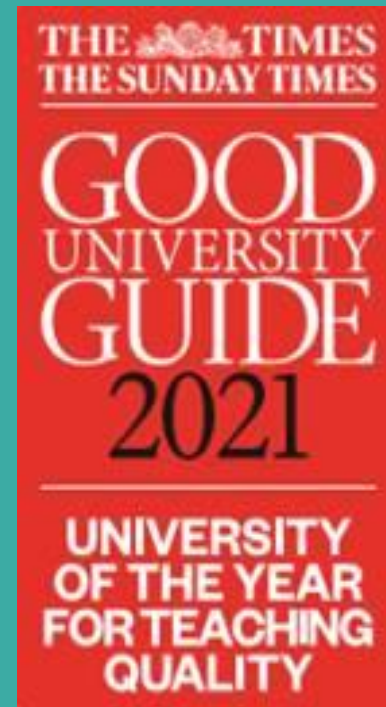# A Conversation Around Diagnostics and Personalised Approaches to Student Success

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Brief overview of the Abertay approach as a basis for a discussion

- Drawing on QAA PARC Collaborative project
- The purpose of a diagnostic approach
- Strengths and weaknesses
- Evidence and products required to engage sceptics

Including developmental conversations on:

- Diagnostics

- Defining student success

July 2020, Senate approved the recommendations of a University working group that it should initiate developments that would see a microcredential framework implemented for students in September 2021.

This would see the first year existing electives (20 credits) being replaced with a new suite of microcredentials.

A University development group, drawn from across Abertay, placed an emphasis on students utilising a microcredential framework to personalise their own development journey as they prepared themselves for their future careers.

The focus was on preparing students to be successful academically and socially within the Abertay community.
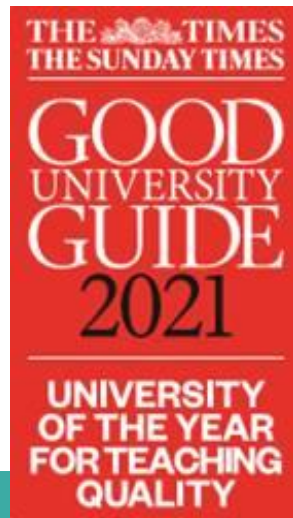
Membership: Membership is the feeling of belonging or of sharing a sense of personal relatedness.

Influence: **a sense of mattering, of making a difference to a group and of the group mattering to its members.**

Shared emotional connection, the commitment and belief that members have shared and will share history, common places, time together, and similar experiences.
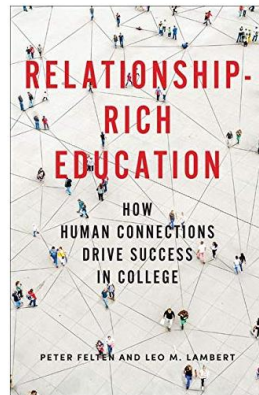
McMillan and Chavis (1986)
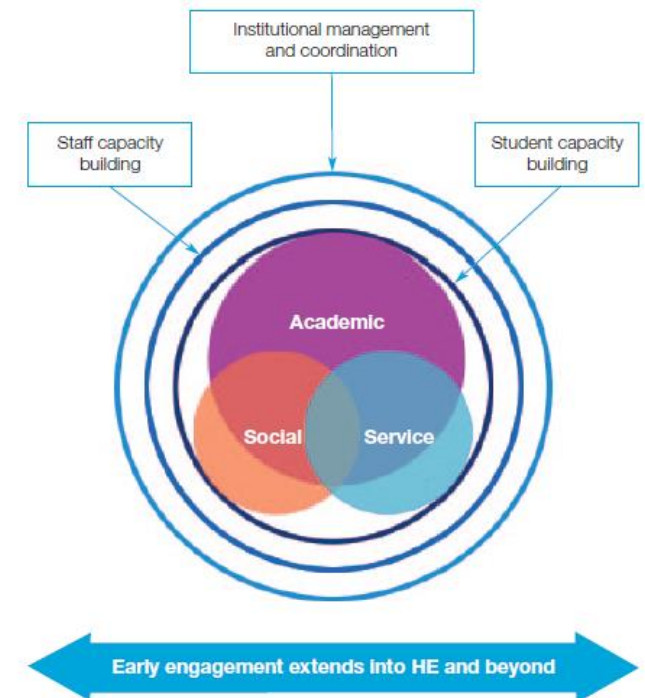
High-Impact Educational Practices

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
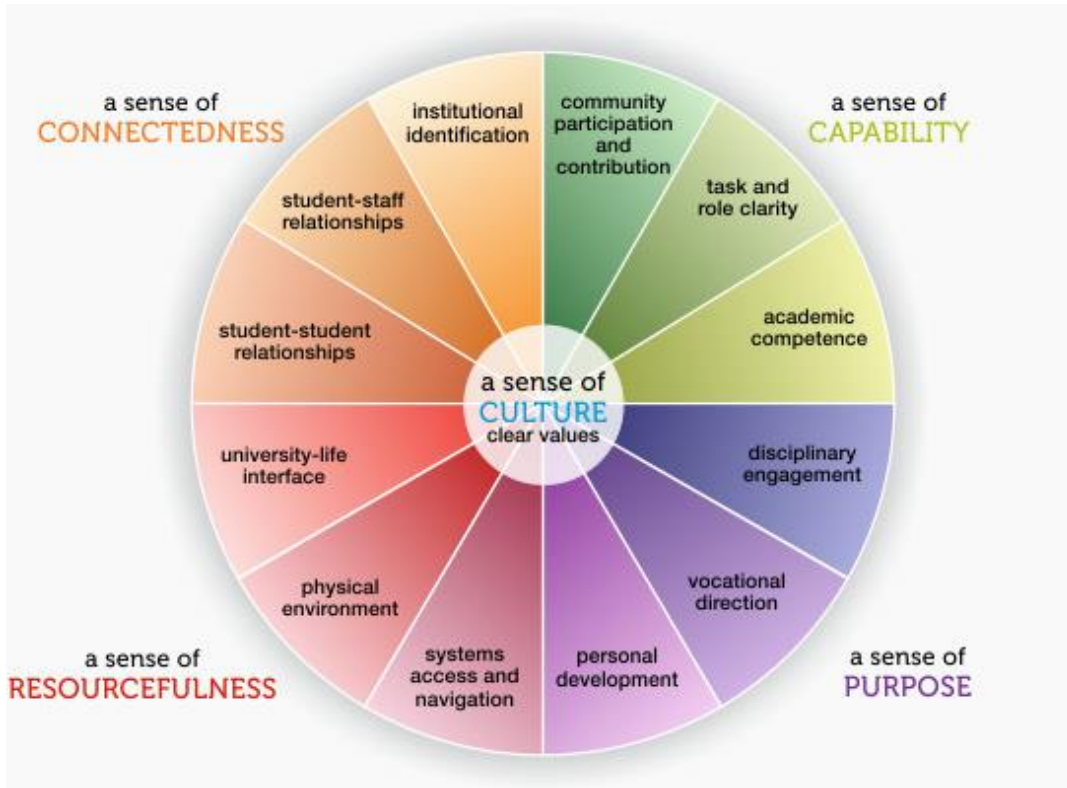
First-Year Seminars and Experiences
Many schools now build into the curriculum first-year seminars or other programs that bring small groups of students together with faculty or staff on a regular basis. The highest-quality first-year experiences place a strong emphasis on critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students' intellectual and practical competencies. First-year seminars can also involve students with cutting-edge questions in scholarship and with faculty members' own research.

Common Intellectual Experiences
The older idea of a "core" curriculum has evolved into a variety of modern forms, such as a set of required common courses or a vertically organized general education program that includes advanced integrative studies and/or required participation in a learning community (see below). These programs often combine broad themes—e.g., technology and society, global interdependence—with a variety of curricular and cocurricular options for students.

Learning Communities
The key goals for learning communities are to encourage integration of learning across courses and to involve students with "big questions" that matter beyond the classroom. Students take two or more linked courses as a group and work closely with one another and with their professors. Many learning communities explore a common topic and/or common readings through the lenses of different disciplines. Some deliberately link "liberal arts" and "professional courses"; others feature service learning.

Writing-Intensive Courses
These courses emphasize writing at all levels of instruction and across the curriculum, including final-year projects. Students are encouraged to produce and revise various forms of writing for different audiences in different disciplines. The effectiveness of this repeated practice "across the curriculum" has led to parallel efforts in such areas as quantitative reasoning, oral communication, information literacy, and, on some campuses, ethical inquiry.

Collaborative Assignments and Projects
Collaborative learning combines two key goals: learning to work and solve problems in the company of others, and sharpening one's own understanding by listening seriously to the insights of others, especially those with different backgrounds and life experiences. Approaches range from study groups within a course, to team-based assignments and writing, to cooperative projects and research.

Undergraduate Research
Many colleges and universities are now providing research experiences for students in all disciplines. Undergraduate research, however, has been most prominently used in science disciplines. With strong support from the National Science Foundation and the research community, scientists are reshaping their courses to connect key concepts and questions with students' early and active involvement in systematic investigation and research. The goal is to involve students with actively contested questions, empirical observation, cutting-edge technologies, and the sense of excitement that comes from working to answer important questions.

Diversity/Global Learning
Many colleges and universities now emphasize courses and programs that help students explore cultures, life experiences, and worldviews different from their own. These studies—which may address U.S. diversity, world cultures, or both—often explore "difficult differences" such as racial, ethnic, and gender inequality, or continuing struggles around the globe for human rights, freedom, and power. Frequently, intercultural studies are augmented by experiential learning in the community and/or by study abroad.

Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
In these programs, field-based "experiential learning" with community partners is an instructional strategy—and often a required part of the course. The idea is to give students direct experience with issues they are studying in the curriculum and with ongoing efforts to analyze and solve problems in the community. A key element in these programs is the opportunity students have to both *apply* what they are learning in real-world settings and *reflect* in a classroom setting on their service experiences. These programs model the idea that giving something back to the community is an important college outcome, and that working with community partners is good preparation for citizenship, work, and life.

Internships
Internships are another increasingly common form of experiential learning. The idea is to provide students with direct experience in a work setting—usually related to their career interests—and to give them the benefit of supervision and coaching from professionals in the field. If the internship is taken for course credit, students complete a project or paper that is approved by a faculty member.

Capstone Courses and Projects
Whether they're called "senior capstones" or some other name, these culminating experiences require students nearing the end of their college years to create a project of some sort that integrates and applies what they've learned. The project might be a research paper, a performance, a portfolio of "best work," or an exhibit of artwork. Capstones are offered both in departmental programs and, increasingly, in general education as well.

LEAP

https://emedia.rmit.edu.au/tito/content/student-lifecycle-model

- For your institution and context……

- What would be the value or purpose of a diagnostic approach?

- What would be a desirable outcome?

Abertay Discovery Tool

- Identifying student strengths and areas for development

- Feedback for each section with links to support services

- Programme level reports (Available by week 4, term 1)

Sections Include:

- Studying at University (Study habits, expectations, independent learning etc)

- Academic Writing & Mathematics (Writing, reading, referencing, basic numeracy skills)

- Digital Skills

- Employability Skills (Career registration)

- Wellbeing

Abertay Discovery Tool

0 of 5 Topics Completed

0%

Overview ✓
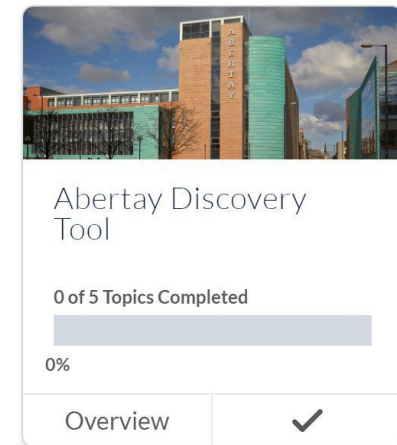
Abertay Discovery Tool
Student Report Example

Abertay Discovery Tool:
Academic Skills Feedback

Congratulations on using the Abertay Discovery tool to start mapping your route to success at University! This section is focused on **Academic Skills**.

This report outlines the areas of strengths that were indicated by your answers and areas that you might like to focus some time and energy on developing. Please note, this is a starting point; not only should you begin to develop these areas, but also use feedback and self-reflection developed throughout this module and others to identify other skills that would benefit from development.

Remember, Abertay is here to support you!

Academic Writing
As you move through your university career you may encounter unfamiliar writing styles or requirements. These could be in the form of essays, reports, or reflective writing to name a few. You have demonstrated an understanding of the differences. To build upon your knowledge, Abertay provides a wide range of resources for you to access when you need them. Find out what's available at Writing (abertay.ac.uk).

Searching and Evaluating Sources
In your modules you will need to use different searching techniques to find sources for you to critically analyse as part of your assignments. You have demonstrated an awareness of how to do this. There are several models and resources available when considering searching and evaluating. You may benefit from finding out more about Searching (abertay.ac.uk) and Evaluating (abertay.ac.uk) your sources.

Academic Reading
You have demonstrated signs of being a critical thinker. This includes reading and writing critically and is a key skill for university and your future career. Critical thinking, or critical analysis, is the evaluation of information or ideas on a topic. You may want to find more out about Academic Reading (abertay.ac.uk).

Referencing
Referencing may be something that you have started to think about before. It is vital to writing academically, so make use of the facilities and resources available to you and develop your referencing skills. Referencing appropriately will help you avoid plagiarism. There are lots of resources for you - Referencing (abertay.ac.uk). At Abertay we use several different referencing styles dependent on your programme of study. Make sure you are familiar with the referencing style you will use:

- Harvard (All programmes expect Psychology and Law)
- APA (Psychology Programmes)
- OSCOLA (Law Programmes)

Mathematics
Throughout your degree you will use different mathematical skills in different ways. Often this will depend on the module you are studying. Your programme and module team will provide you with resources and support in the areas needed. Don't hesitate to contact your programme leader to seek support.

Actions
Based on your feedback and to support you in developing your academic skills, we would recommend you consider the following actions in your first 3 months at university:

1. When you are undertaking your first written assignment, Book an appointment with the Learner Development team. To book an appointment with an advisor please go to Abertay Connect.

   - Appointments are available Monday to Friday, including during vacation weeks (except during Christmas vacation when the university is closed to staff and students). If you'd like more information about our service, or coursework feedback via email, please use the Abertay Connect query section to attach your coursework draft and a copy of the assignment brief.

2. Check out the relevant referencing guide for your course of study

   - Harvard (All programmes expect Psychology and Law)
   - APA (Psychology Programmes)
   - OSCOLA (Law Programmes)

3. Ensure you understand the different academic writing styles

   - Essay Writing
   - Writing Reports
   - Reflective Writing

Considering your Options
As you consider choosing your optional modules. Based upon your feedback, we would recommend that you consider taking at least one of the following:

- ABE101 – Successful Writing at Abertay
- ABE105 – Research and enquiry skills for the digital age
- ABE106 – How to sell an idea

Abertay Discovery Tool

Programme Report View

Abertay University

Abertay Discovery Tool:
Programme Report

Based upon results of the Abertay Discovery Tool in ABE101 – Being Successful in Abertay this report provides an overview. The report is split into strengths and areas for development identified from across 5 sections on the different aspects of a successful university career:

1. Studying at University
2. Academic Writing & Mathematics
3. Digital Skills
4. Employability Skills
5. Health & Wellbeing

AbLE Academy are available to support programme teams in developing cohort activities based upon the results. For further consultation please email Jack Hogan (j.hogan@abertay.ac.uk), Lecturer in Academic Practice.

Programme Information

Programme:
Programme Leader:
Division:
School:

Strengths

Overall, students on this programme showed a good level of knowledge and approaches of independent learning.

Students had a good level of understanding of the role that feedback plays at university. Students recognised that the role of feedback is to help them develop their subject knowledge and transferable skills.

A good range of activities to prepare for classes were identified. This included completing the recommended reading or pre-work, discussing content with peers, and looking over notes from learning materials.

Students showed a good level of confidence in their academic writing abilities. Some students described previous experience of academic writing although not at university.

Students had a good level of knowledge on how to effective work in teams on a range of digital environments.

Most students indicated good knowledge of using key computer software packages for academic work. This included Microsoft office, the use of PDFs etc.

Most students indicated good knowledge of using online communication tools. This included the use of Microsoft teams and emails. It is strongly recommended to encourage students to access the support on the intranet for using emails and calendars.

Areas for development

Some understanding of the role of referencing was shown in the referencing questions. To reinforce the importance of referencing, it is recommended to provide supporting links to materials available for the appropriate referencing used on the programme of study.

Students described some confidence in their basic mathematical abilities but indicated and recognised they needed to improve. It is encouraged to clearly specify the level of mathematics required on the programme of study and the support available from the programme team. Students can also be referred to the Learner Development service.

Most students were unsure on what career path they wished to take. They select answers ranging from 'I am not ready to start thinking about my career yet' to 'I know what I want to do but am not sure how to get there'. It is recommended that where possible alumni are invited back to inspire and showcase their journeys to new students. It is also encouraged that students are provided with the link and regular resources from the employability skills portal available to all staff and students.

Most students have not had the opportunity to engage in previous employment, placements, internships, or volunteering. It is encouraged to provide students with the following links to support that is available in gaining work experience:

- Booking a careers appointment
- Attending careers and employer events
- Searching internships, placements, and part time work

Some students indicated that they struggle to build and maintain relationships and gain a sense of belonging. It is recommended to signpost students to joining a society or sports team. It is also recommended that students request a mentor at the university.

It is recommended that students are encouraged to download the MyWellbeing App and implement the 5 ways to wellbeing (Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Keep Learning and Give to Others).

Academic and Social Foundations

ABE101 - Being Successful at Abertay
(Includes diagnostic test and student action planning to select from options below)

ABE102 - Successful Writing at Abertay

ABE103 - Digital Skills for University and Beyond!

ABE104 - Dundee and Me

ABE105 - Research and enquiry skills for the digital age

ABE106 - How to sell your ideas!

ABE107 - Planning your future career

ABE108 - Welcome to the CommuniTAY

ABE109 - Wellbeing tools and tricks

Principles of Microcredentials at Abertay

- **Credits:** Microcredentials can be 5 (50 Hours) or 10 (100 Hours) credits.

- **Learning Outcome:** 1 learning outcome per 5 credit microcredential

- **Delivery:** Content should be Asynchronous (Online) with supporting synchronous activities where possible. Microcredential must be available to deliver all year round.

- **Assessment:** Microcredentials assessed through automated tools.

- **Abertay Attributes:** Microcredentials must explicitly link to the Abertay attributes.

- **Student Choice:** Students can choose any microcredential that is available to them. Discipline teams are encouraged to offer guidance to students however cannot make it mandatory or exclude students.

- **Mandatory:** ABE101 with diagnostic

ABE101 - Being Successful at Abertay
(Includes diagnostic test and student action planning to select from options below)

ABE102 - Successful Writing at Abertay	ABE103 - Digital Skills for University and Beyond!	ABE104 - Dundee and Me	ABE105 - Research and enquiry skills for the digital age
ABE106 - How to sell your ideas!	ABE107 - Planning your future career	ABE108 - Welcome to the CommuniTAY	ABE109 - Wellbeing tools and tricks

My Success

In your institution………

Is there something within or beyond these academic skills/research/wellbeing/socialisation pieces……what would be the missing piece for your institution?

Impact so far…

Module Title	Number of Students	Term 1 Engagement	
		Submission Rate	Pass Rate
ABE101 – Being Successful at Abertay	714 (100%)	95%	96%
ABE102 –Successful Writing at Abertay	410 (55.7%)	93%	95%
ABE103 – Digital Skills for University & Beyond	355 (48.2%)	91%	98%
ABE104 – Dundee and Me	191 (26%)	90%	100%
ABE105 – Research & Enquiry Skills for the Digital Age	310 (42.1%)	92%	100%
ABE107 – Planning your future career	490 (66.6%)	94%	98%
ABE108 – Welcome to the CommuniTAY	92 (12.5%)	100%	96%
ABE109 – Wellbeing tools & tricks	278 (37.8%)	91%	98%

PERSONALISED APPROACHES TO RESILIENCE AND COMMUNITY
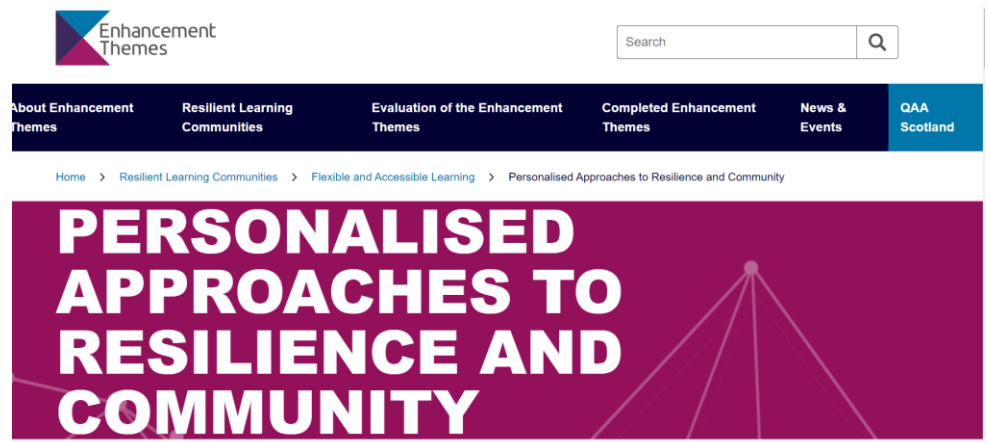
- Pandemic and 16 months of disruption for new students
- Institutional imperative – retention and graduate level outcomes
- Moral imperative to enable our students to succeed
- Personalisation of the student learning journey
- Learning gain legacy – BCU, Warwick etc
- Technological advances – AI and assessment
- Language of diagnostics?

Resilient Learning Communities

To enable and enhance student success through personal reflection and engagement with diagnostic tools and the associated institutional development opportunities.

- Recognise context of each institution

- Recognise the institutional drive – student retention, EDI and attainment gaps, employability
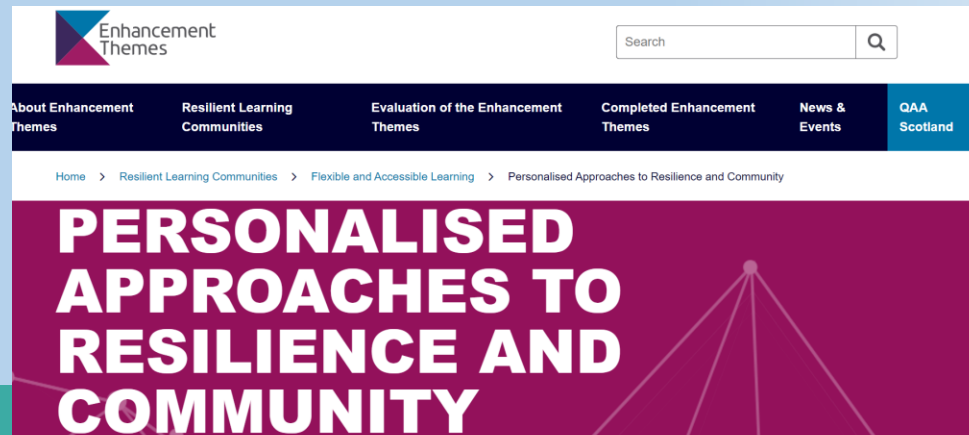
What do YOU need?

Functioning Toolkit - Templates for questions – groupings – guidance instructions – case studies – solution focused – as a quiz/discussion board/ forms etc? Create a question bank for four pillars etc

Macro?

Meso?

Micro?

What is Student Success?

I define student success as …………….

My institution defines student success as………….

My students feel successful when…………….