

# **Business smart: a 3-phase approach to inducting new students**



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# Introduction



- Previous role – Teaching and Learning Consultant, Queensland University of Technology (QUT)
- Current role – Employability Coordinator at the University of Queensland (UQ)
- Co-author of two Pearson Australia academic skills texts
- Doctoral research – employer expectations of graduate employability and how they inform the development of professional knowledge, skills and attributes in HE

# The Australian higher education landscape



- Demand-driven model  student expectations around employability; return on investment in HE
- Increasingly competitive labour market  students required to differentiate themselves
- Employer expectations of 'more than just the degree'
- Changes to post-study work rights of international students
- Deregulation of fees for Australian domestic students, cuts to government contributions to per-student funding
- Possible reduction in international student numbers as key competitors in Asia Pacific develop their HE offerings in country
- Australian Qualifications Framework

# Beginning the university journey



- **Student uncertainty around academic, financial and social expectations**
- **Transition to HE crucial in setting up students for a satisfying and successful experience**
- **Australia – ‘O week’ activities prior to the start of classes:**
  - Getting started
  - Library tours
  - IT and enrolment assistance
  - Discipline-specific introductions
  - Academic preparation
  - Social activities



**OVERWHELMING!**

# QUT Business school approach



- **Background:**

- Students miss out on vital information if they are unable to or choose not to attend
- Overload of information in a short space of time
- Gradual transition to new learning environment less overwhelming for new students
- Just-in-time approach to reach as many as students as possible when the need arises
- Bridge gap from point of offer to commencement of studies
- Foster connections with the School from the outset
- Timely, appropriate and effective communication of information and support services

# The three-phase approach



- 1. Point of offer up to Pre-Orientation (enrolment and student administration)**
- 2. Pre-Orientation and Orientation Week (orientation and induction)**
- 3. First semester of study (study skills and campus life)**

# Phase 1: enrolment & student admin



- **First connections with the Business School – mail out of a bespoke 'welcome postcard'**
- **Postcard outlines next steps in enrolment process**
- **Student Gateway redesigned to be more informative and user-friendly**
- **Enrolment sessions available on campus for the two weeks prior to O Week**

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**Yes**  
and get involved



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# Phase 2: orientation



- **Pre-O week: enrolment sessions (for domestic and international students), welcome for scholarship recipients**
  - **O week: day-long programs for undergraduate and postgraduate students**
    - Executive Dean welcome
    - Discipline-specific welcome
    - Enrolment help
    - Academic preparedness (one hour session)
    - Information on extra-curricular activities (one hour session)
-  Welcoming, festive atmosphere in main foyer – displays, helium balloons, lollies, ‘giant games’

## Features of phase 2



- Focus on welcoming students rather than overwhelming them
- Broad overview rather than too much information
- Preparation for academic journey (in and out of the classroom)
- Information about support services
- Interactive, interesting and informative discipline sessions
- Beginning of journey to becoming a professional and how to enhance employability

## Phase 3: study skills and campus life



- Workshops, seminars and activities delivered across the semester – staged introduction to study and campus life
- Aim – information, developing skills needed for early and continued success, creating connections
- Example sessions: industry seminars, selecting your major, enrolment, getting started on your first assignment, money management, research skills, exam techniques, retention clinics, stress management

## Phase 3 foyer expos



- **Maintaining welcoming, ‘festive’ atmosphere of O week**
- **Foyer area of main building of Business School**
- **Specific themes:**
  - student interest groups
  - support services
  - enrichment activities
  - going global
- **Staff on hand to answer general enquiries, particularly around enrolment**

## 4s – study+skills+support=success



- Individual assessment advice sessions and assessment task workshops for each assignment in the 8 core units of the Bachelor of Business (graduate attributes teaching ‘by stealth’)

### **Also...**

Discipline-based, embedded Learning Advisor in each School for individual and group academic support consultations, and in-class interventions

# Success of approach



- **Strong communications strategy (online chat service from point of offer, mail out of welcome postcard, emails to students, student gateway)**
- **Collaborative nature of Working Party and strength of skills and experience represented**
- **Small team able to make progress, report back to wider group**

# Evaluation of approach



- Increased attendance during O week over the past two years
- High student satisfaction with discipline-specific sessions and academic expectations
- Key features of Phase 2 for students – meeting other students, awareness of support services, assistance around choosing majors
- Increased attendance at 4S workshops over the period the program has been running. Continuous bookings of individual assessment advice sessions
- Students who attend 4S workshops achieve higher grades than those who do not (however, difficult to prove direct correlation between attendance and success)
- **Future:** online resources, greater student ambassador involvement, make academic expectations session more less 'dry'

## Contact details



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