

A Strategy for supporting students given Advanced Standing into Nursing

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Abstract

A strategy for supporting students, given Advanced Standing into the second year of a Nursing degree in bioscience and pharmacology, is being rolled out at QUT.

Background : At QUT, Advanced Standing students include those admitted directly into the second year of Nursing. These students may be from TAFE, or domestic or international graduates in any subject. Caboolture (CAB) is a low socioeconomic status suburb north of Brisbane. QUT has a campus in CAB, with a Nursing cohort (50-60 students). Compared to the main cohort of nursing students (600 students) at the Kelvin Grove (KG) campus, CAB has a higher proportion of low SES students, and a higher proportion of Advanced Standing students. In 2009, a third of the Advanced Standing students at CAB withdrew from the Bioscience Units, and left the University in their first semester.

Advanced Standing Student Questionnaire: In 2010, a questionnaire was devised to gauge first impressions by the CAB Advanced Standing students of the Bioscience and Pharmacology Units, to determine whether the revision lectures in Bioscience given in the first week in semester were helpful, and to assess whether they would be interested in the program at CAB, that we were to roll out for the KG campus in Semester 2 (2010). Eight of 14 CAB Advanced Standing students responded. For those Advanced Standing students who had no previous University study, the Bioscience and Pharmacology Units were overwhelming. The Revision Lectures were evaluated very well. The students strongly supported the roll out of the Bioscience Teaching Initiative to the CAB campus in 2011.

Program being rolled out: The strategy for supporting students given Advanced Standing (the Bioscience Teaching Initiative) was rolled out to the KG campus in the second semester of 2010, when there are no Nursing students at CAB. The Strategy is a Community Website for Advanced Standing students with four components. (1) Getting started; this is a series of eBooks to give the students the basic concepts of anatomy, physiology, and pharmacology. (2) A Workshop in O week; this has talks on 'Navigating your way through the QUT web', 'How to do well in Bioscience', 'Active learning for success', and 'How I survived Bioscience and Pharmacology' by a previous Advanced Standing student. (3) Revision lectures of first year material in anatomy, physiology and microbiology, and (4) Extra tutor support for weeks 1-3.

Preliminary findings: At CAB, the withdrawal rates of Advanced Standing students were lower in 2010 than 2009 for both Pharmacology and Bioscience, which suggests that the revision lectures may have helped. However, the withdrawal rates of Advanced Standing students remained higher at CAB than KG. It will be of interest to determine whether the full Bioscience Teaching Initiative will improve retention of Advanced Standing students at both CAB and KG.