

Beyond transition pedagogy: modelling the next generation of strategies to enhance the first year experience

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The evolution of strategies aimed at enhancing the first year experience (FYE) has led to the implementation of institution-wide approaches for developing transition pedagogy (e.g., Kift, Nelson & Clarke, 2010; Pitkethly & Prosser, 2001). Whilst these third generation approaches to the FYE build upon curricular and co-curricular strategies, once established, it is unclear where the energies of those responsible for enhancing an institution-wide approach are best focused. The model currently presented is based on a review of the first year transition literature and on an accumulation of data from students and staff at Griffith University, where an institution-wide approach to the FYE has been in operation since 2006 (Burnett & Larmar, 2011; Lizzio, 2006).

The purpose of the model is to identify which aspects of the FYE are relatively well covered in terms of understanding of the issues and development of strategy and which areas require attention. The process for developing this model was to separate the student transition into three phases: the prospective student phase, the beginning student phase and the continuing student phase. Within each of these three phases, factors that influence successful transition were further separated into four distinct levels: external factors, internal or personal factors, academic staff factors and institution-wide factors. Based on concerns raised by McInnis (2001), the linkages between the student-related factors during each phase were mapped against academic and institutional factors. Thus, it is possible to visually represent connections between transition issues that have been established as critical to the successful transition to higher education and highlight those areas where more work needs to be done.

The model suggests that, although a number of internal and external factors appear to drive students to come to and succeed at university, how academic staff and the university can best leverage those factors to enhance the FYE remains unclear. Brevity and elegance were important in the presented model, it is therefore not completely comprehensive, nor did it aim to be. Rather, it is hoped that it will form the basis for ongoing discussion, investigation and enhancement of the FYE at Griffith University and beyond.

References

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