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Editorial

Once again this edition of JANZSSA contains an impressive array of articles written by student services' practitioners working directly with students in a number of different ways. A focus of this particular edition is on student mentoring, with descriptions and critiques of several different peer mentoring programs, both academically focused as well as those aimed at supporting the transition of students into university, both domestic and international.

Issues involved in working with students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as an innovative approach to improving mental health services on campus for students are the subjects of other papers within this edition.

This selection of non-refereed papers, best practice case examples, reports and reviews, is sure to interest all those who work with students in tertiary education settings.

Thank you to those who have contributed to this edition, and we encourage others to consider submitting articles, either to be peer reviewed or not, best practice case examples and book reviews for the next edition due out in April next year. Guidelines for submission can be found at the back of the journal.

Cathy Stone
Annie Andrews

Co-editors, JANZSSA

**Up-skilled, look: It's a Mentor.
It's a Training Facilitator.
It's a Super Mentor.
“The Benefits of Student Partnership”**

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From a paper presented at the 13th Asia Pacific Student Services Association International Conference, 5-7 July, 2012, Manila, Philippines.

Abstract

Now in its 12th year, Peer Mentoring @ UNSW remains an innovative program that continuously improves its training delivery and development. A review of Peer Mentoring at UNSW produced a number of recommendations to take peer mentoring at UNSW into the future. Action taken on one of the recommendations resulted in greater involvement of senior or past mentors in the training of new mentors. This has resulted in greater involvement by the ‘super mentors’ who have consequently deepened their experience of leadership and increased their capability to respond to people of diverse backgrounds within a paraprofessional role. A pilot in 2010 involving senior mentors as co-facilitators of mentor training proved to be very successful and the “super mentor” co-facilitator for mentor training is now very much a part of Peer Mentor Training at UNSW. Through this program scheme, deserving Mentors continually grow in the program not just as Mentors but Training Facilitators. Their participation in the Training Scheme is well received by the new generation of Peer Mentors and provides a generational connect between new and more experienced Mentors in the Program. This paper discusses the nuts and bolts of the “Super Mentors as Training Facilitators” scheme of Peer Mentoring @ UNSW.

Background

At the University of New South Wales twenty four (24) peer mentoring programs are offered for commencing students every year. The first semester peer mentoring programs are offered across Faculties, Schools and Divisions. In Semester 1, 2012, approximately seven hundred (700) students took on the role of mentors and approximately two thousand eight hundred (2800) first year students were paired or grouped with a mentor/s. This amounts to 16% of the commencing cohort for 2012.

The Peer Mentoring @ UNSW coordinator works collaboratively with the coordinators of Faculty, School, Division, and Student Society mentoring programs to establish first year mentoring programs, provide training and support for the sustainability of the programs and undertake overarching evaluation surveys and report on the outcomes of the 24 programs.

Goals of peer mentoring @ UnSW

- To assist Faculties and Departments in the development and implementation of mentor programs aimed at supporting the social and academic transition of first year students at UNSW.
- To provide all new undergraduate students at UNSW with the opportunity to be mentored in their first year at UNSW.
- To provide structured support for establishing and maintaining mentor programs within Faculties, Schools and Departments at UNSW.
- To encourage cross Faculty collaboration and fertilisation of ideas and sharing of resources for the enhancement of the first year student experience.

Mentor training

On average twenty (22) peer mentor training workshops are facilitated each year. Counselling and Psychological Services [CAPS] staff inducts and provides training for 400 - 500 mentors from Faculty and context-specific cohorts each year.

Student partnership

“Partnership programs offer an avenue to foster student engagement”, (Whitt, Nesheim, Guentzel, and Kellog, 2008, p.236). Student partnership is a form of student engagement where students work

collaboratively with university staff. Students are actively involved in the educational pursuits of the university that includes giving recognition to their skills, participation and performance (Miller, Rycek and Friston, 2011).

Student engagement is giving voice to students (Kinzie, 2009). It is acknowledging that it is not only university staff who have the sole input for student experience. By listening to what students have to say there is not just an equalisation of the playing field but an enriching of desired outcomes. Engagement activities enhance students' likelihood to achieve their university goals and abilities (Kuh, 2009). Whilst university attendance expands the access to acquiring desired learning outcomes, the gaining of graduate attributes is not just confined to the classroom and the formal curriculum. Extra co-curricular activities offer varied and meaningful opportunities for the development of skill and acquiring of confidence. Peer Mentoring programs provide both confidence and skill development for both the student offering the mentoring and the student receiving the mentoring.

Such partnerships inspire the participating students' relationship with the university; through the university's valuing the student contribution there is a maximisation of student learning and motivation as well as the willingness of students to be involved in university life, to engage with student peers and to foster affiliation with the university. Furthermore, the benefits of student partnerships boost scholarly experience and facilitate leadership skills with a global perspective and intercultural appreciation.

Super mentors scheme

In 2010, the Super Mentors scheme was conceptualized as part of the training and delivery improvement process. The innovation and development of the training model was timely in the growth and direction of the program. The scheme is also a response to the consistent feedback from peer mentor training attendees which indicated that they would like to have a Mentor involved in the training process to relate to as a role model. Moreover, the scheme aimed to recognize the value of Mentors in the program especially those who perform commendably. Most importantly, the scheme is to encourage student engagement.

Mechanics:

Selection of mentors for 'super mentor' training was undertaken via:

- Nomination from specific mentoring program coordinators
- Training sessions for experienced past and/or senior mentors who had completed the training for peer mentor and more than one series of peer mentoring

As a result of participation in the training, it was anticipated that the nominated mentors would:

- Gain valuable skills and experience in leadership and group facilitation
- Co-facilitate/assist the counsellors doing the Peer Mentoring Training

Benefits of Attending the Train the Trainers workshop:

- Certificate of Attendance
- Up-skilling of the Mentors to be co-facilitators of future mentor training program

If able to co-facilitate a Peer Mentor Training the 'super mentor' benefited in three ways:

- The experience was added to their formally recognised Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement (AHEG) of approved extra-curricular activities (Australia wide recognition statements)
- Remuneration for their hours of involvement
- Gaining experience in co-facilitating a training program alongside the usual peer mentor training facilitator

"Train the trainers" training component:

Followed a skill-based and experiential learning approach involving:

- Role induction as Peer Mentor Training Co-facilitator
- Up-skilling of Group Facilitation Skills
- Up-skilling of Leadership Skills
- Up-skilling of Communication Skills

Table 1: Number of SUPER MENTORS involved in the program 2010-2012

Year	Number Super Mentors Trained
2010	7
2011	6
2012	10

“Train the trainers” feedback

The “Train the Trainers” workshops have consistently generated positive results as an up-skilling training program. The participants are able to experience varying methods of learning including but not limited to didactic presentation, experiential exercises, small group activities and skill demonstration. Role induction/orientation is the highest rated training component followed by gaining confidence in applying the knowledge and skills learnt in the communication session and applying the knowledge and skills learnt in the group facilitation module. Gaining confidence in fulfilling their role as co-facilitator is further supplemented by a future meeting with the Counsellor/Peer Mentor Training Facilitator whom they will work with prior to the formal Peer Mentor training delivery.

Table 2: “Train the trainers” feedback

YEAR N=13 Min 1 Max 5	I now understand what is expected of me in my role as a co-facilitator. Median: 5	I now feel more confident in fulfilling my role as a co-facilitator. Median: 5	I feel confident in applying the knowledge and skills learnt in the group facilitation session. Median: 5	I feel confident in applying the knowledge and skills learnt in the communication session. Median: 5
2010	4.71	4.57	4.43	4.57
2011	4.67	4.50	4.67	4.67
2012	4.89	4.40	4.60	4.60
Total	4.76	4.49	4.57	4.62

Overall, the prospective super mentors valued applying the theory to the practice. At the end of the training, they are expected to come up with a presentation and utilize the skills learned. The highlight of the training is the peer observation and feedback from the Main Facilitator on their practice/presentation.

Participants’ comments

Final presentation-experience practising/applying theory.

Learning through activities. Practical theory-helps me remember what I learnt.

The discussions with the other mentors and their ideas. The presentations at the end of the session also helped to show the different styles and techniques that can be used during the training session.

How to co-facilitate and make sure everyone feels included.

The presentation that we did at the end gave us opportunity to put theory into practice and receive feedback.

Practical observation on feedback. Learn the importance of communication.

The roles that was expected of us, the activities made us learn more about the role and possible other situations that could occur.

I found the perspectives of the other students useful as well as the feedback after the presentation

Workshop helped me “how to take it further”.

Practical side presentations at the end. Practical critique.

The group activities are really good and enforced the information.

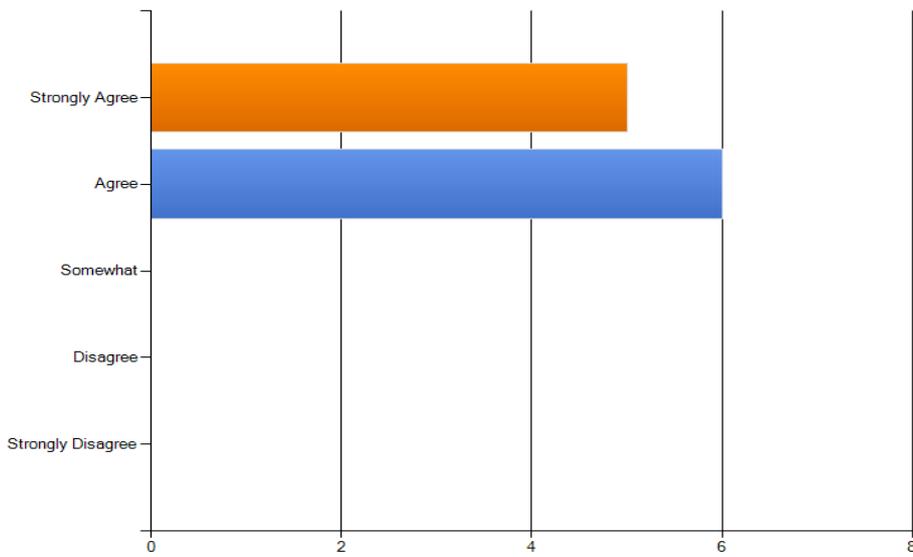
The practical facilitation. Getting feedback directly from the main facilitator and Peers.

The presentation was challenging and fun, applied to what we learnt today.

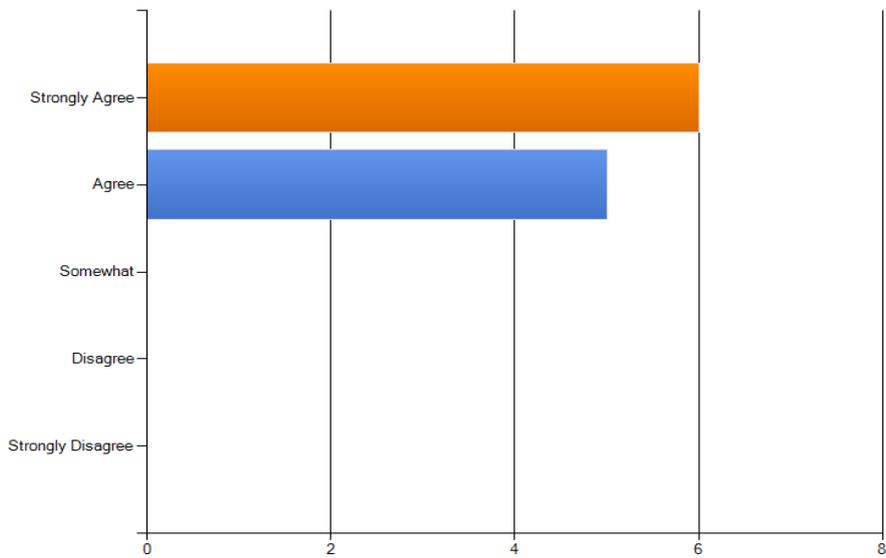
Presentation - doing a presentation, which required us to facilitate was most useful. It gave us an opportunity to test the skills and what we have learnt and consequently seek assessment/opinion on those skills and reflect on further improvement.

Super mentor' feedback post co-facilitation feedback 2010-2012

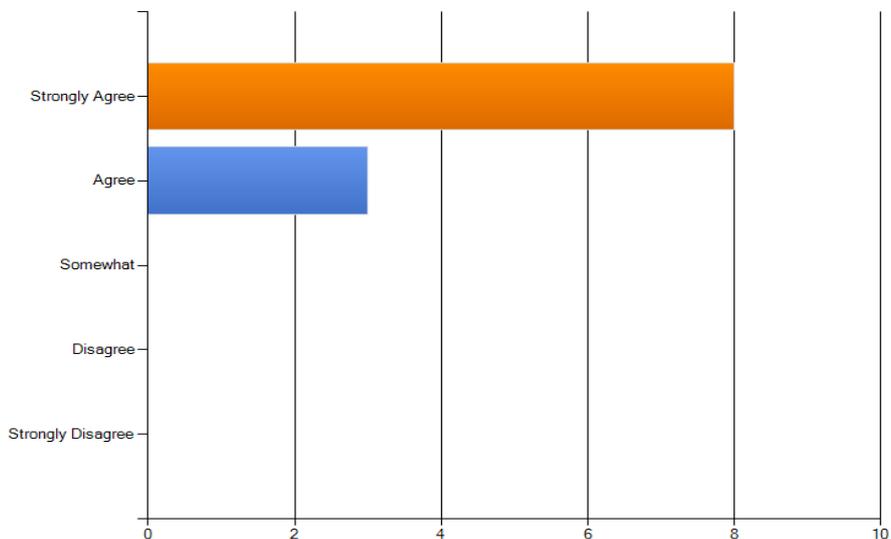
I have improved my confidence in speaking in public/training.



I have improved my communication skills.



I have improved my group facilitation skills.



Comments of super mentors after co-facilitating

Loved every minute of it.

Experience how people learn personal development.

Working together and learning from very experienced staff members -satisfying feeling when the activities work succeed -passing on knowledge to new mentors.

Share my knowledge about peer mentoring.

Facilitating the group activity sections.

It has gained me more confidence in dealing with fellow students. The interaction with the mentors were amazing.

Actual implementation of skills learned during training.

Meeting up with a past mentee who said that she took my advice.

Gaining confidence in facilitating.

Being able to put what I've learned previously in Training the Trainer to practice and being able to receive direct feedback from students and the facilitator. It was also a lot of fun!

Seeing the students keen on learning and participating as well as the training day. It was really helpful in preparing for the role and also to learn skills from a facilitators perspective.

I enjoyed teaching others how to become better mentors.

Being involved in the educational context that prepares students for their role/responsibilities.

Program's observed benefits:

- CAPS Staff are not spread too thinly during Orientation week. Originally, two counsellors facilitated the Peer Mentor Training and this has moved to one Counsellor and one Super Mentor facilitating in some Peer Mentor Training Workshops. This allows more effective coverage of activities by limited person resources.
- Fostering of leadership development for educators and more so for students.
- Super Mentors are familiar with their own peer mentoring program and any jargon that is specific to that particular course/degree.
- Super Mentors are able to respond to questions that are more specific to their academic program.
- Super Mentors as students themselves hold an intermediate position that enhances rapport and training energy because they are perceived as peers.
- Super Mentors possess peer group skills gained from attending past Peer Mentor Training and have undertaken the role of a Mentor that helps in the training delivery (e.g. being more playful, inject humour, etc.).
- Adds another layer of expertise from the wealth of experience of a Mentor.
- The collaboration has been positive for both parties.

Conclusion

The Super Mentor scheme demonstrates the benefits of student partnership, which results in an enhanced student experience and adds value to student engagement training programs. It adds to the enrichment of a Peer Mentoring Program within a diverse university setting, enhances leadership and professional capabilities of students and contributes through active real time recognition of the voice of students in student engagement programs. Student partnership has a valuable place in Student Affairs and the Super Mentor scheme is an example of its infinite possibilities.

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Lessons Learned from Four Years of Peer Mentoring in a Tiered Group Program within Education

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Abstract

Peer mentoring programs are a key means of developing student belonging and engagement, facilitating transition to university, improving retention and academic success. Yet the benefits of peer mentoring can be difficult to measure and quantify. In this paper we present results of an evaluation of a 6-week peer mentoring program with first-year education students, after the first 4 years of operation. Analysis of quantitative data, from pre- and post-mentoring questionnaires, found moderate positive correlations between mentees' expectations and actual experience of coming to university with regard to finding satisfying friends ($r = .462, p < .001$), having a satisfactory academic experience ($r = .400, p < .001$) and worry about not belonging ($r = .436, p < .001$). After participating in the program, mentees reported significantly less stress about coming to university ($p < .001$) and less worry about not belonging ($p < .001$), but some reduction in their expectations of having a satisfactory academic experience ($p < .05$), seeing academics as genuinely interested in teaching ($p < .05$), and their studies preparing them well for work ($p < .05$). Analysis of qualitative feedback identified five key themes concerning what mentees liked about the program and included the opportunity to ask questions, talk and discuss their experience; to meet others and make friends; to seek advice, help and guidance; the value of mentors; and how to survive at university. Overall, the benefits of increased belonging and engagement were clearly demonstrated, but it may take longer for academic benefits to be realised.

Keywords: students, university students, peer mentoring, retention

Introduction

Peer mentoring programs (PMPs) have demonstrated potential to facilitate the transition to university and improve retention and student persistence through enhancing student satisfaction, encouraging a sense of belonging and connectedness, enhancing skill development, and providing role models (Green, 2008; Hansford, Tennent, & Ehrich, 2003; Nora & Crisp, 2008; Wilcox, Winn, & Fyvie-Gauld, 2005). Peer mentoring may also contribute to decreasing levels of stress and anxiety amongst students (Gerdes & Malinckrodt, 1994) and to improving academic performance (Dearlove, Farrell, Handa, & Pastore, 2007; Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1998). The inherent benefits of PMPs also include their low cost, their potential to complement existing transition and retention strategies, and their benefits to both mentors and mentees (Hansford et al., 2003; Heirdsfield, Walker & Walsh, 2008; Heirdsfield, Walker, Walsh & Wilss, 2008).

The recent release of the report and recommendations from the *What Works? Student Retention and Success program* (Thomas, 2012a), which examined the efficacy and effectiveness of interventions to improve retention and included seven separate research projects, one of which involved peer mentoring, provides some timely insights which are useful for evaluating transition initiatives such as the PMP described here. One of the key findings of this ambitious project, which involved 22 Higher Education institutions in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, was that "developing a sense of belonging" in students "is critical to both retention and academic success" (Thomas, 2012b, p. 1).

In this paper we present findings from the evaluation of the first 4 years of operation of a PMP, in the interest of sharing the lessons we have learned over this period. We begin with a definition of peer mentoring and a brief overview of the diverse range of PMPs within Australian universities, including within Education programs, to give an idea of the wide scope of peer mentoring available.

What is peer mentoring?

For the purpose of this paper, the role of peer mentors is generally to support students through drawing on their own experience as students, and to act as role models. Peer mentoring encourages mentees to

participate in co-curricular activities, and can be run in a group format, or one to one. A peer mentor in an undergraduate program is usually a student who has progressed to a more advanced year level, often in the same degree program. Peer mentoring should be differentiated from academic advising which is generally undertaken by professional staff such as learning advisors within a university, or peer-assisted learning programs such as the Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS), where trained student leaders are employed within universities to strengthen academic skills and mastery.

PMPs can be part of a complementary orientation and transition package designed to improve the student experience of coming to university and to facilitate student engagement. Complementary interventions might include, for example, the provision of First Year Advisors (FYA) as a first point of contact for student queries, or the use of “Common Time” in core first-year classes to address foundation components of academic life, for example, unpacking the first assignment question; however, discussion of these interventions is beyond the scope of the present paper.

There are many different models of peer mentoring within the Australian tertiary sector. They can be generic, targeting all students, most frequently first-year students, or selective, targeting identified student cohorts, for example, international students. Tiered mentoring models where peer mentors are supported by academic or professional staff are common. PMPs are variously coordinated by academic or professional staff such as Counsellors. Evaluation is typically qualitative via self-report questionnaires or satisfaction surveys. Payment of mentors is variable, with some being paid small honorariums, or in kind, for example, book vouchers; some mentors receive recognition through certificates or credit towards course requirements such as community service or service learning hours; while others are well paid.

Increasingly, PMPs are being offered within academic schools or faculties to enhance student engagement and strengthen students’ identification with their program and profession, or to address problems with retention. For example, there has been an increase in mentoring in nursing over recent years, to encourage self-care in what is a “caring” profession (Glass & Walter, 2000). Within our own university a PMP has been offered to first-year students in psychology as part of strengthening students’ identification with the profession as well as a transition initiative. Similarly, peer mentoring in education programs has become common practice (Kent, Feldman, & Hayes, 2007) and can be seen as part of the ethos of educating educators, as teaching and helping others will comprise their role once qualified.

A longitudinal study of a peer mentoring scheme within the School of Early Childhood (Education) at the Queensland University of Technology which initially targeted first-year students identified as at risk of attrition, and subsequently expanded to include all first-year students (Heirdsfield, Walker, & Walsh, 2008), reported significant social and academic benefits from participation in peer mentoring and benefits for both mentors and mentees, over the 3-year period that the program was evaluated. The researchers explored the mentees’ and mentors’ experiences using qualitative methods. In a related study (Heirdsfield, Walker, Walsh & Wilss, 2008), an exploration of mentors’ experiences found that mentoring “works both ways” and was personally and professionally rewarding for mentors, despite also having some frustrating aspects.

Griffith University peer mentoring program with education students

A tiered group PMP was developed and offered to first-year students within the School of Education and Professional Studies at Mt Gravatt campus of Griffith University from 2006 onwards. Griffith University is a large metropolitan university with over 43,000 students spread over five campuses. The diversity of the student demographic, including a large number of first in family and mature age students within this cohort, means that it is vital that first-year students are assisted in the transition to university and that they are offered the social and academic support to strengthen academic success.

Background to the program

This program developed from the idea of extending and amalgamating two existing orientation and transition initiatives. One of these involved a Mentoring Program offered to first-year students in Education at Mt Gravatt campus during Orientation week, which was conducted by mentors (usually 3rd or 4th year students) taking a group of students from the same program (e.g., primary or secondary education) to provide an opportunity for incoming students to draw on the experience of their more senior “peers”. This program was coordinated by one of the co-authors of this paper. Focus groups with students and mentors consistently recommended extending the program beyond a one-off session.

The second initiative involved weekly groups for first-year students at Mt Gravatt campus offered by a Counsellor in Student Services. These groups, entitled *Surviving and Succeeding at University* and later, *First Year Success*, were offered to first-year students from Weeks 1 to 6 of Semester 1 and focused on supporting transition, including setting realistic academic goals, and developing confidence in their academic and organizational abilities. Just as importantly, the groups aimed at making students feel valued and supported by the university and facilitating the development of friendships with other students. While these groups were beneficial to students who attended, the advantage of offering peer mentoring groups within an academic school, rather than Counsellor-led groups through Student Services, was that it would increase access and acceptability to students, since it would mainstream the service and avoid the stigma often associated with a request for additional help.

Hence a decision was made to pool resources and to pilot a Peer Mentoring Program for First Year Students in Education that recruited students at Orientation and ran for a 6-week period in Semester 1, 2006. The program was coordinated by two Counsellors and the Coordinator of the mentoring program within Education. A small Orientation and Transition grant was obtained to partially fund the pilot with the balance being funded by the School of Education and Professional Studies.

Description of the program

The PMP runs for 6 weeks for an hour per week from Weeks 1-6 in Semester 1 of first year and follows on from the one-off mentoring session offered to all first-year education students in Orientation. First-year education students are given the option of enrolling in the ongoing PMP at the start of semester and allocated to a mentor. Mentors (in most cases Orientation week mentors) are recruited and trained to deliver ongoing peer mentoring groups. Counsellors, FYA and the PMP Coordinator provide ongoing support to mentors through a tiered mentoring model. The development, implementation and evaluation of the PMP were influenced by experience gained from existing transition programs within the university including PMPs that had already been piloted and evaluated within the School of Human Services (Fowler, 2004) and the School of Applied Psychology (Muckert, 2002). Mentors are paid a small honorarium in the form of a book voucher and given a certificate upon completion of the program. In recent years the contribution of mentors has been recognized by the university at leadership events hosted by Mentoring@Griffith.

Recruitment

Mentors were recruited by the Coordinator through recommendations from academic staff, emails to prospective mentors, and as the program progressed, from previous mentees asking to be involved as mentors. Recruitment of mentees occurred in several ways: through an application form sent out to first-year students as part of their enrolment pack; promotion by mentors at the one-off peer mentor session offered in Orientation; or promotion by Program Convenors and FYA in both Orientation and at first-year lectures. The application form briefly described the program and asked students to provide their student number, basic demographic data and contact details, as well as degree program to facilitate matching with mentors by program.

Training of mentors

Mentors were given a 2-hour training session offered in Orientation, conducted by the Counsellors and the PMP Coordinator. FYA, and in some years Program Convenors, attended these sessions and had input into the training. Training included information on the role of mentors, setting up and maintaining a group, conduct of mentoring sessions, managing boundaries, identifying students "at risk" and referral to other university support services. Mentors were given a handbook that contained resource material used as part of the training, contact details of key university support services and staff and copies of all the documentation relevant to the PMP. Where possible, students who had been involved as mentors in previous years shared their experience with incoming mentors as part of the training and in this way the program evolved and was refined over the years as a result of learning through shared experience. While 2 hours may seem short to undertake training of this sort, it was felt that education students already receive training as part of their degree program that prepares them for taking on the role of mentoring and therefore that this was sufficient. In addition, most mentors had already received an induction into the role to enable them to provide the one-off mentor session in Orientation.

Matching of mentors and mentees

Since passing on experience is a key aspect of peer mentoring, matching mentors and mentees as closely as possible is highly desirable; however, in practice this is much more difficult to achieve. Matching by degree program and time--that is, availability to meet--was therefore the main criterion we used to match mentors with mentees. After the pilot year, we also decided to have two mentors per group and to have larger groups of 10 to 12 mentees to allow for the expected attrition within a 6-week transition program. Having paired mentors allowed for greater diversity in terms of age, experience and personality. However, mentors still had to be sensitive to differences in experience between mature age students and school leavers and foster a spirit of collaboration rather than competition between these two groups. Having mature age mentors paired with mentors who had come to university as school leavers assisted this. Pairing of mentors also meant that the workload could be shared and if one was absent the other could still conduct the session.

Evaluation

The PMP was evaluated on an ongoing basis throughout the 6-week program as well as upon completion. Mentors were asked to submit weekly email reports to the Coordinator on the progress of their group, using a pro forma which sought information about attendance, topics covered in the session, any concerns about particular students and any difficulties in the conduct of the group. Mentors were also required to attend two review meetings, in Week 3 and Week 7, to report on the progress of their group and to review the program as a whole once the 6 weeks was completed. These meetings were conducted by the Coordinator and Counsellors and attended by FYA, and in some years, Program Convenors as well. Through hearing how other mentors conducted their groups and overcame difficulties such as finding a suitable venue or time to meet, enticing first-year students to an 8.00am peer mentoring session, or dealing with difficult or disruptive students, proved to be great learning experiences for everyone. Over time, knowledge gained could be passed on to new mentors at subsequent training sessions and the program improved in response to the lessons learned each year.

Formal evaluation of the PMP was undertaken using pre- and post-mentoring questionnaires that mentees were asked to complete, either as hard copies or from 2009 also available online. These questionnaires were adapted from the Institutional Integration Scales developed by Terenzini and Pascarella (1980). The questionnaires, consisting of 10 items on a 5-point Likert scale (where 1 = *Strongly disagree* and 5 = *Strongly agree*), compared mentees' expectations of coming to university with their actual experience after the first 6 weeks. Expectations included aspirations concerning academic as well as personal and social experience. Examples of questions included in pre-mentoring questionnaires were, "I expect that I will be satisfied with my academic experience at Griffith University"; "I intend to stay at university until I complete my Program"; "I expect to feel stressed about university life"; "I expect that my interpersonal relationships with other students will have a positive influence on my intellectual growth and interest in ideas". Questions included in post-mentoring questionnaires were identical except for minor changes of wording in some questions, for example, "I am satisfied with my academic experience at Griffith University". Post-mentoring questionnaires included two additional items asking mentees to rate their satisfaction with the PMP and how much they felt their mentors were similar to them in outlook, ideas and values. Post-mentoring questionnaires also sought qualitative feedback through four open-ended questions concerning what mentees liked about the program, anything they disliked or thought could be improved, what they thought they had gained from the program and whether they would recommend it to other students.

Description of sample

The sample consisted of 200 first-year education students who participated in the PMP over the first 4 years of operation and provided demographic information on the application form or questionnaires. This comprised approximately 25% of enrolments each year. The majority of mentees were female (71.5%), and from the following age categories: school leavers (42.7%), young adults aged 19-21 years (22.3%) or mature age students, that is, 22 years or older (35%). Almost half of mentees (48.6%) were enrolled in primary education programs that included special education, while 36% comprised secondary education students and the remainder were enrolled in technology education (20%) or applied theatre (13%).

What have we learned?

There were several operational changes made to the program in the first few years, such as having paired mentors and larger groups, as a result of learning from experience and through evaluation in review meetings and feedback from post-mentoring questionnaires. The system of tiered mentoring was streamlined so that

mentors' weekly email reports were directed solely to the Coordinator of the program rather than to the Coordinator as well as other staff (i.e., Counsellors or FYA) designated to support them. This was done to reduce the workload on other staff, particularly FYA, and to centralise data-gathering and collection of feedback to avoid confusion and to make it more manageable. Having a single person receiving these reports also made it easier for common or systemic problems to be identified and addressed quickly. For example, in one year several groups reported difficulties with a particular tutor. The Coordinator passed on this feedback to the Course Convenor and there was a quick resolution of this difficulty.

Recruitment of mentees was improved by asking Program and Course Convenors to promote the PMP in Orientation, and at core first-year lectures in the first week or two of semester. In addition, FYA invited mentors into Common Time sessions at the start of semester to talk about the PMP and this resulted in further recruitment. Maintaining morale and attendance was enhanced by mentors' sending encouraging texts to mentees at the end of Week 1 to congratulate them on having survived the first week. Some mentors were proactive in setting goals and tasks for the group in response to identified concerns and conducted PMP sessions in the library, for example, to demonstrate the use of a reference tool, BlackBoard and so on.

Approximately 50% ($n=102$) of the sample completed the four open-ended questions on the post-mentoring questionnaires that sought feedback about mentees' experience of the program. An analysis of this qualitative feedback found five key themes concerning what mentees liked about the program. These were the opportunity to ask questions, talk and discuss their experience; to meet others and make friends; to seek advice, help and guidance; the value of mentors; and how to survive at university. Interestingly the first three themes were each raised with equal frequency by 25% of mentees. Examples of the ask/talk/discuss theme included: *You could ask your Mentor and there was no such thing as a 'stupid question'; A chance to talk to people who had already gone through their first year.* Examples of the meet others/make friends theme included: *I loved meeting like-minded mature age students; Just knowing everyone is experiencing similar problems is a relief.* Examples of the advice/help/guidance theme included: *Made it a lot easier for me to understand what is expected of me; getting help with interpreting assessment.* An example on the theme of the value of mentors reported by 15% of mentees was: *Tips on how to cope with workload and time management;* and on the theme of surviving university reported by 11% of mentees was: *It helped me to settle in and it was good to have someone to talk to about things I didn't understand.*

Over the first 4 years of evaluation of the PMP, feedback from mentees on post-mentoring questionnaires was overwhelmingly positive with only a few suggestions made to improve it, most notably related to extending the program to include more sessions or to run longer than 6 weeks. Ninety-six per cent of mentees ($n = 99$) in this timeframe who responded on post-mentoring questionnaires said they would recommend the program to other first-year students. In terms of what was gained from participation in the PMP, mentees identified the following benefits listed in order of frequency of responses: confidence/motivation (17%), more understanding of university life (15%), friends/networks/ongoing relationships (15%), not alone/support/help (12%), mentoring very helpful (11%), helped with study/academic program (10%), helped with handling stress/coping with university (10%). Hence it would appear that the benefits of participation in the PMP were more personal and social rather than academic, yet strongly focused on increasing mentees' sense of belonging within the university. Some examples of what mentees felt they gained included: *A couple of people I knew dropped out as they found it overwhelming whereas I had the confidence (knowledge) to stick to it; I have gained an understanding of where my course is headed and it provided me with an opportunity to get to know older students as well as those in my course; Confidence and a sense that I belong here – it's not so scary.*

Approximately 40% ($n=76-77$) of the sample (after excluding missing data) completed both pre- and post-mentoring questionnaires, which enabled mentees' expectations to be tracked and compared with their actual experience of coming to university, after completion of the 6-week program. Using Pearson's correlations, moderate positive correlations were found between pre- and post-mentoring responses regarding finding satisfying friends ($r = .462, p < .001$), having a satisfactory academic experience ($r = .400, p < .001$) and worry about not belonging ($r = .436, p < .001$) (see Table 1). This suggests that mentees' expectations in these three areas matched their experience moderately closely.

Table 1. Pearson's Correlations of Expected and Actual Experiences at University.

Expected versus actual	N	r	p (2-tailed)
Satisfying friends	77	.462**	<.001
Satisfying academic experience	76	.400**	<.001
Relationships with other students positively influence intellectual growth and interest in ideas	77	.354**	.002
Lecturers and tutors genuinely interested in teaching	77	.264*	.020
Intend to stay and complete program	76	.052	.654
Able to do things as well as others	77	.266*	.019
Satisfied with program of study	76	.227*	.049
Feel stressed about uni life	77	.263*	.021
Worry about not belonging	76	.436**	<.001
Studies will prepare me well for work	77	.124	.281

** p <.01, * p<.05

Interestingly, we found that mentees who reported higher similarity with their mentors in terms of outlook, ideas and values at the end of the PMP, were also more likely to report feeling good about their peer mentoring experience ($n = 102, r=0.63, p<0.01$), being more satisfied with friendships at university ($n = 102, r=0.3, p<0.01$), being more positively influenced in their intellectual growth and interest in ideas by these relationships ($n = 102, r=0.45, p<0.01$), feeling that their lecturers and tutors were more genuinely interested in teaching ($n = 102, r=0.28, p<0.01$) and that their studies were preparing them well for work ($n = 102, r=0.4, p<0.01$). These findings suggest that careful matching of mentors and mentees to ensure there is similarity between them may be very beneficial to achieving good outcomes in mentoring. This finding is consistent with other studies that have also found matching mentees with mentors who are similar to them improves outcomes (Fowler, 2004).

Paired sample t tests comparing mean scores on pre- and post-questionnaires across the 10 items indicated that after participation in the PMP, mentees were significantly less stressed about university ($p <.001$) and less worried about not belonging ($p <.001$; see Table 2). However, they reported small but statistically significant reductions in their expectations of having a satisfactory academic experience ($p <.05$), seeing academics as genuinely interested in teaching ($p <.05$), and studies preparing them well for work ($p <.05$). These findings suggest that a PMP of this duration at the commencement of university may have more impact on alleviating the initial anxieties of incoming students and increasing belonging, and less impact on expectations about academic success, which may take longer to realise. It is worth noting that 6 weeks into first semester, many students would not have received results from initial assessments and therefore would have no objective idea of how they are performing academically. Hence it may be realistic for mentees to have some uncertainty about their capacity to complete their program at this stage in the semester.

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations (SD) of Reported Ratings of Students' Expectations about University Life before and after Attending the PMP on a Likert Scale from 1 to 5.

	N	Pre Mean (SD)	Post Mean (SD)	Amount Changed
Feel stressed about uni life	77	4.23 (0.86)	3.62 (1.04)	0.61***
Worry about not belonging	76	2.84 (1.11)	2.37 (1.00)	0.47***
Satisfying academic experience	76	4.30 (0.63)	4.01 (0.72)	0.29*
Lecturers and tutors genuinely interested in teaching	77	4.40 (0.73)	4.10 (0.74)	0.30*
Studies will prepare me well for work	77	4.45 (0.70)	4.10 (0.66)	0.35*
Satisfying friends	77	4.29 (-0.70)	4.30 (0.74)	-0.01
Able to do things as well as others	77	3.91 (0.83)	4.10 (0.70)	-0.20
Satisfied with program of study	76	4.16 (0.71)	4.05 (0.69)	0.11
Relationships with other students positively influence intellectual growth and interest in ideas	77	4.38 (0.73)	4.21 (0.73)	0.17
Intend to stay and complete program	76	4.70 (0.67)	4.68 (0.66)	0.01

*** p <.001, * p<.05

Discussion

The personal and social benefits of peer mentoring, including increased sense of belonging, reduced stress associated with coming to university and improved social engagement, have been clearly demonstrated, as evidenced by our findings. The academic benefits of peer mentoring, including improving academic engagement and success, may take longer to emerge, based on the findings we have reported in comparing mentees' expectations and experience of coming to university. However it would be unrealistic and premature to expect a single intervention, limited to a 6-week program at the start of first semester, to achieve demonstrable academic outcomes at this point in the student life cycle. The overwhelmingly positive feedback from mentees, captured in the qualitative analysis of the program, speaks volumes in terms of the degree to which the PMP helped mentees develop knowledge and confidence to feel that they have the capacity to succeed at university. Feeling that they belonged at university was critical to this development and was clearly demonstrated in our analysis of quantitative data concerning their expectations on entry and experience after participation in the PMP. The fact that mentees also reported significant reduction in stress associated with being at university was pleasing, as it undoubtedly contributed to mentees' sense of satisfaction with their university experience and self-efficacy, which we expect should provide a solid foundation for further development and academic success in future.

Hence it would seem that the PMP we have described here has demonstrated success in one of the key areas identified in *What works? Student Retention and Success: Summary Report* (Thomas, 2012b), namely, enhancing mentees' sense of belonging. The results outlined in that report are heralded as a "radical new message" for institutions seeking to improve retention, especially given the increasingly diverse demographic of students coming into higher education institutions as a result of widening participation. Further, "finding friends, feeling confident and above all, feeling a part of your course of study and the institution ... is the necessary starting point for academic success" (Thomas, 2012b, p. 1). Yet are these really radical new insights, or are they what we know of the student experience already? We would suggest, as evidenced in the Higher Education sector, that many academics, especially those who work at the coalface of teaching and learning and are involved with inducting first-year students, as well as professional staff – Counsellors, learning advisors and other support staff – have known for some time that improving student engagement improves the student experience and in turn, retention. Perhaps it is as a result of their close involvement with students who are struggling personally, socially and academically as part of their day to day work, that they have been at the forefront of developing and participating in orientation and transition interventions, such as PMPs, for many years.

As with all programs, there have been many challenges in implementing the PMP and limitations as a result. One of the main challenges was attrition of mentees, both between applying to join and taking up the PMP, and progressively across the 6-week duration of the program. It is difficult to know exactly how many mentees were lost to the PMP through attrition, as failure to take up or continue the program may have been due to mentees' withdrawing from university altogether in some cases, and we did not have the resources to investigate this. It was a great source of frustration for mentors and for us, as coordinators of the program, as it meant that some mentors did not have the satisfaction of being allocated mentees, or of conducting a cohesive and viable group. Timetabling issues were another challenge, which meant that if mentees could not attend at the agreed time, they had to be reallocated to another mentor and this disrupted or delayed their participation into the program, or in some cases may have resulted in their withdrawal. Practical problems associated with having to train mentors, match mentors to mentees, mentors having to contact mentees to set up the first peer mentoring meeting at an agreed time, all within the space of Orientation week so that the program could be up and running by Week 1 or Week 2 at the latest, put a great deal of pressure on the Coordinator and mentors. Some, if not all, of these challenges and resultant limitations could be overcome if, as recommended by Thomas (2012b), the PMP was mainstreamed, that is, if it was offered to all first-year students with an "opt out" rather than an "opt in" method of recruitment. Better integration with other faculty transition initiatives, a commitment to ongoing funding, and greater involvement of senior academic staff would further strengthen this program and may improve the take up by first-year students. Practical problems like timetabling could also be overcome if peer mentoring in first semester was seen as a core transition initiative and scheduled into first-year timetables around core lectures, as Common Time programs currently are. Integration into Common Time programs could also be achieved beneficially by combining didactic and peer mentoring approaches within the same program. For education students, the extension of peer mentoring to assist students to prepare for practicums in later years could be another way of harnessing the experience of senior students as mentors to enhance student learning, engagement and academic success.

This latter suggestion could particularly benefit students from non English speaking backgrounds (NESB), who are being admitted into Education and other professional programs in increasing numbers, and who often struggle to meet the more stringent requirements of practicums.

In this paper we have focused on reporting the benefits of peer mentoring for mentees, but it is clear from our own experience and that of others (Heirdsfield, Walker, Walsh & Wilss, 2008) that mentors also gain a great deal from the experience. The eagerness with which previously mentored first-year students apply to become mentors in later years, demonstrates both the value mentees place on their own experience and their belief that it was pivotal in enhancing their induction into university life. The increasing recognition given to mentoring and other leadership activities within universities also demonstrates the importance universities attribute to learning from one's peers as well as the benefits of peer mentoring for improving student engagement and academic success.

Conclusion

If governments and universities are going to continue to encourage and facilitate wider participation within the higher education sector, in the interests of enabling more people from diverse backgrounds to gain the benefits of higher education, then it is the responsibility of universities and governments to ensure that these new student cohorts are adequately supported. "Access without support is not opportunity" quotes Thomas (2012b, p. 4) from Tinto. PMPs are a proven means of providing support, and as such, should be an integral part of transition initiatives within universities.

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Difference in Metacognitive Thinking as a Cultural Barrier to Learning.

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Abstract

The current paper has taken a socio-cultural approach as proposed by Vygotsky, to language as a cultural/cognitive tool. An examination is made of research that used Marion Blank's Levels of Questioning with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse students (CALD) in a mainstream Technical and Further Education (TAFE) diploma level classroom. The results of this study suggested that CALD students became more confident about working in mainstream classes as they were given the opportunity to place language in to the context of the area studied. Teachers also reported that students worked with more confidence in the culturally different classroom setting after using Marion Blank's Levels of Questioning.

A case study of a counselling session is also provided in which the use of Blank's Levels of Questioning is discussed. It is suggested that using Blank's Level's of Questioning is a useful tool in the development of a contextual understanding of what the counsellor and the students were discussing. Blank's levels of questioning might be a useful tool in assisting counsellors to work with teachers working with CALD students and students of CALD in general.

While there has been a consistent growth in people of Cultural and Linguistic Diverse (CALD) backgrounds studying at Australian educational institutions there has not been a great deal of study of possible difference in metacognitive processing across cultures. Murray (2010) reports that Australian universities have responded to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (2009) report on English language training for international students by increasing pre-enrolment assessment of the English language proficiency of international students. However, he believes there is a need to teach what he has called "academic literacy". Bell (2006) examined difference in the use of metacognition in postgraduate students at an Australian university. She found that even though these students were highly trained in their respective areas of knowledge they were not readily able to decode cultural differences in institutional approaches. To this extent it is not just a language difficulties that could create barriers to CALD student's learning in an Australian educational setting, there may also be differences in metacognitive thinking about how to problem solve across cultures that could impact on learning. Vandergrift (2005) has pointed out there is a connections between metacognition and motivation. A consequence of learning differences at the metacognitive level could be that CALD student's develop motivational issues that affect their mental health.

Tadmor and Tetlock (2006) have suggested that there has been little research into the ways in which exposure to second culture could influence cognition. Tadmor and Tetlock have also noted that cultural differences and individual response to the new culture can be influenced by the congruence, or incongruence, between the home culture and the new culture. Where it might often be suggested that language experience is by itself a key to embracing a host culture, being able to cognitively navigate a new culture is also vital to mental health. At the individual level Simsek (2010) has noted that a child's ability to label concrete objects allows for the development of a sense of self that becomes translated into the potential for the person to use symbolic tools that are used to decode experiences. Words exist as both an expression of objects in the world, but also take on a symbolic meaning that are used to mediate between the inner world and the outer environment (p. 68). Hatano & Wertsch (2001) contend that the influence of language on "shaping human discourse and thinking is so great that it is often justified to say that language does part of our thinking or speaking for use" (p.80). The nature of the decoding process becomes problematic when there is a split between the mediation of the inner and outer worlds.

Wang and Thorns (2009) have examined the migration of skilled workers to New Zealand from China, where the apparent lack of transfer of knowledge from the home culture to the host culture is the focus of the study. Though the migration program focused on people with high levels of knowledge, including people with PhD's in areas of skill shortage in New Zealand, these immigrants were not readily able to be successful in New Zealand. It was not that these people suddenly lost their knowledge, or were not competent. Wang and Thorn suggest that what was forgotten in the process of these skilled workers moving to New Zealand was that there are different levels of knowledge. There is knowledge that is a professional body of knowledge and then there is tacit knowledge; knowledge that is "unarticulated, contextualised and embodied" (p.85).

Socio-cultural theory

Socio-cultural theory provides a lens through which differences in cultural cognitive processes can be explained and through which interventions can be developed. Two decades ago Braten (1991) suggested that Vygotsky offered a theoretical position that explained metacognitive development that was influenced by cultural mediation. Vygotsky had three fundamental tenants which are critical to human cognitive development and each was culturally influenced (Hatano & Wertsch, 2001). In this context the most fundamental element in the development of mental activity cannot be seen as an individual activity, but is one in which cultural mediation is implicit. Secondly, language is a cultural tool that starts in externalised interaction between care giver and child, but later becomes internalised as inner speech. Inner speech is critical in the development of an internalised mediation process that develops into a self regulatory system (Braten, 1991). Finally, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is the difference between what an individual knows and their potential to learn something new when supported by a mediation process. A knowledgeable other such as a teacher of a language class potentially mediates the learning of a new language.

Knowledge particularly as it has been related to language learning in adults has focused on the tools that allow a person to come to grips with words and grammar of English. This is an appropriate step in developing a pathway toward being able to negotiate a different culture, but is one step in knowledge development. Gredler (2009) identified another aspect of Vygotsky's theory that suggest as an older adolescent, or young adult, a person develops knowledge of how to think in abstract terms or to problem solve. This knowledge is abstract and is not necessarily translated from actual worldly objects. Lattaca (2002) focuses attention on how academic knowledge provides language and tools through which to view the world, but in doing so also imposes constraints on the way the world is perceived (p. 725). To this extent Lantolf (2006) notes that social speech does not equate to developing cognitive understanding of a second language. Lantolf has also pointed out that thinking in another language requires extra attention to the task. Given that working memory space is required to process and rehearse new verbal information, such as new words and concepts it is potentially hard to also focus attention to tasks that require higher order cognitive processing when attention is on decoding words (DeGuerrero, 2005; Hester & Garavan, 2005; Lantolf, 2006). If space is not given for CALD students to understand the contextual nature of words in a discipline then they are constricted in their ability to interpret the higher order thinking that they might be presented with while doing academic tasks.

Using Marion Blank's levels of questioning

Marion Blank developed four levels of questions which were originally used to assist teachers to nurture thinking in young children. In a recent study Hay, Callingham and Wright (2012) used Blank's levels of questions with three diploma level mainstream TAFE classes of CALD students. The levels of questioning were used to operationalize Vygotsky's ideas of language as a cultural tool. It was proposed that Blank's levels of questioning provided a means to mediate thinking from concrete thinking to the potential to use inner speech to think in abstraction and inferential terms in a second language. A summary of Blank's level of questions are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Blank's four levels of language complexity

Level of complexity & proficiency	Language complexity to the Experience	Example of discourse
1	Directly supplied Information (Characteristics)	What do you see?
2	Classification (Selective analysis of Experience)	Grouping likeness and difference. How is this different?
3	Reorganisation (reordering the experience)	Retelling the story What is your experience?
4	Abstraction and Inference (Reasoning about experience).	What, how, why

(Hay, Fielding-Barnsley, & Taylor, 2010).

As Hay and colleagues (2012) have noted when a particular level is not mastered it become hard to be able to reason at a higher level. A consequence of having questions introduced at levels not yet mastered by the receiver of an utterance is that it is not easily interpreted by the receiver of the utterance. It has been shown

that this is often a situation teachers are faced with when asking questions that move from a Level One concrete question to Level Four abstract questions without mediating the thinking through the other two levels (Blank & White, 1999).

Preliminary findings

In an earlier study main stream classroom teachers and CALD students were asked to respond to questionnaires that were focused on learning (Wright, 2012). The results of a survey of mainstream higher education teachers found that they felt the level of English CALD students had when they entered their programs was often not enough for the students to succeed in their classes. One teacher commented, “ The range of understanding of English in general varied greatly within the classroom. Often the 80/20 rule applied in terms of competency”.

Students of CALD background have been found by researchers to have difficulties interpreting how a classroom that is foreign to them functions (Huang & Brown, 2009). Students who were surveyed reported they had difficulties interpreting how to use prior problem solving approaches when engaged in higher order thinking related to their study in an Australian educational setting (Wright, 2012). At the metacognitive level both teachers and students reported incongruence in their perceived approaches to problem solving and how it was to be applied to an Australian classroom.

Method

Participants

The study that followed from the questionnaires involved teachers from mainstream classes in diploma level subjects. Forty –two students responded to the questionnaire, with the groups being heterogeneous mix of Indian, Sri Lankan, Chinese and Korean students. The students were required to have an International English Language Test Score (IELTS) of 5.5 (Moderate competence and above in English) to be accepted into the course. Teachers came from mainstream teaching areas and had qualifications that varied from Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAA) to a PhD. Three classes were involved each with the majority of students of CALD background.

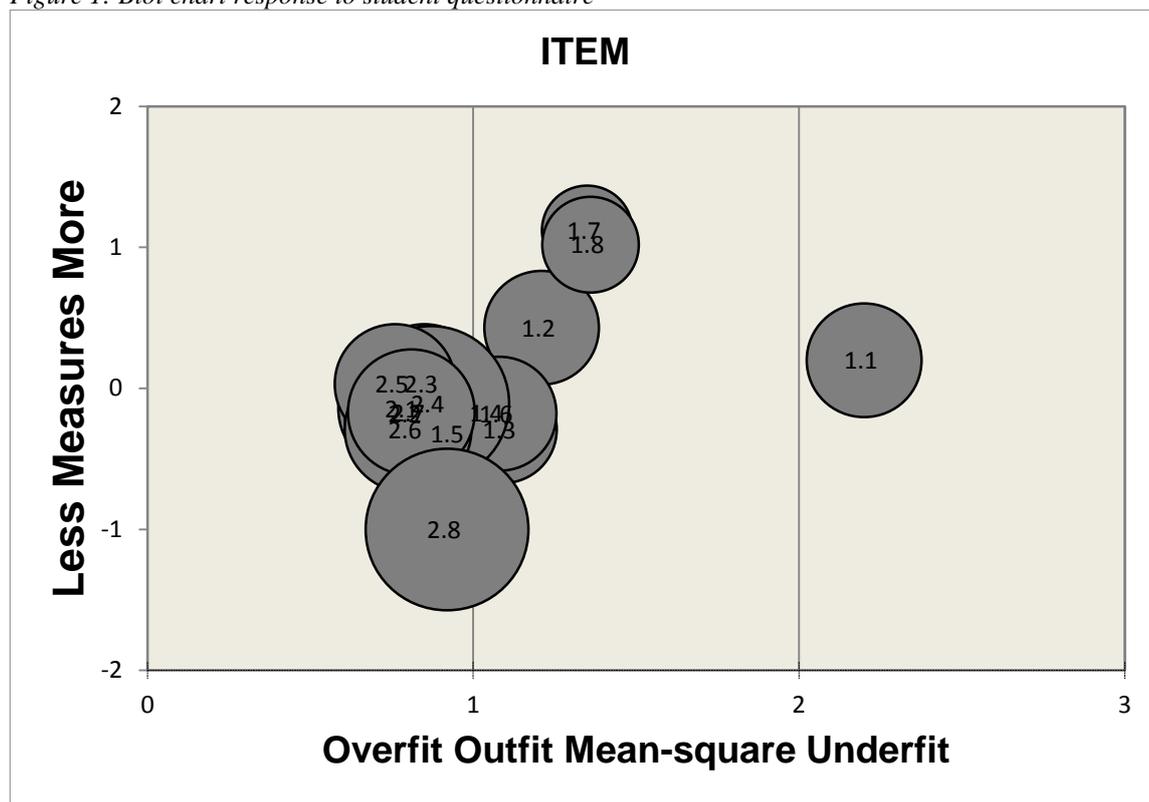
Procedure

Teachers were introduced to Blank’s levels of questioning and were asked to focus on Level Two Questions in the classroom. The students were given the opportunity to discuss with other students concepts and words that were part of the subject matter they studied. An example of this intervention was shown when one of the teacher’s participating in the study introduced the concept of “domestic violence” to the class. The cultural contextual of the concept and the context in which the term is used in the discipline was made explicit to the student through their discussion. The class content was not changed in the process of undertaking this activity.

Results and Discussion

Students who participated in the intervention classes were asked to fill out questionnaires about their classroom experiences at the end of the study (see Appendix 1). The results of that questionnaire are displayed in Figure 1. Rasch analysis was used to sort the data, responses are weighted comparing an expected item response with the empirical data. When data fits well with the Rasch model the data sits close to the line marked as one in the Blot Chart. The harder to endorse items are at the top of the Blot Chart and easier to endorse items are closer to the bottom of the chart. Items that sit past the vertical line labelled two are in the underfit column, responses to that item in this area were erratic suggesting that respondents found it hard to endorse the item.

Figure 1: Blot chart response to student questionnaire



Wright (2012)

Figure 1 shows the fit of items within $+2$ and -2 suggesting the pathway measure is measuring what it is intended to measure. The underfit of item 1.1 to the model suggests that responses to the item had been erratic. The item 1.1 Infit Mean Squares (MNSQ) is 1.56 and the t-statistic (ZSTA) is 1.8. But the outfit MNSQ of 2.20 and a ZSTA of 3.0 suggest that the outfit score has contributed to the underfit of item 1.1 “When I solve problems in the classroom I usually remember how I solved a similar problem in the past”. The erratic response to this item suggests that participants were not able to clearly indicate that they were able to apply prior knowledge to problem solving situations in an Australian classroom activity. The erratic nature of response to item 1.1 is consistent with findings from the Wright (2012) study of how CALD students saw themselves as learners. On this and in the above mentioned study CALD students were not able to interpret how useful prior problem solving approaches were in Australian adult education settings.

The mean for the Blot Chart is represented by the zero while the positive one and negative one represent one standard deviation from the mean. The most difficult item to endorse was item 1.7 “When solving problems I usually look for a similar problem in a book and copy it” and Item 1.8 “When I solve problems in a classroom I leave it until my teacher shows me how to do it” both fit two Standard Deviations above the Item mean. The other responses fit within one standard deviation of the item mean, while item 2.8 is the most easy to endorse “In the class I have taken recently, I feel more confident when I understand what I am doing”. Item 2.8 sits two standard deviations below the Item Mean.

The pattern of the responses to items within the Rasch model suggests students were asking questions of the teacher, using logical steps to develop responses, contributing to classroom discussion and feeling they are confident about the class they took. These responses suggest a different pattern of classroom interaction to that often reported by teachers. The teachers reported that students had developed positive ways of working in the classroom.

By grounding the students in the contextual knowledge of the concepts and word meanings used in the discipline they studied, they were able to focus on building knowledge within the class without working memory being overwhelmed by conceptual meanings and word interpretation.

The use of Blank’s levels of questioning with the population of CALD students supported the development of contextual meanings related to the educational settings. The overall results of this study suggested that Blank’s levels of questioning contributed to better outcomes for CALD students in Australian education settings.

Can Blank's levels of questioning be used in counselling

To this writer's knowledge Blank's levels of questioning have never been applied to a counselling setting before. A case study will be used to illustrate a counselling session in which Blank's levels of questioning were found to be useful.

Case Study:

Two CALD students studying a Diploma in Community Welfare made an appointment to see a Student Counsellor. The students presented to the session to ask about future employment prospects in the area they were studying. They indicated they were not clear about where such studies would lead them. When asked why they had chosen the course they had they advised the counsellor that their immigration agent had suggested it. The counsellor then asked about previous employment history. Neither of the clients had any prior experience in the welfare area.

The discussion shifted as the questions were asked by the counsellor, the two clients were now explaining that they did not understand the words being used in the classes. They emphasised the difficulty they had with the concept of 'counselling'. A word frequently discussed in classes, but a word they could not connect prior experience with. They did not find it difficult to talk about career guidance with a counsellor, but personal counselling was seen by them as associated with mental illness, something they did not want to be associated with. They found it difficult to identify the context of class discussions about the topic as their prior knowledge differed from that of the classroom context. The major issue they had was not what to do with the course, but rather decoding the contextual meaning of concepts introduced in the classroom.

Discussion

The session had turned from a discussion of career related questions to one that focused on the concept of 'counselling'. Using Blank's levels of questioning the interpretation of the word 'counselling' was made explicit. According to Vygotsky a word needs to be placed in a cultural context. As previously noted there are four levels of Blank's questions each focusing on the development of more complex cognitive interaction between speaker and receiver. At Level One concrete examination of the word was engaged in. At first both counsellor and clients were engaged in discussing the literal meaning of the term. However, the following Level Two conversation focused on the relationship between the word and similar words and concepts. The context in which the word was used was also discussed. As the discussion developed the clients started to make use of Level Three questions by connecting the word with their prior knowledge (Blank, Rose & Berlin, 1978). They began to connect the word with personal experiences they had not connected with before. They used linguistic knowledge to translate the word from English to their home language while discussing times that they had engaged in counselling without naming the process. The word meaning and personal experience were linked in a way they had not previously been for these two students. At an individual level they were able to use semantic knowledge and episodic knowledge that enhanced their declarative knowledge of the concept discussed above and clarify what procedural process might be used in the context of their course.

General discussion

By applying socio-cultural theory to our understanding of knowledge development across cultures the results of the study discussed earlier suggest CALD students are provided with a mediation process that supports cultural understanding. It is also likely that the use of Blank's levels of questioning can be a useful tool to be used when mediating the implicit knowledge systems between CALD students, teachers, and counsellors. As was noted at the beginning of the paper it would seem important to develop congruence between the home culture and the new cultural experience. Second language training has provided CALD students with the chance to develop a functional and sociolinguistic knowledge of English. This training is important, but when language is considered as a cultural/cognitive tool then the levels at which cognitive processing is taking place also becomes critical. Blank's levels of questioning is likely to have allowed CALD students to be less focused on taking up working memory space to interpret utterances as they occur in a classroom setting. By freeing up working memory space higher order decoding of information is also likely to have been allowed to develop. This way of looking at language could be of importance to counsellors in assisting teaching staff to work with CALD students. It is also likely that CALD students are able to make more complex interpretations of cultural differences when words are given context.

Appendix 1

Problem-solving Questionnaire

1) Listed below are some statements concerning approaches to solving problems. Please mark your level of agreement with each statement.

When I solve problems in the classroom I usually

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1	remember how I solved a similar problem in the past	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2	just have a go at the first thing that comes to mind	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3	think carefully about the logical steps	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4	break the problem down into small parts	<input type="checkbox"/>				
5	talk to my teacher about how to solve the problem	<input type="checkbox"/>				
6	talk to other students about how to solve the problem	<input type="checkbox"/>				
7	look for a similar problem in a book and copy it	<input type="checkbox"/>				
8	leave it until my teacher shows me how to do it	<input type="checkbox"/>				

2) Listed below are some statements about how you found learning in your recent class. Please mark your level of agreement with each statement.

In the class I have taken recently, I

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1	found it easy to understand what the teacher wanted me to do	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2	usually understood what was expected of me	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3	found it easy to understand the ideas that were taught	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4	enjoyed my learning experience in this class	<input type="checkbox"/>				
5	liked the way that the teacher asked questions	<input type="checkbox"/>				
6	contributed to classroom discussions	<input type="checkbox"/>				
7	asked questions of the teacher about the material	<input type="checkbox"/>				
8	feel more confident when I understand what I am doing	<input type="checkbox"/>				

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Mental Health Coordination: From Calm to Crisis in 0.3 Seconds.

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Introduction

This article describes the role development, responsibilities and workload management of the Mental Health Coordinators at Victoria University of Wellington.

Brief History

The Mental Health Coordinator (MHC) role was established within the Student Counselling Service (SCS) at Victoria University of Wellington (VUW) in 2007, in response to growing numbers of complex, acute and high-risk student presentations to university services. The coordination of responses to these students was becoming increasingly time-consuming for all staff, and within the SCS this responsibility had tended to fall on the management team. The role initially had a dual purpose: to provide individual students with a coordinated clinical response to their mental health support needs, and to work with staff and students to raise the level of mental health knowledge and awareness, along with developing university-wide strategies aimed at fostering positive student mental health.

The clinical component of the role included the provision of support, advice and training to VUW and hall of residence staff in dealing with distressing situations, including post trauma work and the identification of students at risk.

The role was initially temporary, and was externally funded for 15 months. The position was made permanent in 2008, with a further full time permanent position confirmed in 2010. Currently the clinical role is shared between two MHC's, both working 0.6 FTE (3 days per week). The Mental Health Promotion role is filled by a third SCS team member, working similar hours.

Current roles and responsibilities:

The two MHC's currently sharing the role come from very different backgrounds resulting in complementary skills, expertise and knowledge. Kelly is an occupational therapist with experience in in-patient and community mental health settings, and Joanna is a counsellor with long experience in student counselling. We each work three full days, and this has proved to be manageable with the role responsibilities.

Our collegial relationship with the rest of the SCS team, and with the GPs and nurses in Student Health, is a vital element in our role. We are available to our colleagues for consultation, advice, information and support, and on their request we follow up and monitor students of concern, for example if they have been referred to SCS and are waiting for their first appointment, or if a clinician is absent or has no available appointments. We receive all the referrals, reports and, discharge summaries from mental health services, and are responsible for acting on these when there is no assigned clinician. Undertaking case coordination of service-wide response to a student with high and complex needs is another recent development which has worked well. Along with the rest of the SCS team, we participate in fortnightly multi-disciplinary team meetings with the Student Health and Disability Services staff, and this fosters good communication and a cooperative approach.

The MHC's are also the main liaison between the SCS and the nine halls of residence at VUW. We are the point of contact for hall staff about any incidents or concerns about students who live in halls, and we are frequently called upon for advice, information or specific support. We also assist in the mental health component of the training programs for hall staff.

Another of our responsibilities is acting as a contact and referral point for academic, administrative and support services staff who make contact with the SCS with concerns about students. Similarly, concerns from GPs, parents, friends, classmates and others are usually referred to us for follow-up.

We have developed strong links with secondary mental health services, including the crisis services and we now meet regularly throughout the year with a representative from mental health services. Students who are referred to mental health services are usually jointly assessed at the SCS with clinicians from both services

participating. Improved communication, better cooperation and closer relationships with mental health services has had significant benefits for the SCS and for our students.

The SCS provides daily 'duty' sessions for students who require support around quick academic questions or who meet emergency criteria. The MHC's each have a weekly duty session, and we also provide an emergency backup role for other staff on duty, and at other times during the week. Following a crisis (e.g. earthquakes, assaults, sudden death or suicide), we have a response role which may involve group debriefs with students on or off site, proactive and prompt contact with individual students, and liaison with relevant services for on-going or immediate support. We function essentially as the core "ready response team" for SCS.

We are also involved with a range of roles related indirectly to our clinical work, including attendance at VUW's Risk Assessment and Advisory Committee meetings and Hardship Committee meetings; co-facilitating the SCS 'Good Sleep Group'; developing a group on managing anxiety; writing and maintaining the content of the SCS website; participating in orientation activities; and producing VUW's version of the University of Melbourne's 'Staying Sane on Campus' booklet.

Benefits and challenges

Although the role was initially planned to have a reactive clinical component and a proactive health promotion component, this proved difficult to maintain, because the demands of urgent clinical work usually took priority. The role was therefore divided into distinct clinical and health promotion aspects at the end of last year, and the MHC's now have an almost exclusively clinical focus.

This division has been very successful, allowing us to be responsive to the clinical demands of the role without the pressures of pre-arranged mental health promotion obligations, and the consequent feelings of guilt when these obligations have to be rescheduled. The sharing of the role between two MHCs rather than three is more manageable and practical for us, the SCS and wider university services, and the split has also worked well for our colleague who enjoys the focus on health promotion.

The MHC role is not without its challenges: the workload fluctuates greatly, and time management is a constant issue. What is a manageable task one day, cannot be contemplated the next; and being responsive to the needs of colleagues, students and external services of necessity requires being flexible, being willing to be interrupted, and accepting that planning one's day or week is usually not possible.

Working in a cooperative and mutually respectful "shared care" way with staff in the wider university can be challenging, particularly around privacy and confidentiality. There is a range of attitudes to confidentiality among the various professional groups, and our role necessitates a continual reassessment of what is most appropriate on a case by case basis.

The number of clients we see and the number of interviews/consultations we hold are comparable with those of the SCS team, but the overall level of acuity, risk and complexity is significantly higher, necessitating constant and vigilant attention to safety and risk management. This brings with it the need to be resilient, aware of our stress levels, and able to manage them appropriately. To assist with this, along with our fortnightly external supervision, we also meet fortnightly for mentoring with an experienced member of the SCS and have easy access to our immediate managers as needed.

As a team of two sharing the role, we need to have watertight handover and communication systems, and be able to rely on one another and work in tandem. Mutual support and trust is essential. We also need to have a sense of humour, be super-efficient with paperwork and record-keeping, be computer-literate, and have good boundaries: in a role which is of necessity broad, it's important to be able to say no! And it goes almost without saying, that support and backup from our team is essential, to enable us to function effectively in what can at times be a very difficult and demanding role.

Conclusion

What we have described is the current state of our roles so far: but this is of course very much a work in progress. The present structure works well for us and for our clients, colleagues and the university, and we appreciate the flexibility which allows us to work to our strengths and respond promptly to situations as they arise. The role makes an effective contribution towards the development of a University-wide safety net of support for students, and we expect that it will continue to evolve in response to the changing pressures on students and the changing demands of the University environment.

We are aware that the MHC role is becoming increasingly popular in the university setting, and we are happy to be contacted about the development or scope of our position at VUW.

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‘ExcelL on Campus’: Using Peers to Help International Students Negotiate their New Learning Environment.

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International education is commonplace now, and Australian and New Zealand universities have many international students on their campuses. However, good practice—in terms of orienting, advising, and skill development for these students—is still far from definitive. Our practice as learning advisers informs us that international students are sometimes still unable to negotiate their new learning environments effectively enough to gain the academic and social results they expect. This paper describes a program that uses local student volunteers to model and coach effective communication skills.

At Victoria University we have adapted a cross-cultural communication training program created by a multi-national group of academics. The original program was ‘ExcelL: Excellence in experiential learning and leadership’ (Mak, Westwood, Barker, & Ishiyama, 1998). This program aimed to help migrants achieve success in a new culture. Victoria’s adapted version, ‘Excel on campus’, aims to help international students develop successful communication behaviours to negotiate their new learning environment and achieve the results they seek—with minimum stress and maximum sense of well-being. It uses local student volunteers as the reference group from which to draw information about how to communicate successfully on campus. These local students also perform role-plays and coach on the program.

The program runs over five 3-hourly sessions and each session covers specific communication competencies and related scenarios. The program is led by two ExcelL-trained trainers (staff from learning support, counselling, library, and international office). It accommodates 20–25 international students and 4–5 local students. Each session follows a similar structure. First, the competency for the session is discussed. Competencies include behaviours that can be difficult for incoming international students, such as making social contact, refusing requests, disagreeing, and giving feedback. Participants first identify their own cultural behaviours in relation to these competencies. Everyone validates these behaviours by recognising and discussing the values which underlie them. Next the trainers introduce a scenario relating to campus life, and the local student volunteers perform a role-play showing how to communicate effectively within that scenario. For example, when discussing how to refuse a request, we might take the scenario of refusing a request to loan a completed assignment. Or when discussing how to give feedback, we might use the scenario of negotiating more timely feedback from a supervisor. After watching the role-play, students write up cultural maps stating words and body language used. They also consider the values behind the observed communication. Next, all students practise the role-play and receive coaching from the trainers and student volunteers. Finally, students state where and when they will practice the competency in the upcoming interval between sessions.

Throughout the program, students report back on perceived successes and failures. The group grows in cohesion and relatedness, and some groups form Facebook groups that continue to stay in touch years after the program. Comparisons of pre- and post-surveys consistently show that international student participants report a marked increase in confidence. Many students also report increased happiness. Local student volunteers report an increase in awareness of, and affinity for, students of other cultures.

The most important aspect of this program is that it is experiential. It is easy to read theory on cross-cultural behaviour, but behavioural adaptation can only be effectively achieved through practice.

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PASS (Peer Assisted Study Support) Program at Victoria, University of Wellington

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Issue the initiative was designed to address

PASS (Peer Assisted Study Support) offers ‘active’ and ‘collaborative’ peer learning opportunities that complement students’ formal academic teaching. Based on Supplemental Instruction, an American program designed to support ‘at risk’ courses (Blanc, deBuhr & Martin, 1983), PASS currently operates in over 1500 US institutions and in 29 other countries (University of Western Sydney, 2012).

Initially introduced at Victoria University of Wellington (VUW) to help first-year International students adapt to the New Zealand university environment, the PASS program run by Student Learning Support (SLSS) now extends peer support to all students across a range of courses in Commerce, Law, Humanities & Social Sciences, Psychology, Chemistry, and Engineering.

Desired outcomes

The aim of the PASS peer support program is threefold:

Pastoral:

- To help students understand what is expected of them at university
- To build participants’ confidence about expressing ideas related to course content
- To provide a supportive environment in which students can build friendships and study partnerships

Academic:

- To foster deeper understanding by encouraging autonomous, critically-thinking and reflective learners
- To promote ‘active learning’, encouraging fellow students to discover knowledge for themselves
- To enhance student retention and success

Developmental:

- To help students identify their learning needs
- To equip students with appropriate study skills
- To encourage students to become independent learners

Description of initiative

Open to all students who wish to “improve subject understanding and grades”, the voluntary 50-minute sessions are entirely peer-driven, led by fellow students who excelled in the course the previous year. PASS Leaders do not teach; rather they encourage participants to take responsibility for their own learning, facilitating ‘active learning’: activities such as icebreakers, role plays, brainstorming, posters and rap lyrics, quizzes, games like Pictionary, Bingo, and ‘Headbands’, and Facebook discussion groups.

PASS Leaders are selected based on grades (B+ or better) and proven people skills, the role frequently a natural progression for candidates who attended PASS themselves. Attendance fluctuates, but Leaders are generally responsible for 8-12 students (with Law frequently attracting groups of 15+).

In large courses such as Law and Accounting, a second leadership tier, the PASS supervisor (a former PASS leader and current subject tutor), oversees the team of Leaders and liaises with academic staff.

The SLSS Coordinator trains the Leaders (2 introductory hours, 1 hour midway and 1 hour end of trimester), and oversees the program in general, sending housekeeping emails, and holding ‘drop-in’ office hours. Leaders receive a comprehensive resource handbook and also devise their own activities, which they share with fellow Leaders in their weekly reports.

Initially sponsored by Victoria International (1999-2000), then a philanthropic trust (2001-2004), Leaders’ wages are now funded by respective Schools and Faculties (Leaders: \$14 p.h., Supervisors: \$18p.h.). SLSS

underwrites the program's overall coordination (within a full-time Senior Learning Adviser position), part-time administrative support, and production of resources (*Leaders' Manual*, etc).

Evaluation used or planned

Students and Leaders are surveyed each trimester. Student feedback is consistently high, with 85% of participants regularly 'agreeing' and 'strongly agreeing' that PASS is an "important part of their study" and 94% saying they "would recommend PASS" to their peers (Laurs, 2011). Leader survey responses highlight how supporting one's peers contributes to the development of their Graduate Attributes: critical and creative thinking, communication and leadership (Laurs, 2009).

Outcomes from this or earlier pilot

Quantitative results (2001-2011) show that 95% of students who attend regularly (≥ 5 sessions) successfully pass the course. The program's contribution to "student learning and leadership opportunities" was acknowledged with a 2011 General Staff Excellence Award. Since 1999, PASS at VUW has grown from 15 to 140 groups, currently providing peer-support for more than 1600 students.

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The Accommodation of International Students in University Mentor Programs: A Case Study from Curtin University

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This report was completed as part assessment for Mentoring, Coaching & Tutoring 499, Semester 1 2012

Executive Summary

This report reviews the current literature about the particular challenges facing international students in their transition into university life in Australia and applies this research to the accommodation made to international students within the present Curtin University Mentor Program.

Curtin University offers a peer-mentoring program to all new undergraduate students in their first year. Volunteer senior students, provided with one full day of training, act as mentors in assisting new students in their transition into university life. However, no specific cultural training is included to address the particular issues faced by international students, who comprise almost one third of the total number of students.

With the rapid increase in the value of higher education as an important export, and the increased reliance on international students for revenue by Australian universities, the provision of high-quality student services has become a focus of attention. Mentoring is one strategy that can be seen as vital to enhancing the experience of international students and thereby enhancing the university's international reputation.

Because of acculturation stress, international students face greater difficulties in their transition to university than domestic students. These difficulties include language, learning style and expectations, social integration, coping strategies, perceived discrimination and cultural adjustment. Culturally informed and sensitive peer mentoring can be instrumental in alleviating these problems.

This report found that although all first year students are allocated a mentor in the Curtin Mentor Program, there are logistical problems in identifying all new international students, who would benefit from mentoring support. Furthermore, although there is training given to the mentors, there is no cultural awareness training that would help international students in their transition. Finally, although mentors are asked to be role models, the implications and expectations of this concept are not clear.

This report recommends:

1. All commencing international students, regardless of their academic year, need to be identified and included in the program.
2. Appropriate cultural training needs to be provided for mentors, particularly in cross-cultural communication skills, differing educational strategies and experiences, and knowledge of cross-cultural experiences, including the stages of adjustment to a new culture, collectivist-individualist cultural awareness, and how to recognise culturally specific indicators of stress.
3. In the context of the global education goals of Curtin University, the values incorporated in the concept of a Curtin University "role model" need to be explored further in the mentor training.

Curtin University mentor program

Introduction

Curtin University offers a peer-mentoring program to all new undergraduate students in their first year (<http://mentoring.curtin.edu.au/start/>). Volunteer senior students, recruited by their respective schools, act as mentors in assisting new students in their transition into university life. Mentors are provided with one full day of training conducted by the mentor program coordinators. All new undergraduate students in their first year are automatically allocated a mentor, ideally from within the same course. The principal aim of the program is to improve student retention, as well as to generally improve the student experience for all participants (Elliott & Lynch, 2011). However, although the retention rate of international students is higher than that of domestic students, this is not necessarily a reflection on the level of support that the international students receive from the university (Kutieleh, Egege & Morgan, 2003). Therefore, this report will review the current literature about the particular challenges facing international students in their transition into

university life in Australia and apply this research to the accommodation made to international students within the present mentor program.

International students in Australia

Valued at \$19.1 billion in 2009-2010 (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2010) and having almost doubled in value since 2004, international education is Australia's third largest export industry, with higher education being economically the most significant part (Phillimore & Koshy, 2010). Furthermore, with fees paid by international students making up 15% of university revenue (Krause, Hartley, James and McInnis, 2005), Australian universities are becoming increasingly dependent on international students as a crucial source of income and considerable resources are invested in attracting international students, particularly from Asia (Fallon & Handa, 2006). Curtin University has Australia's third largest international student population (Hackett, 2012), with 32% of all Curtin students coming from overseas (Office of Strategy and Planning, 2010), which is significantly higher than the national average of 24% (Khawaja & Dempsey, 2008). Of this number, 87% of international students come from Asia (Office of Strategy and Planning, 2012). According to one government report, this rapid growth in the number of international students "has been one of the most significant changes to occur within the Australian higher education system in the past decade" (Krause et al., 2005, p. 76).

Although a good deal of the burgeoning literature about international students' transition has been focussed on academic issues, such as language proficiency (for example, McInnis, 2001; Zepke & Leach, 2007), recently there has been a greater interest in the psychological and sociocultural adjustment needs of international students. This is most likely in response to the increasing competition within the global education market and the subsequent shift in the view of sojourners from 'student' to that of 'client' in the discourse of higher education (Rodin, 2009). With word of mouth being a primary means of enhancing a university's reputation, offering 'customer satisfaction' by improving the quality of the overseas experience for the international student will have economic implications for that university's future (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001; Mullins, Quintrell & Hancock, 1995). Because of the national economic importance of the education export market, recent government reports suggest that more attention be placed on the overall adjustment of international students outside the classroom environment, to ensure a high-quality experience for international students (Department of Education, Science and Technology, 2005; Council of Australian Governments, 2010). However, Zevallos (2012) argues that although increasingly dependent on international students for financial support, the student services offered by Australian universities are not adequately addressing the cultural, linguistic and social needs of international students. Therefore, providing a culturally sensitive mentoring program, aimed at the specific transition issues of international students, is one important strategy in providing high-quality service.

Transition issues for international students in Australia

Transition is defined by Guilfoyle & Harryba as "a process of socialisation into the university culture where rules are not explicitly stated" (2009, p. 2). Although there are transition issues for all new students commencing higher education (McInnis, 2001), all of the research reviewed indicates that international students have much greater difficulty in adjusting than domestic students. However, it is important to note that there is no evidence to suggest that the international students' ability to deal with change per se is significantly different from domestic students (Liamputtong, 2011). Furthermore, there is considerable individuality in the way international students respond to the challenges of transition and we must be careful not to engage in cultural stereotyping (Volet & Renshaw, 1995). With this caution, let us examine the issues that most significantly challenge international students in their transition, with particular reference to ethnically Chinese students because they represent the majority of international students at Curtin University.

Acculturation, the adjustment to the new culture, is the central concern for international students. When the usual social cues that are familiar to the student are suddenly withdrawn and replaced by new cultural mores, the student may experience "culture shock", which can be psychologically overwhelming (Gunn, 2005). The degree of adjustment required depends on cultural distance, which refers to the degree of difference between the home culture and the host culture (Ward & Kennedy, 1996). In the case of Asian students, particularly ethnic Chinese, this distance is considerable: Chinese culture may be characterised as collectivist, hierarchical, dependent and high context, whereas the dominant Australian culture is individualist, independent and low context (Park-Saltzman, Wada & Mogami, 2012). This means that learning to be independent, a key requirement for adjusting to university in Australia, is very difficult for Asian students and leads to considerable stress in the early part of their stay (Zhang & Brunton, 2007). Peer mentoring can

be valuable at this point because the immediate contact with a host national can help to alleviate the disorientation felt on arrival. However, in order to offer appropriate support to the mentee, a high level of cultural understanding is required by the mentor.

The literature on international students in Australia is almost unanimous in suggesting that international students need and want social interaction with domestic students. Although all new students are faced with the challenge of making new friends at university, international students have significantly more difficulties in establishing friendships (Abe, Talbot & Geelhoed, 1998; Ward et al., 2001), particularly because of a lack of confidence in speaking English and fear of making mistakes (Andrade, 2009; Zhang & Brunton, 2007). Yet positive social exchange is critical to the emotional adjustment and well-being of international students, and to their overall satisfaction with their experience (Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002; Khawaja & Dempsey, 2008). However, despite the strong desire of international students to make friends with host nationals (Guilfoyle & Harryba, 2009), there is a markedly low level of social interaction between international students and domestic students (Krause et al., 2005). One reason is because many Australian domestic students are reluctant to engage in socialising, particularly with Asian students, because of widespread stereotyping and discrimination (Guillen & Ji, 2011). Pairing domestic mentors with international mentees is one important strategy in breaking down these artificial barriers of race.

Furthermore, it has been found that the failure to make positive relationships with domestic students can lead to withdrawal, loneliness, disappointment, perceived discrimination, misunderstandings, isolation, emotional stress, inability to cope, and depression for international students (Rosenthal, Russell & Thomson, 2006; Ward, 2004). Sawir et al. concluded, “stronger bonds between international students and local students... is key to a forward move on loneliness” (2007, p. 148). Therefore, having a domestic student as a mentor can be a very positive experience for opening up social exchange opportunities with host nationals. However, in light of the cultural distance between Asian and Australian students, particularly the difficulties Asian students have in acting independently, the mentor will need to be more proactive in making contact with their international mentees (Park-Saltzman et al., 2012).

Transition into the new academic culture of tertiary life is a challenge for all first year students. However, there is considerable literature about the problems faced particularly by Asian students, who are coming from a dependent, rote-based learning style into an independent problem-solving style (for example, Arkoudis & Tran, 2007; Volet & Renshaw, 1996; Zhang, Sillitoe & Webb, 1998). Therefore, particularly in light of the hierarchical nature of Chinese culture, international students may over-refer to teachers for advice and support for their problems (Heggins & Jackson, 2003). They may also have difficulty in even understanding the meaning and role of a mentor who is a fellow student (Jeong et al., 2011). Although this is primarily a concern for the teaching staff, it also has relevance for the mentor who may offer tips for study and assignments that might have been helpful for them in their first year of study, but may not be useful at all to international students who are struggling to understand the basic concept of independent learning.

With regard to how international students use student services for support in their transition, the literature suggests that these services are often underutilised (Ang & Liamputtong, 2008; Khawaja & Dempsey, 2008; Smith & Khawaja, 2011). Coming from a collectivist culture, Asian students are more likely to use collectivist coping mechanisms to deal with their adjustment problems, which may be inappropriate in Australia (Bailey & Dua, 1999). Asian students will be used to referring to authority figures such as parents and teachers for advice, but because of the perceived sacrifices made by the family in providing their overseas education experience, international students may be disinclined to trouble their family with their problems (Ang & Liamputtong, 2008). Teachers, therefore, are expected to take on the parental role and provide emotional as well as academic support, which becomes problematic in light of the Australian model of encouraging independence (Zhang et al., 2004). In the absence of collectivist support structures, international students will often turn to compatriot friends for advice (Park-Saltzman et al., 2012). However, they are unlikely to use a student counselling service because individual counselling in an Asian context is associated with mental illness, and seen as a loss of face, which would bring shame on the family (Ang & Liamputtong, 2008). Bailey and Dua note that universities that provide assistance to international students from collectivist backgrounds to help them learn more individualist coping strategies, academically and emotionally, will significantly contribute to the well being of those students and encourage them to complete their degree (1999, p. 181). There is potential here for culturally sensitive mentors to support international students in a casual setting to help them understand the teacher-student dynamic in Australia, as well as explain that counselling services are to be seen as a normal strategy in dealing with problems and seeking advice.

The role of mentoring in transition for international students

The literature supports the role of peer mentoring in facilitating the transition needs of international students. In the same way that it does for domestic new students, peer mentoring helps the international student to understand that their confusion is normal and should not be taken as a sign of a lack of competence (Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002). However, the mentor needs to have relevant cultural knowledge to be able to reassure the student in an appropriate manner. Furthermore, during initial orientation, there is so much printed and formal information to be processed that international students suffer from information overload (Westwood & Barker, 1990). Therefore, orientation programs may not be as effective for international students as they are for domestic students. However, the casual long-term setting of the mentoring relationship can assist international students to process this information more slowly and meaningfully, as well as provide helpful feedback on how the information should be prioritised. Mentoring also helps all new students to feel a sense of belonging to the university culture, but Khawaja and Dempsey (2008) suggest that because wider cultural isolation is a key issue for international students, helping international students to fit into to university life will also act as an entry into the broader host community culture. Holley and Caldwell (2011) support this finding and conclude that the social interaction provided by peer mentoring is invaluable in providing an important coping strategy for cultural adjustment.

Westwood and Barker (1990) researched a peer-mentoring program at an Australian university and found that even though the key goal was academic retention, there was also a positive impact on social adjustment. The roles of the mentor were identified as 1) cultural interpreters, 2) facilitators and information givers, 3) referral agents, 4) confidants, and 5) friends. Like the Curtin program, the mentors were recruited from the general student body but they were given additional cultural training, which included communication skills to discriminate differing cultural modes of expression; conceptual knowledge of cross-cultural experience, especially the stages of adjustment and recognising culturally specific indicators of stress; information on wider community resources beyond the university; and information about university procedures and resources that pertained specifically to international students. The types of contact that ensued included study skill and assignment preparation tips, provision of referral information, family invitations, and sports, recreation and entertainment events. This four-year study concluded that having a host national peer mentor positively correlated to academic success and also better social adjustment and well-being for the international student.

In another controlled study of a peer mentoring program at Flinders University (Qunitrell & Westwood, 1994), modelled on the program cited above but with an emphasis on the students' experience rather than retention, it was reported that those who participated were more likely to describe their first year experience more positively, their language fluency improved and they were more likely to use student services than non-participants. It was suggested that one reason for the higher levels of adjustment for the international students involved in the program was because the students were able to get more useful information about how to function in the host culture. That is, they learned "the unwritten codes of the local culture" (p. 57), which is in accord with the definition of transition given above as "a process of socialisation into the university culture where rules are not explicitly stated".

Curtin University mentor program

The Curtin University Mentoring Program is a well-structured program that has been very successful in its aims of increasing retention. Furthermore, the feedback from mentees has been overwhelmingly positive, which suggests it is also successful in enhancing the experiences of first year students (Elliot & Lynch, 2011). However, presently there is no mentor training that directly addresses the specific needs of international students. In applying the reviewed literature to the present mentoring program, I will now focus on the roles of the Curtin mentor as stated in their training material and identify the ways in which the needs of international students can to be incorporated into this training.

The roles of the Curtin mentor are stated as 1) to be available for support and advice, 2) to generally enhance the experience of the new student, and 3) to act as a role model (Smith, 2012b, slide 6). The first role may be seen as is informational, and the second role as psychosocial, with the third role acting as a reflection of the Curtin institutional values. However, each of these roles has culturally specific implications, which, unless directly addressed, will mean that a mentor's relationship with their international mentees will not reach its potential. To provide appropriate "support and advice", the mentor needs to have some knowledge of the cultural differences in educational approach and experience, as well as differing expectations, such as rote learning style versus independent learning style and the student-teacher relationship. Furthermore, as

indicated in the study by Westwood and Barker (1990), it is important to have knowledge of resources in the wider community within which the university resides.

The Curtin mentor program seeks to help build the mentee's confidence and help them to feel like they belong to the university community (Smith, 2012a). However, in order to "enhance the experience" of new international students it is necessary to have some cultural knowledge so that the experience of the student is not inadvertently diminished rather than enhanced. Anecdotally, a Curtin mentor organised a barbeque for her mentees to help them to socialise in a relaxed setting. However, two international students asked her if the meat she was cooking was *halal*, but the mentor did not know what this meant. After the mentees explained their dietary needs, the mentor took them to the Main Café where *halal* food was available. Although the mentor did find a solution, the result was that the mentees, instead of being made to feel a part of the group, were further isolated and very embarrassed for "making trouble" (personal communication, 14 April, 2012). Furthermore, although the training material identifies "effective communication skills" as a characteristic of a successful mentor (Smith, 2012b, slide 19), modes of communication vary considerably across cultures, particularly between high context cultures like China and low context cultures like Australia. For example, in the training material (slide 47) there is a communication tip to "make eye contact", which is considered rude in many Asian cultures, as well as in Australian Indigenous culture. The Flinders University mentoring program outlined above stresses training in communication skills "to discriminate differing cultural modes of expression."

Regarding the third role of the Curtin mentor, there has been an interest in recent literature regarding the implications of the mentor as "role model." Although being a role model is cited in many studies offering a definition of "mentor" (for example, Anderson & Shannon, 1988, MacCullum & Beltman, 1999; Jones & Simmon, 2010), it has been suggested that this implies an authoritative paternalistic stance, whereby the mentee is expected to emulate behaviours endorsed by the dominant culture, rather than maintaining their own culture (Kram & Isabella, 1985; Kochran & Pascarelli, 2003; Jiang, 2011; McMahan & Fritzberg, 2003). Sawir et al. ask, "should international students have to acquire not just English but an ideology of possessive individualism, and a reduced commitment to the extended family, to cope with being in nations like Australia?" (2009, 171) It is important therefore that prospective mentors gain a clear understanding of what it means to be a role model embodying the values of Curtin University.

Clearly, the maintenance of the status quo of the dominant culture is not endorsed by Curtin University, which is committed to preparing students "to live and work in an increasingly global environment" (Hackett, 2012), as well as specifically identifying an international perspective as one of its three main aspects of the curriculum, and in two of the nine graduate attributes (http://otl.curtin.edu.au/teaching_learning/attributes.cfm). As a Curtin mentor then, being a role model means acknowledging and embracing cultural diversity as an everyday demonstrable practice. However, as the Curtin case example illustrates, "role model" may not be appropriate for an international mentor program. As noted above, Westwood and Barker do not suggest "role model" as one of the mentor roles, but prefer "cultural interpreter" instead when working with international students.

Furthermore, the Curtin mentoring program is only available for "first year" international students. However, because of the stringent language requirements and the individual nature of each student's abilities and experience, the entry process is complex (Curtin English, 2012). Therefore, although many students may be commencing their first year of study at University, this might mean they start in an academic second year. Also, postgraduate students may be considered as "first-year" students with respect to their educational experience in Australia, and may be in more need of support because their retention rate is significantly lower than undergraduates (Guilfoyle, 2006). But these students, who are experiencing the same challenges as any other "first-year" students, will not have access to the mentoring program. However, the benefits in enhancing their university experience would be the same as other commencing students and it would be beneficial if these students could be identified and included.

The role of mentor in relation to international student mentees is complex and challenging for the institution engaged in trying to provide a positive experience (Colvin & Jaffar, 2007). It is important, therefore, to be clear about the goals of the mentoring program. The fundamental goal peer mentor programs generally, as illustrated in the Curtin training material, is "to assist new students to successful transition into the University" (Smith, 2012b, slide 6). However, as described in the Curtin mentor program evaluation report, another key goal of mentor programs is "to impact on student persistence" (Elliot & Lynch, 2011, p. 1). In relation to the needs of international students as outlined in this report, these two goals are not necessarily

synonymous: With an average international attrition rate of 8.73%, compared to the domestic rate of 18.11% (Ross, 2012), international students do not have a significant problem with persistence; however, they do have a much greater challenge than domestic students in their transition. Therefore, in light of the above literature review about the transition of international students into university life in Australia, the following recommendations are made with regard to peer mentoring programs in general.

Recommendations

1. All commencing international students, regardless of their academic year, need to be identified and included in the program.
2. Appropriate cultural training needs to be provided for mentors, particularly in cross-cultural communication skills, differing educational strategies and experiences, and knowledge of cross-cultural experiences, including the stages of adjustment to a new culture, collectivist-individualist cultural awareness, and how to recognise culturally specific indicators of stress;
3. In the context of global education goals, the values incorporated in the concept of a "role model" may well need to be explored further in mentor training.

Conclusion

Using the Curtin program as a case example, peer mentor programs have the potential to provide a high level of quality service for international students. By assisting international students in their adjustment to a new culture, a culturally sensitive mentoring program can provide a positive experience that will enhance the transition and academic success of these students. By acknowledging the diversity and values of the global community, mentoring in a multicultural environment can be a strong catalyst for change in the broader community.

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Open Universities Australia

I was fortunate to be invited to attend the launch on 14 September 2012 of the findings of this major research project which was conducted over an 18 month period, between early 2011 and mid 2012. The project, funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council, investigated the factors that contribute to the effective teaching and support of students from low socioeconomic (SES) backgrounds. The Project Team consisted of Professor Marcia Devlin (Open Universities Australia, formerly Deakin University) as project leader; Professor Sally Kift (James Cook University); Professor Karen Nelson (Queensland University of Technology); Ms Liz Smith (Charles Sturt University); and Dr Jade McKay (Deakin University).

Data for the project was gathered from a number of sources – interviews with 89 students from low SES backgrounds and in the first generation of their families to attend university; interviews with 26 staff known for their expertise in teaching and/or supporting students from low SES backgrounds at university; review of significant literature; and an environmental scan nationally of effective policy, programs and practice in teaching and/or supporting students from low SES backgrounds. For the purposes of the student interviews, the project team recruited ‘successful’ students – that is, students from low SES backgrounds who had completed a year of university and had re-enrolled for another year. The focus of the research was on ‘what works’. By interviewing students who had successfully completed their first year of university study, the aim was to discover what were the factors that had helped them to stay and succeed.

What has been produced from this research project is a set of documents which provide evidence-based findings and recommendations on the most effective approaches to the teaching and support of low SES students. As universities continue to strive to improve their equity profile, in line with the Australian government agenda of widening access and participation, it is increasingly important that there is a common understanding across the sector of ‘what works’ for this important and growing cohort of students. Documents produced and now released include: the Final Report 2012; Practical advice for teaching staff; and Practical advice for institutional policy makers and leaders. The project website at www.lowses.edu.au makes each of these available as well as providing a conceptual framework relevant to the Australian context, materials to support professional development and repository of effective policy, programs and practice.

For all of us who work with students in the Australian tertiary education sector, these research findings and recommendations can now help to inform our work, ensuring that the growing numbers of students from low SES backgrounds on Australian campuses can receive the appropriate interventions to help them succeed.

The author may be contacted:

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JANZSSA Submission Guidelines 2012

Word Processing platform

All articles should be submitted electronically using Microsoft Word or in another commonly used word processing format able to be converted to an MS Word document.

Language and spelling

JANZSSA uses Australian English so please adjust your spell check in word to ensure compliance.

Journal format

JANZSSA is published in an A4 format.

Article Length:

Articles would normally be less than 6,000 words to be accepted. Articles longer than 6,000 words may be returned to authors to be shortened.

Abstract is required:

All articles submitted must include a brief (<250 words) abstract.

Page layout required:

Articles for inclusion in JANZSSA in either the referred or non-refereed sections need to be submitted electronically using the following layout instructions. The following is a normal page layout in MS Word:

Top: 5.5 Bottom: 5.5
Left: 2.54 Right: 2.54
Gutter = 0 Header = 1 Footer = 6

Font type:

Times New Roman

Font pitch:

Article Title: 14 point BOLD
Author/s Name, Role, Institution: 12 point
Abstract header: 12 point BOLD
Abstract body: 10 point italics
Body text: 12 point
Header within body of the text: 12 point BOLD
Footnotes: 9 point

Diagrams tables and drawings:

Any diagrams and tables included in the text must be no larger than 21 cm in depth x 17 cms wide. Any drawings included are inserted with **Paste Special** function so that the drawing is stable in the body of the text.

Text within a table is preferred as centred or left margin aligned.

Use of colour:

JANZSSA is published in black and white so use of colour in graphs, diagrams and drawings may mean that the nuanced meaning in the various components of the chart, graph etc lost. Please ensure that the differences in charts, diagrams and graphs etc are clearly defined using variations of colour within a grey scale.

Use of References:

Referencing protocol is the APA Referencing System. Examples of the APA Referencing system are easily found using an internet search. Below are two examples from Australian Universities.

http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/onlib/ref_apa.html
<http://www.lib.monash.edu.au/tutorials/citing/apa.html>

Suitable content for articles submitted for publication in JANZSSA:

Articles may include comment and debate on current issues, reports of student services in practice, policy matters, research projects, and reviews of relevant books. The guiding editorial policy is that articles are of interest to student service staff, and are of a high standard.

JANZSSA publishes both refereed and non-refereed articles:

Authors who wish to submit an item to be published as a refereed article must include a written note to that effect at the time of submission. If an author does not specify for inclusion in the refereed section the editors will consider the article for publication in the non-refereed section.

Best Practice and Strategies to Show Case:

JANZSSA is now including in its non refereed section examples of best practice and innovation emerging in Student Services.

Contributions for this section are invited. Contributions to this section would normally be descriptive and not evaluative.

Length of submissions can vary but the upper word limit will normally be 1500 words. Contributions of longer length may be returned to the author for editing.

A Showcase Best Practice Report Template is available from the Editors. See contact details below.

Reports and Reviews:

Reports on aspects of policy and practice within Student Services and the Post-Secondary Education sector are invited. Short reviews of books, articles, journals, reports which would be of general interest to JANZSSA readers are also very welcome.

Quality Submissions:

All submissions for publication are required to comply with the layout requirements, and edited for grammar, punctuation and spelling accuracy prior to submission to the JANZSSA co-editors. Articles will be returned to authors for corrections, if required, prior to consideration for publication or distributed for peer review.

Submission Deadlines:

JANZSSA publishes issues: in April and October each year.

Deadline for submission of non-refereed articles, reports or reviews, and contributions to the section, Best Practice and Strategies to Show Case:

- February 14 for the April issue
- August 15 for the October issue.

Deadline for submission of refereed articles:

- October 30 for the April issue
- April 30 for the October issue.

Referee Process:

The editor of JANZSSA will consult with the Editorial Board to identify at least two expert referees (who may not necessarily be members of ANZSSA).

Each referee will be unaware of the identity of the other referee/s.

Each of the referees will be provided with an electronic copy of the article from which the author's name has been removed.

As author/s you should also remove other identifying information, and replace any such words or sentence with "words removed for purposes of author anonymity" so that you are not identifiable as the author/s once the author names have been removed.

Referees will submit a report back to the editor that contains one of four recommendations. These are:

1. That the article be published without amendment
2. That the article be published with minor amendment, to be approved by the Editor of JANZSSA
3. That the article be published with amendments to be approved by the referees
4. That the article not be published as a refereed article

Referees will also return the electronic copy of the article, which may contain annotations and suggested amendments to the paper. Referees will be asked to ensure that their identities are not revealed in the track changes or annotations made.

At least two referees must be in agreement for an article to be published as a refereed paper.

Enquiries:

Any queries regarding submission format should be directed to either of the co-editors. See contact details below.

JANZSSA Co-editors (2012-2013)

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Copy editing by Ruth McHugh. Email: ruth@squiddery.com

Before submitting your article:

Please refer to the following check list and complete these actions prior to submission of the article.

Please check:

- JANZSSA page layout has been used
- JANZSSA font type and font size requirements have been used
- JANZSSA referencing system (APA style) has been used throughout and that all references are included in full.
- Spelling, grammar and punctuation reviewed.
- All diagram and table contents are position and text correct (i.e. text abbreviations used are consistent throughout diagram or table and that text is centred or left margin aligned.).
- Drawings included are inserted with Paste Special function so that the drawing is stable in the text.
- Do print and read for final corrections.
- De-identified version of paper as reviewer copy completed and attached (if the article is for submission for the refereed section of JANZSSA).

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This group also functions as the Editorial Board of JANZSSA

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Information about ANZSSA

The Australia and New Zealand Student Services Association provides development opportunities and sector representation for professional staff working in post secondary student engagement, student participation, student wellbeing and student development throughout Australia and New Zealand. Through meetings, seminars, workshops and conferences, experienced practitioners share information, ideas and research within their areas of expertise.

ANZSSA is focused on:

- The quality of the student experience
- Supporting and empowering students to achieve their educational and life goals
- Enhancing student wellbeing and development Improving student success and persistence
- Providing outreach to students at-risk
- Raising institutional student retention rates

Membership

Whilst ANZSSA is based in Australia and New Zealand, anyone is welcome to join us, no matter where you may be located. Full details of current membership categories and registration costs are available via the ANZSSA website members' page at www.anzssa.org.

Belonging to ANZSSA will connect you to a community of professionals across many institutions and support areas – including:

International offices - Counselling - Health services - Housing services - Student guild advocates - Learning support - Grievance/Conflict Resolution officers - Chaplaincy and other faith officers - Careers - Academic advisors - Recreation services – First year experience and transition services - Mentor programs - Equity staff - Financial advisers - Student advisors - Disability support - Welfare advisors - Volunteer and leadership program coordinators - Directors and Heads of operational areas.

Professional Development Activities

The *ANZSSA Biennial Conference* attracts international participants as well as delegates from across Australia and New Zealand.

Regional and State meetings range from informal workshops to visiting speakers and annual conferences.

Members Discussion Board located on the ANZSSA web site at www.anzssa.org provides opportunities for members to share information and collaborate on programs and issues.

Publications

JANZSSA, the Journal of ANZSSA, is published and distributed to members twice per year. Members are encouraged to contribute a variety of material: scholarly articles, information communications, comments, book reviews, and items of interest to the general membership can all be accommodated.

Website

<http://www.anzssa.org>

The ANZSSA web site is a comprehensive resource offering a broad range of information to professionals working in student support and student services' roles.