

# **Expectations of transitioning through second year science undergraduate degree programs**

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## **Abstract**

*To date there has been limited exploration of Australian undergraduate transitional experience through (as opposed to into and out of) degree programs. As we turn to a more holistic approach to overall program experiences the need to better understand transition through has become imperative. Our work forms part of a larger project exploring the lived experiences of this cohort and is at the behest of current literature which expresses the requirement for purposefully capturing and evaluating middle year undergraduate student experiences. Initially we have focussed on developing an understanding of student expectations of second academic year of science degree programs in an Australian institute. This pilot work evaluates emergent themes students have identified regarding their expectations of second year of university science programs using a combined methodological approach. It reports on preliminary findings distinguishing Australian cohorts from International counterparts and factors for consideration in supporting the academic progress of undergraduate students.*

## **Scholarship Alignment and Contribution to STARS 2017**

This work undertakes the literary recommendations (Casper, Khoury, Lashbaugh, & Ruesch, 2011; Gregory, Loughlin, Harrison, Lodge, McDonnell, West, McBurnie & King, 2013; Heier, 2012; Loughlin, Gregory, Harrison, & Lodge, 2013; Milsom, Stewart, Yorke, & Zaitseva, 2014) to establish cohort and institutionally relevant data on which to develop appropriate, holistic transition strategies for improved student experience through the middle years of undergraduate degree programs. Understanding student expectations then allows for subsequent contextualised interpretation of lived experiences during transition through programs.

Preliminary findings suggest that contrary to reports in the American literature, a proportion of Australian second year undergraduate students do expect program challenges to increase with regards to content and assessment. Students also expect to experience assessment fatigue. However, a subset of students also appears to have unrealistic expectations with regards to the amount of individualised support provided by the institution and the impact that non-academic contributions may have on their overall student experience.

## **References**

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