Exploring assumptions about the first year at university and how it can differ from reality

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Workshop Outline

- Context and Demographics
- Student Preparation (Activity)
- Student Expectations and Performance
- Break
- Student predictions and reflections
- What can you do?
- Resources
SSEE Project background

- Aim: to explore the gaps between student expectations and experiences of university and how this can be minimised

- 3 year research project, conducted at and by the University of Adelaide, Flinders University and the University of South Australia 2010 – 2012

- The first grant was awarded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (Office of Learning and Teaching); in October 2013 we won an OLT Extension Grant to disseminate the findings across Australia
The SSEE Project

- Examine student expectations and experiences across 3 South Australian institutions (1 ATN; 1 Go8; 1 IRU)
- Two 76 question surveys
- Five surveys over 3 years 2010–2012
- Surveying commencing and continuing students
- Look at expectations and actual experience
- Details available:
## Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Commencing</th>
<th>Continuing</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flinders</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>4851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Adelaide</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>6621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UniSA</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>5411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>7366</strong></td>
<td><strong>9517</strong></td>
<td><strong>16883</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25% response rate
What do you think?

Secondary education adequately prepares students for university
Secondary education adequately prepared me for university study

- Commencing
- Continuing

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- N/A
Entry pathways to university

- High School: 59%
- Gap year / deferral: 11%
- Foundation course: 4%
- Transfer: 5%
- TAFE (or similar): 3%
- Work: 4%
- Other: 4%
## Results & Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Type</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>First in Family</th>
<th>Metro’n School</th>
<th>Live with parents</th>
<th>Mature Aged</th>
<th>Average Age (years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commencing</td>
<td>7361</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing</td>
<td>9509</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (n)</td>
<td>16870*</td>
<td>11286</td>
<td>5299</td>
<td>12534</td>
<td>9531</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* While we received over 18,000 responses, respondents who indicated they were not attending university for the first time were removed from commencing student cohort.
Students are satisfied...

- Overall, students anticipated a high level of satisfaction from their university experience.
- After a semester of university study students had a good level of satisfaction.
- After a semester of university study students still found their university experience more satisfactory than their high school experience.
What does a student need to be successful at university?

- Balanced life
- Engage (attendance?)
- Support from the institution
- Work hard
- Friends
Are friends important?

Having a group of close friends will be important for support at university.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- N/A
The reality

Are any of your friends attending the same university?

- Yes and in same degree / program
- Yes but not in the same degree / program
- No
So, do students have realistic expectations of what university will be like?
What shaped students’ views or accurately reflected university?

- Helped shape my views
- Accurately reflected what uni would be like

Bar chart showing percentages for various sources:
- Parents / primary...
- School careers...
- School teachers
- Older siblings or...
- Friends
- Traditional Media...
- New Media (e.g.)
- University websites
- University...
- Other
Does entrance score predict GPA?
Does entrance score predict GPA?

Correlation Coefficient ($R^2$) = 0.135
Does entrance score predict GPA?

Correlation Coefficient ($R^2$) = 0.0924
Does school type predict entrance score?

![Bar chart showing ATAR (%) for Catholic, Independent, Public, and IB schools. IB schools have the highest ATAR, followed by Independent, Catholic, and Public schools.](chart.png)
Does school type predict GPA?

![Bar graph showing GPA (on a scale of 0 to 7) for Catholic, Independent, Public, and IB schools. The graph indicates that IB schools have the highest average GPA, followed by Independent, Catholic, and Public schools.](image-url)
Does school type predict GPA?

Zoomed in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Type</th>
<th>GPA (/7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IB</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Correlation Coefficient ($R^2$) = 0.00553
Gender Gap?

Significant difference
Educational Location

No significant difference
Family Background Disparity?

First in Family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GPA (/7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FiF</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not FiF</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Significant difference
“development and learning unfold along individual pathways, whose trajectories are shaped by the ongoing interplay between sources of vulnerability, competence and resilience” (Glover, Hetzel, Tennant & Leahy, 2010: 12)

1. Does our SA experience translate to your institutions?

2. What is the MOST important transition issue affecting commencing university students?

3. What can staff do to address these issues / gaps?
Student views regarding the differences between university and high school
Do students value attending lectures?

- It will be important for me to attend most lectures
- It was important for my learning to attend most lectures
Do students’ outside commitments affect study?

- I have commitments / activities outside of University that might negatively affect my ability to study.
- I had outside commitments / activities that negatively affected my ability to study.
I am doing well at university...

(Commencing) I am a capable student...

(Continuing) I did as well as expected..

- **Agree**: 86.8%
- **Disagree**: 13.2%

- **Agree**: 64.4%
- **Disagree**: 35.6%
Are staff accessible?

- Having easy and convenient access to my lecturers and tutors outside of face-to-face teaching will be important to my learning.

- I had easy and convenient access to my lecturers and tutors outside of face-to-face teaching times.
What can staff do to better support students?
What is a reasonable time for having your assignments / work marked and returned to you?

What was the average time for assignments / work to be marked and returned to you?
Feedback on drafts of work will be important to my learning.

Feedback on drafts of work was provided.
Feedback on my submitted work will be important to my learning.

Sufficient feedback on my submitted work was provided.
Having lecturers who are enthusiastic about teaching will be important for my learning.

I learned more in classes taught by enthusiastic teachers.
References


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SSEE Project team

Carrickalinga writing retreat 2012