

Giving the edge, getting ahead: libraries, literacies and learning

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ABSTRACT

QUT Library has recently assumed consolidated responsibility for integrated service provision and support for study skills (academic literacy) and research skills (information literacy). This important mandate strengthens QUT Library's strategic focus on leading learning service innovation and actively engaging in teaching and learning at QUT. The Library's integrated suite of learning resources emphasises this commitment. Targetting undergraduate learners (particularly 1st year/transition), these online learning environments provide 24/7 access to academic and information literacy learning tools and resources.

This Nuts and Bolts session describes the design and development of the four key resources in the suite - Studywell, QUT cite|write, Pilot and Subject Guides. The session presents implementation and integration of the resources, and discusses student engagement and satisfaction.

Introduction

QUT Library has established an integrated model of learning service and support, underpinned by a conceptual "integrated literacies" framework of knowledge, skills and capabilities. This portfolio crosses a range of client services, resource provision, active teaching and consultation. Deliberate articulation of resource design and development with Curriculum Design Principles and QUT's First Year Experience Policy and Guidelines assures strong alignment with the University's objectives regarding enhanced student experience, flexible delivery and online learning.

Four key resources constitute the learning resource suite - Studywell, QUT cite|write, Pilot and Subject Guides. Each resource applies effective use of technologies and learning design to accommodate diverse student needs, time commitments and learning styles. Each serves a particular purpose, but creates a whole-of-learning approach to facilitating greater capability,

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conceptual understanding and informed application of academic and information knowledge and skills.

The online learning suite

Studywell: <http://www.studywell.library.qut.edu.au/>



Studywell is QUT's newly-released learning resource for improving study effectiveness and efficiency. Studywell builds academic performance in writing, teamwork, reading and note-taking, research, referencing and citing, and exam preparation. Tools, templates and tips in a range of formats allow flexible use by students, and easy re-use and course integration for academic teaching staff.

Studywell's high-impact visual design and innovative use of current technologies facilitates self-directed discovery-based learning. The fundamental design ethos engages learners, encourages interaction with content and facilitates what is described by Oblinger (2008) as "discovery infrastructure"¹ (the distribution of resources to promote learning in "Education 3.0"). The discovery platform also promotes learner autonomy and responsibility while guided incidental learning assists multiple learner pathways to and active engagement with content. A "3-click max" principle minimises learner frustration and facilitates quick access to materials. The constructivist design facilitates the effective embedding of curriculum-based learning. Metaphor or theme criteria motivates interaction with resources and provide learners with elements that "catch their attention and immerses them in an environment", an indicator of success noted by Jolliffe, Ritter, Stevens as that which makes the "program is so interesting and appealing, or so intellectually stimulating, that the users actually like it"(2001).

In keeping with QUT's commitment to improve the first year experience and address graduate capabilities, Studywell capitalises on both physical and virtual innovations to support new approaches in pedagogy and learning support (MOPP C/4.3; C/6.1; C/6.2).

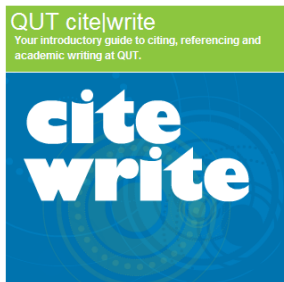
¹ a method of inquiry-based instruction, discovery learning believes that it is best for learners to discover facts and relationships for themselves

Subject Guides: <http://libguides.library.qut.edu.au/index.php>



Compiled by subject-specialist librarians, these guides link students to authoritative sources of information, including books, journal articles, databases and web resources in a wide range of disciplines. They are an excellent starting point for research for students, and an extra source of reliable resources for teaching staff. These resources also include graphic and multimedia resources to teach student research skills within the context of their subject areas. Librarians can adapt the layout and functionality to suit the style of the discipline, the types of assessment tasks and student demographics.

QUT cite|write: <http://www.citewrite.qut.edu.au/>



QUT cite|write is the University's introductory guide to referencing, citing and writing at an undergraduate level. Providing four authoritative standards of referencing and citing, it also addresses conventions of academic writing, including essay structure, writing plans, directive words and paragraph structure. QUT cite|write was developed and released in 2008, as a replacement for an existing guide. In response to student and staff feedback, the format and layout underwent significant review and redesign.

This guide is a product of significant University-wide collaboration and voluntary engagement of highly experienced staff from across a range of QUT student support areas. This partnership has enabled the delivery of a high quality student-focussed resource, and demonstrates the value of collaborative partnerships in delivering meaningful learning support. Consistently high usage stands as testament to the worth of the product and the success of the extensive communications strategy undertaken to assure organisational-wide change.

Pilot: <https://pilot.library.qut.edu.au/index.jsp>



With a focus on facilitating deep learning, Pilot is a self-paced tutorial which leads students through the learning of fundamental research processes. Tutorials, activities, quizzes and

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strategies assist students to know how to define their topics and search for information as well as synthesis, evaluate, manage and acknowledge information. Students can do individual modules, or complete the whole tutorial and attain their Pilot's licence.

Although primarily a tool for independent learning, Pilot is also integrated into a number of courses and units, with mandatory completion of modules or the final summative "licence" weighted with a grade percentage. The value of Pilot extends beyond QUT, with access open to schools and provision made for over 20 institutions to customise the tutorial to suit the needs of their own clients.

Conclusion

Academic and information literacy are interdependent capabilities, as must be the development and support of learning. Rather than resting as the responsibility of any one group or department at QUT, quality service and support has drawn on distributed intelligence from a consortium of stakeholders across the organisation. QUT Library is a committed educational enterprise where librarians and skills advisers engage as educational partners with faculties to challenge learners' assumptions, encourage authentic learning, establish and guide academic standards, and mediate across undergraduate, FYE and academic discourse (Elmborg, 2006; Dick, 1995).

Session Outline

Presentation (10 minutes)

A quick overview of QUT Library's role in teaching and learning support with an outline of the online resources developed for this purpose – Studywell, cite|write, Study Guides and Pilot. An explanation of their development in alignment with curriculum design principles and QUT's First Year Experience Policy and Guidelines.

Pairs / Small Group Discussion (5-7 minutes)

"The resources we have mentioned today are generally used at QUT as generic learning and teaching tools. They are either taught by library staff as generic classes or they are resources that students can access in their own time. Our current focus is to work towards the development of these skills being embedded specifically within units and courses at QUT.

Participants to discuss the following questions

- Q1: Are academic and information literacies explicitly taught within the context of courses at your universities, or is the predominant emphasis on extracurricular classes and resources?
- Q2: How were these incorporated into courses/programs?
- Q3: Who teaches these literacies, and what is the role of skills advisers and librarians? "

Whole group discussion (13-15 minutes)

Participants invited to contribute one innovative or effective way that information and academic skills are being taught in their institutions. Responses (approximately 3 minutes each) would facilitate large group discussion.

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