Linking study skills courses and class content: A joint venture between Student Services and the Health Faculty

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**Background:** AT AUT, TTA (Te Tari Āwhina: The Learning Development Centre) began offering generic study skills courses (KEYS) four years ago. Although these were stand alone courses, all lecturers were from TTA and students were encouraged to follow up their course work with a lecturer upon completion of the course. Many of these generic courses were taught to 1st year Nursing students who were doing a foundation course. One of the learning outcomes for students’ essays is ‘present work at an appropriate academic level’. However, many first year students are confused as to the meaning of this statement. TTA staff felt generic study skills courses would increase the students’ awareness of what was expected of them in regard to university requirements.

Two years ago TTA and the 1st year Health Faculty lecturers met and discussed what could be done to better assist 1st year students with their study skills. TTA suggested two of the study skills courses, KEYS to Study Success and KEYS to Academic Writing be amalgamated and offered to the 1st year Health students. This combined course would allow the students time to write in class and develop study skills in the classroom environment. However, faculty and TTA lecturers were aware that students may see this as more work, in addition to their already busy schedule. To combat this possible objection, TTA suggested directly linking the combined study skills course to the first essay/assignment the students would be undertaking. The TTA lecturers would go through the complete process of writing an essay with the students, focusing on their first assignment. The course would run for two hours/week x 8 weeks. During the course students were actively involved in the writing process, they saw the relevance of what they were learning and they were able to request topics related to their course, which they wanted to focus on for the next week.

**Practical Application:**

1. Overall course schedule for the 8-weeks – including assessment
2. Examples of materials used in the course and relation to content
3. Student feedback - what worked & what didn’t
4. Lecturer feedback & statistical results

**Discussion Questions:** (If people don’t have anything they want to discuss)

1. In your opinion how important is the relationship between lecturers and support staff, especially for first year students?
2. Do you think it is useful for first year students (especially) to see that support staff and lecturers communicate with each other?
3. What does your institution do (or what has it done) to develop the relationship between lecturers and support staff to better assist students?
4. What is your view of linking study skills with course content?

I look forward to hearing if this nuts & bolts proposal has been accepted for the FYHE Conference in Brisbane.

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