Transition from vocational education and training to higher education: Orientation

Working Party:

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With many thanks to Diane Middleton
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Case Story - 1

One Student’s First Semester from a Tutor’s Perspective

Where would Tom be without support?

On first meeting Tom he was very nervous at the prospect of beginning university. Tom completed his trade as a chef before beginning his Bachelor of Education (Technology and Applied Studies). Tom was able to gain funding from the Ngungilanna Indigenous Student Services for a tutor.

When working on the first assignments it was very clear that one of the areas Tom lacked knowledge in was analysing the assignment question to gain meaning. On one occasion I had to inform him that what he had written was completely irrelevant and that he would not be able to use any of it. For Tom, this was devastating to the point of utter hopelessness. However, with encouragement from myself and working with the course coordinator to set achievable goals we were able to get past this hurdle.

The next hurdle was being asked to resubmit an assignment as all the criteria had not been covered. Again, Tom felt as though his world had come crashing down and once again we were able to work through this situation to gain a positive result.

Intermingled with the above assignment issues were homesickness, living arrangement suitability, and health issues. Being from an Aboriginal family, kinship is of great significance and living away from family is problematic especially when you are housed with other first year students who may not hold the same values and are much younger than you. Tom also discovered a significant health issue which requires surgery during semester break. These problems caused difficulty in staying focused on study and the onerous task of getting through the first semester at university was therefore all the harder.

If it was not for the support of Ngungilanna Indigenous Student Services, the course coordinator and myself, Tom would not have survived his first semester. It was through this support system that Tom received the correct advice to help him continue and not withdraw. One of his last statements to me at the end of semester was “if it had not been for you, I would have quit”.
Case Story – 2

Jessica is a student who has moved through the education system from one section to another. For example, High School to TAFE to Higher Education. While at school Jessica discovered a love of photography and has pursued this as a career. Her parents encouraged her to attend TAFE in the evening while at school to begin gaining her qualifications. While at TAFE she found that she could use the certificates gained as credit towards a university degree. Jessica investigated this avenue further and discovered if she completed the Diploma at TAFE then she would need only to complete one year at university to again a degree in Bachelor of Arts (Photography).

Jessica enjoyed her studies at school and TAFE getting good marks in most assessments. It was not until she moved away from home to attend university that she began to struggle in areas such as time management and finance. She was not required to attend to these matters by herself before. Home sickness was another area that she was having difficulty coping with.

Jessica was confident in her abilities at putting together an assignment. However, on receiving the first assignment back she was devastated to discover that she had only just passed. Jessica had not realised that the standard of work was so much higher at university compared to TAFE. This only added to the external pressures that she was experiencing at the same time and waiting for the other assignments that had been submitted around the same time was a difficult time. The results for these were the same. Jessica had put so much effort into these assignments that she thought that she did not have any more to give. It was at this point that she visited the Course Coordinator who referred Jessica to support systems within the university.

These support systems available through Student Services proved to be Jessica’s lifeline for her time at university. It was through these services that Jessica was able to gain the necessary skills to go on and complete her degree, graduate and find gainful employment.
Executive Summary

The purpose of this report was to examine the implications for students in transitioning from the Vocational Education and Training (VET) to Higher Education (HE). Research for this report included a working party of members from across several areas of Charles Sturt University (CSU) and VET, a review of current literature on identified gaps and strategies, a summary of the variety pathways, an exploration of transition/orientation issues, a description of the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) levels and an articulation of the graduate attributes relevant to students studying at different levels.

The major findings indicate that there is a need for a variety of programmes initiatives and curriculum thinking that support students entering HE from VET to, enrich the teaching and learning programs currently being offered at university.

While it is clear that student needs will vary, this report recommends some strategies that can be put in place to assist with the transition from one sector to the other.

Recommendations Summary

1. For CSU Students

Description of programs:
In order to achieve the outcomes, the following programs could be delivered flexibly in a Distance Education, face-to-face mode or blended mode:
1. The development of a new Study Link subject that focuses on the factors that impede smooth Transitions identified in this Report, and the development of strategies that students could use to overcome these issues.
2. The development of a targeted mentoring program that links existing students who have entered via this pathway with new students. This would be the responsibility of the Faculties.
3. The development of a Webpage with the URL to be promoted to new students that acknowledges and addresses the problems of Transition. The focus should be on the services available within CSU to support students and the provision of contact information.
4. An assertive encouragement to all students enrolling via this Pathway to preface their CSU study with the Study Link programs that are available.

2. For CSU Academic Staff

Description of programs:
In order to achieve the outcomes, the following programs could be delivered flexibly in either a DE or face-to-face mode.
1. University wide distribution of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council Kit on “Articulating a Transition Pedagogy”.
2. Professional Development (PD) in mapping competencies and an understanding of a competency Based Training (CBT) framework and the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF).
3. Courses that have a documented TAFE/VET articulation structure will be reviewed formally to ensure that the first year subjects align with the pedagogies appropriate for the student cohort. PD in identifying and addressing ‘gaps’ in the first year of study. Pedagogical and assessment focus.

3. For CSU As An Institution

Description of programs:
In order to achieve the outcomes, the following actions could be taken:
1. The Division of Planning and Audit and Admissions assume as a priority the provision of enrolment information to Course and Subject coordinators prior to the start of the session that identifies those students who have enrolled with a VET sector qualification.
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ORIENTATION PROGRAM
This program of work addresses the multiple issues associated with the Transition from VET to HE.
The program is divided into 3 sections and is arranged according to the respective areas of responsibility within CSU.

1. FOR CSU STUDENTS:

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<tr>
<th>Area of specific activity</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Key personnel and resources</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
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<tr>
<td>At the completion of this program students will be able to:</td>
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<td>a) Identify the differences in learning and teaching and assessment that characterise the VET and HE sectors</td>
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<td>b) Identify the possible difficulties that they will encounter in their first year of study at CSU and develop strategies and supports to overcome these difficulties.</td>
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<td>c) Connect electronically or face to face with current students in their programs that have made the transition from VET to HE.</td>
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<td>d) Identify their contact ‘hubs’ within the CSU environment.</td>
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<td>e) Negotiate the CSU infrastructure (both virtual and architectural) with confidence.</td>
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Develop a Study Link Subject that specifically and explicitly addresses differences in learning/teaching and assessment. Publicise the availability of the subject in CSU and inside VET providers.

Access identified transaction students.
Establish contact

Set up and publicise a contact hub for VET to HE students (both physically and virtually) on each campus

Provide students with clear information about CSU infrastructure – as identified on page 28

Study Skills Advisors in conjunction with Working Party members and Marketing.
Course coordinators
Course Mangers
Planning & Auditing
Student Administration
Student Services
Student Services
Department of Facilities Management (DFM)
Working Party members
Marketing
Department of Information Technology

End of 2010
2011
2011
2011

Description of programs:
In order to achieve the outcomes above the following programs could be delivered flexibly in a Distance Education, face-to-face mode or blended mode:

1. The development of a new Study Link subject that focussed on the factors that impede smooth Transition, identified in this Report, and the development of strategies that students could use to overcome these issues.
2. The development of a targeted mentoring program that links existing students who have entered via this pathway with new students. This would be the responsibility of the Faculties via the HEPPP funding.
3. The development of a DVD to be distributed to new students that acknowledges and addresses the problems of Transition. The focus should be on the services available within CSU to support students and the provision of contact information.
4. An assertive encouragement to all students enrolling via this Pathway to preface their CSU study with the Study Link programs that are available.
5. A focus on developing literacy skills during first year of HE study.
### Description of programs:

In order to achieve the outcomes above the following programs could be delivered flexibly in either a DE or face-to-face mode.

1. Development of a short web based and hard copy booklet that introduces all staff to the new initiatives re creating pathways for students and the expectations and experiences that these new students will have of a University education. This could be easily based on the ALTC Kit on “Articulating a Transition Pedagogy”.

2. PD in mapping competencies and an understanding of a CBT framework and the AQF

3. PD in identifying and addressing ‘gaps’ in the first year of study. Pedagogical and assessment focus.
### 3. FOR CSU AS AN INSTITUTION:

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Area of specific activity</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Key personnel and resources</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
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<tr>
<td>a) CSU as an institution will be able to:</td>
<td>Develop a reporting system that allows the extraction of this data from student records. Develop methods of dissemination to course coordinators of this information to ensure its currency and useability.</td>
<td>Division of Planning and Auditing and Student Administration.</td>
<td>End of 2010 for implementation in 2011.</td>
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<td>b) Easily and quickly identify and communicate to staff and divisions the students who are making the transition from VET to HE</td>
<td>Appoint a new member of staff to set up meeting initially with VET providers in the CSU footprint to enlist the assistance of the VET providers in understanding the issues surrounding the transition to HE and to develop practical collaborative strategies to bridge the gaps prior to HE entry.</td>
<td>VET /HE Relationship Manager&lt;br&gt;Course Managers&lt;br&gt;Office of DVC Academic&lt;br&gt;Appoint a new member of staff member Level HEW8.</td>
<td>End of 2010</td>
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<td>c) Facilitate greater contact between the VET providers and CSU with a focus on transition and the provision of programs and pedagogies that help to bridge the ‘gaps’</td>
<td>Collate existing information on entry and exit points. Report to Academic Senate.</td>
<td>Office of Academic Governance in conjunction with VET/HE Relationship Manager</td>
<td>Mid 2011</td>
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<td>d) Report on the availability of multiple entry and exit points in CSU degrees</td>
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<td>e) Investigate the possibilities of expanding the entry and exit points in CSU degrees</td>
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**Description of programs:**

In order to achieve the outcomes above the following actions could be taken:

1. The Division of Planning and Audit could assume as a priority the provision of enrolment information to Course and Subject coordinators with a focus on those students who have enrolled with a VET sector qualification.
2. Academic Senate could commission a Working Party to investigate and report on points 3 and 4 above.
3. The position with responsibility for VET/HE relations could take on a program that focussed on point 2 above.
There is wide agreement that student success at university is largely determined by their experiences during the first year. While a positive first year can set the foundation for a successful overall student experience, the first year is also the time when students are most at risk of withdrawing from their studies. As we strive to meet the Government’s participation targets, our student cohorts will become increasingly diverse, potentially exacerbating further the risk factors associated with the transition to University study (Smith, 2010).

It is no longer sufficient to support the transition to the first year of university study by adding programs *around* or *in aid* of the curriculum. Instead we must focus on the central experience that all first time students have in common and which is within our institutional control – the curriculum. According to Kift (2009) it is within the first year curriculum that students must be engaged, supported, and realise their sense of belonging. Kift argues that the obvious way to support increased participation and diversity is through coherent, integrated, intentional, supportive first year curriculum design. It is this approach that has led to the development of a sound set of research based principles to guide intentional first year curriculum design (Smith, 2010).

**Introduction**

**Definition of Transition**

Transitions occur in education at critical points as students change location. They move from Pre-school to Primary School; from Primary School to High School; from High School to VET, HE or work. Each one of these transitions entails new learning, orientation to a new context and reassessment of identity in the broadest sense of the term. It is certainly true that each transition will take varying amounts of time depending on the individual.

In the VET and HE sectors the term “transition” is taken to mean the movement of students from one sector to the other. The traffic goes in both directions (Harris, Rainey & Summer, 2006). The term implies that students will need to make adjustments socially, pedagogically, financially and emotionally when they move. It is the intensity and range of these adjustments that need to be made explicit if both sectors are going to provide the scaffolding for success for these learners.

**Terms of Reference**

**Deliverables**

1. The Working Party should investigate the specific needs of students commencing at CSU based on a TAFE qualification. Evidence sources might include but not be limited to: student and lecturer feedback, the CSU credit precedence database, literature across the sector and TAFE and CSU courses documentation.

2. The Working Party should analyse the various TAFE pathways and credit packages available to establish the potential gaps and differences in skills and expectations between University and TAFE.
3. Based on the information gathered, the Working Party should develop an orientation program for TAFE students commencing at CSU. Development of the program should consider:
   a. Intended learning outcomes
   b. Most appropriate and sustainable mode/location of program delivery
   c. Resources required for
      i. Program development, and
      ii. Program implementation
   d. How best to target and inform appropriate students of the program’s availability and whether it will be an optional or compulsory program
   e. Methods of evaluation the program and evidence of success

Note: the use of enabling funding and infrastructure should be considered in the development of this program.

Report Summary

The transition from VET to HE is not always a smooth process. The hurdles that have to be overcome are articulated in the literature, and reiterated by both students and staff. This Report outlines these problems within the context of providing orientation activities for students making this transition. The Report draws on research conducted by the Divisions of Marketing, and Planning and Audit in 2009. It uses the literature to inform our thinking about the problems and their possible solutions. It calls on the descriptors specified by the Australian Qualifications Framework to identify the areas of difference between the qualification levels and the expectations of learning that accompany these. The Report includes three case studies which illustrate that the recognition of these differences between the pedagogies and curriculum and expectations in the different sectors can be used as the basis for the development of orientation activities that smooth the rough ground. The Reports from the Faculties have been used to summarise these areas of pedagogical need and, along with the literature and other research, form the basis for the recommendations from this Working Party.

Working Party Members

- Roslin Brennan Kemmis (School of Education – Chair)
- Heather Cavanagh (School of Biomedical Sciences)
- Bill Anscombe (School of Humanities and Social Sciences)
- Mark Frost (School of Business)
- Zelma Bone (School of Business)
- Jill Harris (Teaching and Learning Services)
- Roy Sanders (School of Information Studies)
- Alison Lord (School of Teacher Education-Dubbo)
- Geoffrey Lord (Faculty of Education: Dubbo)
- Lisa Griffin (Disability Liaison Team: CSU)
- Angel Hampton (Division of Marketing: CSU)
- Liz Smith (Director, Transition)
- Simon Thomson (Division of Student Services)
- Andrea Crampton (School of Biomedical Sciences)
Methodology
A variety of methodologies was used in this project.
   a) Video conference meetings/focus groups
   b) Faculty and Divisional input on transition issues as viewed from these particular perspectives
   c) Quantitative/Qualitative information from the Divisions of Marketing and Planning and Audit (2009 – questionnaire and interviews)
   d) Literature Review
   e) Illustrative case studies
   f) Access to Policy documents

Background Information

Difficulty with managing the transition into university was a major barrier identified in the audit report as preventing students from pursuing more advanced qualifications. Many students undertaking study in the education field must juggle family and/or work with their study commitments (Curtis, 2009; Darab, 2004). This delicate balancing of commitments is particularly pertinent for students in the female dominated Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) field. Meeting all the competing demands of work, family and study can cause a great deal of stress for educators. Another source of stress can come from social isolation and a lack of academic confidence (EC Workforce Lit Review, 2009). Often, students find the enrolment procedure and early weeks of a university course difficult and confusing, which can lead to frustration and discouragement as supports are not always available. Also, many university students studying via distance feel isolated and do not feel like a part of a learning community. The intent of the pilot is to help students feel supported in making this transition and encouraging them to become part of a community of learners in their own communities in order to facilitate successful completion of their study (Early childhood education workforce capacity project, Draft).

Multiple pathways
Students come from VET to HE along many pathways. It is useful to understand these as each has its own challenges and particular characteristics. A number of common VET to He pathways are described below.

1. Co enrolment with CSU and RTO
Students who are co enrolled with TAFE (or another VET provider) and CSU often receive ‘forward credit’ for the Units of Competency that they are studying in the VET sector. They undertake their VET sector study concurrently with their study of CSU subjects. Characteristically the number of CSU subjects studied over the period of the concurrent enrolment increases over the duration of the degree. Successful completion of the VET sector components result in the forward credit being converted into transfer credit. In the case of a number of programs (Bachelor of Social Work-Indigenous Program) the first session prior to co enrolled study is undertaken fully in a TAFE context.
We also have Articulation Programs where students complete the TAFE component first, and then complete the CSU component of the program – all delivered face-to-face through the participating TAFE campus (CIT and NSI). Where does this fit with these categories?

2. **TAFE/CSU Pathway Programs**

This is the “process of connecting two or more different qualifications (which are often at different levels) in order to establish clearly defined linkages that provide agreed and consistent levels of credit that enable individuals to progress from one qualification to the next” (Australian Qualification Framework Advisory Board, 2007).

CSU has a number of programs that combine TAFE and university study, and we call these 'Pathway Programs'. There are two types of Pathway Programs; Articulation Programs and Integrated Programs:

- **Articulation Programs** allow students to study and complete qualifications at TAFE first and then go on to complete their CSU study.
- **Integrated Programs** allow students to study at TAFE and CSU at the same time. Students are co-enrolled at both institutions

If you have TAFE qualifications, or even if you have only completed modules at TAFE, you may be able to fast track completing your degree at CSU, by receiving academic credit. Credit is assessed on an individual basis, and the amount of credit awarded may vary depending on the TAFE qualification and subjects/modules studied, as well as other factors such as relevant work experience.

- With a TAFE diploma, you could graduate with a Bachelor degree after just two years of full-time university study
- With an Advanced diploma, you could complete your degree in just over one year of full-time university study.

3. **Credit packages/Credit transfer**

Some courses specify the level of credit for VET sector qualifications that will be awarded at the point of entry into CSU courses. This level of credit is variable. “More than two thirds of the respondents (to the questionnaire-TAFE to University survey, 2009) received some credit, but for more than one quarter, this was less than 64 credit points”. In some cases students will receive credit for their first year of University study based on their VET Sector qualification. They come to CSU and move straight into second year of University study. “Credit transfer recognises previous prescribed learning undertaken in one institution as being equivalent to the learning under taken in another institution” (Australian Qualification Framework Advisory Board, 2007). The following example illustrates how one Faculty coped with the multiplicity of VET sector qualifications and encouraged a smoother transition.

The TAFE credit package for social welfare was developed to achieve a number of things:

1. To provide an administratively simple means of handling TAFE credit applications;
2. To maintain the significantly high numbers of students from the TAFE sector moving into degree studies;
3. To provide a course/subject structure that enabled TAFE students to move seamlessly through the welfare degree to social work if they wanted to, and;
4. To provide a program with a level of academic rigour at the university level with a mix of introductory/foundation subjects and higher level ones.

The current TAFE/Social Welfare pathways program includes up to 4 subjects that are also in the Bachelor of Social Welfare (BSW) degree. Thus, students who wish to proceed to the BSW, can then claim these four subjects again as part of the BSW. This makes the TAFE Pathway Program very attractive to those students whose ultimate aim is to get a social work qualification. They can gain a social work qualification in the equivalent of 5 years full-time study, but with a resultant lower HECS debt than students completing the 4 years full-time program.

However, with the development and introduction of the Master of Social Work (Professional Qualifying), TAFE/Social Welfare pathway graduates wanting to undertake the Masters of Social Welfare (MSW) rather than the BSW cannot, under university regulations, claim credit for the four identical or similar subjects in the MSW. In effect, TAFE students are now doubly disadvantaged in terms of time and cost, relative to those students completing an undergraduate degree and then the Masters (Anscombe, n.d., pp. 9-10).

4. Entry requirements
A growing number of courses at CSU specify a VET sector qualification as an entry requirement. The VET sector qualification is often accompanied by a mandatory period of industry experience and when taken together they allow students to enter a range of CSU degree programs. This combination of VET sector qualifications and industry experience can be represented as a credit package at the point of entry and thus these credentials serve both purposes—entry and credit.
Each of these models for transition has inherent difficulties. The following case studies make these, and their possible solutions, explicit.

CASE STUDIES

The following case studies explore the patterns of enrolment and the challenges that need to be met. In some courses students are concurrently enrolled and studying both in the VET sector and at CSU.

Case Study 1 – Faculty of Arts
Bill Anscombe
Senior Lecturer in Social Work

I have been involved in developing a co-enrolment programme at Western Institute of TaFE (commencing in Dubbo in 2005) and a co-enrolment programme through the Riverina Institute of TaFE (at Deniliquin commencing in 2007). I was also involved in developing a specific Indigenous co-enrolment programme (again at Dubbo). The Dubbo co-enrolment programmes operate on a weekly face-to-face teaching basis or a block release basis as far as University study is concerned and face-to-face weekly classes for the TaFE study (for the first two years). At Deniliquin, the classes are run face-to-face for TaFE study, and DE for University study. The programmes are attached.
The programmes were developed in educationally disadvantaged areas.

Co-enrolment with TaFE was a response to the (then) prevailing circumstances at Dubbo and Deniliquin and was in response to TaFE overtures.

The programmes have had high attrition rates. Students are lost after the first two years of TaFE and often to employment. The differences between TaFE study and University study is often at the conceptual and theoretical level. TaFE often do training while the University is more likely to be developing thinking and conceptualising skills.

Students in both courses have struggled with the changing expectations and particularly the critical frame of reference adopted by the University study. There have been difficulties in sequencing the subjects and building upon the foundations that have been laid at TaFE. At Dubbo, the students have had a co-enrolment cohort and a TaFE only cohort that has lead to some unhealthy comparisons and “one-upmanship”. Some of the enrolment systems have not worked well and there is a continual need for TaFE-CSU inter-relationships.

At Deniliquin, the programme is so valued that the TaFE puts in additional resources in the form of a study skills programme offered to the co-enrolled students. This operates each week and focuses upon the CSU study. This has been remarkably successful in assisting students to both stay in the programme and also do well in the programme. Again, Deniliquin requires on-going but minimal support. The programme was designed so that one of the two compulsory field placements would be done away from Deniliquin for logistic and educational reasons.

The co-enrolment programmes manage the transition as a kind of “concurrent transition” rather than as a “sequential transition” between TaFE and CSU. This “concurrent transition” has its difficulties related to course content, cross crediting, enrolment processes, support processes, “student ownership” and “student expectations”.

Case Study 2 – Undergraduate Library and Information Management

Initial studies (early 1990s) indicated that those students most likely to succeed in their first year of study, and to complete the degree, were those who had had previous university-level study. Those least likely to succeed were those who came to the degree with a library technicians (paraprofessional) qualification at Diploma and Associate Diploma levels.

A more recent study shows a reversal of this trend. A study of the intakes in 1997, 1999, 2000 and 2004 to 2008 shows that the success rate in their first semester of library technicians upgrading was slightly higher than the average for the intake. In fact, in 3 of those intakes, not one technician graduate terminated their studies at the end of the first year, compared with up to 17% of those who had no prior tertiary or TAFE study.

This is one indication that those who are graduating from library technicians programs now are in a better position to succeed at university study than were those who graduated from technicians program before 1990. Further evidence of the success rates of technicians upgrading is that in the 10 years to
2002, more than 500 students graduated from CSU's Bachelor of Arts (Library and Information Science). 21 students graduated with Distinction, 10 (47%) being TAFE Assoc. Dip. graduates. A further 6 (29%) of those were students with no prior post-secondary study. During that time, 3 of the students who graduated with Distinction were also granted the University Medal, and one of those went to a TAFE Library Technician graduate.

One of the noticeable trends which represents a critical success factor for our undergraduate students is that the library technician graduates are now more likely to be ready for active participation in the learning process. Research showed that in the mid-1990s, TAFE students in our field were used to being passive recipients of pre-packaged past knowledge, and that their predominant learning style was one in which they related best to the physical, hands-on world and thought in ways that were methodical, ordered, and predictable. They preferred hands-on activities and a tendency for perfection.

We have long been aware that we need to encourage the majority of our first year students to evolve from passive to active learners. This involves changes in personal values, time management, study skills, critical and lateral thinking, research and information seeking skills. Fortunately, the majority of our intake into the CSU UG LIM degrees consists of mature adults (mean age at intake is 37) who, through life and work experiences, have already become efficient and effective time managers, and have the motivation to seek assistance in developing further the other related skills required to succeed in tertiary education.

Another factor which assists library technician graduates is that many of the subjects studied in CSU’s BALIS combine theory and practice in a way that allows the application of the theory to real situations. In many subjects, assessment combines a requirement to demonstrate the student’s understanding and learning of new knowledge with a requirement to apply that knowledge to practical situations. The use of practical exercises, case studies, journals, interviews, projects and reports as assessment styles recognises the need to be able to demonstrate the potential skills required to put theory into practice.

An even more obvious factor is that both courses are preparing for entry to the same profession, albeit, as the profession is currently structured, at different levels. Both courses are preparing students for employment, and certainly in our case, developed with considerable consultation with ALIA, with employers, with practitioners, and with current students and recent graduates.

Finally, we have addressed, we feel successfully, the need to integrate ‘transition to uni’ materials into our first session subjects. First, a compulsory introductory Residential School, and secondly, INF100, a foundation subject into which are integrated both content about the profession, and learning skills modules.
In November 2008, CSU in partnership with Riverina and Western Institutes of TAFE and Batchelor Institute of Tertiary Education, were successful in gaining a Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) grant. The collaborative project that has developed, the Early Childhood Education Workforce Capacity (ECEWC) project, aims to build workforce capacity in early childhood education through enhancing existing expertise in early childhood education and building the workforce in inland and Indigenous areas in NSW and NT. The project is looking at developing training pathways that are accessible and locally supported in these areas with a particular emphasis on developing appropriate programs within inland and Indigenous communities in these locations.

As part of the project, Western Institute of TAFE (WIT) and Riverina Institute of TAFE (RIT) with CSU are facilitating pilot programs involving both current and recently graduated Diploma of Children’s Services students. The plans for the pilots were developed following extensive research of Institutional contexts, the broader early childhood education (ECE) field and the current political context. Close collaboration with our TAFE partners revealed and substantiated many barriers that currently prevent Diploma students from either going on to or completing their university studies, particularly into the Bachelor of Teaching (Birth to 5 years) degree program which is course specifically designed for Diploma students and the Diploma is the entry requirement. TAFE students cited difficulty with managing the transition into University as the major barrier. Balancing work and family with the extra stress of learning ‘how to be’ a CSU distance education (DE) student and becoming an independent adult learner is in many cases, overwhelming for TAFE students. Social isolation and lack of academic ‘confidence’ also proved to be difficult for students (Early Childhood Education Workforce Capacity Project, 2010). Often students find the enrolment procedure and early weeks of a university course difficult and confusing which can lead to frustration and discouragement, particularly when students are not fully aware of appropriate support services. Also many university students studying in DE mode often feel isolated and do not feel like a member of a learning community.

It became clear to those on the project team that transitions and student support were two main issues that need addressing in order to assist students complete university qualifications. The intent of the pilots then is to help students feel supported in making the transition to university study and help to begin to build the capacity of communities to both support and encourage students to become part of a community of learners in their own communities in order to facilitate successful completion of their study.

The project team and pilot working parties explored the notion of a 12 month transition program for a group of pilot graduate students from RIT and WIT. The 12 month transition to the University involves several components, mainly concurrent enrolment in TAFE Diploma and the B.Teach (0-5yrs) degree; a community mentoring structure; assistance in accessing transition and literacy resources at CSU; an emphasis on self-directed learning and peer facilitated learning; and professional development opportunities for community-based mentors.
Very close and sustained collaboration with our TAFE partners have allowed us to develop pilot programs that begin to address the needs of students as they make the transition from TAFE to CSU. A concurrent enrolment allows students to access the full range of support services in both the TAFE and CSU contexts. The community mentor structure will assist student in accessing support in their communities, particularly around ECE content and teaching practice. The opportunity to participate in a face-to-face orientation will allow students to become familiar with CSU systems prior to the commencement of their first subject of study. The community professional development day will allow students to see the connections between their study and the issues in the ECE field as well as build relationships with ECE professionals and other students in the course. Those that choose to mentor our students in their communities will also have the opportunity to participate in professional development around mentoring that will serve to build the capacity of the EC sector in inland communities, particularly around supporting university students. The collaborative production of high quality on-line resources to support student transition and community capacity building should assist in sustainable work in inland communities. It is, however, only through sustained collaboration between TAFE and CSU that programs such as the ECEWC project can deliver programs that more appropriately meet the needs of students in ‘transition’.

INFORMATION FROM THE DIVISIONS OF MARKETING AND PLANNING AND AUDITING

The Divisions of Marketing and Planning and Audit at CSU have provided valuable information that has contributed to this Project. The Specific Needs of Students commencing at CSU based on a VET sector qualification, “TAFE to University Survey Report” provided extremely helpful statistics and focus group response summaries. The objectives of this study were to:

1. Identify key TAFE institutes and courses undertaken by students prior to university study.
2. Develop a basic understanding of the motivators/barriers for students making the transition from TAFE to CSU.

To achieve our objectives, we invited CSU students who enrolled in 2009 based on a previous TAFE qualification to complete our ‘TAFE to CSU’ survey. A total of 337 students responded to the survey, representing a 28.75% response rate. Some 81% of respondents had commenced study by distance education.

Highlights of the 2009 Report

Key feeder TAFE Institutes and programs

- 12 key feeder TAFE/VET Institutes contributed more than two thirds (69%) of the intake in 2009.
- Local Western and Riverina Institutes contributed over 39%
- In most cases (around 79%), a student’s most recent prior TAFE study followed a broadly similar field of study at CSU. This proportion was highest (95%) for students commencing programs in the Faculty of Business and lowest (68%) for students commencing in Arts
- More than one third of students (36.4%) in this intake completed their TAFE study in 2008.
- The top 10 VET feeder disciplines (comprising some 15 broad study areas of VET study) contributed more than 82% of the intake in 2009.
More than two thirds of respondents (67.4%) received some credit, but for more than one quarter (26%) this was less than 64 points (1 eftsl).” 81% of these respondents commenced study in 2009 by distance education.

More than one third of the 337 students completed their TAFE study in 2008. More than two thirds of the respondents received some credit, but more than one quarter received less than 64 points (1 eftsl).

The survey generated both quantitative and qualitative data. The survey covered the following areas:

1. Key feeder Institutes
2. VET feeder program disciplines by CSU Faculty of enrolment
3. Most recent VET course discipline area
4. VET feeder programs by CSU course
5. Credit attainment levels
6. Motivators and barriers to participation in the TAFE to University Transition
7. Reasons for studying at CSU
8. The easiest and most difficult aspects of the VET to University Transition
9. The similarities and differences in VET and CSU study experiences
10. Degree of stress associated with transition
11. Employment status
12. Age group and Equivalent full time work experience
13. VET programs undertaken by students enrolling at CSU in 2009
14. CSU course of enrolment in 2009
15. Most recent TAFE Institute attended
16. Respondent Home region
17. Most recent VET course discipline area

The quantitative and qualitative data have been analysed and represented in both frequency tables and themed responses to the open ended questions and follow up interviews.

The current major formative themes emerging from the data are:
1. 5.3% indicated that they decided to study at University after they completed their TAFE/VET course
2. The dominant reason for opting for University study was related to improving employment chances
3. Life changes, time and adequate income were the most difficult aspects of change to Uni study
4. The cost of studying at university and the degree of intellectual difficulty were ranked as being the most ‘different’ aspects of University study compared with VET/TAFE
5. The degree of stress is significant, with 20% of all students expressing some level of discomfort

LEVELS, EXPECTATIONS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES – AUSTRALIAN QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK (AQF)

It is useful to compare and examine the AQF levels in terms of the expectations of student achievement and the learning outcomes that accompany each level. These levels provide clear indicators of the relative skill levels, the extent to which learning is applied in different situation, and the ‘defined range’ of these situations, the extent of individual responsibility, and autonomy and self regulation, the talent
for analysis and complex thought processes and the capacities for innovation, problem solving and work leadership.

For instance, a student who enters CSU on the basis of a Certificate III will have been exposed to the following expectations and will have worked to achieve learning outcomes appropriate to this level. This methodology identifies significant differences and provides insights into where and how these differences can be addressed to facilitate a smoother transition. These differences are demonstrated in the table below.

By definition these levels imply particular pedagogies. Teaching, learning and assessment are tailored to these levels, and the knowledge, skills and understanding, both generic and subject specific, form a developmental continuum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Certificate III</th>
<th>Bachelor</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Transferring skills and knowledge to a new environment</td>
<td>• Systematic and coherent body of knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Technical advice</td>
<td>• Underlying principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Resolution of specific problems</td>
<td>• Academic skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Performance of a defined range of skilled operations</td>
<td>• Capacity to research, comprehend and evaluate new information and concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Some judgment and discretion</td>
<td>• Review, consolidate, extend and apply new knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Some responsibility for others</td>
<td>• Self directed learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Capacity for teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Encounter significant literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Developmental exposure to content</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following table has been taken from the AQF documents. It again illustrates the continuum of expectations at progressively higher AQF levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The characteristics of learning outcomes at this level include the knowledge, skills and understandings, both generic and subject-specific, required as a basic preparation for civic life, work and lifelong learning. These are developed through studies that may include academic disciplines, vocational education and training, and community-based learning.</td>
<td>Breadth, depth and complexity of knowledge and skills would prepare a person to perform a defined range of activities most of which may be routine and predictable. Applications may include a variety of employment-related skills including preparatory access and participation skills, broad-based induction skills and/or specific workplace skills. They may also include participation in a team or work group.</td>
<td>Breadth, depth and complexity of knowledge and skills would prepare a person to perform in a range of varied activities or knowledge application where there is a clearly defined range of contexts in which the choice of actions required is usually clear and there is limited complexity in the range of options to be applied. Performance of a prescribed range of functions involving known routines and procedures and some accountability for the quality of outcomes. Applications may include some complex or non-routine activities involving individual responsibility or autonomy and/or collaboration with others as part of a group or team.</td>
<td>Breadth, depth and complexity of knowledge and competencies would cover selecting, adapting and transferring skills and knowledge to new environments and providing technical advice and some leadership in resolution of specific problems. This would be applied across a range of roles in a variety of contexts with some complexity in the extent and choice of options available. Performance of a defined range of skilled operations, usually within a range of broader related activities involving known routines, methods and procedures, where some discretion and judgement is required in the selection of equipment, services or contingency measures and within known time constraints. Applications may involve some responsibility for others. Participation in teams including group or team coordination may be involved.</td>
<td>Breadth, depth and complexity of knowledge and competencies would cover a broad range of varied activities or application in a wider variety of contexts most of which are complex and non-routine. Leadership and guidance are involved when organising activities of self and others as well as contributing to technical solutions of a non-routine or contingency nature. Performance of a broad range of skilled applications including requirements to evaluate and analyse current practices, develop new criteria and procedures for performing current practices and provision of some leadership and guidance to others in the application and planning of the skills. Applications involve responsibility for, and limited organisation of, others.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>Advanced Diploma</td>
<td>Associate Degree</td>
<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>Graduate Certificate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breadth, depth and complexity covering planning and initiation of alternative approaches to skills or knowledge applications across a broad range of technical and/or management requirements, evaluation and coordination. The self-directed application of knowledge and skills, with substantial depth in some areas where judgement is required in planning and selecting appropriate equipment, services and techniques for self and others. Applications involve participation in development of strategic initiatives, as well as personal responsibility and autonomy in performing complex technical operations or organising others. It may include participation in teams including teams concerned with planning and evaluation functions. Group or team coordination may be involved. The degree of emphasis on breadth as against depth of knowledge and skills may vary between qualifications granted at this level.</td>
<td>Breadth, depth and complexity involving analysis, diagnosis, design, planning, execution and evaluation across a broad range of technical and/or management functions including development of new criteria or applications or knowledge or procedures. The application of a significant range of fundamental principles and complex techniques across a wide and often unpredictable variety of contexts in relation to either varied or highly specific functions. Contribution to the development of a broad plan, budget or strategy is involved and accountability and responsibility for self and others in achieving the outcomes is involved. Applications involve significant judgement in planning, design, technical or leadership/guidance functions related to products, services, operations or procedures. The degree of emphasis on breadth as against depth of knowledge and skills may vary between qualifications granted at this level.</td>
<td>The acquisition of the foundational underpinnings of one or more disciplines, including understanding and interpretation of key concepts and theories and how they are evolving within the relevant scientific, technical, social and cultural contexts. Development of the academic skills and attributes necessary to access, comprehend and evaluate information from a range of sources. Development of generic employment related skills relevant to a range of employment contexts. A capacity for self-directed and lifelong learning. A course leading to this qualification is generally but not exclusively articulated with relevant Bachelor Degree programs. A course leading to this qualification will vary in breadth and depth according to whether it is a single or multidisciplinary program but will be taken to sufficient depth to provide a basis for full articulation with relevant Bachelor Degree programs.</td>
<td>The acquisition of a systematic and coherent body of knowledge, the underlying principles and concepts, and the associated communication and problem-solving skills. Development of the academic skills and attributes necessary to undertake research, comprehend and evaluate new information, concepts and evidence from a range of sources. Development of the ability to review, consolidate, extend and apply the knowledge and techniques learnt, including in a professional context. A foundation for self-directed and lifelong learning. Interpersonal and teamwork skills appropriate to employment and/or further study. A course leading to this qualification also usually involves major studies in which significant literature is available. Course content is taken to a significant depth and progressively developed to a high level which provides a basis for postgraduate study and professional careers.</td>
<td>Characteristics of learning outcomes at this level cover a wide range of specialised needs following an undergraduate program or relevant prior work, ranging from initial and ongoing professional development to preparation for further postgraduate study. The learning outcomes reflect a standard appropriate to advanced study and primarily include the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills in a new discipline or professional area, which may also involve extending knowledge and skills gained in an undergraduate program or relevant prior work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In summary, the following table identifies the significant developmental and learning expectations of each AQF level. It allows readers to identify “learning gaps” and provides a way forward in planning programs to address these. While the CSU Graduate Attributes on page 21 recognise the aspirations we have as an institution for our graduates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Certificate I</th>
<th>Certificate II</th>
<th>Certificate III</th>
<th>Certificate IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Competencies enable an individual with this qualification to:</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Competencies enable an individual with this qualification to:</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Competencies enable an individual with this qualification to:</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Competencies enable an individual with this qualification to:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demonstrate knowledge by recall in a narrow range of areas</td>
<td>demonstrate basic operational knowledge in a moderate range of areas</td>
<td>demonstrate some relevant theoretical knowledge</td>
<td>demonstrate understanding of a broad knowledge base incorporating some theoretical concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demonstrate basic practical skills such as the use of relevant tools</td>
<td>apply a defined range of skills</td>
<td>apply a range of well developed skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apply known solutions to a limited range of predictable problems</td>
<td>apply known solutions to a variety of predictable problems</td>
<td>apply solutions to a defined range of unpredictable problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perform a sequence of routine tasks given clear direction</td>
<td>perform a range of tasks where choice between a limited range of options is required</td>
<td>perform processes that require a range of well developed skills where some discretion and judgement is required</td>
<td>identify and apply skill and knowledge areas to a wide variety of contexts with depth in some areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>receive and pass on messages/information</td>
<td>assess and record information from varied sources</td>
<td>interpret available information, using discretion and judgement</td>
<td>identify, analyse and evaluate information from a variety of sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>take limited responsibility for own outputs in work and learning</td>
<td>take responsibility for own outputs in work and learning</td>
<td>take responsibility for own outputs in relation to specified quality standards</td>
<td>take limited responsibility for the quantity and quality of the output of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>Advanced Diploma</td>
<td>Vocational Graduate Certificate</td>
<td>Vocational Graduate Diploma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Competencies or Learning Outcomes enable an individual with this qualification to:</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Competencies or Learning Outcomes enable an individual with this qualification to:</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Competencies or Learning Outcomes enable an individual with this qualification to:</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Competencies or Learning Outcomes enable an individual with this qualification to:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demonstrate understanding of a broad knowledge base incorporating theoretical concepts, with substantial depth in some areas</td>
<td>demonstrate understanding of specialised knowledge with depth in some areas</td>
<td>demonstrate the self-directed development and achievement of broad and/or specialised areas of knowledge and skills building on prior knowledge and skills</td>
<td>demonstrate the self-directed development and achievement of broad and/or highly specialised areas of knowledge and skills building on prior knowledge and skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>analyse and plan approaches to technical problems or management requirements</td>
<td>analyse, diagnose, design and execute judgements across a broad range of technical or management functions</td>
<td>initiate, analyse, design, plan, execute and evaluate major, broad and/or highly specialised technical and/or management functions in highly varied and/or highly specialised contexts</td>
<td>initiate, analyse, design, plan, execute and evaluate major functions either broad and/or highly specialised within highly varied and/or highly specialised contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transfer and apply theoretical concepts and/or technical or creative skills to a range of situations</td>
<td>demonstrate a command of wide-ranging, highly specialised technical, creative or conceptual skills</td>
<td>generate and evaluate ideas through the analysis of information and concepts at an abstract level</td>
<td>generate and evaluate complex ideas through the analysis of information and concepts at an abstract level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evaluate information using it to forecast for planning or research purposes</td>
<td>generate ideas through the analysis of information and concepts at an abstract level</td>
<td>demonstrate a command of wide-ranging highly specialised technical, creative or conceptual skills in complex contexts</td>
<td>demonstrate an expert command of wide-ranging, highly specialised technical, creative or conceptual skills in complex and/or highly specialised or varied contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>take responsibility for own outputs in relation to broad quantity and quality parameters</td>
<td>demonstrate accountability for personal outputs within broad parameters</td>
<td>demonstrate responsibility and broad-ranging accountability for personal outputs</td>
<td>demonstrate full responsibility and accountability for personal outputs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>take limited responsibility for the achievement of group outcomes</td>
<td>demonstrate accountability for group outcomes within broad parameters</td>
<td>demonstrate responsibility and broad-ranging accountability for the structure, management and output of work of others and/or functions</td>
<td>demonstrate full responsibility and accountability for all aspects of work of others and functions including planning, budgeting and strategy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CSU Graduate attributes

Any orientation program from VET to HE must incorporate explicit strategies which scaffold VET students towards the progressive acquisition of the CSU Graduate Attributes whilst recognising the aspirations that accompany the AQF descriptors and expectations appropriate to their Certificate or Diploma level.

Graduates of Charles Sturt University are expected to be ethical members of society with an interest in life-long learning and valuable employees. They should be able to apply relevant skills and knowledge in the modern workplace, use appropriate technologies, exercise critical and reflective judgement, work and learn independently or in collaboration with others and communicate effectively. These attributes should be complemented with an appreciation of academic honesty, reflective judgement, responsibility for professional decisions, tolerance and integrity.

All courses leading to the award of a Bachelor degree will foster in their graduates the attributes set out below.

CSU Graduate Attributes build students’ capacity to contribute to their community and to the wider society. By the conclusion of their studies, students are able to:

- demonstrate a broad overview of their field of knowledge;
- communicate effectively in a manner relevant to their discipline;
- demonstrate analytical skills, including the exercise of critical and reflective judgement;
- address unfamiliar problems;
- plan their own work;
- work as a team member;
- demonstrate a national and international perspective; and
- demonstrate an understanding of, and commitment to, values-driven practice in their field of study that takes account of open enquiry, ethical practice, social justice, cultural diversity, reconciliation and environmental sustainability (http://www.csu.edu.au).
IDENTIFIED GAPS AND STRATEGIES (LITERATURE)

The gaps, and the strategies to address these, appear in the literature. The following is a summary of some of this literature.

Number 1. The design of the first year of HE study should explicitly link the VET discipline area to HE learning.

According to Kift (2009) it is within the first year curriculum that students must be engaged, supported, and realise their sense of belonging. Kift argues that the obvious way to support increased participation and diversity is through coherent, integrated, intentional, supportive first year curriculum design. It is this approach that has led to the development of a sound set of research based principles to guide intentional first year curriculum design (Smith, 2010, p. 1).

Number 2. Transition

The curriculum and its delivery should be designed to be consistent and explicit in assisting students’ transition their previous educational experience: the nature of learning in higher education and learning in their discipline as part of their lifelong learning. The first year curriculum should be designed to mediate and support transition as a process that occurs over time. In this way, the first year curriculum will enable successful student transition into first year, through first year, into later years and ultimately out into the world of work, professional practice and career attainment. (Kift, 2008, p. 1).

Number 3. Availability of cultural support

Culturally inclusive approaches to education move beyond the tokenistic inclusion of specific subjects to promote deeper understanding of cultural contexts and differences (Whittington, Glover, Stephenson & Singin, 2008, cited in Early Childhood Education Workforce Capacity Project, 2010).

Number 4. Greater and Deeper Contact between VET and HE Sectors

Quality academic pathways should support the diverse needs and strengths of diverse students in diverse contexts (Bragg, et al., 2006). While there are calls for greater continuity between and across contexts, Watson (2006, p. 18) notes that ‘the expectation of a “seamless” pathway places significant demands on learning institutions in each sector’. Whether or not pathways can, or should, be seamless, existing pathways have some common elements: credit transfer, articulation and recognition of prior learning; a range of entry/exit points; and progression (Early Childhood Education Workforce Capacity Project, 2010, p. 32).

To be effective, the support of executives of both VET and HE institutions to establish and maintain cross-sectoral relationships will be critical (Cram & Watson, 2008; O’Hara & Bingham, 2004, cited in Early Childhood Education Workforce Capacity Project, 2010, p. 35).
Number 5. Access to Institutional Support
For many students, access to institutional support will be one of the defining factors in whether or not they continue at university, or drop out (Scott, Bond, & Webb, 2005 cited in Early Childhood Education Workforce Capacity Project, 2010, p. 35).

Number 6. Integrated Assessment and Reduction in Subject Fragmentation
This project was about the need for strategies to improve the quality of assessment. Much of the research and recommended strategies from this project informed a series of guides developed by the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) to provide assessors with a range of practical tools and resources for improving assessment practices.

In each of the workshops, there was debate about the merit of having standard assessment tools. There was agreement that where these tools are used, there needs to be flexibility about how they are delivered and assessors should be free to interpret tasks within their own context. Participants also felt that if standard assessment tools are used, they need to be continuously refined (Clayton, Roy, Booth & House, 2004, p. 24).

While many modularised courses can be innovative, one of the unintended consequences of modularisation can be that smaller, discrete units of study, occurring over a limited period of time, can mean less time for students to develop familiarity or practice with skills or knowledge before they are assessed. Fewer integrated assignments are in evidence in modularised courses, and students tend to focus on discrete sets of skills or knowledge without considering either transferability or connections across areas (Gibbs, 2006, cited in Early Childhood Education Workforce Capacity Project, 2010, p. 36).

Number 7. Multiple Entry and Exit Points to acknowledge the diversity of life experiences and situations of students
External demands on students to meet employment and family responsibilities, combined with the impact of new technology on the global workforce, means that people increasingly need multiple entry and exit points along learning and training pathways in order to participate in education and training throughout their lives. People now use education and training to not only gain jobs but to change jobs, to build on their initial qualifications and to increase their productivity and employability (Watson, 2006). Within this context, the negotiation of multiple entry and exit points becomes a space for negotiation between educational institutions and professions (Early Childhood Education Workforce Capacity Project, 2010, p. 36).

Number 8. Provision of enabling or bridging courses
A range of initiatives has been undertaken to enable learning pathways within and between the education sectors. These have included arrangements for articulation, credit transfer and recognition of prior learning; the appointment of specialist staff, such as skills advisors and pathways officers; and the provision of enabling or bridging courses for those lacking knowledge and skills for a course. Inter-institutional collaborative arrangements, such as joint courses, learning opportunities on shared campuses or in dual-sector institutions, have also been established. School-based initiatives such as developing vocational streams have been
implemented widely. While there have been difficulties associated with a number of efforts to enhance pathways, there has been solid progress and many notable successes over recent years (Harris, Rainey & Sumner, 2006, p. 9).

Number 9. Competency Based Training to Higher Education
Conroy, Pearce and Murphy (2000) highlighted the major dysfunction between the underpinnings of curricula in the sectors (p.3), a point reinforced by Moodie (2003), who has argued that the implementation in VET of training packages with an industry-based competency focus has inhibited systematic efforts to match VET curricula to higher education (Harris, Rainey & Sumner, 2006, p. 18).

The expectation of a “seamless” pathway through education and training, particularly between the vocational education and training (VET) and higher education (HE) sectors places demands on learning institutions in each sector. Competency-based training has had an impact on the way in which training is delivered and the structure of most training courses differs significantly from the way education is delivered in universities. The fundamentally different approaches to course delivery in VET and HE compound the difficulties faced by course convenors in understanding how learning outcomes are achieved in the other sector (Watson, 2006, p. xiii).

Number 10. Ungraded assessment in VET is an impediment to VET to higher education transfer (Phillips, KPA 2006, pp.14, 30). They recommend the use of graded assessment in higher-level VET courses as a way of facilitating articulation. Swinburne University of Technology uses graded assessment in its higher-level VET programs to facilitate transfer (Young 2006, cited in Curtis, 2009, p. 5).

These 10 identified areas from the literature must be overlaid by considerations for the individual students their backgrounds, their life situations, and their experiences. Characteristics such as age, linguistic and cultural background, gender, socioeconomic and socio educational status, location, the whole range of student psychological characteristics and social factors interact to make the concept and reality of transition highly complex (Pargetter, McInnis, James, Evans, Peel & Dobson, 1998).

WORKING PARTY INPUT
Identified Differences in Skills, dispositions and Knowledge
The Working Party members contributed their experiences and knowledge about the transition from the Vocational Education and Training Sector to Higher Education. This input is summarised below and it is reiterated by research and reflected in the literature on Transition.

1. Transition to theoretical and critical thinking
One of the most clearly identified areas of difference between the learning experiences of students in the VET Sector and the experiences of students in HE relates to the transition to be made from a competency based system of teaching and assessing with its focus on the achievement of skills to an environment where the pedagogical focus is on the development of higher order analytical and
reflective thinking. This difference is clearly represented in the descriptors that accompany the qualification levels in the AQF.

2. Academic Literacy
Academic Literacy is an area of great concern. The literacy demands placed on a student in their first year of HE study include the development of skills such as referencing, essay writing, note taking, critical reading, the comprehension of the technical prose associated with the particular discipline area in which the student is located and the range of functional literacy skills that form the basis for the successful achievement of the objectives associated with university Study.

3. Academic Expectations
The design of university learning material, particularly in the distance education mode, are frequently quite different from those common in the VET sector. The HE materials are designed with a greater focus on student autonomy and self regulation and this unfamiliarity often poses problems for students making this transition.

4. On-line learning and Information Literacy
The ability to participate in On Line Learning and skills in information locating, gathering, interpreting, and usage are often assumed to be the necessary building blocks for teaching and learning in the HE. However, students making the transition from VET to HE may not have been exposed to these experiences and the assumption that they come with levels of technological and information literacy that equip them to navigate through the demands of online learning and information seeking are not necessarily correct.

5. Reading
In HE there is a strong focus on reading. This is often represented in both the volume and complexity of the reading tasks. This focus is far less intense in the VET sector study where competency skills based framework focuses on “demonstration” more than on “analysis”.

6. Language
The language and lexicon of VET and HE are very different.

7. Culture
The cultures that surround VET and HE have very different traditions and practical expressions. These differences imply that a transition in terms of “identity” in needed. This is a very different identity transformation for mature aged students compared to those who move straight form the VET sector to HE and is obviously influenced by the mode of study.

8. Expectations
Student expectations and the broader set of expectations that flavour VET and HE are of ten quite different and are often implicitly embedded in subjects and courses. The process of making these differences explicit is left to the student making the transition.
9. University Infrastructure and Organisational Complexity – See diagram 2 (Charles Sturt University Maze) for the plethora of university systems and supports that may operate quite differently to those that characterise VET sector providers.
Factors Influencing the Transition from VET to HE

Diagram 3
SUMMARY OF ISSUES IN TRANSITION/ORIENTATION FROM VET TO HE

The preceding information makes it clear that orientation for VET to HE involves considerations of curriculum and pedagogy, recognition of the multiple pathways from VET to HE and strategies that can be used to address expected predictable “gaps”.

Curriculum and pedagogy
- Each University is responsible for developing its own particular curriculum for each discipline area, course and subject. This may be influenced by accrediting bodies such as professional associations eg psychology, pharmacy, social work.
- The VET sector has transparent, nationally consistent and documented curriculum either displayed in the relevant Training Packages or in non Training Package course documentation.
- The VET sector has a competency based approach to pedagogy and assessment. At the Diploma and Advanced Diploma levels the focus is on the application of learning, and the assessment of the success of this application is often through demonstration of skills.
- Universities use a wide variety of pedagogies and their focus is on developing well informed critical, analytical and ethical thinkers and practitioners. Universities use a wide range of assessment strategies. However, there is a strong emphasis on written assessment.

Credit transfer and articulation
- Structured credit transfer refers to an agreed amount of credit given by the receiving institution for sections of a particular course offered by the sending institution.
- Articulation refers to the recognition of the whole course from the sending institution by the receiving institution, and is usually expressed in terms of ‘being excused’, for example, from the first year of study. (‘integrated cross-sector award arrangements’ in Phillips, K.P.A., 2006)
- Individual students may receive individual credit by negotiation
- The provision of entry to a course through possession of a VET qualification

Addressing the ‘gap’ between VET courses and university courses
- Content gaps
- Pedagogical gaps in Competency Based Training
- Generic skills gaps
- Learners’ study habits gaps

STRATEGIES – SUMMARY FROM WORKING PARTY; ORIENTATION TO HE
- Targeted Mentoring
- Production of a Website focusing explicitly on the experiences of past students
- Connect new with old students
- Compulsory residential school
- New study link subject VET to HE
- Linking past learning with new learning through explicit strategies
- Institutional support
- First year curriculum and assessment
• Cultural support
• Identity Change and Reformation
• Infrastructure support
• Contact ‘hubs’ for students
• Pilot session
• Mapping courses and training packages
• Explicit Literacy teaching with a particular focus on the subject specific Literacy demanded by the various discipline.

Institutionally

• Personal Development for staff in HE and VET
• Greater contact between VET and providers and CSU.

METHODS OF EVALUATION

1. FOR CSU STUDENTS:
These could include:
1. Focus groups of students (both on campus and DE) to evaluate the effectiveness of the various levels of support provided.
2. Quantitative data collected from students re experiences
3. Accessing the Planning and Audit information re attrition and retention mapped against location of students at the point of entry into CSU.

2. FOR CSU ACADEMIC STAFF:
1. Quantitative data collected about the levels of awareness and curriculum adjustment.
2. Focus group data

3. FOR CSU AS AN INSTITUTION:
1. Quantitative data about the dissemination of enrolment information
2. Qualitative data on the effectiveness of the VET/HE relationships
3. Reports from Academic Senate.
References


Australian Learning & Teaching Council (n.d.). *Articulating a transition pedagogy.* Queensland: Queensland University of Technology


Charles Sturt University. (n.d.) *TAFE to University Survey Report.* NSW: Market Research Unit Division of Marketing; Charles Sturt University.


