

‘Active Success at Uni’: Open interactive learning

‘Active Success at Uni’ is an interactive website produced by a team of enabling educators from the Open Access College at the University of Southern Queensland. The interactive website covers the broad range of transferable skills and cultural knowledge required for success at university and is tailored to the special needs of first-in-family and socio-economically disadvantaged students entering undertaking pre-enrolment preparatory programs. It consists of a number of independently functioning online modules and has the flexibility to be integrated into a range of USQ enabling courses, as well as being available globally as an open licensed resource. The site has been extensively trialled and appears effective in positioning enabling students for success both in their enabling study and in subsequent undergraduate and postgraduate programs. The site also eases the workload pressures on academic and professional staff, freeing up time to enable more intensive and nuanced support of students where needed.

The University of Southern Queensland (USQ)’s ‘Active Success at Uni’ project aimed to develop an open licensed and interactive online resource specifically tailored to the additional support needs of students commencing university studies as first-in-family students, particularly from a background of educational or socioeconomic disadvantage.

USQ has 40 years of experience teaching post-secondary education programs to students studying off-campus and attracts a high proportion of students entering university as non-school leavers; particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds. The University has developed extensive expertise in supporting these students to achieve success at university. Its enabling programs include one of the largest external tertiary preparatory programs in Australia that has operated since 1988. USQ’s Open Access College also supports non-traditional students commencing postgraduate study.

The ‘Active Success at Uni’ site covers a broad range of topics relevant to enabling students, including academic communication, anti-plagiarism and retention strategies, as well as an introduction to life and culture in a university environment. The site is structured as independently functioning online modules and has been designed to be both integrated into a range of USQ enabling courses and made available globally as an open licensed resource.

The online ‘open textbook’ aims to remove many of the barriers to tertiary education encountered by non-traditional students as they attempt to negotiate university study. The highly interactive and student centred nature of the resource make it accessible to a wide audience, including those with limited experience of university study, those with hearing and vision impairment, and students from non-English speaking backgrounds.

In 2017 the site is being integrated as a teaching and learning tool into the University’s enabling courses for both undergraduate and postgraduate entrants, and it is freely available for teachers and learners on the World Wide Web.

Kate Judith, Jessamyn Clarke, Charmaine Davis, Barbara Harmes, Marcus Harmes, Julie Penno, Lalanthi Seneviratne, Open Access College, University of Southern Queensland

‘Active Success at Uni’: <https://activesuccessatuni.usq.edu.au/>