

# UniStep: another step towards engaging and retaining students

12th Pacific Rim First Year in Higher Education Conference 2009



**UNISTEP**  
University Student Transition  
Experience Program

Life Impact The University of Adelaide

## Orientation - 3 Tiers

- Traditional O'week Activities
- Reality Bites Sessions
- Extended semester 1 orientation

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## Reality Bites

Transition to university issues

- Differences
- Jargon
- Referencing
- Time Management
- Services
- MyUni
- UniStep

Senior Students

- Own Experience
- Tips

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## Semester Program

<b>Physical Orientation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Soap Box Performers</li><li>• Library Tours</li><li>• Campus Tours</li></ul>	<b>Academic</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Getting Started on uni study</li><li>• Taking Good Lecture Notes</li></ul>
<b>General</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Life Lessons 101</li><li>• Balance: Study and Life</li></ul>	<b>Social</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Taste of Uni</li><li>• End of term BBQ</li></ul>

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## UniStep Promotion

<b>Publications</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Orientation guide</li><li>• Student Union diary</li></ul>	<b>Signage</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A frames</li><li>• Banners</li><li>• Session signs</li></ul>
<b>Orientation Week</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Give aways</li><li>• Brochures</li><li>• Welcome Centre</li></ul>	<b>Electronic</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Weekly email</li><li>• MyUni</li><li>• First Year Website</li></ul>

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## UniStep Evaluation

**Informal**

- Student emails
- Student feedback at events and sessions

**Formal**

- Week 5 Online Survey
- Week 12 Online Survey

**Overwhelmingly positive response**

"I would just like to thank you for your help in making my first year of uni as 'freak out free' as possible!"

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**Slide 1: UniStep (University Student Transition Experience Program)**

- University of Adelaide has for many years offered a week long, centralised, orientation program
- In 2008 the Transition Unit piloted an extended 6 week orientation program for commencing first year students
- Positive feedback encouraged the continuation and expansion of the program in 2009

**Slide 2: Orientation – 3 Tiers**

- In 2009, in addition to the traditional orientation week sessions and events, a second tier was added with 'transition to university' sessions called Reality Bites
- Information sessions and activities were organised and promoted to students as part of the semester 1 extended orientation program

**Slide 3: Reality Bites**

- 9 sessions attracted a total of 1025 first year students
- The sessions consisted of Transition staff presenting information on issues affecting first year students and a panel of senior students spoke of their experiences at uni and gave helpful tips

**Slide 4: Semester Program**

- UniStep included a range of activities and sessions designed to help students become familiar with the campus and the academic and support services available and to provide opportunities for students to engage and connect with each other

**Slide 5: UniStep Promotion**

- In 2009 significant increase in the promotion of UniStep
- Weekly updates on first year website
- Weekly door prize for students attending sessions
- Weekly email helped to personalise – somebody cares

**Slide 6: UniStep Evaluation**

- Feedback sought informally at events and formally through 2 online surveys
- Prize draw for survey respondents
- Total of 1339 students (23.29% of all first year students) responded to the surveys
- Time Management session in both surveys was found to be the most worthwhile session
- Over 72% of respondents agreed that UniStep had increased their awareness of support services
- Over half of the survey respondents who had thought about leaving during the first semester agreed that UniStep had influenced their decision to stay
- Overwhelmingly positive responses