



# First Year Experience

## Project Report

*April 2009*

**Note:** The First Year Experience Project has involved a diverse range of JCU academic and professional staff since the development of the "Arrive Stay and Succeed at JCU" focus in 2006. This project was established by TLD, and has involved over 300 JCU staff members. The First Year Experience Project thanks these staff for their commitment to supporting successful transition.

## Executive Summary

The intent of the First Year Experience Project is to promote a university-wide, co-ordinated approach to systematically research and monitor the first year student experience at JCU, and to co-ordinate and strengthen the range of first year activities (support, technical, administrative and academic) in Faculties and Divisions.

On 19th April 2008 Academic Board accepted a report submitted by the First Year Experience Project which identified four priority areas with recommendations for action:

- **SENSE OF PURPOSE** - First Year Focus
- **STUDENT ENGAGEMENT** - Internal Communication Strategy
  - Curriculum Relevance
  - Flexible Learning Options
- **BUILDING RESILIENCE** - Review of Advisor Roles
- **QUALITY TEACHING** - Support for Staff Teaching 1<sup>ST</sup> Year

The Board resolved that the *First Year Experience Project Report of April 2008*, be noted and that a progress report be provided to the Board by the Director Teaching and Learning Development in one year to monitor progress with the project and the recommendations made in the report.

Over the last twelve months the First Year Experience Project has maintained a strong focus on the identified priority areas. The high profile of the First Year Experience Project has supported a significant institutional response to the priorities, as outlined in this report (pp. XX-XX). The First Year Experience Project has also identified a number of future action areas to support a sustained university-wide response to first year transition (pXX).

The project actively involves over 300 staff members across all aspects of the institution – academics, administrators and student service staff – to identify opportunities to collate collective institutional knowledge and share resources, programs, information and strategies at the disposal of the institution. Collaborative practice is the first step towards the optimal, strategic delivery of transition strategies. The First Year Experience Project has played a significant role in the instigation of professional networks.

The wide dissemination of the First Year Experience Questionnaire (FYEQ) 2006<sup>1</sup> and 2008 data has enabled the institution to closely monitor the first year experience. A surface analysis of the data indicates significant changes in the student experience in comparison to 2006 data. A significant increase was noted in the number of students reporting experiences of good quality teaching and approachable staff with a genuine interest in student progress.

A number of staff members have requested access to FYEQ data to inform curriculum design and service development. The data provides an insight into the changing profile of the student population including demographic information, employment status, access to technology and study pathways. The student experience must be closely monitored to develop relevant curriculum and appropriate student support systems to enhance retention and progress.

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<sup>1</sup> As analysed by Audrey Milton, Associate Dean of Teaching and Learning, Faculty of Law Business and the Creative Arts (Formerly, Academic Developer, Teaching and Learning Development)

2009 strategic planning documents suggest a significant shift in institutional rhetoric towards a University-wide commitment to the student experience, with particular focus on the first year experience featuring as a core strategy. Notable increases in the number of transition related activities and programs within Faculties, Schools and Divisions have been identified in response to planning priorities. However, many of the strategies to support transition remain driven by enthusiastic individuals with a personal interest in first year transition. In the absence of sufficient resources, burgeoning initiatives may become unsustainable or lost as a result of staff turnover and/or changing workloads and priorities.

Despite an increased focus on the first year experience, an apparent disconnection seems to exist between Faculty plans and School implementation. Clear performance targets and positively loading teaching resources within the first year could potentially bridge this gap. Such an investment has the potential for significant financial returns due to improved retention and increased competitiveness for Learning and Teaching Performance Funds (LTPF). Future action areas supporting a sustained university-wide response to first year transition are outlined in this report (pXX\_XX).

The *First Year Experience Report of April 2008* highlighted the valuable contributions made by lecturers, tutors and practical demonstrators to the first year experience. It is understood that a substantial proportion of these teaching responsibilities are assumed by sessional staff. Further investigation into sessional staffing, has highlighted the need for improved strategic workforce planning and the development of systems, policies and practices for the induction, management, integration and support of sessional teachers. James Cook University must clearly articulate its teaching performance standards to sessional teaching staff to preserve teaching quality and academic reputation.

The project has identified a priority focus on sessional teaching for the 2009-2010 period, with intent to:

- Establish a clear institutional context of the contribution made by sessional teaching staff.
- Develop and improve internal processes and communication to promote higher levels of engagement and enhance quality of sessional teaching, with particular focus on specialist preparation for teaching first year students.
- Identify, analyse and disseminate good practice examples across the university, with particular focus on specialist preparation for teaching first year students.

**It is recommended that:**

- ❖ **Academic Board support the project's future focus on sessional staffing issues**
- ❖ **the Board be tasked with assigning responsibility for identified action items (pX)**
- ❖ **and monitor progress.**

## Institutional Response to Priority Areas (2008-2009)

The *First Year Experience Project Report April 2008* identified four priority areas<sup>2</sup> with recommendations for action. The high profile of the First Year Experience Project has supported a significant institutional response to each of the priority areas. These institutional responses are summarised below against recommendations drawn from the 2008 report.

### 1. SENSE OF PURPOSE - First Year Focus

**1.1 It is recommended that those nominated as responsible, review the First Year Experience Project recommendations outlined within this report to inform the development of operational performance targets for 2008 - 2009.**

#### JCU Response:

- *First Year Experience Project Report April 2008* noted by Academic Board.
- The *First Year Experience Project Report April 2008* disseminated to key stakeholders including, Faculty Pro-Vice Chancellors, Heads of School/Discipline, University services and members of the First Year Experience community.

**1.2 It is recommended that the academic plan, informed by FYE recommendations, support faculty and school based action plans, for 2008 -2009, to operationalise a strategic focus on first year transition.**

#### JCU Response:

- The planning package released to guide the Faculty and Division strategic plans for the next triennium (2009-2011) includes as a core strategy:
  - 4.4 Strengthen University-wide commitment to the student experience, with particular focus on the first year experience.*
- All faculties have identified strategies with a focus on the first year experience. Specific strategies include:
  - Increased levels of student participation and engagement
  - Increase investment in teaching and learning professional development activities
  - Appointment of FYE Representatives
  - Identification of "At Risk" students
- First Year Experience Questionnaires<sup>3</sup> completed by 1455 students from the first year cohort across Cairns and Townsville campuses. A surface analysis of the data indicates significant changes in the student experience in comparison to 2006 data. These changes include:

<sup>2</sup> A review of first year experience literature identified a number of common elements supporting successful first year transition. These elements were loosely classified to form the priority areas of the First Year Experience Project (See Attachment One).

<sup>3</sup> 2006 First Year Experience Questionnaires analysed by Audrey Milton, Associate Dean of Teaching and Learning, Faculty of Law Business and the Creative Arts (Formerly, Academic Developer Teaching and Learning Development)

- Students have better access to computers and internet
  - Students use of web based resources including LearnJCU has increased
  - Staff were perceived as more approachable and available to discuss student's work and more interested in student's progress
  - More students reported having made close friends at Uni
  - Students were more informed about the range of student services available
  - Students are spending more time on campus – Course contact hours have increased
  - Less students are working
  - Students who are working are working more hours
  - Links between content in study period 1 subjects has improved
  - More students felt the quality of teaching of teaching in their course was generally good
  - More students are having a year off after finishing school
- First Year Experience Questionnaire data disseminated to key stakeholders through First Year Experience online community, student newspaper, and "Fast Fact" emails.
  - Eight (8) requests made for FYEQ raw data to inform strategic planning.

**1.3 It is recommended that a full-time permanent First Year Experience Leader position be established. This would facilitate the systematic research, monitoring and co-ordination of the first year experience (support, technical, administrative and academic) in faculties and divisions at JCU.**

#### **JCU Response:**

- Project Leader (Teaching & Learning Development) contracted until September 2010.
- **X Heads of School** identify staff within school assigned responsibility for monitoring first year experience and/or co-ordinating first year curriculum design.

## **2. STUDENT ENGAGEMENT**

- Internal Communication Strategy
- Curriculum Relevance
- Flexible Learning Options

**2.1 It is recommended that a communications group be established to develop an internal institution-wide communication strategy to improve communication with first year students.**

#### **JCU Response:**

- Communication resources developed:
  - Student Services has developed detailed communication blueprint and Performa templates for all official communications during the student lifecycle.
  - Student Services has undertaken the documentation of Orientation Week processes to enhance management of organisational knowledge and practice.

- LearnJCU *Checkpoints* module developed to guide new students through key milestones during the academic year.
    - [http://www.jcu.edu.au/teaching/fye/JCUPRD\\_039349.html](http://www.jcu.edu.au/teaching/fye/JCUPRD_039349.html)
  - *Troubleshooting Referral Guide* developed to support quality referrals to student services.
    - [http://cms.jcu.edu.au/student\\_services/docs/JCUPRD\\_044633](http://cms.jcu.edu.au/student_services/docs/JCUPRD_044633)
  - *Steps to Getting Started* website pilot
    - [http://cms.jcu.edu.au/prospective/cc/JCUPRD\\_041958](http://cms.jcu.edu.au/prospective/cc/JCUPRD_041958)
  - Policy and Procedures drafted to support management of bulk student emails.
- Review of Orientation Week:
    - Review of Orientation Week sessions to simplify messages, reduce double up and document core business processes.
    - Review *Introduction to JCU, your faculty and your course* and development of guide for presenters.
    - Student Services develops *OrientationOnline* and resources for parents/partners and re-locating students.
    - Daily briefing sheets disseminated to key stakeholders during Orientation Week.
    - Detailed contact hours for first year subjects entered into Courses and Subject Database (CSDB).
    - Working party established to investigate timetabling concerns raised by new students.
    - Working party established to develop web resource for new students.
    - Working party established to support student access to JCU systems (i.e. eStudent, StudentsOnline, LearnJCU etc.)

**2.2 It is recommended that ongoing review of curriculum relevance to student expectations be undertaken by Heads of School in conjunction with Teaching and Learning Development.**

### **JCU Response:**

- Curriculum Refresh Grant Guidelines acknowledge contemporary best practice with the inclusion of “*Curriculum supporting the best possible first year experience*” as a key theme.
- Associate Deans (Teaching and Learning) facilitate meetings of first year teaching and/or support staff to share and/or co-ordinate curriculum development.
- First Year Curriculum Design Symposium (Australian Learning and Teaching Council) has 12 JCU delegates.
- First Year Curriculum Symposium resources made available to all members of FYE community.
- First Year Curriculum Design Principles (articulated by Sally Kift, ALTC Fellow) disseminated to Faculty Pro-Vice Chancellors and Heads of School to support curriculum refresh activities.
- FYEP facilitates teaching workshop addressing student expectations during Teaching and Learning @ JCU 2008.
  - 58 staff attend sessions held on the Townsville and Cairns campuses.
  - Over 20 staff teaching into first year showcase strategies to enhance curriculum relevance to student expectations

**2.3 It is recommended that Heads of School in conjunction with Teaching and Learning Development work to increase the range of flexible learning options available in response to 1<sup>st</sup> year student needs.**

**JCU Response:**

- FYEP representation on Flexible Learning Committee.
- Cairns Learning Advisers establish online mentoring program.

**2.4 The continuing development of appropriate facilities for teaching, learning and social interaction within common areas of the university is recommended.**

**JCU Response:**

- Facility concerns raised by first year students and staff teaching first year directed to **XXXX Committee**.

### **3. BUILDING RESILIENCE - Review of Advisor Roles**

**3.1 It is recommended that the First Year Experience Project Leader, undertake a review of advisor roles to identify support needs, standards of practice and pastoral care roles and responsibilities to support first year transition.**

**JCU Response:**

- The First Year Experience Project conducted thirty-eight (38) interviews with academic advisors across Townsville and Cairns Campuses to identify support needs and current standards of practice. Whilst most advisers clearly demonstrated a personal interest in students and their success, the following gaps in service delivery were identified:
  - The advising role is generally based upon the personality and interests of the current incumbent rather than institutional guidelines.
  - Staff receive limited to no training and the steep learning curve ultimately results in poor advice during the peak advising period (Orientation Week – Week 3).
  - Minimal administrative support and private consultation rooms has a negative impact upon the quality of advice.
  - Without clear induction and record keeping processes quality advising becomes unsustainable as knowledge is lost due to staff turnover and/or changing workloads and priorities.
  - Approximately, one in four of the advising staff listed on the JCU Academic Advice website was no longer performing the role or had left JCU.
- Training and resources made available for advising staff:
  - Student Systems conducts training in use of *eAcademic* and *eStudent: What our students see and common errors they may encounter*.
  - Counselling Service conducts *Dealing with Difficult Behaviours Workshop* on Townsville and Cairns campuses in response to need identified by staff.
  - *Centrelink Information for Advising Staff* resource developed and disseminated to faculty advising staff.
  - *Troubleshooting Referral Guide* developed to support quality referrals to student services.
    - [http://cms.jcu.edu.au/student\\_services/docs/JCUPRD\\_044633](http://cms.jcu.edu.au/student_services/docs/JCUPRD_044633)

- Training package developed to promote use of LearnJCU *Early Warning System* to monitor student engagement.
  - 32 staff (across four campuses) participate in Early Warning Training.
  - Staff utilising the *Early Warning System* report:
    - Increased class attendance following email notifications
    - Most commonly used criteria to identify student disengagement was - Students who did not access subject sites for 14 days+
    - Generally between 7 -20 students were identified as disengaged in each subject
    - Up to 25% response on email contact (i.e. students have since accessed LearnJCU)
    - Up to 35% response upon phone contact (i.e. students have since accessed LearnJCU)

## 4. QUALITY TEACHING - Support for Staff Teaching 1<sup>ST</sup> Year Students

**4.1 It is recommended that the Pro-Vice-Chancellor of each faculty commission a review of the appointment, training, preparation and support processes for staff teaching first year students, in recognition of transition demands.**

### JCU Response:

- First Year Experience LearnJCU Community provides information and resources to 315 community members to support transition pedagogy.
- 50% of 2008 Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) Citation Winners for *Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning* are teaching in first year.
- The majority of 2008 *JCU Teaching Awards* are awarded to academic staff teaching in the first year.
- 8 JCU *FYHE Conference Grants* awarded to support staff to attend 12<sup>th</sup> Pacific Rim First Year in Higher Education Conference 2009.
  - 17% of submissions to the 12<sup>th</sup> Pacific Rim First Year in Higher Education Conference 2009 were submitted by JCU staff members.
  - 189 registrations received for Teaching and Learning Development activities focusing on first year teaching strategies.

### Priority Areas (2009 – 2011):

#### Institutional Response:

To maintain a focus on first year transition and support a sustainable institution-wide response to the first year experience, the following action areas have been identified for 2009 – 2011. These action areas are closely aligned with the strategic directions generated by *First Year Experience Report April 2008* and Faculty planning documents.

**It is recommended that Academic Board be tasked with assigning responsibility for the identified action items and monitor progress.**

First Year Experience Action Items (2009-2011):

SENSE OF PURPOSE	STUDENT ENGAGEMENT	BUILDING RESILIENCE	QUALITY TEACHING
<p>Establish achievable, measurable performance targets for FYE focused strategies identified by Faculties and Divisions. <b>(PVC &amp; DVC)</b></p> <p>Abridge the First Year Experience Questionnaire in accordance with identified performance targets and conduct every two years to monitor the student experience. <b>(Audit &amp; Assurance)</b></p> <p>Establish performance targets informed by First Year Experience Questionnaire 2008 data. <b>(Faculty PVC)</b></p> <p>Develop reliable institutional level reporting to measure attrition in the first year. <b>(Corporate Planning &amp; Performance)</b></p> <p>Establish a university-wide retention strategy such as ON TRACK<sup>4</sup> to identify and re-engage students who meet criteria indicating disengagement. <b>(Faculty PVC &amp; HOS)</b></p>	<p>Identify and implement practical solutions in response to concerns raised by new students regarding timetables, campus maps and subject selection. <b>(Student Services)</b></p> <p>Event Management expertise and resources to be directed towards the Orientation Week program. <b>(Student Services &amp; Marketing)</b></p> <p>Establish a web resource strategically targeting information to new students. <b>(Student Services &amp; Marketing)</b></p> <p>Develop a communication strategy to ensure staff teaching first year students are familiar with information regularly disseminated by administrative and student service staff during the academic year. <b>(Student Services)</b></p> <p>Heads of school work with First Year Co-ordinators/Advisors, Associate Deans (Teaching &amp; Learning) and Teaching &amp; Learning Development to incorporate FY Curriculum Design Principles as part of Curriculum Refresh. <b>(Faculty PVC)</b></p> <p>In accordance with the curriculum refresh process, faculties and schools work towards best practice standards in flexible learning as identified by ACCODE. <b>(Faculty PVC)</b></p> <p>Facilities Management Office (FMO) and Information, Technology &amp; Resources (IT&amp;R) to have increased involvement in Orientation Week planning. <b>(Student Services, FMO, IT&amp;R)</b></p>	<p>Establishment of clear, student-centred service points (Student Hubs) for all student inquiries. <b>(Student Services)</b></p> <p>Use enquiry management software to facilitate the management, analysis and tracking of student inquiries. <b>(Student Services)</b></p> <p>Clearly define student advising roles and provide adequate training and support for staff undertaking these roles. <b>(Academic Board)</b></p> <p>Active recruitment of staff suited to relationship management/client service roles. <b>(Human Resources)</b></p> <p>Review and improve Student Consultation Times Policy. <b>(Faculty PVC &amp; HOS)</b></p> <p>Establish an effective student grievance/ feedback process and strengthen student advocacy services. <b>(Student Services)</b></p>	<p>Formally define and recognise the role of First Year Advisors/co-ordinators with academic schools. <b>(Faculty PVC)</b></p> <p><b>Establish University policy<sup>5</sup> clearly defining recruitment and selection processes, role expectations and centralised professional development and reporting.</b> <b>(Faculty PVC)</b></p> <p>Assign workload allocations reflecting and rewarding First Year teaching demands. <b>(Faculty PVC)</b></p>

<sup>4</sup> The On Track Programme was introduced at James Cook University in 1998 by Student Equity. The Programme is a peer support programme that initiates contact and extends support to first year students who have not attended lectures, tutorials and/or submitted formative assessment. In 2009 the programme was supplemented by the LearnJCU Early Warning Function which enables subject co-ordinators to identify, notify and generate reports regarding potentially disengaged students.

<sup>5</sup> Griffith University's First Year Advisor policy provides an example of good practice. Refer to Attachment Two.

**Project Response:**

The *First Year Experience Report of April 2008* highlighted the contributions made by lecturers, tutors and practical demonstrators to the first year experience. Sessional staff in particular make a considerable contribution to teaching and learning, and in many cases are essential to the professional quality and relevance of the degree programme.

Further investigation has highlighted the need for improved strategic workforce planning and the development of systems, policies and practices for the induction, management, integration and support of sessional teachers. James Cook University must clearly articulate its teaching performance standards to sessional teaching staff to preserve teaching quality and academic reputation.

A priority focus on sessional teaching has been identified for the 2009-2010 period, with intent to:

- Establish a clear institutional context of the contribution made by sessional teaching staff.
- Develop and improve internal processes and communication to promote higher levels of engagement and enhance quality of sessional teaching, with particular focus on specialist preparation for teaching first year students.
- Identify, analyse and disseminate good practice examples across the university, with particular focus on specialist preparation for teaching first year students.

**It is recommended that Academic Board support the project's future focus on sessional staffing issues, with a particular focus on specialist preparation for teaching first year students.**

A review of first year experience literature identified a number of common elements supporting successful first year transition. These elements can be loosely classified under the following headings:

- **Developing a Sense of Purpose**
  - Universities must develop a strong understanding of their students' motivations, experiences and challenges
  - Curriculum focus needs to be more immediate to student's past experiences and what they intend to do in the future
  - Students should have a clear understanding of how current study activities (at any point in time) relates to their degree programme and future goals
  - Students may disengage due to poor choice of academic programme, including lack of vocational relevance.
  
- **Foster Student Engagement**
  - Krause (2005) describes engagement as "the time, energy and resources students devote to the activities designed to enhance learning at university."
  - Student engagement has academic and social dimensions
  - Competing priorities for students' time requires a significant shift towards student-centred approaches
  
- **Building Resilience**
  - Development of the skills or attributes to recover quickly from adverse circumstances (mental, physical or emotional crisis).
  - Some individuals seem to have a natural ability to bounce back whilst others have to learn how to become resilient.
  
- **Quality Teaching Focus**

The Australian Learning & Teaching Council<sup>6</sup> (formerly Carrick Institute for Learning & Teaching in Higher Education) utilises the following criteria to award citations for outstanding contributions to student learning:

  - Approaches to teaching that influence, motivate and inspire students.
  - Development of curricula and resources that reflect a command in the field
  - Approaches to assessment and feedback that foster independent learning.
  - Respect and support for the development of students as individuals
  - Scholarly activities that have influenced and enhanced learning and teaching

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<sup>6</sup> Australian Teaching and Learning Council (2008) Selection Criteria – Citations for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning. Retrieved, April 20, 2009 from: <http://www.altc.edu.au/>

## ROLE OF THE FIRST YEAR ADVISOR<sup>7</sup>

<b>Approving Authority:</b>	Academic Committee Resolution 5/2005
<b>Approval Date:</b>	15 September 2005
<b>Approved Document No:</b>	2005/0025014
<b>Review Date:</b>	2009
<b>Policy Adviser:</b>	Secretary, Student Orientation & Engagement Committee Email: <a href="mailto:secretariat-policy@griffith.edu.au">secretariat-policy@griffith.edu.au</a>

### Description of the Policy:

This policy describes the role and responsibilities of the First Year Advisor.

### Related Policies, Procedures & Forms:

[Role of the Program Convenor](#)

[Role of the Course Convenor](#)

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[\[Broad Role Statement\]](#) [\[Appointment of the First Year Advisor\]](#) [\[Responsibilities\]](#) [\[Advisement\]](#)

## 1.0 Broad Role Statement

The role of First Year Advisors has been established for all undergraduate programs to assist commencing students in their transition to University, as part of the broader responsibility taken for this, at the School and Faculty level.

The primary role of First Year Advisors is to coordinate the academic orientation of commencing students and assist them to put their education in context, become informed participants in their university education, understand and navigate the systems at Griffith, become part of the community, and make adequate preparations for graduation and future careers either through the provision of advice or through referral to other University services or campus resources. The role is to support students to take responsibility for their own curriculum and career decisions by providing experiences of self-managed learning.

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## 2.0 Appointment of the First Year Advisor

A First Year Advisor, who is a member of academic staff, is to be appointed for all undergraduate programs or a cluster of related programs. In selecting academic staff for the role of First Year Advisor consideration should be given to the staff member's interest in assisting students plan and succeed in a program of study, consistent with their abilities and interests, as well as the staff member's knowledge of the University's academic support services, academic policies and procedures.

The appointment of a First Year Advisor should be for a minimum of two years. The First Year Advisor is to be recommended by the Head of School in July each year, after consultation with the relevant Program Convenor, to the Faculty Board for appointment for the next academic year. The First Year Advisor reports to the Dean, or, where applicable, the Associate Dean, Teaching and Learning.

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<sup>7</sup> Retrieved, April 20, 2009 from:

<http://www62.gu.edu.au/policylibrary.nsf/xmainsearch/c18d506aa2211dfb4a25708100644fcf?opendocument>

The Program Convenor in the case of programs with small enrolments may undertake the Program Convenor and the First Year Advisor roles concurrently. In the case of programs that are multi-campus there may be campus specific First Year Advisors. The time commitment involved in advising will be considered as contributing to teaching or service and taken into account by the Head of School in determining the staff member's academic workload. The First Year Advisor's name and contact details for each undergraduate program is published in the Program Catalogue, and on the First Year Students website.

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### **3.0 Responsibilities**

First Year Advisors in each Program will achieve the outcomes required of the role in different ways, appropriate to the discipline and the cohort. The responsibilities of the role may include the following:

#### **3.1 Planning for Advisement**

The First Year Advisor will:

- liaise with the Program Convenor about expectations of commencing students in the program and the level of advisement to be provided.
- liaise with the Program Convenor and relevant Course Convenors about the inclusion of advisement, engagement or learning support activities within introductory courses.
- attend First Year Advisor Network workshops and associated professional development activities.
- be able to locate and explain the University's academic policies and procedures or how to access administrative resources for policy interpretation in complex circumstances.
- know when and how to refer students to learning support or other services or resources.
- liaise with academic support and development services about 'in program support' for commencing students.

#### **3.2 Organising Academic Orientation**

The First Year Advisor will take a lead role in coordinating, in collaboration with academic and general staff, an academic orientation for all commencing students in the program which:

- clarifies their expectations of higher education and their expectations of being at Griffith, provides clear and accurate information about the program in which they have enrolled, clarifies the purpose of the program and its career outcomes, and specifies the requirements for satisfactory progress in the program.
- outlines the role of First Year Advisors in supporting commencing students to become self-managed learners through the provision of information regarding the degree program, courses, resources, degree related policies and procedures and being the first point of contact for discussing matters related to their academic work.
- outlines the key learning systems that assure the quality of the student experience, e.g. Program and Course Catalogues, Course Outlines, [Learning@Griffith](mailto:Learning@Griffith) and [Evaluations@Griffith](mailto:Evaluations@Griffith).
- incorporates contributions from other teaching and academic support staff (Faculty Librarian, Learning Assistance Advisors, Language Advisors, Counsellors, Griffith International), as well

as from peer mentors in outlining their supports for academic success.

- outlines a student to First Year Advisor communication strategy which covers face-to-face (drop in and appointments), hard copy, e-mail, [Learning@Griffith](mailto:Learning@Griffith), and telephone interactions for the purpose of assisting with academic/program related concerns either through direct support or through referral to other University services or campus resources.

### **3.3 Facilitating Student Networks**

The First Year Advisor will implement strategies to foster student-student interaction, which includes:

- promoting University organized mentoring arrangements (Peer-Link Tutors, Uni-Key Mentors, Industry Mentors) and enhances in-program opportunities for mentoring of commencing students by continuing students.
- establishing a student-to-student communication strategy, which covers formal student forums, informal opportunities for students to network face-to-face, on-line communication & mentoring.
- promoting involvement in Orientation activities to familiarise commencing students with their main campus.

### **3.4 Monitoring Academic Achievement and Progress**

The First Year Advisor will work with Course Convenors to monitor academic achievement and assist students maintain satisfactory academic progress in their first year of enrolment by:

- encouraging students to engage in self-assessment of their learning skills using tools available on [Learning@Griffith](mailto:Learning@Griffith).
- facilitating access to resources and developmental opportunities.
- identifying critical milestones for academic success and initiating student contact at these times.
- identifying students “at risk”, making contact and referring them, where appropriate, to relevant support services, whilst at all times respecting students’ rights to privacy.
- identifying and congratulating high achieving students, outlining opportunities for extending their learning or to engage in peer support of fellow commencing students.

### **3.5 Evaluating First Year Advisor Activities**

The First Year Advisor is required to evaluate and prepare a semester / annual report, using the template provided, to the Faculty Board on the effectiveness of the orientation and transition activities they have undertaken by:

- reporting activities undertaken, with suggested improvements for subsequent intakes
- monitoring retention rates for commencing students in the program.
- within privacy provisions, reporting on students at risk and identifying whether they discontinued.
- seeking feedback from commencing students on the activities conducted by the First Year Advisor and the

effectiveness of the referral service.

- outlining the key program/academic issues for commencing students, and making recommendations for improving student engagement.

3.6 ***Contributing to Knowledge about the Commencing Student Experience at Griffith***

First Year Advisors can contribute to the improvement of the first year experience for commencing students at Griffith, and more generally through:

- Research and/or publishing on outcomes of interventions to enhance student orientation, transition and engagement
- Participating in local and national forums/conferences on the first year experience
- Sharing ideas on good practice.

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#### **4.0 Advisement**

Information and strategies for advising commencing students shall be shared through the FYA Network, FYA website, advisor development workshops, advisor manuals and other means.

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