Providing prompts to support a difficult story
Dr Stephen Scott, University of Otago

The University of Otago, like most universities, has a policy around the expectations of students’ academic performance. The University uses institutional data to identify undergraduates that have passed less than half of their points (credits) in the first half of the academic year and sends them a Warning Notification and then suggests they seek support.

The Office of Student Success piloted a project to coordinate the proactive contact of students on Academic Warning, where we reach out, to invite students to tell their story. This may not be an easy conversation for both the student and the staff member so a series of booklets and a loose script were developed to support this conversation and to help the student structure their student story.

There is the normalisation of the student’s situation. Then there is the opportunity for the student to tell their story, reflecting on the past semester; what went well and not so well. The student’s story is further explored to find out where they see themselves in a few years’ time and what led them to choose university. Finally, a supported discussion about what they would like to do differently to change their story.

This presentation will share the booklets developed and some of the stories from the project.

Learning outcomes
- Knowledge of Academic Progress Policy.
- Knowledge of resources used to support students share their story
- To reflect on some stories and how changing the story was supported

Presenter
Dr Stephen Scott, University of Otago

Stephen is Head of the newly formed Office of Student Success at the University of Otago. He is of Ngāti Whātua and English descent. Stephen has a background in teaching Zoology and developing support for Māori science students. He was appointed as the Director, First Year Experience in 2016 where his research focus was on the use of institutional data to investigate student engagement, retention, wellbeing and success for first-year students and for first-year indigenous students in particular. Stephen now has the mandate to investigate opportunities to support student success in any student cohort within the University of Otago. He also worked, with a number of caring staff, to develop the Locals Programme, which supports students flatting, or at home in their first year at Otago.