Transition in the First Year Curriculum: Supporting transition to university life and study
This resource was developed by Ron Baird of Transition and Orientation Programs for the University of Melbourne with the invaluable assistance of Kathryn Boin, Manager, Transition and Orientation Programs. Published by Academic Enrichment Services, July 2010.
TRANSITION IN THE FIRST YEAR CURRICULUM:

Supporting transition to university life and study

Ron Baird and Kathryn Boin
Transition & Orientation Programs
The University of Melbourne
The University of Melbourne seeks to support academic staff in the provision of a quality learning experience for their students. The first year of undergraduate study is particularly important as students adapt to the new learning environment, and the University has a longstanding commitment to supporting students’ many transitions. In addition to student services and voluntary transition programs, the focus is moving increasingly towards a curriculum and teaching practice that intentionally support transition. To this end it gives me great pleasure to introduce this resource kit developed by Transition & Orientation Programs.

The resource kit has been created for first year teaching staff and those wanting to do more to support student transition in the classroom environment. The kit uses good practice examples from colleagues to provide first year teaching staff with a range of easily adaptable activities and approaches. It includes activities for use in lectures, tutorial and sessional teaching formats, online resources and activities, assessment, field trips and professional development. Furthermore, the kit provides a basic understanding of transition, a section outlining the hallmarks of a ‘transition-friendly first year teacher’ and a ‘five minute guide to a transition-friendly curriculum’ for the busy academic.

This resource kit exemplifies the University’s ongoing effort to support and enhance the Melbourne Experience for its students. The focus on the curriculum as a method of facilitating successful transition is particularly timely as the University moves to fulfil equity targets resulting from the Bradley Review; targets which will greatly depend on the retention and success of an increasingly diverse student population.

It is envisaged that the kit will be an organic online resource that over time will have new activities added to it by other academic staff keen to share their knowledge and experience. I hope that this kit will act as a catalyst for the sharing of ideas and the website where it is housed will be a forum in which this conversation unfolds. I thank those academic staff who have generously shared their practices, and encourage all of our teaching staff, especially those with first year teaching responsibilities, to utilise this resource in developing their curriculum and teaching.

Professor Philippa Pattison
Pro-Vice Chancellor (Learning and Teaching)
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was inspired by a workshop presentation delivered by Professor Sally Kift, Articulating a transition pedagogy: What might good first year curriculum design look like?, delivered at the University of Melbourne Transition Forum, September 3 2008. The project was, thus, informed throughout by Professor Kift’s ALTC Fellowship project Articulating a transition pedagogy to scaffold and enhance the first-year learning experience in Australian higher education. We would like to express our gratitude to the following First Year Teaching Staff who shared their passion for teaching as they related aspects of their teaching practice for this project; this project would not have been feasible without their involvement. Dr. Stuart Barber, Professor Jeff Borland, Mr. Noel Boys, Dr. Dora Constantinidis, Dr. Simon Cropper, Mr. Greg Cusack, Mr. Matthew Dyki, Associate Professor Dawn Gleeson, Dr. Wendy Haslem, Ms. Kate Judith, Professor Paul Kofman, Mr. Peter McSweeney, Dr. Andrew Metha, Mr. Andrew O’Keefe, Dr. Ian Thomas, Mr. Trevor Tonkin, Dr. Tony Weatherley and Dr. Ian Thomas. We are especially grateful to Ms. Suzanne Daroesman and Ms. Anna To of the University’s Institutional Planning, Evaluation and Quality (IPEQ, Finance and Planning Group) who provided valuable suggestions and feedback on the survey.

The student quotes used on the activities pages were drawn from the 2006 and 2007 First Year Summit Reports produced by Transition & Orientation Programs (http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/transition/staff/uni/resources.html) the First_year@UniMelb blog (https://airport.unimelb.edu.au/first_year/) and Quality of Teaching data provided by the academic participants in this study.
# CONTENTS

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE.................................................................................................................. 7

PROJECT METHOD.................................................................................................................................. 8

  How to use this kit ................................................................................................................................. 8

ACTIVITIES FOR DIFFERENT TEACHING FORMATS AND PEDAGOGICAL TOOLS ..................... 12

  Lectures .................................................................................................................................................. 13
  Tutorials/Sessional formats ..................................................................................................................... 17
  Online Resources and Activities ............................................................................................................ 24
  Assessment ............................................................................................................................................. 25
  Field trips ............................................................................................................................................... 30
  Staff Professional Development ........................................................................................................... 31

BIBLIOGRAPHY ........................................................................................................................................ 37
BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Student transition into and through study at the University of Melbourne has been supported by a combination of orientation programs, comprehensive student services and faculty-based, extra-curricular transition initiatives such as seminars, study groups and mentor programs. The recent report The First Year Experience in Australian Universities: Findings from 1994 to 2009 (James, Krause & Jennings, 2009) indicates that the efforts of universities and schools over this period have made real improvements to students’ experience of transition.

There are, however, trends and emerging challenges identified in that report which we must be aware of in order to keep transition support relevant and consistent with changes in the first year student population and the ways they engage with university life. While there is still a place for the extracurricular programs – particularly those where peer support is involved (such as mentoring or study groups) – several trends discussed in The First Year Experience report are putting an increasing focus on the need to embed transition support within the curriculum:

• Students are spending fewer hours on campus, due to a number of factors including the competing demands of outside paid work and other commitments, and the increasing use of online learning tools. This makes it more difficult to attract students to attend extra-curricular, voluntary transition programs, so that the students who most need the support may miss out.

• An anticipated increase in the diversity of the student population, particularly related to the Australian Government’s target of increasing the number of young Australians with bachelors degrees, and that 20 per cent of undergraduates will be from low socio-economic backgrounds by 2020. These targets will depend on the retention and success of these students. Among other services, it will be critical to ensure the curriculum – as the one area all students have in common regardless of background – supports their transition.

• New discussions in the higher education sector about academic standards, particularly in the first year.

The recent trend in Australian universities has been toward embedding transition support and activities directly in the curriculum rather than through extracurricular programs, and Melbourne is no exception. The curriculum was the focus of a recent Australian Learning and Teaching Council Fellowship held by Professor Sally Kift of the Queensland University of Technology. Kift reminds us that:

‘in all their diversity, students come to higher education to learn and that it is within the first year curriculum that students must be inspired, supported, and realise their sense of belonging; not only for early engagement and retention, but also as foundational for later year learning success and a lifetime of professional practice. (Kift, 2009)

Kift’s final Fellowship report provides a number of discipline case study exemplars from Australian universities, in order to create a set of ‘guiding principles for intentional first year curriculum design and support’1. With this project as background, we were interested to learn more about the innovations in first year teaching here at the University of Melbourne, and ensuring that these practices could be shared across the first year teaching community.

This kit, therefore, acknowledges and applauds first year teaching practice that we believe supports transition to university study, by employing different aspects of the curriculum. The data resulting from a series of interviews and survey responses has been collated into this resource for new academic staff, staff new to first-year teaching, and those interested in learning more about supporting transition in the classroom.

This kit will provide staff with new ideas and approaches that are not necessarily time-consuming or resource-intensive. Teaching staff may even find that they already use many of these activities in their teaching practice, even though they may not explicitly think of it as ‘transition’.

1 This report can be downloaded at http://www.altc.edu.au/resource-first-year-learning-experience-kift-2009
Data collection was carried out between August and October 2009. Nineteen first year teaching staff participated, with thirteen being interviewed and a further six completing an online survey. During the interview staff were asked a series of questions designed to elicit responses about their teaching practice and ideas. The interviewees had the option of an individual or group interview with eight staff opting for individual interviews, and a further five staff participating in two group interviews.

The information gathered has been collated into a description of the main activities discussed in these interviews, categorised into teaching format or tool. Student quotes scattered throughout have been gathered over the past years in various Transition & Orientation projects including the First Year@Unimelb blog, and first year student focus groups and surveys. Pertinent statistics from the 2009 First Year Experience Survey are also included throughout.

**How to use this kit**

There are several ways in which you may choose to use the resources here, presented in various formats to suit your circumstances

1) **Transition basics: issues for students and the role of the curriculum**
   This section provides an introduction for staff who are not particularly familiar with transition or are new to first year teaching. It includes an overview of the main issues and challenges encountered by first year students, and how aspects of your curriculum and teaching can facilitate adjustment to university life and study.

2) **What makes a ‘transition-friendly’ first year teacher?**
   This section describes what we see as the basic characteristics of the first year teachers we spoke with. These do not describe specific activities, but the spirit in which they approach teaching in order to facilitate transition. To be used if you do not feel the need to introduce new elements to your curriculum, but would like some tips on how to present yourself as someone who explicitly cares about students’ transition and progress.

3) **The five-minute guide to a transition-friendly curriculum: small things you can do that can make all the difference**
   These activities require little explanation, less time and fewer resources, and are quick and simple ways to enhance the transition aspects of your teaching and curriculum.

4) **Further resources**
   Useful if you are particularly interested in this aspect of teaching and would like to read more.

5) **Activities for different teaching formats and pedagogical tools**
   These activities were described to us in interviews with teaching staff. Each is provided with an explanation of the activity, resources required, and what benefit it has for students’ transition. They require planning and integration into your curriculum as a whole. Where possible, actual examples and templates are provided.

6) **A growing resource**
   We expect that many of you will read this kit and realise that much of what you do could also be considered as transition support. We invite all teaching staff to contribute examples of their practice so that this kit grows over time and becomes a dynamic resource. If you feel you have something to contribute or would like to join the Transition in the First Year Curriculum LMS community, please contact Ron Baird at rbaird@unimelb.edu.au or Kathryn Boin at kboin@unimelb.edu.au.

---

2 Please see Appendix 3 for a copy of the interview and survey questions.
1) Transition basics: issues for students and the role of the curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of transition</th>
<th>Role of curriculum and first year teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic:</strong> Changes in teaching and learning styles, in the pace of instruction, in expectations and assumptions and in the level of self-directed study they need to complete.</td>
<td>Support students’ adjustment to the new academic environment, make expectations clear, provide formative feedback, provide opportunity for academic skills development, and teach in a manner that demonstrates concern for students’ progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal/Social:</strong> Many students are also transitioning to adulthood and need to establish new social and support networks, and adapt to a new cultural environment. Many students are also dealing with a move to a new city or country, organising housing and dealing with homesickness.</td>
<td>Students can develop supportive networks among their peers: often, having a friend makes the biggest difference to a student’s persistence when they encounter difficulties. Classroom activities – ranging from icebreakers and social tutorials to group projects and field trips – can foster these connections between students by giving them opportunities to meet and get to know their classmates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administrative:</strong> Students learning to take responsibility for their own administrative affairs, such as enrolment, finances, timetables, and understanding university processes.</td>
<td>Providing materials that make clear any administrative processes connected to the curriculum such as extensions, special consideration, alternative examination arrangements etc. Also, simply understanding that new students may take a while to learn how the ‘system’ works.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) What makes a ‘transition-friendly’ first year teacher?

“More important than the curriculum is the question of the methods of teaching and the spirit in which the teaching is given”. Bertrand Russell

In partnership with a supportive curriculum is a teacher whose approach extends beyond the provision of knowledge and content to provide some degree of pastoral support. Students are certainly attuned to whether they think staff care about their progress.

While it is not easy to give individual attention to all students in large first year classes, it is possible to show that you care about your students through the spirit in which you teach.

The transition-friendly first year teacher:

- **Is ‘human’**
  This was the response from one of our interviewees when asked what he thought was an important part of being a good teacher. Students will respond positively to a friendly manner in lectures, in your communications via the LMS and in your email responses or face-to-face meetings with individuals.

- **Is available to students**
  Make it clear early on that you are available for student consultation and can provide them with support. This does not mean being constantly available and at a moment’s notice, but providing clear information about how to seek help, and who to seek help from in different circumstances.
"I was right about uni being hard, but it definitely was not as scary as I imagined. Most lecturers did not throw us in the deep end, and made conscious efforts to help our transitions."

- **Conveys a passion for their subject**
  Enthusiasm is infectious, especially at first year when students are shaping their ideas about future academic interests and learning about research-led teaching.

- **Takes advantage of professional development opportunities, and the chance to learn from both colleagues and students**
  The resources section in Appendix 1 lists a number of these opportunities at the University of Melbourne, ranging from occasional seminars to accredited courses.

  If you are a Department Head or First Year Coordinator try to position your most experienced teaching staff into first year subjects in your Department. Early career academics taking on first year teaching will benefit from being mentored in their teaching practice by an experienced academic with teaching responsibilities. Early career academics can be further supported by regular meetings and professional development sessions run by either the Centre for the Study of Higher Education (CSHE), the Academic Skills Unit (ASU), the Teaching and Learning Unit (TLU) or by the Faculty or Department.

- **Makes expectations clear**
  Always seek to clearly delineate assignment expectations and deadlines including any extra assessment support sessions or consultations. This can be put up on the LMS or announced in class as well as being indicated on the assessment sheet.

  Be very clear about what needs to be understood, at what level and why it is important that they develop this understanding of the subject content.

  Always seek to provide timely, high quality feedback, both written and verbal, on student work that focuses on student learning as well as performance.

  In giving feedback on student work state something positive, identify and explain areas required for improvement and strategies for the improvement of future work

- **Recognises diversity in students’ cultural and educational background, and employs varied teaching methods to keep the curriculum inclusive and accessible for students with different learning styles.**
  The CSHE offers a range of resources to assist you in teaching diverse groups of students

- **Harnesses the power of peer support**
  Students respond well to learning initiatives that involve peer assistance, either from their immediate peers or those in higher year levels. Use teaching methods that encourage student interaction and engagement, such as group work and other team-based learning initiatives that encourage cooperation in the classroom and help students build connections with one another. Instituting a peer-to peer support initiative in your subject using later year student mentors or facilitators can have a very positive effect on the learning outcomes of your students. Transition and Orientation Programs can advise on similar programs if you are interested in learning more.

- **Is aware of the many services available to students**
  Teaching staff are an important referral point for students who need to access services. For example:
  - Mentioning the existence of relevant services during lectures or tutorials
  - Specifically referring individual students when you perceive they need particular assistance
  - Including links to student services web pages on your LMS site
  - Including student services contacts in newsletters, regular emails or other communications
  - Having services’ flyers, posters or other promotional material available in your office, on department noticeboards or at front desks where relevant. Services are generally happy to provide these when asked.
• **Knows how student services can assist teaching staff**

For example:

- the Academic Skills Unit works with faculties to create tailored workshops for each discipline or to develop resource materials.
- the Disability Liaison Unit can assist staff in supporting students with a disability, or can point you in the direction of resources to develop more inclusive teaching practices in general.
- Transition and Orientation Programs can work with you to review the transition aspects of your curriculum, advise on activities to complement the curriculum (such as mentor programs), and contribute to sessional staff training.
- Learning Environments staff can assist you in creating the LMS pages you want.
- know the names and contact details of the Student Advisors in your relevant student centre who perform a welfare role or have responsibility for transitioning students, students at risk and student engagement, so that you can liaise with these staff if you have any concerns about how a student is transitioning. Remember student advisors are not just about advising students, they are also there to advise and assist teaching staff in supporting students as well.

3) **The five-minute guide to a transition-friendly curriculum: small things that can make all the difference**

While this resource provides a range of tasks and approaches to assist you to align your teaching practice and curriculum with a clearly defined transition focus, you may not always have the time to develop and adapt them. There are, however, some basic activities that are easy to implement and that can be readily applied in the classroom with a minimum of explanation, time and resources, and they are all activities that signal to your students that you are aware of their transition needs, accessible and willing to help.

In the first class:

- Display a slide with or write on the board your name, contact details, your consultation times and the best means for your students to make an appointment with you, and tell them you are available to help.
- Spend some time helping the students get to know you: your research background and interests, how you came to be lecturing in this subject, the funniest thing that happened to you in first year, what you like best about teaching: anything that is not too personal, yet will give them some insight into you as an individual and make you more approachable.
- Conduct icebreaker activities to enable students to feel comfortable with each other as well as the teaching staff and develop a cohort experience. There are various icebreakers which can be used in all sized classes, including lectures. Even something as simple as spending the first five or ten minutes of a lecture or tutorial allowing students to chat with the person next to them can be an effective way of building a more welcome atmosphere.

Through the semester:

- Include a short ‘study tip of the week’ or similar on your LMS page.
- Explicitly discuss resources available to help students, such as library resources, first year learning centres, student services, past exam papers, or how to apply for things such as special consideration.
- Ensure that you have student support service literature on hand in your office or student consultation room in case you need to advise or refer a student. It’s also a good idea to have links to the various student services on your subject’s LMS pages.
- Talk to your students about how being involved in the life of the University can help them settle in and feel a sense of belonging e.g. by getting involved in the wide variety of extracurricular activities, such as joining a club or society, volunteering opportunities; again you can add links to these web sites on your subject’s LMS pages.
- Show a film. Screening a film relevant to your subject content can be a very accessible and fun way to introduce subject content to first year students, while also encouraging social interaction. Depending on your subject you can choose a feature film, documentary or television program with a relevant message related to a given topic in your subject. Following the screening you can contextualise the film by explaining how it links to the subject content.
ACTIVITIES FOR DIFFERENT TEACHING FORMATS AND PEDAGOGICAL TOOLS
Lectures

Problem Solving Lectures with incentives for contributing
Contributed by Professor Jeff Borland (Department of Economics)

Explanation of activity
Display a series of slides with subject problems or content requiring an answer or outcome and ask the students to turn to the person behind them to collaborate on an answer. Students can then have the opportunity to give an answer or contribute to the discussion. Those who participate are rewarded with a chocolate.

Professor Borland develops the lecture content in such a way that allows for problem solving or that encourages comment on the lecture topic. This lecture activity works well as an ice breaker in early lectures such as the Week 0 academic orientation session or the Week 1 lecture, however this activity can easily be used throughout the semester.

Resources required
A ready supply of Freddo Frogs or other snack chocolate to use as incentives for participation.

Benefit to students
Essentially the lecture works as a means of purveying content and ideas while also encouraging students to break the ice and get to know each other by working collaboratively on their contribution. This activity works to develop a number of areas in the students’ transition experience.

Academically it encourages interest and involvement in the subject content as the questions/problems can be posed in an interesting and engaging manner. Most importantly, it provides students with confirmation that they have prior knowledge and thus gain a sense of self confidence.

Students also benefit socially as the collaborative aspect of the activity encourages students to get to know others outside of their normal friendship groups. Turning to the student behind, rather than beside, avoids students interacting with those who are more likely to already be known to them, and encourages wider interaction.

See the next page for an example of this activity.

‘Professor Borland...lets the class actively participate and enthuses students into an appreciation of the subject’
Some examples of microeconomic concepts we will study, and the problems they can help solve

a. When should Qantas sell an extra seat on a flight?
Qantas has a 7.00 am flight from Melbourne to Sydney on February 28. Capacity on the flight is 250, and so far 200 tickets are sold. The cost of airport charges, fuel, and wages for pilots is $40,000. None of these costs vary with the number of passengers carried. For every extra passenger that Qantas now books, it will cost $50 for extra flight crew, $10 for food, and $5 for cleaning.

What is the minimum price at which Qantas should be willing to sell an extra ticket?
Answer: Qantas should be willing to sell extra tickets for any price above $65. This amount, $65, is the additional amount that it will cost Qantas to have an extra passenger. Qantas should only be willing to sell a ticket for an extra passenger if the benefit it receives (the ticket price) is greater than the cost that Qantas incurs (cost of flight crew, food, and cleaning). Qantas does not need to include the cost of fuel, airport charges and pilots, since these costs are incurred regardless of whether they sell any more tickets (that is, they are already committed to provide the 7.00 am flight).

Lessons: Understanding this problem requires application of the economic theory of decision-making. The essential component of this theory is that a rational decision-maker will only choose to take an action if the additional benefits from that action outweigh the additional costs.

b. How to solve a rat plague
In some cities in Brazil, large populations of rats pose a significant public health problem. A solution that has been proposed is to pay a bounty per kilo of dead rats brought in by members of the population of those cities.

Do you think this is a good idea?
Answer: Certainly it seems that a direct effect would be to provide incentives for people to take actions to reduce the rat populations.

But there might also be indirect effects. Because the payment for dead rats was such a large amount compared to average household income, many households actually started breeding rats. Having people hunting for rats is also likely to cause a public health problem. And it is quite likely that there are more efficient ways to solve this problem.

Lessons: Rational decision-makers will respond to the benefits and/or costs of taking an action. These benefits and costs can be influenced by government policy. But policies designed to provide incentives to induce people to take some action can also have perverse or unintended effects. Hence optimal policy design requires thinking about all the possible consequences of a proposed policy. Understanding about optimal policy design in this situation would use the economic theory of decision-making and incentives.
Interactive student-response using keypad systems.

Contributed by Dr. Stuart Barber (Veterinary Science)

Explanation of activity
In a lecture you can use an individual student ‘clicker’ or keypad, which allows students to provide instant feedback on a range of issues based on multiple-choice questions in the lecture. For example, in a lecture you might ask students if they have read the weekly reading and you can receive an immediate graphed response indicating the percentage of students who had read, skimmed or not read the weekly tutorial readings.

Resources Required
This requires the purchase of keypad clickers and the accompanying software by the Department. You can contact your Faculty’s Teaching and Learning Support staff to discuss the possibility of introducing interactive clickers in your lectures.

Benefit to students
This resource is particularly useful in lectures with large numbers of students (over 100 students).

Students enjoy the interactivity as it helps them learn content by providing the opportunity to respond and ask questions anonymously in lectures. This aids students’ academic transition as it assists them to become active rather than passive recipients of the learning.

Keypad technology can help lecturers check student understanding of subject content and encourage interaction and discussion that actively involves all students in lectures.

“I need to participate more in class discussion though, felt kind of nervous in speaking out even though I constantly urged myself to talk. It doesn’t seem to work, I know my weakness but can’t overcome it yet. So it is a bit frustrating.”

Use of clicker technology in lectures can foster student interaction and engagement especially for less confident students who may be reticent about contributing to the discussion in lectures.
Adjunct/extra Q&A study support lectures
Contributed by Mr. Greg Cusack (Department of Accounting and Business Information Systems)
Also used by Mr. Matt Dyki (Department of Accounting and Business Information Systems)
Mr. Noel Boys (Department of Accounting and finance)
Mr. Trevor Tonkin (Department of Accounting and finance)

Explanation of activity
Conduct a study support lecture early in the semester that is designed to bring students up to speed with subject content, especially students who may not have a background in the given area of study. The lecture runs as an adjunct to the normal lecture program and allows the opportunity for all students to attend in order to broaden their understanding of the subject content. At the lecture there will be a range of tutors present. Students are encouraged to ask any questions they may have about the subject content, no matter how basic. The tutors then explain the problem/issue and the students are encouraged to work together in order to develop answers or knowledge of concepts. The tutors can circulate to assist groups or individuals.

Resources required
• Booking of an appropriate lecture theatre or teaching space given the size of the class.
• Ensure that all sessional staff expected to attend are paid for their involvement.
• It will not involve much preparation of content as it will be primarily be responding to student questions, though you may want to prepare some scenarios or questions around a forthcoming piece of assessment in case the students need some prompting to get discussion started.

Benefit to students
The adjunct Q&A lecture will benefit students by allowing them the opportunity to ask any question they may have about the subject content. This will encourage greater engagement with the lecture content. The questions provide lecturers with information on students’ levels of understanding and the answers provide students with an understanding of what they are expected to learn. The Q&A lecture will especially benefit those students who do not have a strong background in the subject area, such as breadth students or those who did not study the subject at year 12.

“There’s no point going to a class you don’t enjoy if there’s no one there you can talk to”

Students respond well to in-class social activities and will find learning more enjoyable if they are comfortable with their peers, the teaching staff and their learning environment.
Tutorials/Sessional formats

Meet and Greet tutorial
Contributed by Associate Professor Dawn Gleeson (Department of Genetics)
Also used by Dr. Stuart Barber (Veterinary Science)
Dr. Dora Constantinidis (Department of Information Systems)

Explanation of activity
The week 1 or 2 tute is used as an introductory welcome session where students are introduced to the teaching staff of the subject in an informal gathering with soft drink and finger food. Students and staff are able to mix freely with their tutors and ask any questions they might have. There is often a tour of the teaching spaces, i.e. labs, the First Year Learning Centre as well as the Departmental office.

Resources Required
Teaching staff need to be present and the sessional staff need to be paid for their time as if were a standard tutorial. You can use the actual tutorial room they will be using during the semester to help familiarise students with the teaching space. You may also wish to provide some light refreshment as well.

Benefit to students
Students gain a rapid familiarisation with the teaching staff, the subject and what is expected of them. This activity provides an opportunity for students to see the teaching staff as collaborators in their learning. Contributes to the development of a greater sense of belonging as they are able to view and ask questions about the teaching space directly from the teaching staff.

This type of tutorial also helps students to feel comfortable with one another, learning names and becoming familiar with their fellow students, so they feel able to contribute to tutorials throughout semester.

Finally, it operates as an excellent means of developing a close cohort of students. In many respects it demystifies the teaching process and shows it as something that is accessible.
Individual student interview conducted early in the Semester (preferably before week 6).

Contributed by Dr. Wendy Haslem (Department of Cinema Studies) and Dr. Andrew O'Keefe (Faculty of the VCA and Music)

Explanation of activity
Students are scheduled into a 30 minute appointment with their tutor or lecturer to discuss their early progress in the subject and any issues concerning the student or the teaching staff.

Resources Required
This process can be time intensive, so it requires the availability of teaching staff to cover the entire group of students enrolled in the subject. Most suited to subjects with small enrolment numbers or low student-to-staff ratio. This activity could work with subjects with large number of students but broken up into small tutorial groups. Subject coordinators would have to allocate time towards training the tutors prior to the commencement of semester. Tutors would need to be paid, so this type of coaching training could be part of existing tutor training and development programs.

Benefit to students
This activity allows the student to directly address how their learning and engagement with the subject, course and the University is progressing. It allows students a voice in their education and helps them feel valued and known as individuals. This activity explicitly links and supports the outcomes of the University’s Students at Risk policy (SAR).

Week 4 Student Reflection Task

Contributed by Associate Professor Dawn Gleeson (Department of Genetics); Developed in conjunction with Ms. Lyn O’Neil (Department of Genetics) and Dr. Shanton Chang (Department of Information Systems)

Explanation of activity
In the week 4 tutorial students are provided with a short reflection task which asks students to reflect on and rate their uni experience to date vis-a-vis their expectations. The task also asks students to indicate if they have found a listed range of student support services useful (or used any of the services at all) and finally asks them to write a short response on how they can improve their uni experience. The task concludes with the statement that “if you need help, seek help” This task can be done anonymously or students can discuss it in pairs.

Resources required
Develop a short reflective task sheet relevant to your subject or adapt the example provided.

Allocate 15 minutes of the week 4 tutorial to complete the task.

Benefit to students
This is a very simple yet effective task that allows students to stop and take stock of how they are travelling in their subject(s) and prompts them to seek out help if required. It has the added benefit of reinforcing the available support services by listing them and asking students if they have found them useful.

This task is particularly beneficial as it allows students to reflect on all aspects of their transition to uni life and study early in the semester.

This activity explicitly links and supports the outcomes of the University’s Students at Risk policy.

See the next page for an example of this activity.
Biology Tutorial
At this stage in the semester it is often quite normal to feel anxious or unsure or even disappointed about your choice of subjects or your expectations of university life.
If you are not feeling this way: congratulations! You may have made the transition to university life a little better than others.
Spend the next few minutes thinking about your choices and experience so far...On a scale of 1 to 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University is better than I expected</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have chosen the right subjects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think I am succeeding in my studies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would like more support in my studies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I have found the following resources useful:
- Lectures
- Tutorials
- Duty Tutors
- The Library
- LMS (Learning Management System)
- The Biology Learning Centre
- Science 101
- Student Portal
- Academic Skills Unit
- Science Students Centre (Old Geology Building)
- Counselling Service
- Health Service
- Dental Service
- Jobs and Employment
- Sport and Fitness
- Clubs and Societies
- Financial Aid

I think I can improve my experience of university by......

If you need help, seek help. It is not too late to sort out difficulties!
Week 3 monitoring of attendance & contacting students who miss class.
Contributed by Ms. Kate Judith (Melbourne School of Land and Environments)

Explanation of activity
Subject coordinator or tutors, depending on size of subject; collate a list of students who have not been attending tutorials.

The tutor or subject coordinator then attempts to contact students in order to ascertain why the student has not been attending classes and advise of relevant support services or to refer a student to. This activity is directly related to the University’s Students at Risk Policy and teaching staff can contact a student advisor regarding the SAR if needed. For this activity to be most effective the subject coordinator must ensure that tutors take regular and accurate attendance in tutorials.

It is also important that student tutorial lists are correct and that students are attending their allocated tutorial time/location.

Benefit to students
Early intervention of non-attending students can identify if a student is having difficulty making the transition to university. There are a variety of reasons why students do not attend class and by making contact and advising them of the relevant support available they can seek assistance with whatever issues they may be having, be it an academic difficulty or a personal issue. Often the student has simply chosen a subject that is not right for them and by informing them of the procedure for withdrawing from the subject will save them from either accruing an unnecessary HELP debt or receiving a fail result for a subject they did not do.

Students often appreciate just knowing that someone noticed their failure to attend class. This simple act of following up on an absence helps them feel more valued and can increase their own commitment to the course.

“NO ONE cares if you’re going to miss uni for days on end. I’m going on a road trip this year with Make Poverty History and I thought “Well, I better let people know that I’m going to miss some stuff and maybe hand assessment tasks in late”. Turns out, the Student Centre doesn’t care (they gave me a ‘naw, that’s cute’ look) and neither do the lecturers or tutors (they gave me confused looks when I told them). So the moral is, just rock up to uni whenever…”

Often it can appear that University staff do not care if students turn up or not, as exemplified in the quote to the left. However, this activity can quickly disabuse students of this notion and also reinforce that teaching staff care about their progress and wellbeing.
Library Research Skills Workshop
Contributed by Dr. Dora Constantinidis (Department of Information Systems)

Explanation of activity
Allocate the entirety of a tutorial to a dedicated Library/Research Skills workshop. This can be run in the library by the relevant Faculty reference librarian. The workshop should cover basic research skills, an overview of library databases relevant to your subject content and an overview of Supersearch. The Library conducts tours and some training sessions for undergraduate students, however, by including it in the curriculum you ensure that all students attend this vital session.

Resources Required
Allocate a tutorial early in the semester for a research workshop, perhaps utilising the first week tutorial or scheduling it early in the semester before the first assignment is due. Alternatively, offer these sessions outside tutorial times. You would need to offer repeat sessions over a week so that students can attend a session that fits into their timetable. These additional sessions will need to be clearly advertised to students; i.e. via LMS, during lecture and tutorials.

Work in conjunction with your relevant Faculty Reference Librarian in the development of the content for your Library Research Skills workshop.

Benefit to students
Often students commence university studies without adequate research skills and lecturers often wrongly assume that students are up to speed with the requisite research skills to succeed at university. This can be especially challenging for international students who are often unfamiliar with the research skills required in the Australian higher education context.

Students will benefit tremendously from a Library research skills workshop tailored to the subject content. Academically, students will gain a better appreciation of the concept of empirical research and workshops can serve as a basis for students to begin developing their empirical research skills.

"I have been on library tours, information lectures on facilities available and academic writing classes... Some people might ignore the idea of attending any of these things, thinking that they can’t be bothered or that they’ll figure it out themselves, but I feel for the small amount of personal time I have sacrificed, it has given me great value in return. For a start I now know where everything in the Baillieu Library is and I have my friends (who didn’t go on the tour) asking ME for help to find things!"
Adjunct/extra tutorials
Contributed by Mr. Matt Dyki (Department of Accounting and Business Information Systems)
Also used by Mr. Greg Cusack (Department of Accounting and Business Information Systems)
Associate Professor Dawn Gleeson (Department of Genetics)

Explanation of activity
Some teaching staff have found the provision of extra or additional tutorial classes, which focus on a particular topic, piece of assessment or exam revision, to be very beneficial for students; especially if some or all members of the class indicate they are having difficulty grasping a particular topic or there is a particularly difficult assessment forthcoming. The subject coordinator needs to develop additional content for these tutorials, or an expanded version of the material used in the standard lecture and tutorial format.

Resources required
Allocation of time and sourcing of an appropriate teaching space are required. The preparation of worksheets, notes or revision materials will also have to be accounted for. It is also appropriate to ensure that additional sessional teaching time is considered and sessional teachers are remunerated appropriately.

Benefit to students
Students benefit from the scaffolded approach to their learning with the opportunity to explore more deeply a given topic in a focussed tutorial that builds upon what was learnt during the semester. There is a particular benefit when adjunct tutorials are provided at crucial times during the semester, such as prior to assessments or exams. Students feel more supported in their preparations for assessment, which can often result in reduced stress levels and improved outcomes.

Country of Origin Group Tutorial Task
Contributed by Professor Jeff Borland (Department of Economics)

Explanation of activity
Students are provided an A4 worksheet with a list of the countries or geographic regions identified in the University’s Student System from which the largest numbers of students in your subject are drawn. The student’s task is to match up each country from the list with its capital city, population, unit of currency, rate of growth in Gross Domestic Product (output)(2008), and Treasurer/Finance Minister.

Resources required
The production of a worksheet with the relevant countries and/or geographic regions from which the largest numbers of students in your subject derive from; this data can be downloaded from ISIS. You can amend the data that students must match with the country to reflect your subject content, i.e. Foreign Affairs Minister or Cultural Minister and other data specific to your area of study.

Benefit to students
This activity is designed to act as an icebreaker for the first tutorial and to encourage students to get to know one another, especially given the range of different nationalities that are encountered in the classroom. This activity will encourage greater interaction and understanding between the different cultures represented in the classroom.

See the next page for an example of this activity.
## Example of country of Origin tutorial Task

Produced by Professor Jeff Borland (Department of Economics)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capital City</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Currency</th>
<th>GDP growth (%)</th>
<th>Treasurer/Finance Minister</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jakarta</td>
<td>4,268,800</td>
<td>Dollar</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>John Tsang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seoul</td>
<td>6,977,700</td>
<td>Dollar</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>Vu Van Ninh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombo</td>
<td>4,839,400</td>
<td>Dollar</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Yoon Jenug-hyun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>21,374,000</td>
<td>Yuan</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>Bill English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>20,156,204</td>
<td>Dollar</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>Wayne Swan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuala Lumpur</td>
<td>22,920,946</td>
<td>Dong</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Najib Tun Razak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taipei</td>
<td>26,992,577</td>
<td>Dollar</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Pranab Mukharjee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>48,607,000</td>
<td>Won</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Alistair Darling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanoi</td>
<td>48,687,000</td>
<td>Dollar</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>Thurman Shanmugaratnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canberra</td>
<td>61,399,118</td>
<td>Ringgit</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>Lee Sush-Der</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Delhi</td>
<td>86,210,781</td>
<td>Rupee</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Xie Xuren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington DC</td>
<td>228,248,534</td>
<td>Rand</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Timothy Geithner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria City</td>
<td>304,059,724</td>
<td>Rupiah</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Pravin Jamnadas Gordhan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretoria</td>
<td>1,139,964,932</td>
<td>Rupee</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Sri Mulyani Indrawati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellington</td>
<td>1,325,639,982</td>
<td>Pound Sterling</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Mahinda Rajapakse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Online Resources and Activities

Group Wiki
Contributed by Dr. Simon Cropper (Department of Psychology)

Explanation of activity
The group wiki provides an online forum for students to share information, resources, research, writing and comments on their team assignment. Students can also discuss their experiences in the subject. The group wikis are monitored by the tutorial staff who will post relevant and timely information, e.g. notification of an upcoming documentary relevant to the weeks lecture and tutorial topic.

Resources Required
Requires the development and set up of a wiki on a host site. LMS can be used to host a wiki (http://www.lms.unimelb.edu.au/), or there are free sites available online such as PB Works (http://pbworks.com/).

It is important for the wiki to have a direct relevance to the course and not just for the sake of using technology.

Benefit to students
Creates an online forum and interaction that encourages the development of a cohort experience and can also serve to develop networks as students form teams and then utilise the wiki as a resource repository and online writing space.

Posting questions online to tutors is good. [It] helps me to think [about] things from other perspectives. Discussing things [on-line] with friends also helps with assignments.”

Mid-Semester Student Survey
Contributed by Dr. Dora Constantinidis (Department of Information Systems)

Explanation of activity
An online or hardcopy student survey in week 6 of semester to ascertain student feedback on the teaching in the course to date. The survey responses are then used to address any issues identified by students. The feedback also contributes to forward planning for the subject in the next semester.

Resources required
Develop an appropriate survey instrument with questions relevant to the subject and cohort. The survey can be implemented either online using the LMS or can be distributed in hardcopy format in the lecture. If using a hardcopy format, you will have to allow for photocopying and arrange for someone to distribute and collect the survey. You will also have to allow time to code the survey and distil the responses into a report with recommendations to improve the teaching of the subject.

Benefit to students
Students stand to benefit from the mid-semester survey by being given the opportunity to contribute their feedback and input on the teaching of the subject directly to the teaching staff. This allows for improvements to be made and implemented for the current students and may directly improve their learning experience. Students will benefit from an ongoing focus on evaluation centred on seeking improvements to the way the subject is taught.
Assessment

Early assessment task
Contributed by Dr. Andrew O’Keefe (Faculty of the VCA and Music)
Also used by Dr. Ray Dagastine (Melbourne School of Engineering)
Dr. Wendy Haslem (Department of Cinema Studies)
Mr Greg Cusack (Department of Accounting and Business Information Systems)
Mr Matt Dyki (Department of Accounting and Business Information Systems)
Ms. Kate Judith (Melbourne School of Land & Environment)
Dr. Tony Weatherly (Melbourne School of Land & Environment)
Dr. Ian Thomas (Melbourne School of Land & Environment)
Mr. Peter McSweeney (Melbourne School of Land & Environment)

Explanation of activity
Students are asked to complete an early piece of assessment, usually in week 3. The task should be relatively short and a low stakes assessment in terms of the percentage it is worth. The idea is to encourage students to complete the assessment whilst not heavily penalising them as it is a diagnostic assessment task.

The use of an interim or early assessment task allows teaching staff to identify early if a student may be in need of further academic assistance. You can then refer students to specialist academic support from the Academic Skills Unit, the Teaching & Learning Unit or First Year Learning Centre. Poor performance on an interim piece of assessment can also be an indicator of other issues in a students’ life and thus referring the student for an appointment with a Student Advisor is advisable.

Resources required
Development of an appropriate assessment task geared to the subject content along with an appropriate criteria sheet that allows for feedback to the student.

The assessment task can be small, such as a quiz or short answer test, or can act as the foundation for a later assessment task in the subject, such as an annotated bibliography or article or chapter review of a text to be used as part of a research essay.

Benefit to students
The interim assessment task works as an excellent identifier of a student’s skill level and ability in the given subject content. It also allows students to address any academic weakness they may have early on. The student will receive feedback from their tutor and can arrange extra support if needed, which can counteract problems that, left unchecked, might lead to poor progress or other issues later in the semester resulting in failure or discontinuation of the subject/course.

The early assessment task also allows the student to develop a base understanding of the subject content and can be used to build upon their learning, e.g. an annotated bibliography task can serve as the basis of a research essay later in the semester. In this way the interim assessment task not only acts as an aid to identify any academic weakness, but also acts as the base for the scaffolding of further learning in the subject. This activity is directly linked to and supports the University’s Student at Risk policy.

The worst part of first year was “getting lots of assignments and projects at the end of each semester. If the assignments were spread throughout the semester evenly it would have been better.”

Students need an early indication of how they are going. The early assessment task can, apart from identifying any academic transition issues, provide a measure of reassurance that university study is achievable.
Online assessment task using a shared database

Contributed by Dr. Wendy Haslem (Department of Cinema Studies)
Also used by Dr. Simon Cropper (Department of Psychology)

Explanation of Activity
Develop an online research assignment that allows students to posit research, develop a bibliography and other media relevant to their topic online. Other students can access the database to view and comment on other students’ work.

The database was developed for a cinema studies subject taught by Dr. Haslem, for the purpose of producing a ‘monster profile’ as part of a research assessment task. The Godzilla Database acts as an online repository for resources relevant to the study of cinematic monsters; however a similar database can be adapted to most subject content as per the database used by Dr. Cropper in Psychology.

Resources required
Development of an online database. LMS can be utilised as a platform to achieve this.
Please see the following link for assistance with using the LMS in your subject. http://www.lms.unimelb.edu.au/

Benefit to students
Utilising an interactive online assessment as the first assignment engages students and captures their imagination for the topic. It also allows students to create a research data file using new technology that they can compare and discuss with their peers, thus creating opportunities for social interaction and a sense of cohort building. Students are able to follow and discuss what other students are doing in relation to their various projects.

“Godzilla Community was really impressive”
“I thought the Monster Hall of Fame was a good idea - it was easy to use and I liked seeing what the other kids had done”
Assessment criteria sheet for assignments & tasks
Contributed by Dr. Wendy Haslem (Department of Cinema Studies)

Explanation of activity
Criteria sheets are an effective means of communicating to students exactly what you are looking for in the completion of an assessment. Assessment criteria are usually set out in a grid format with headings such as content, methodology, research, etc. This format allows feedback and comment on the strengths and weaknesses of a range of criteria under analysis in the assessment.

The use of assessment criteria sheets is a two stage process:
1) provide the assessment criteria sheet to the students when they receive the assessment task so they are aware of how they will be assessed.
2) give the completed assessment criteria, including all comments and ratings, back to the students on return of their assignments, so that they can benefit from the formative feedback provided by using a criteria sheet.

Resources required
Develop a criteria sheet in line with the given assessment task. There are a variety of texts available on criteria sheets available to assist you in the development of an optimal criterion for the assessment in your subject or you can adept the example provided.

Assessment criteria sheets also have the added benefit of making the marking of assessment tasks a lot easier for teaching staff.

Benefit to students
Assessment criteria sheets eliminate some of the ambiguity of what is required to successfully complete a piece of assessment. Students often feel more comfortable approaching the research and writing of assessment that has clearly delineated criteria and guidelines for assessment, which can lead to improvement in students’ academic outcomes, self confidence and overall engagement with the subject content and a higher quality of work.

See the next page for an example of this activity.

“\text{I would have liked more instruction with regard to assignments.}”

“The overall grade isn’t that helpful, students want it to be broken down into different assessment components,...”

“There is a mixture of assessment styles. Not much direction given about assignments and the depth that is required creates problems.”

Students appreciate assessment tasks that are explicit about what is required of them and how they will be marked. Assessment criteria are also excellent in relaying to students where they performed well, where they went wrong, and how they can improve their performance in the future.
# Example of an Assessment Criteria Sheet

Produced by Dr. Wendy Haslem (Department of Cinema Studies)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Sheet</th>
<th>Research Essay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction to Cinema Studies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| STUDENT’S NAME: | GRADE: |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H1</th>
<th>H2A</th>
<th>H2B</th>
<th>H3</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outstanding</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Satisfactory/Fair</td>
<td>Poor Effort</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## PRESENTATION AND ORGANISATION

- Is the essay structured in a logical and well-organised manner?
- Is the writing style clear and comprehensible?
- Spelling and Grammar
- Is the Bibliography/Filmography presented effectively?

## ARGUMENT PRESENTATION

- Has the topic been convincingly addressed, and is it well argued?
- How well is close analysis of films employed to support arguments?
- Does the essay engage with source material?
- How effectively are the ideas and arguments developed?

## RESEARCH

- Is appropriate source material used to support arguments?
- Does the essay reveal good comprehension and assimilation of source material?
- Was the topic well researched?
- Are sources (primary and secondary) cited?

Comments
Supported Group Work/Assessment
Contributed by Dr. Stuart Barber (Veterinary Science)
Also used by Dr. Ray Dagastine (Melbourne School of Engineering)
Ms. Kate Judith (Environments)
Dr. Tony Weatherly (Melbourne School of Land & Environment)

Explanation of activity
Develop assessment that is to be completed by a group or team. The content of the assessment should aim to complement and develop the teamwork and networking skills of the students involved. Essentially it should be developed in such a way as to allow for the involvement of all students participating in the assessment and seek to cater to their individual learning styles. The marking of the group assessment should seek to include a combination of group and individual marks for the activity.

Resources required
Development of a team-based piece of assessment that encourages involvement and the skills-development of participants.
Ensure that tutors are appropriately trained to mentor and coach the groups through any difficulties and that they are able to provide relevant feedback on the progress of the group. It is important to align the group assignment with the content of the weekly lecture to ensure the continuity of subject content and assessment.

Benefit to students
The use of group assessment task enhances student learning by emphasising the collaborative learning process, in which students learn to negotiate, manage conflict and resolution. Students also benefit from the development of teamwork skills. Teamwork skills will not automatically be picked up by the students, they will need to be taught these skills by teaching staff equipped to act as team coaches. Group work is also a very useful tool for encouraging social interaction especially amongst international and rural students and is thus an excellent avenue for supporting transition.

The best part of uni was “being part of a group assignment which allowed me to interact with other students in the group. We are now very close friends. Its difficult to get to know people in tutes where there is no group work etc”

Assessment Return Sticker (Colour-coded)
Contributed by Mr. Matthew Dyki (Department of Accounting and Business Information Systems)

Explanation of activity
A colour-coded sticker is attached to the back or last page of a returned piece of assessment, which details specific information related to the feedback on the assessment. A different coloured sticker is used for the various categories of feedback provided on the assessment return sticker. Each sticker will relate to a different area, such as language skill, grammar, difficulty grasping concepts, plagiarism, etc. The sticker provides tips to avoid repeating the issue/problem on future assignments. The sticker also provides information on where to get help including links to relevant websites such as the Teaching and Learning Unit, AIRport, LMS resources and the Academic Skills Unit.

Resources required
Identify the range of areas and issues to be addressed by the assessment return sticker. Develop relevant feedback comments which provide clear information on how to avoid and/or improve in this area, being sure to include links to relevant support services. Print this information by colour-coded category on a range of coloured A5 label paper.

Benefit to students
The assessment return sticker is used as an addendum to the regular feedback provided on assessment and acts as a quick reference guide. This further supports students in addressing more critical issues such as plagiarism (and how to avoid it).

The use of colour-coded assessment return stickers provides a strong visual impact, which will capture students’ attention and alert them to a range of issues that were identified in the assessment of their work.

It provides strategies to improve on future assessment tasks and provides information about relevant student support services.
Field trips

Professional development field trip or site visit
Contributed by Dr. Stuart Barber (Veterinary Science) and Dr. Tony Weatherley, Mr. Peter McSweeney and Dr. Ian Thomas (Melbourne School of Land and Environment)

Explanation of activity
This activity can be adapted for most subjects, however it is ideally suited for subjects with an industry or vocational focus. Coordinator arranges a field trip to an appropriate industry or other site relevant to the subject content. Depending on the subject this could, for example, be a farm, building site, museum, publishing firm, law firm, court or manufacturing facility. The trip can be organised as a day trip or overnight excursion that takes in a range of such sites or facilities. Often these trips are linked with a piece of assessment, for example your students may be required to evaluate and report on these visits. Alternatively, various activities can be arranged in coordination with staff at the site being visited, which students have to report or present on.

Resources required
Identification of a relevant site, facility or organisation to visit. Negotiating the visit with relevant staff of the site in question. Development of an appropriate tour/inspection that incorporates an educative component which relates to the subject content.

Please see the Academic Enrichment Services Field Trip Planning Kit:
http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/aes/off-campus/
The field trip toolkit covers all aspects of field trip preparation including program design, risk assessment and costs. Costs can be covered by the Teaching Department or by the student, with a subsidy provided by the University. In some subjects the cost of the field trips are being offset by use of sponsors.

Benefit to students
The field trip provides an excellent cohort experience as it encourages social bonding as students undertake a physical and educational journey together.

In first year a field trip can serve as an exciting introduction to the topic. Students are taken out of traditional classroom setting and placed in an environment where they experience how various organisations function, which is difficult to replicate in the classroom. Often after a field trip, especially overnight excursions, students feel a real connection to the course, the teaching staff, each other, and to future career opportunities & real world applications.

“The last day of uni before the Easter break, I went to Werribee Open Range Zoo for a field trip, which was nice. I … was pleased to learn in a talk we had, that modern zoos are now much more for educating about and promoting strategies to maintain wildlife, rather than profit and entertainment priorities. We also got to go on a pretty cool safari-type drive where much of the area was explained to us.”
Staff Professional Development

Contributed by Dr Wendy Haslem (Department of Cinema Studies) and Associate Professor Dawn Gleeson (Department of Genetics) also used by Professor Paul Kofman (Department of Finance)

Explanation of activity
1) Tutor training
Pre-semester tutor training is important for sessional teaching staff for two reasons: firstly to ensure that there is consistency in the tutors, approach to teaching and the marking of assessment; training the teacher to teach. Secondly, tutor training provides the opportunity to inform the tutors about the range of student support services available at the University and the provision of training on how tutors can best provide pastoral support and referral for the students.

Tutor training also serves to create a sense of a cohort experience for the tutors and provides a network of support amongst the tutors.

2) Mid-Semester tutor retraining
As an adjunct to pre-semester tutor training the subject coordinator arranges for a mid-semester retraining. This allows tutors to reflect on their recent teaching experience and get advice regarding any specific difficulties they may have had in their teaching to date.

The subject coordinator can provide feedback on the tutor’s immediate experience of teaching. It also provides a support network for tutors.

Resources Required
Organise a venue and set aside time for the training or re-training session. Provide payment for any sessional teaching staff that attend.

Develop training aims and support information for the tutors, such as ‘Students in Transition: A guide for sessional teachers of first year undergraduate classes’ produced by Transition & Orientation Programs (can be downloaded at: http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/transition/staff/uni/resources.html) and ‘The Melbourne Sessional Teachers Handbook: Advice and strategies for small group teaching at the University of Melbourne’ produced by the Centre for the Study of Higher Education (can be downloaded from: http://www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au/).

Benefit to students
Students will benefit from having tutors who are well trained to address not only their learning needs but also some of their pastoral or transition issues.

One of the focuses of retraining is to allow tutors to reflect on and gain feedback about their approach to dealing with student issues that are not solely of an academic nature. As the re-training is provided mid-semester, tutors can take this advice and feedback directly back into the classroom for the benefit of the students.

“As a student, personally I have to say that I love your teaching style and the organization a lot!”
Appendix 1: Professional development resources:
A range of professional development programs and materials is offered by the CSHE, and often by your Faculty or Department.

The CSHE offers two courses: the Melbourne Teaching Certificate (non-award) and the Graduate Certificate in University Teaching (award).

Events such as the Provost’s Summit (July) and the Vice-Chancellor’s Teaching Colloquium (December) offer a chance to hear about colleagues’ practices.

Occasional seminars and events run by the CSHE, student services, faculties and a range of other organisations often focus on student learning and experience.

Other staff resources
Transition & Orientation Programs have a range of resources available (publications, programs and reports) to support academic staff, especially those with first year teaching responsibilities. These resources can be found at: http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/transition/staff/index.html

For information pertaining to student academic policies please see the Academic Services Policy home page at http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/policy/

The Australian Learning & Teaching Council has an extensive list of reports and resources related to the projects it is involved with. These can be downloaded at: http://www.altc.edu.au/resources

University of Technology Sydney, Assessment Futures website provides a wide range of useful and up to date information regarding student assessment practice in the tertiary sector: http://www.iml.uts.edu.au/assessment-futures/

Conferences which focus on the first year experience can be a good complement to the discipline-based conferences you might normally attend. Ones to look out for include the First Year in Higher Education http://www.fyhe.qut.edu.au/ and Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA) http://www.herdsa.org.au/

The Learning Space Support (LSS) team provide a range of support services designed to help prepare teaching staff for each semester’s commencement of teaching.

The LSS team conducts user consultations within a shared learning/teaching space including:

• Support to academic staff using installed multimedia equipment in timetabled shared learning spaces on the Parkville campus.

• One-on-one consultations with academic staff seeking guidance on using installed multimedia equipment in their allocated spaces.

• To book a consultation, please complete the on-line request form. Learning Environments will then schedule an appointment at your convenience: http://trs.unimelb.edu.au/forms/consult.html

If you are interested to read about how students are experiencing first year, then have a read of the First Year@Unimelb Blog. First-Year@UniMelb provides an authentic insight into how first year students are coping with the demands of uni life: https://airport.unimelb.edu.au/first_year/
Appendix 2: Useful links to refer your students to

Online Transition Resources for your students

- AIRport (Academic Interactive Resources Portal): for quizzes and other interactive activities designed to assist students academic skills development: https://airport.unimelb.edu.au/
- Transition and Orientation Programs website for information, resources and publications to assist students to make a successful transition to university: http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/transition/

General Services for Students

Student Centres: http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/studentcentre/
Student Services: http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/
Academic Skills Unit: http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/asu/
Campus Maps: http://www.pcs.unimelb.edu.au/maps_locations/campus_maps
Careers and Employment: http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/careers/
Centre for Indigenous Education: http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/cie/
Counselling Service: http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/counsel/
Disability Liaison Unit: http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/disability/
Health Service: http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/health/
International Student Services: http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/international/
Key University Dates: http://www.unimelb.edu.au/keydates/
Library: http://www.library.unimelb.edu.au/
Life at Melbourne: http://www.futurestudents.unimelb.edu.au/about/life
Student Portal: http://www.portal.unimelb.edu.au
Student Financial Aid: http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/finaid/
Student Housing Service: http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/housing/
Student IT: http://www.studentit.unimelb.edu.au/
Student Union: http://union.unimelb.edu.au/
Appendix 3: Interview/Survey Questions

‘Identifying Transition Excellence in the First-Year Curriculum Project Survey’

Information about you and your subject

Name:

Interview date and time:

Teaching role (i.e. coordinator, lecturer in team, tutor, etc):

Subject code:

Estimated enrolment numbers:

Core/compulsory 1st year subject? Yes ☐ No ☐

University Breadth Subject: Yes ☐ No ☐

Section 1: Your level of understanding of, and interest in, transition issues

1a. What do you feel is your level of understanding of the transition issues encountered by students in your subject?

Very little ☐ Fair ☐ Good ☐ Excellent ☐

Please comment on what some of these issues are in your particular area:

Section 2: Teaching Practice and Curriculum design

2a. To what extent does the design of your curriculum intentionally support students’ transition?

Not at All ☐ Somewhat ☐ To a great extent ☐

2b. What strategies have you employed in your teaching to support students’ transition and how effective do you feel they are?

For example

• Academically – embedding skills development into subject curriculum
• Socially – providing opportunities for students to connect and interact with one another during class time
• Administratively – making use of LMS to clearly explain processes such as special consideration, assignment submission requirements, etc

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of transition</th>
<th>Example(s) of strategies</th>
<th>Effectiveness of strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td></td>
<td>Not at all effective ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat effective ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Quite effective ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Very effective ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td></td>
<td>Not at all effective ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat effective ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Quite effective ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Very effective ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td></td>
<td>Not at all effective ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat effective ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Quite effective ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Very effective ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic</td>
<td></td>
<td>Not at all effective ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat effective ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Quite effective ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Very effective ☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2c. How do you evaluate if these strategies are effective?

2d. Apart from looking at academic results/progress and attendance what measures do you have in place to identify students who are having difficulty with any aspect of transition?

2e. How do you use this information?

2f. To what extent do you train and support sessional staff to carry out a transition function/role?

- Very little ☐
- Some ☐
- Quite a bit ☐
- Very much ☐

How do you do this?

2g. Have you ever worked in partnership with academic staff, key administrative areas and student services to enhance the transition elements of your subject?

- Yes ☐
- No ☐

In what ways do you do this?

Section 3: Resources you currently use, and resource and support initiatives you would like to see developed further at the University.

3a. What barriers/limitations do you encounter that prevent you from doing as much as you would like in the area of transition? (For example, lack of information about transition, need for more tutors etc.).

3b. What resources do you currently use to assist the facilitation of student transition in your subject/teaching? (e.g. student services, publications, professional development & seminars)
3c. What resources do you find most effective and why?

3d. Are there other resources and support that you would like made available to aid you in supporting the transition of your students? (e.g. more information from student services, more professional development opportunities)

3e. What would your ideal transition program include?

3f. Any other comments you would like to make?

3g. Would you consent to being contacted further in relation to this study, for the purpose of:
   - Accessing examples of your teaching materials? Yes ☐ No ☐
   - Talking to others about your strategies? Yes ☐ No ☐
   - Would you be interested in receiving transition newsletters/updates? Yes ☐ No ☐

Thank you very much for participating in this survey. Please forward the invitation to participate in the project, either by interview or survey, to other academic colleagues who may be interested in participating.

If after completing the survey you are now interested in attending an interview please contact: Ron Baird, Transition Project Officer. Ron can be contacted at 8344-4636 or rbaird@unimelb.edu.au.

Further questions about the project can be directed either to Ron, or to Kathryn Boin, Manager of Transition & Orientation programs: kboin@unimelb.edu.au or 8344 3897.

If you would like to stay informed on the progress of this project please check the project web page, http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/transition/staff/uni/index.html, for regular updates, including survey results, information about viewing feedback on the project, and reports & resources generated from the study.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


