

Academic Health Check-Ups:

An Inquiry Approach to Actualising 'Just-In-Time, Just-For-Me' Support.

Trudy Quantrill and Jenny Downing, Student Transitions and Careers, James Cook University

What?

In 2016, James Cook University piloted pre-Census 'Academic Health Check Up' events to help students identify gaps in their awareness of critical resources, services, programs and actions that are pivotal for their academic success. Participants answer (yes or no) to a checklist of items and staff provide students with referral information and resources for any negative responses recorded. Student details and their responses are collected via a perforated section of the checklist, which is used for data analysis to assess the retention and success of participants, and to provide real-time feedback to courses and support services about concerning trends in awareness levels to prompt targeted, proactive responses. Data analysis in tables below showed positive impact for student participants.

Why?

Academic Health Check Ups were initiated to actualise *whole-of-institution, whole-of-student, just-in-time, just-for-me* tailored support in line with best practice transition pedagogy (Kift, 2015). Many JCU students commence university with low levels of cultural capital and have substantive gaps in understanding of university culture and academic expectations, which can be an ongoing challenge as they transition through subsequent year levels. This responsive 'check up' intervention aims to proactively and equitably identify individuals' gaps in awareness and empower them with relevant information for their academic success.

Who?

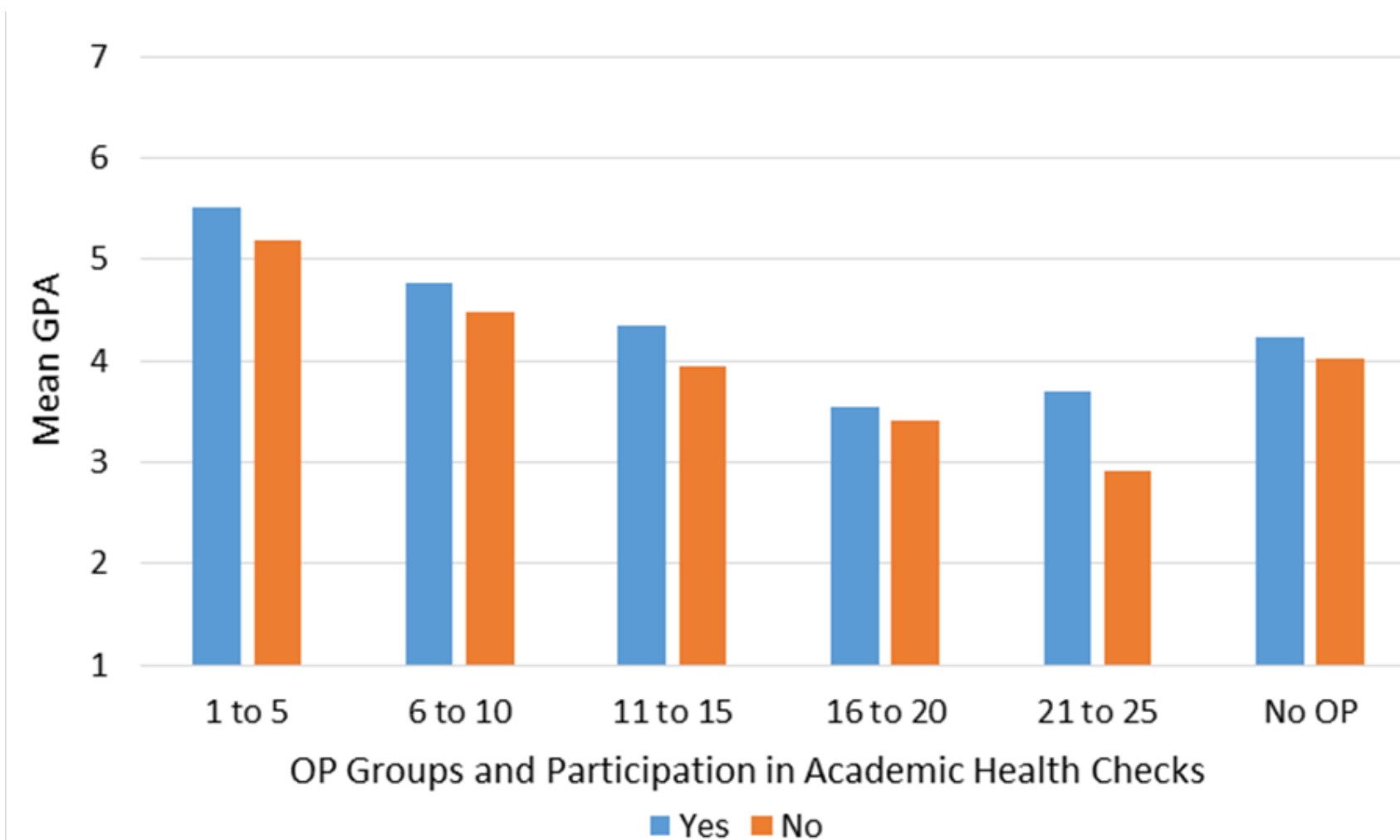
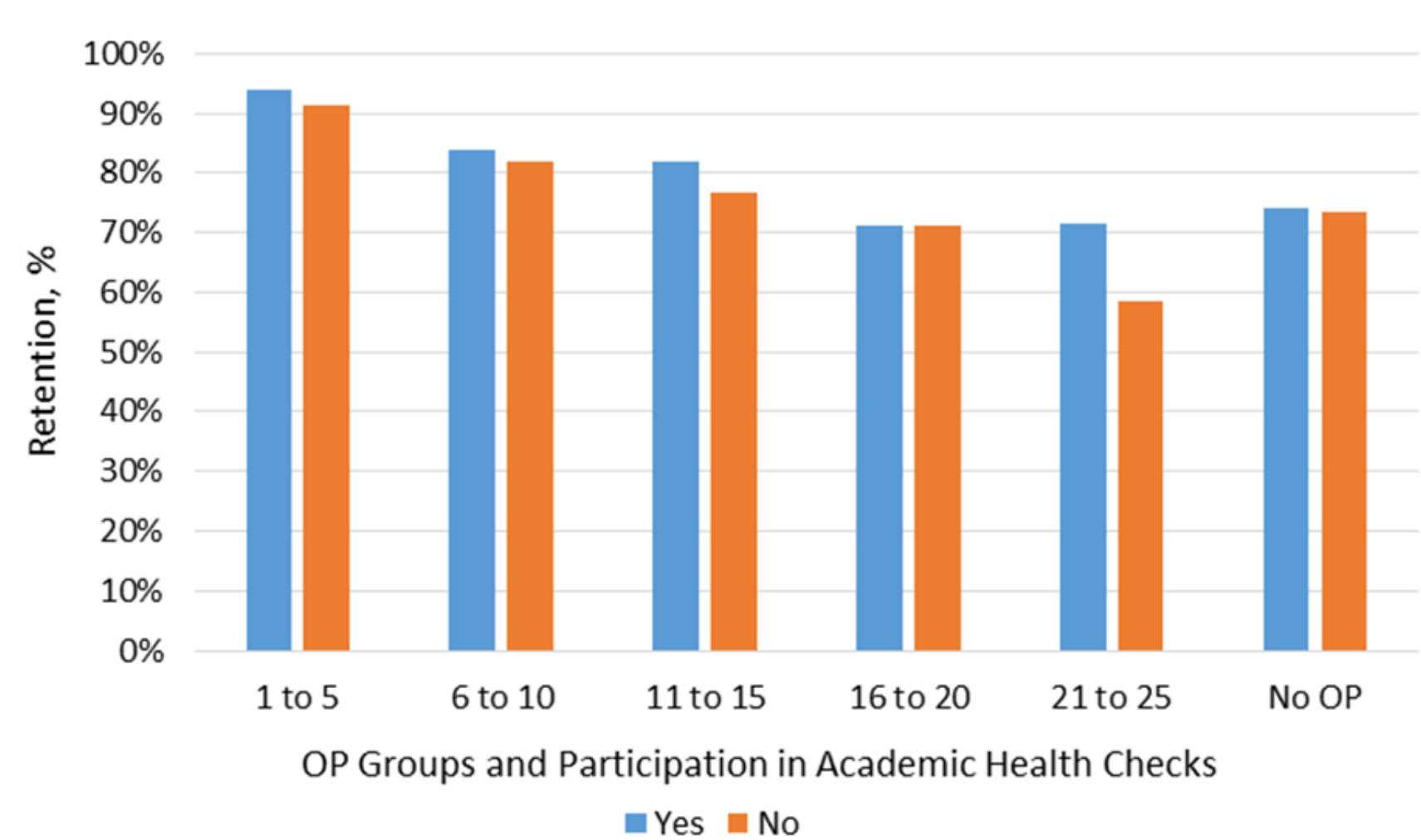
Two tailored checklists have been designed: one for first-year students and another for middle and final-year students, so the questions target appropriate information for commencing versus continuing students. The checklists were designed to be generic, so students from all courses could participate in the activity, but they also feature some additional questions for international students. The checklist items were designed in partnership with academic and professional staff from across the university to maximise their engagement with this 'whole-of-institution and whole-of-student' initiative. These include academic support, student services, careers and employment, student wellbeing, library services, academic language and learning, transition specialists, student mentor program, Indigenous Centre staff, international services and student peer leaders. These diverse individuals also provide the personalised support to student participants at the scheduled events, and are provided with professional development training before the event in order to be able to discuss the wide-ranging resources, services, programs and actions on the checklist in detail. In 2016, 1543 student participants.

When?

The 'check-ups' are run for three hours/day over three days in Week 3 of each study period. The events are strategically scheduled to allow students sufficient time to proactively address any gaps identified, so they can optimise their confidence levels in the fortnight before census date. Pre-Census interventions are often run by universities in Week 5, but this can often increase student stress levels and lead to attrition if they have a limited amount of time to address a significant issue.

Where?

Academic Health Check Ups events are run on campus at rotating high traffic areas to maximise exposure. There has also been an online 'Academic Health Check Up' program designed for our external students at www.jcuhc.info.



References

Kift, S. (2015). A decade of Transition Pedagogy: A quantum leap in conceptualising the first year experience. *HERDSA Review of Higher Education*, 2, 51-86. Retrieved from <https://herdsa.org.au/herdsa-review-higher-education-vol-2/51-86>