IMPLEMENTING A BLUEPRINT FOR TRANSITION SUCCESS

Karen Nelson
Sally Kift
Tracy Creagh

Queensland University of Technology

ET@QUT
Enhancing Transition at QUT

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TOPICS

- Background of ET@QUT

- Key Imperatives in 2007 &

- Implementation Strategies

- Teamwork Protocol

- Monitoring Student Engagement

- Conclusion, Questions & Discussion

BACKGROUND

- Project funded by a QUT Large Teaching and Learning Development Grant 2005-2007
- Aim - to develop, pilot and communicate an effective, university-wide, integrated, coordinated, sustainable, curriculum-mediated transition framework
- Focus – Faculties of Law & IT, QUT
- Team
  - Sally Kift & Karen Nelson – Co-directors
  - Wendy Harper - Learning and Teaching IT Manager
  - Julia Humphreys - First Year Program Coordinator
  - Carole Quinn – ET@QUT Project Manager
  - Tracy Creagh, Natasha Shaw, Kim Moody – Research Assistants
  - Academic & Professional colleagues across QUT

OUR PHILOSOPHY

- Transition is a responsibility that must be shared and understood by *all* areas of the university – academic and professional, senior management, student services, administrators and learning environmental support.

- Achieving this holistic collaborative environment requires systematizing transition philosophy *within* the elements of strategic infrastructure *and* practical activities *across* all traditional silos *between* faculties and divisions.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Project Phases & Focus of Activities	Year 1: Project Planning	Year 2: Piloting of tools & resources in Law and IT	Year 3: Refining & communicating the framework
Mapping of current activities in faculties and divisions	Identifying activities, resources & meta data framework.	Inventory commences in Law and IT with other faculties to follow.	Create system to maintain and develop of resource metadata.
Identifying developing & trialling new initiatives in Law & IT	Conflict resolution Teamwork Academic integrity QV for transition students	Integrating new tools into units. Evaluation of usefulness and impact.	Evaluation and refinement of resources in conjunction with stakeholders
Constructing the framework.	Internal communication strategies. Liaison with related T&L projects.	Visualisation of inclusive timeline developed and piloted in Law & IT	Promotion of framework & staff development activities

SUB-PROJECTS

- Academic Integrity
- Conflict Resolution
- Resource Inventory & Metadata
- Monitoring Student Engagement
- Orientation (small group program)
- QV for Transition Students
- Student Expectations
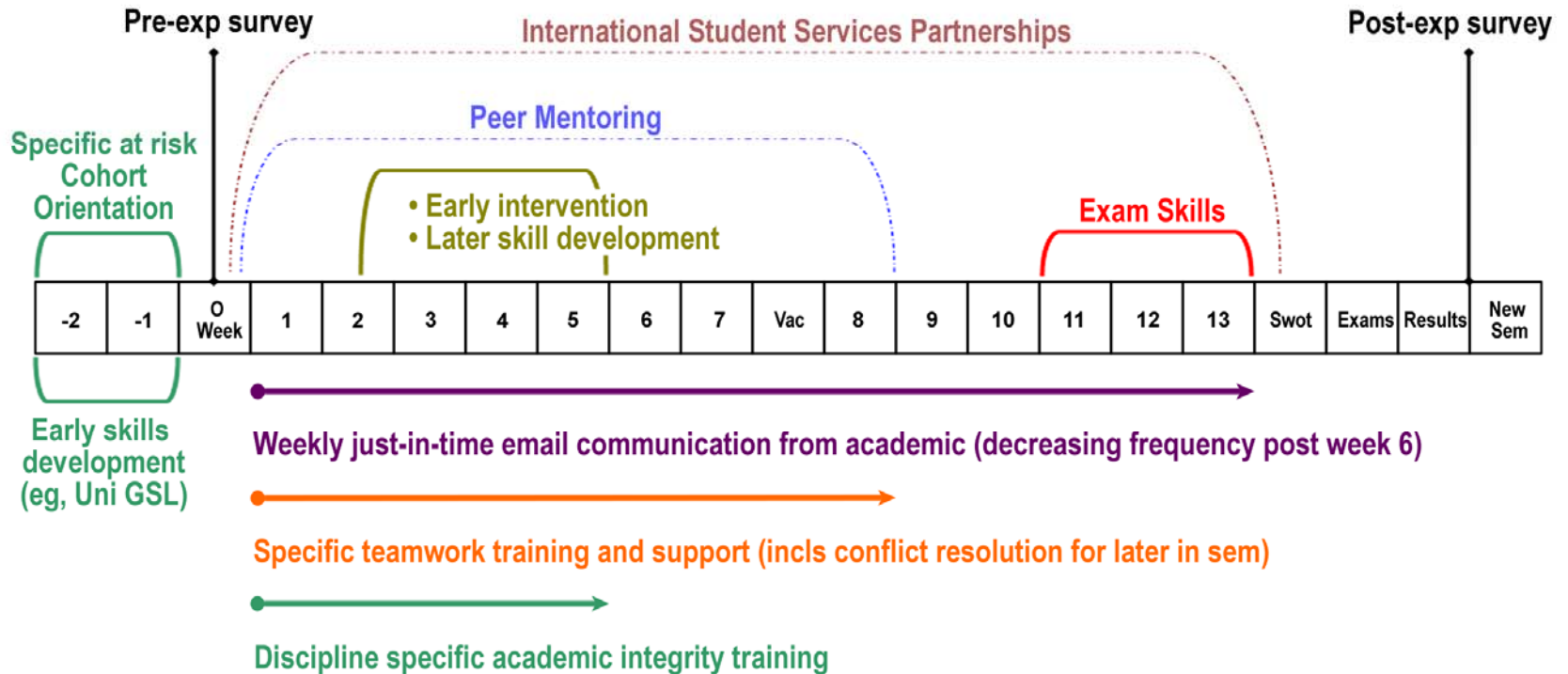- Teamwork Protocol
- Welcome Mentoring

The *"blueprint"* is the plan that enables a systematic institution-wide approach to transition.

It provides a common language and way of communicating Transition across the institution.

WORKING BLUEPRINT VISUALISATION

Student-Centred Timeline for Managed Learning Environment – Semester Weeks

Pre-exp survey

International Student Services Partnerships

Post-exp survey

Specific at risk Cohort Orientation

Peer Mentoring

- Early intervention
- Later skill development

Exam Skills

-2	-1	O Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Vac	8	9	10	11	12	13	Swot	Exams	Results	New Sem

Early skills development (eg, Uni GSL)

Weekly just-in-time email communication from academic (decreasing frequency post week 6)

Specific teamwork training and support (incls conflict resolution for later in sem)

Discipline specific academic integrity training

KEY DRIVER IN 2007

- *How is good practice for managing the transition of students into university institutionalised in a large university?*
- We selected projects that offered the greatest opportunities for staff engagement *and*
  – Required uptake or resources by staff or
  – Critical for student persistence

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- Focus on the uptake of resources by staff
  - Teamwork Protocol
  - Resource Inventory
- Focus on student experience
  - Monitoring Student Engagement
  - Conflict Resolution

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*Will a **teamwork protocol** for staff improve the design of teamwork units and improve the learning experience of first year students?*

- QUT students work on group assignments and projects outside of university time more than students at any other university (CSHE FYE Survey, Krause et al, 2005).

- At QUT, teamwork causes distress and concern for students, academics and teachers attempting to manage teamwork assessment (Nelson et al, 2006).

- No institutional-wide approach to teamwork at QUT.

- We don't always give students opportunities to *learn about* teamwork or *understand how to* participate effectively in teams.

- A common approach by all faculties will assist teachers to provide the optimal conditions for teamwork.

DEVELOPING THE TEAMWORK PROTOCOL

- Goals
  - To identify and develop the key elements crucial for students to have a successful teamwork experience during their first year at QUT
  - To assist teachers with all aspects of teamwork
  - To develop an accessible resource and tool for staff to use when teaching with teamwork.
- Process
  - Participation invited from all faculties and divisions:
  - Three forums (Sept 2005, June and Nov 2006)
  - Canvassed support for a university-wide teamwork protocol for staff.
  - Examined the principles and elements of teamwork assessment.
  - Forum members and others agree on the content, format and direction for the Teamwork Protocol.
  - Draft Protocol reviewed by forum members in detail and subsequently revised.
  - Key issue - how best to implement the Protocol across the university faculties is discussed.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROTOCOL

- Four main elements/ principles
  - The purpose of teamwork
  - Designing for teamwork
  - Team management and support
  - Assessment models.

- Brief definition and discussion of each element

- Recommendations and strategies for dealing with each element

- Teamwork resources and templates to assist in the teaching process.

IMPLEMENTATION STATUS

- Protocol
  - Web enabled document & Booklets!
  - Templates and examples of resources for team activities
  - A diagnostic tool to assess teamwork processes and performance
- Process
  - Communicate with first year unit coordinators undertaking teamwork activities
  - Map teamwork in FY units
  - Invite unit coordinators to compare their units with the teamwork protocol elements
  - Work with early adopters
  - Evaluate utility of protocol
    - Design of units
    - Student experience
  - Assist and support unit coordinators – embed and refine
  - Augment resource with lessons learnt from faculties – refine online tools – and hand over to T&L community as a resource.

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL

Implementing a Blueprint for Transition Success

Teamwork Protocol Demonstrations

Z Block Foyer - Lunch time (Thursday and Friday)

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Monitoring Student Engagement (MSE)

- *How do we prevent, identify and manage students who are having difficulties with the transition into university life, to improve opportunities for student persistence and to minimise unexplained attrition?*

MSE ISSUES

- Engagement is a constructivist notion - participation will influence learning (Coates 2005)

- Engagement is the key factor in achieving quality outcomes for students (satisfaction, academic success and persistence) (Krause, 2002, 2005)

- → student engagement is critical for institutions

- Responsibility lies with students *and* with institutions to provide the "right" environment.

- Challenges include: reduced funding and massification of the sector, casualised academic workforce, large classes, less student time on-campus, increasing levels of student employment …

WHY MONITOR ENGAGEMENT?

- Multiple variables (no single cause) contribute to disengagement (Tinto,1995)
- Attrition is highest in First Year (Dest,2004)
- Contributing factors: financial issues, unrealistic expectations, degree of fit and familiarity with environment, attitudes to learning and lower tertiary entrance scores, reason for enrolling …
- Ultimate consequence of disengagement is withdrawal from course before completion.
  – Institution - loss of revenue and cost of resources
  – Community - loss of intellectual capital and potential loss of educated workforce

MONITORING ENGAGEMENT AT QUT

- Identify students who are struggling or showing signs of disengagement
- Provide appropriate support for these students
- Propose that a coherent, coordinated and sustainable university wide approach is required by
  - Better understanding student expectations
  - Map processes / activities currently in place
  - Visualisation for communication & discussion, staff development, identify opportunities for discussion…

CURRENT STATUS – UPDATE

- Large qualitative survey to understand students expectations: workload, time management, challenges, hopes and fears …

- 11 interviews with faculty academic and professional staff
  - open ended questions
  - Focused on activities / strategies used to identify, monitor, and manage student engagement in their first year of study.

FINDINGS: IDENTIFYING STUDENTS AT RISK

– No uniform approach:
  - Participation in tutorials (with and without follow up)
  - Academic performance in early assessment
  - Access to on-line learning environment (with and without follow up)
– More formal approaches tended to be in larger groups and less experienced academic staff
– Concerns about locus of responsibility
– Acknowledgement of difficulties students experience and that aspects of pastoral care are an academic responsibility
– Need a holistic view of student engagement
– Insufficient time/resources

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		Orientation	Semester 1	Semester break	Semester 2	End of academic year
Academic	Director UG Studies Course Coordinators	Continuous involvement at the big picture level. Responsible for review and evaluation of course content, student progress and overall academic issues				
	Unit Coordinators (UC)	Continuous involvement. Direct contact with students in a consultative role and direct teaching of lectures. Review data on student engagement and feedback on Unit content and teaching. Responsible for monitoring Tutors engagement and monitoring of student progress and reporting issues to CC.				
	Tutors (T)	Not formally involved	Weekly interaction with students, note attendance, directly address issues with unit content , refer to UC or LSC re: other issues	Feedback information to UC	Weekly interaction with students, note attendance, directly address issues with unit content, refer to UC or LSC re: other issues	Feedback information to UC
Administrative	Student Admin Officer-Orientation	Primary responsibility Supervises Welcome Mentors		Review feedback from Sem1 Orientation Prep for Sem 2 Orientation		Review feedback from Sem 1 Orientation Prep for Sem 2 Orientation
	Learning Support Coordinator(LSC)	Participates in Faculty Orientation, assists students as required	Monitor students who have been referred by other staff and refer to other agencies if required.		Monitor students who have been referred by other staff and refer to other agencies if required.	Contact some of the students identified with a GPA below 3.5
	General Admin Staff	Process student enrolment Inform students of course requirements	Respond to general student inquiries. Peak interaction wk 1-2 & wk 8-9 and end of semester	Process student enrolment Inform students of Course requirements	Respond to general student inquiries. Peak interaction wk 1-2 & wk 8-9 and end of semester	Answer enquiries from incoming students
Peer	Welcome Mentors (paid)	Facilitate sessions Featured on web and marketing material	Provide feedback to Student Admin Officer-Orientation			
	PASS Leaders (paid)		Facilitate weekly sessions that are Unit specific	Provide feedback to LSC	Facilitate weekly sessions that are Unit specific	Provide feedback to LSC
	Duty Tutors (paid)		Provide general academic support and guidance	Provide feedback to LSC	Provide general academic support and guidance	Provide feedback to LSC
	Peer Mentors (voluntary)	Buddy system – each Mentor allocated a group of students to contact	Maintain email contact every 2 wks up to week 8	Feedback to Unit Coordinator	Not known if program continues into second semester.	
	ITSA (voluntary)	social faculty association for staff and students	organises social activities	Market ITSA to 2nd Sem intake	organises social activities	Prepare for next year

FINDINGS: SYSTEMS FOR MONITORING

Attendance	**Hand written records kept if stipulated by Unit coordinator** **Coordinators refer to Tutors hand written records some Coordinators use spreadsheets to track overall attendance**	**Tutor** **Unit Coordinator**
Interaction with Online learning Site	**BLACKBOARD can collate data on frequency of interaction by individual students**	**Unit Coordinator**
Assessment	**Entered by Tutors/Coordinators onto faculty info system**	**Unit Coordinator/ FIT Student Services**
Interaction with support services	**Each agency keeps individual records of consultation and referrals, on paper, in QUT Diary and text and spreadsheets**	**Unit Coordinator** **LSC** **Duty Tutors**
Academic performance	**Information gathered in faculty info system and entered into University administration software. Reports generated and relayed back to faculty**	**FIT Student Services /QUT Student Administration**

FYHE 2007 "Implementing a Blueprint for Transition Success" Karen Nelson, Sally Kift & Tracy Creagh, QUT

MSE CHALLENGES

- No unified system for collecting and collating data from various sources
- Attendance and participation records not uniform
- Academic probation identified at end of academic year
- Students withdraw from units and courses without consulting staff
- Staff wanted an agreed approach that could focus on individual students
- Academic staff had the most contact but were not resourced (time, skills, systems) to actively monitor engagement
- → Conflict for academic staff between monitoring engagement or performing research activities
- Effectiveness of peer support initiatives is unknown and are perceived as under-utilised

MSE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Invest in systematic collecting, recording and collating of relevant data
- Follow up on MSE indicators early in semester 1 and all identified "at-risk" students and end of first sem.
- Clarification of role and responsibilities for FY tutors and unit coordinators
- Allocation of additional resources
- Professional development
- Introduce a case management approach to MSE
- Evaluate utility of peer support programs
- Investigate the possibility of notifications when students withdraw from a unit or course.

MSE CURRENT STATUS

- Implementing practical consistent "runs on the board" activities across FY units in one Faculty

- Developing specifications for information system support

- Professional development forums at faculty and university level

CONCLUSION

- Our challenge is to resolve the question
  - *How is good practice for managing the transition of students into university institutionalised in a large university?*
- We are focusing on staff engagement and participation
  - Uptake of resources
  - Student experience
- By harnessing two projects: teamwork protocol and monitoring student engagement.

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Thank you for listening!

Questions and Discussion

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