Assisting Transition Through an Honours College Program: an Australian Perspective

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Griffith Honours College
WHAT is the Griffith Honours College?
First of its kind in Australia for undergraduate students

Provides an enriched educational experience for high achieving undergraduate students

- Enhanced opportunities to ease transition to University
- Recognition of high academic achievement
- Meeting like minded students
- Special preparation to be a future leader in your chosen field
- Exclusive academic and social experiences
- Additional support of Griffith Honours College staff
**WHAT** is the Griffith Honours College?

From Keitha’s Talk

Orientation linked to academic success

Low self-confidence and purpose important

Friends

Future more important than past

Ongoing not a single event esp for low SES. FIF
Transition

• Many students face difficulties in transition to HE
• High risk of discontinuing studies
• Early intervention. Students go where there is a connection
• Student-centred learning
• Aim is to provide supportive environment
• Study reports the first Australian Honours College
• 130 high achieving students – OP 1, 2 and 3
Where are they now?
South Korea
Adelaide
Dubai
Gold Coast
Gold Coast
**Why apply to join the Griffith Honours College**

**Students’ Perspective**

**Receive Personal Attention** – students will take part in regular one-on-one sessions with a mentor throughout their University years.

**Experience the World** – students will be encouraged to gain a global perspective by studying or working overseas for a few weeks, a few months or a year.

**Be Recognised** – as high achieving amongst the University community.
• WHY apply to join the Griffith Honours College
• Parents’ Perspective
• Additional Pastoral Care – students will have access to the Griffith Honours College staff
• Leadership Development Series – extra curricula activity specially designed for Honours College students to assist in the transition to University
• Orientation – exclusive orientation event for students and parents
The Study

• A Pragmatic Approach using mixed methods (Creswell, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998)

  • Quantitative: formative assessment measuring perceptions of important issues before and after orientation
  • Qualitative: unstructured interviews with students at end of semester to review effectiveness and make changes based on the perceptions of students themselves
  • Quantitative: comparison of Honours College students results with mean scores for programs
The Study

• Orientation

• Understanding University
• Understanding Self
• Leadership
• Meeting others – speed dating, human bingo
• Parents breakfast (Kenny Rogers)

• Sets the scene and gives a language
What Students Perceived as Important
Data Analysis

- N=99
- Students evaluate their expectations prior to orientation and again after it had been completed
- Paired sample T-test (t(77) = 8.935, p<.001) indicated that students perceived a significant difference in their preparedness before and after orientation
Difficulties Experienced by 1st Year Students

![Bar chart showing difficulties experienced by 1st year students.]

- Juggling work and study
- Degree more difficult than anticipated
- Conflict between family and study
- Caring for children or family members
- Balancing personal relationships
- Fitting in and making friends
- Finding time for other commitments
- Degree not being what you expected
- Paying fees and other study costs

Legend:
- Anticipated Difficulties
- Difficulties Experienced
Discussion

• All 130 students completed first year
• Initiatives used in the program have assisted transition
  • Mentoring
  • Global experiences
  • Team building
  • Feeling Connected
  • Social events run by students
• Formative evaluation enables the Program Manager to make real-time changes
• Griffith Honours College is a successful model
Challenges

• Overcoming perception high achieving students do not need additional support
• Lack of Australian literature
• Marketing and unknown Australian concept
• Transference to other universities
• Maintaining sponsorship with changes in Senior Management
• Like a number of HE Projects is this one too dependent on present staffing skills and passion