










Paving a better path: Improving transition to University for VET students

Janelle Davis
Dr Janice Catterall
Dr Dai Fei Yang

Looking back:

-  Between 20-25% of commencing students are admitted to a UWS bachelors degree on the basis of a VET qualification
-  Pre 2007, arrangements were incoherent and ad-hoc
-  No assurance or information available for VET students seeking to enter University studies
-  Credit usually consisted of first year units

What did this mean for VET students?

-  No certainty of gaining admission or credit in a degree
-  No information on how the University regarded VET qualifications
-  Inefficient and time consuming process for seeking credit
-  Often commencing in 2nd year units from the outset
-  No transition support – not even on the radar

The MCEETYA Good Practice Principles suggest (Cram et al 2008) *“Ad hoc articulation programs are often characterised by inconsistency or lack of transparency and do not always serve students well.”*

What did this mean for the University?



Information silos



No system in which to establish formal relationships



Repetitive manual processes (assessing and approving credit applications)



Inappropriate credit transfer



Concerns about inequity, lack of transparency and inefficiencies

“universities that have a strong focus on diversifying their student intake, a focus on equity and access or a mission that links them closely with their region and its development are more likely to build credit transfer arrangements into this vision”.

Phillips KPA Report 2064 (p18), 2006

UWS Executive resourced and designed a new position

Relationships Manager UWS/VET

“Credit transfer arrangements work best when they are central to institutional vision and where there is a senior person with designated responsibility for ensuring these arrangements are implemented”.

“Effective development and sustainability of credit transfer arrangements require institutions to allocate significant funds specifically for this purpose”. Phillips KPA Report 2064, 2006

Why have a designated position?



Someone's job



Allows a single point of contact - a resource for providers, academics and others



Promotes structure for pathways arrangements and credit mapping



Supports a more holistic approach across the University



Monitor and maintain

Projecting forward




A VET framework has been established that includes policy, guidelines, systems and procedures



Over 450 VET pathways have been established across 32 disciplines



Strong relationships have been developed with TAFE and private colleges

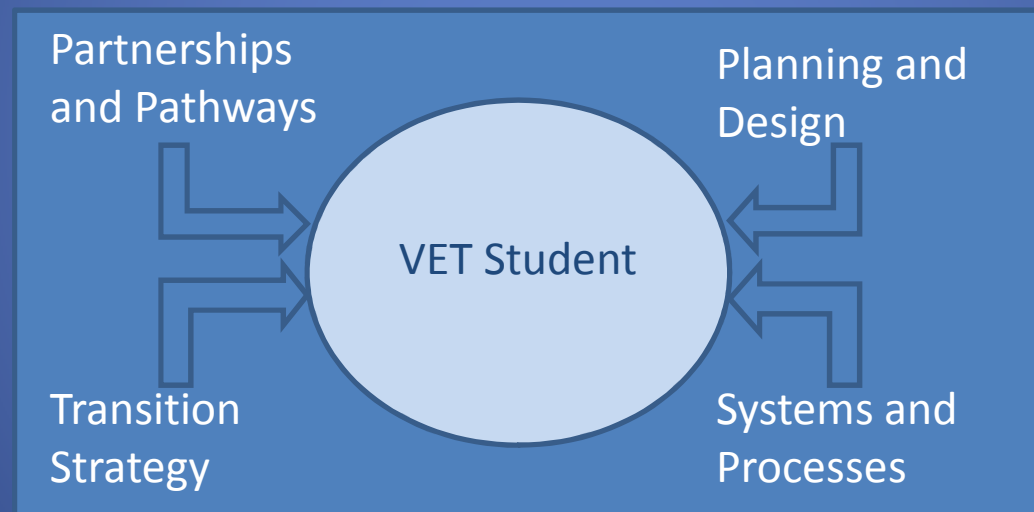


VET web pages have been established containing searchable pathways and credit details as well as links to an online pathways credit e-form, Information for providers pack and a VET transition page



Research on VET student transition has been conducted (ALTC project)

More than just credit transfer, rather a “Pathways Experience” for success



“We need to identify the main obstacles to former TAFE students completing their higher education studies and to discuss the ways in which institutions should be addressing them. This is necessary to ensure that the trend of an increasing number of TAFE students admitted to universities does not simply result in higher levels of attrition in their first year of undergraduate study”. Watson (2008)

Foundation Principles:

Commitment
Collaboration
Consistency
Clarity
Care

Partnerships and Pathways..

Commitment, Collaboration, Consistency, Clarity, Care



Flexibility to develop state-wide, regional and local partnerships



Innovative partnerships - need to be sustainable



System for private providers seeking partnership



Aim for standardised pathways whilst remaining open to innovation

Planning and Design...

Commitment, Collaboration, Consistency, Clarity, Care



Structure and relevance



Collaboration between specialists (involve the right people)



Responsible credit transfer



Student centric focus

Systems and Processes...

Commitment, Collaboration, Consistency, Clarity, Care



Design systems that support efficient use of resources



Think outside the square



Go back to the drawing board when necessary



Involve the stakeholders

Transition Strategy... *Commitment, Collaboration, Consistency, Clarity, Care*



Holistic view of transition (everything matters)



Evidence based research (get facts, not anecdotal accounts)



Sustainable strategies



Generic and discipline based strategies

ALTC Competitive Grant - 2009 (completing in mid 2011)

Enhancing the student experience: transition from vocational education and training to higher education:



Conducted by UWS with partner institution CSU
UWS: Business, Nursing and Early Childhood, CSU: Education)



Specifically to research how VET students at both universities experience transition to University (bachelors degree)



Identify gaps and stumbling blocks to design and develop strategies



The right thing to do if we have such large VET cohorts articulating

Enhancing the student experience: transition from vocational education and training to higher education: UWS findings



Surveys = 529 completed over 2009, 2010
Business (N=368), Nursing (N=143), Early Childhood (N=19, 2010 only)



9 Focus groups (N=33), Telephone Interviews (N=30)



In 2009 and 2010, 451 VET basis students withdrew . A number of these were interviewed by telephone after withdrawing (N=44)

Enhancing the student experience: transition from vocational education and training to higher education: UWS findings (from 529 completed surveys for Business, Nursing and Early Childhood)

Student expectations compared with experience: 42.7% of students found their University course to be a lot different than expected

Item	More than expected (N)	%
Amount of work you have to submit	229	43.3%
Amount of study you have to do	304	59.5%
Amount of preparation for class	270	53.3%
How hard the work is	194	36.7%

Degree of difficulty (N=529)

Item	Difficult at first %	Difficult %	Very Difficult %
Enrolling in course or unit	35	7	5.3
Registering for tutorials	25.1	8.9	5.3
Assessment tasks	21.7	12.5	3.2
Academic Writing	23.1	13	6.2
Academic	17.8	9.6	1.7
Academic Conventions	30.1	13.8	4.9
Keeping up with course	21.0	14.9	3.6
Online environment	14.9	4.9	5.0
Course expectations	11.3	6.4	1.7
English level	9.5	3.8	1.3
Maths level	9.3	7.4	2.1
Balancing demands of study and work	18.7	23.4	8.1



Pilot Strategies

- Early interventions – pre offer stage and during first semester
- Information available on VET web pages for access at any time
- VET Peer Guide
- Welcome pack mail out to all VET students (contained letter, Peer Guide brochure, schedule of bridging programs and workshops) targeted for VET
- Increased numbers of Bridging Programs and delivery (online and blended)
- Workshops for using UWS online services and technology

Thank you

Questions or comments...

j.davis@uws.edu.au
j.catterall@uws.edu.au
d.yang@uws.edu.au