group component of the quiz at it helped me understand the questions better and what questions I was wrong and what the correct process is to tackle the question again.”

“Group component was great. It showed me how many errors I made and loved other students understanding and explanations.”

“It was an interesting experience doing the quiz as the group. As a pro I think it replicates what group work is like in the real world as each of your decisions have an impact on the end result. Only con was that you know straight away when you got a question wrong.”

Week 8

Peer feedback: the students submit a draft version of their work for peer feedback. There are no marks associated with it, but this allows the students to see and sample each other's work and provide feedback using a marking rubric.

Student feedback:

"I just wanted to add that I thought the peer review for the draft submission was really helpful! By reading and marking other drafts, we were able to get a better understanding of what was required, and where we lacked in our own work. It was insightful to see how others presented and communicated information in different ways!"

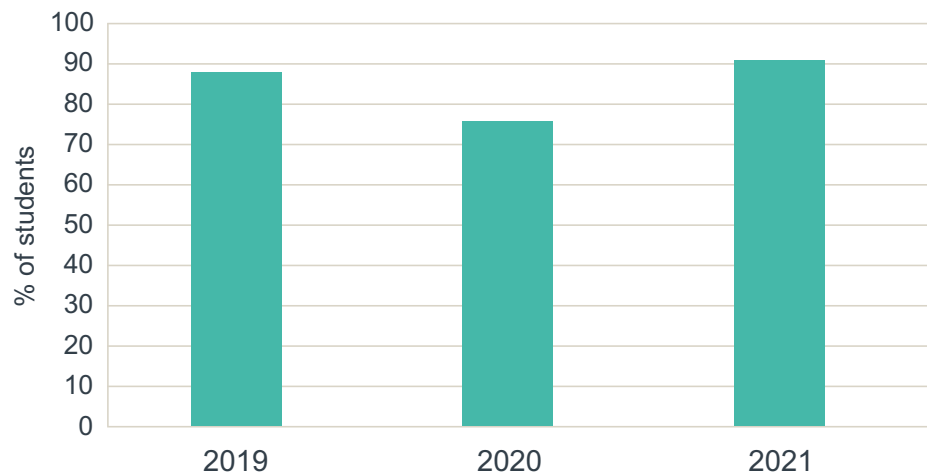
Week 9

Group member evaluation: at the end of the project, students evaluate themselves and their team on communication, leadership, trust and accountability, conflict resolution, feedback and reflection skills. The idea is to help students identify their strengths and weaknesses and work toward improving their weak areas in the future. The students receive leaflets containing information and tips on these topics they can use to improve their weak areas.

Weeks 1-9

Reflection diary: the students keep an individual reflection diary on how the team is progressing on their work. They critically evaluate the value of teamwork and their progress.

Figure 3. The percentage of students agreeing or strongly agreeing they learned valuable skills to work effectively in a team. Results obtained from an optional informal survey over three years - 2019 (n=73), 2020 (n=29), 2021 (n=33)



The programme appears to have helped students form better connections with their peers from the beginning, leading to better engagement in the course overall. Most students agreed or strongly agreed (Figure 3) that they learned invaluable teamwork skills during the term. These include strategies to meet deadlines, problem-solving through open discussions, seeing the real-life applications of biochemistry, sharing the workload, using feedback to improve work and learning through teaching. Many students reported the task helped them make new friends and trust and rely on each other. Giving students more targeted training in academic skills such as teamwork should be a priority in their university learning, as early mastery of these skills could improve their university experience.

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Leading the redevelopment of the Unicaf Induction Programme: promoting collaborative, differentiated and reflective learning to elevate the student experience

—
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The Unicaf Induction Programme is a compulsory introductory programme undertaken by all registered Unicaf students before embarking on their academic journeys. It aims to help students acclimatise to online learning and familiarise themselves with academic reading and writing conventions. In response to rising attrition rates in Unicaf's Induction Programme during 2020, and student feedback collected during the same period alerting to limitations, the development of a new and improved student induction programme emerged as an imperative need at the end of 2020. After consideration of relevant research on causes of student attrition in online education, and following an evidence-based approach (European University Association, 2020), the redevelopment of the induction programme began in early 2021, attaching particular importance to three dimensions: collaborative learning, differentiated learning and reflective learning.

Identifying the need for a new induction programme

Feedback collected through module evaluation surveys for induction modules delivered between June and December 2020 revealed recurring student concerns over the lack of social interaction opportunities, the time-consuming nature of weekly assessment tasks and the unengaging nature of learning materials. Student progression rates further painted an alarming picture; only 53% of students enrolled in induction modules between June and December 2020 successfully completed their module, while an alarming 47% did not engage or minimally engaged with the programme.

Leading the development of the new induction module

Informed by student feedback and relevant educational literature and research, the following three core principles buttressed the redevelopment of the induction module.

Instigating opportunities for differentiated learning

Given the easily accessible and heterogeneous character of online courses, which allow the participation of students with an expansive range of learning profiles, differentiating module content and pacing was considered crucial in the particular context of Unicaf and the new induction programme in order to accommodate different learning styles and alleviate student disengagement.

The most noticeable way in which differentiation was implemented is the pacing differentiation enabled by the conversion of the induction programme to a self-paced course. This enables students to progress at their own pace, determined by their own preferences, abilities and circumstances, provided that all summative assessment tasks are completed within a four-week limit.

Moreover, in response to student concerns regarding the lack of engaging material and subsequent difficulties in comprehension and motivation, and in an attempt to engage students of different learning styles, differentiation was applied in the module material. Specifically, written documents in the course are now replaced or enriched by including more visual and auditory aids using audio explanations, diagrams and imagery, and are further complemented by material in alternative formats such as video tutorials, interactive tasks, discussion forums, practice quizzes and a live webinar.

Similarly, differentiation was promoted in the assessment methods used in order to accommodate different learning preferences and, simultaneously, address the issue of cumbersome workload. The six written submissions of the previous programme were replaced by three quizzes, which include a range of question types, and only one written submission.

Instigating opportunities for reflective learning

The importance of reflection as a tool for enhancing students' learning has long been evidenced in educational literature as it helps to increase the depth of knowledge, identify gaps in knowledge, and personalise knowledge while also establishing social connections (Roskos, Vukelich and Risko, 2015; Chang, 2019).

In the redevelopment of the induction programme, reflection was purposefully embedded to promote the consolidation and application of knowledge, an aspect which, according to student feedback, was neglected in the previous programme. An entirely new section devoted to cultivating the skills of reflective thinking and reflective writing, with prompts for reflective tasks, are now included in several discussion forums with the aim of encouraging students to increase awareness of their learning and exchange perspectives with other group members.

Instigating opportunities for collaborative learning

Given its prominence in both the student feedback and relevant research, the need to develop opportunities for social interaction among students through collaborative activities could not be disregarded. Indeed, online interaction between remote learners is presented by scholars as a way of diminishing feelings of isolation, strengthening support networks and facilitating deeper understanding (Liu, Gomez and Yen, 2009; Sher, 2009).

While the self-paced nature of the induction module was not conducive to the inclusion of summative collaborative tasks, opportunities for social interaction among students abound throughout the course. In particular, students are prompted to engage in collaborative dialogue in numerous available discussion forums, including a designated discussion forum for exploring the written assignment requirements, thereby increasing the sharing of knowledge and contributing to the development of a supportive online learning community to which they can resort if they need help.

Evaluating the new induction programme

As part of the evidence-based approach adopted, several data collection instruments were used to obtain feedback after the launch of the programme, such as semi-structured phone interviews with students during the first trimester after the launch, a course evaluation survey available at the end of each course, and student feedback posted in discussion forums or sent via VLE message to faculty. All data indicated clear student satisfaction, with 81% of students finding the current module material engaging, 78% reporting enjoying the collaboration with other students in discussion forums and 71% finding the module conducive to the development of reflective thinking. As regards the crucial matter of attrition rates, the numbers reveal a significant improvement; while the success rate for 2020 was 53%, the corresponding rate in 2021 is 86% and 92% in 2022, indicating an astounding increase.

In summary, while the core purpose of the induction module remained unchanged, the improvements implemented in terms of structure, content and design of the module through the promotion of differentiated, collaborative and reflective learning have yielded significant positive reactions from the induction student body, resulting in the enhancement of the student experience and the dramatic improvement of student progression rates. The redevelopment project has thus been shared at institutional level so that the implications can be examined in the wider context of promoting best practices within Unicaf.

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Veterans Transition Program: addressing barriers to success for student veterans in transition to higher education

—
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The transition to higher education can be distressing for many current and former serving Australian Defence Force (ADF) members. They confront unique challenges. Inequality, academic unpreparedness, feelings of isolation and alienation, and loss of identity are among the issues reported as detrimental for their access, persistence and academic achievement. Studies have highlighted the importance of initiatives to improve the transition and educational outcomes of veterans.

At Australian Catholic University (ACU), raising awareness of the barriers facing veterans and their families and providing them with access and targeted support is a strategic priority. Piloted in 2020, the Veterans Transition Program (VTP) is a two-week university immersion experience to facilitate student veterans' transition into a higher education learning environment.

One of the participants of the programme was an army veteran who decided to enrol for a Bachelor of Exercise and Sports Science at ACU. It had been a while since his separation from service, *"I had a bit of a struggle trying to find out exactly what I wanted to do. While I was in, as a UAV operator, I was doing something completely left field, so going from learning about airspace to the human anatomy, it's a big changer"*. Uncertainty about career choice is just one of the many barriers in the student veteran journey. Navigating the cultural shift from military service to academia can be overwhelming. As he reflects, *"sitting down and doing exams in a different environment as well as dealing with a completely different cohort. Also, what the expectations were was a little bit of a worry, wasn't too sure how formal it is"*.

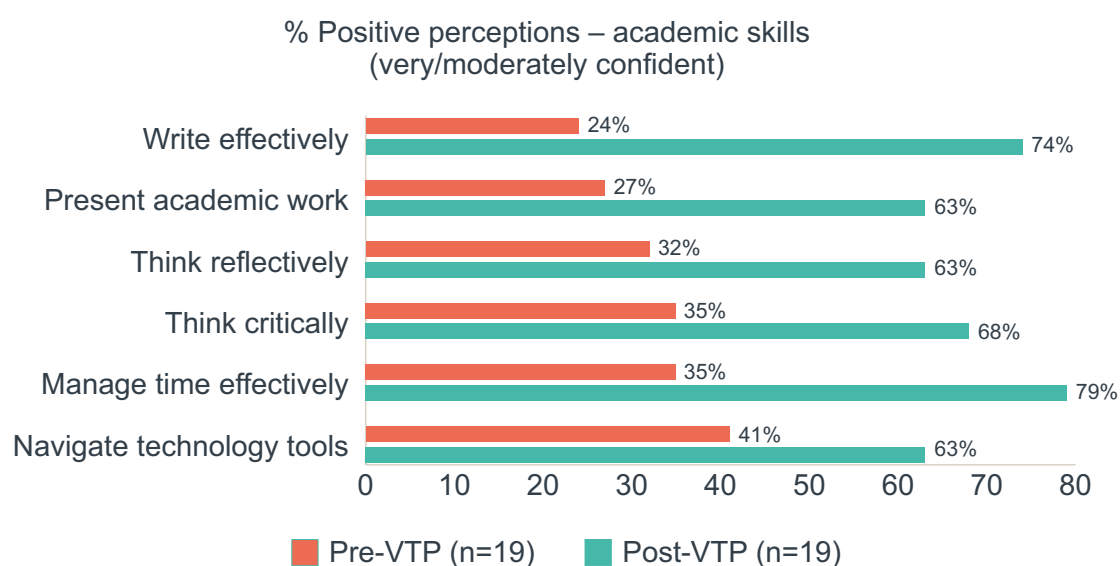
Guided by research, the VTP has been designed to help student veterans form a learner identity and acclimatise to the campus environment. In the context of lectures and tutorials around a philosophy unit, student veterans acquire academic literacy, apply critical thinking, and unpack academic expectations. Through philosophy, student veterans quickly discover not only what they could bring to the table in terms of the ideas at hand but also what the subject could do for them in their post-service lives.

Veterans face challenges but they are also able to translate unique strengths from the military to the university experience. This is remarked on by another participant, who has worked with the veteran cohort since the programme started, *"when teaching the VTP, I got the chance to work with smart, capable, driven and focused students, who brought to their studies a wealth of professional and life experience that is unique in the university landscape"*. The Veterans Transition Program accounts for those strengths and encourages students to build on them during their studies. For the staff collaborating across different areas of the university, the involvement in the pilot and in subsequent iterations has been extremely rewarding. As he describes, the *"experience was always interesting to me, as a teacher, and sometimes humbling. At the end of each cohort's studies in the VTP, I was genuinely proud of every single one of my students, each of whom did themselves proud in what they achieved"*.

The VTP is a supportive first step. It helped participants get “*through the front door*”. Student veterans in transition to higher education often report concerns due to returning to formal education after an extended period. For one, it had been more than 10 years since last writing an essay or preparing for an assessment. Building on foundational academic skills, promoting help-seeking behaviour and strengthening students’ confidence in academic success are VTP’s key components.

“It got me on the ball rolling when it came to doing my assignments and coming back into academic writing. Understanding where to find things, where I can do research and also whom I had there for support. I didn’t realise exactly how much support I had until I’ve done the programme. So, it definitely increased my ability to think that I can achieve it all”.

Pre- and post-programme data from 19 student veterans participating in the VTP during the first semester of 2022 demonstrate its positive impact. After the initiative, the students’ perception of their ability to apply key academic skills increased with a significant gain in confidence in planning and preparing for written assignments.



This intervention does not only focus on the academic side of the student veteran experience. The programme also aims to enhance self-perceptions of community acceptance and engagement. In dealing with feelings of loneliness and isolation, the initiative offers student veterans a space to connect with faculty and their peers. In the participant's words, *"It gives you your own little community. You've just got a group of people that you all came through at the same time, did the programme together and we all catch up still. A lot became good friends throughout it and we all check in on each other"*. Data shows that the sense of belonging and connectedness to the university community almost doubled after attending the VTP.

Over the past two years, more than 70% of commencing students opted-in for the programme, with a high completion rate. After the introduction of the VTP, retention improved by 12% in just one year. Participants' satisfaction with the programme is high, with 100% reporting that they would recommend it to new student veterans. Qualitative feedback has been extremely positive: *"I enjoyed the introduction to the entire university experience"*; *"It helped me understand the basics of the uni lifestyle"*; *"I really loved connecting with ex-defence people"*. As the university is experiencing growing numbers of student veterans, it continues to expand its dedicated and student-centric support. Higher education has the potential to shape and transform the lives of veterans and their families. This has meant an opportunity *"to just puddle along and reintegrate into society"*. ACU has bold aspirations to lead a new era of support for ex-service members and those who are most close to them and establish the university as a practice leader in Australia.

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