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)
Building on theory/practice

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 high-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 goal of learning communities is 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 first-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 enhances 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, others are exploring how 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 constructed questions, empirical observations, cutting-edge technologies, and the sense of excitement that comes from working to answer important questions.

Diversity/Global Learning
Many colleges and universities now offer 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 “dilemma differences” such as racial, ethnic, and gender inequality, or continuing struggles around the globe for human rights, freedoms, 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, student-based “experiential learning” with community partners is an intentional strategy—and often a required part of the course. The idea is to give students direct experience with issues they are studying in the classroom and with ongoing efforts to analyze and solve problems in the community. A key element in these programs is the opportunity student have to both apply what they are learning in real-world settings and reflect in a classroom setting on their service experiences. These programs involve 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 interest—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 capstone” 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 or “best work,” or an exhibit of artwork. Capstones are offered both in departmental programs and, increasingly, in general education as well.

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: 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 strength 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 only and shows you where to 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

At university, you may encounter assignments that require skills or knowledge that you need to develop or acquire. This section provides guidance on how to develop your academic writing skills.

Searching and Evaluating Sources

In your studies, you will need to use different searching and reviewing techniques. This section provides guidance on how to use your knowledge effectively on academic assignments.

Academic Reading

You have demonstrated signs of being a critical thinker. This includes reading and writing critically with a key skill for your future career. Critical thinking, or critical analysis, is the evaluation of information or ideas on a topic. You need to be able to read academic writing in different formats.

Referencing

Referencing plays a key role in academic writing. This section provides guidance on how to effectively reference your work.

Mathematics

Throughout your degree, you will use different mathematical skills in different ways. Often, this will depend on the module you are studying. This section provides guidance on how to develop your mathematical skills.

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 semester at university:

1. When you are undertaking your first written assignment, book an appointment with the Library Development team. To book an appointment with an advisor, please go to Abertay Success.
   - Appointments are available during this week, relating to the written assignment due at the end of the week.

2. Check out the relevant referencing guide for your course of study.
   - General Information on Referencing and Citations
   - APA Reference Generator
   - Chicago Manual Style

3. Ensure you understand the different academic writing styles:
   - Essay Writing
   - Book Reports
   - Reference Allows

Considering Your Options

As you consider choosing your optional modules, remember your feedback and consider the following:

- ARE 100 - Successful Writing at Abertay
- ARE 105 - Research and inquiry skills for the digital age
- ARE 100 - How to sell an idea
Most students were unsure on what career path they wished to take. They select answers ranging from 1 to 7, not really sure until the last minute. It is recommended that when students are unsure how to get there, it is important to have a clear vision and an early career plan. The Abertay Discovery Tool is designed to help students identify their strengths and weaknesses.

Programme Information

- Programme:
- Programme Year:
- School:

Strengths

Overall, students on this programme showed a good level of knowledge and approaches to independent learning. Students had a good level of understanding of the role that feedback plays in university life. Students were able to identify areas for improvement and develop their own strategies to improve.

- A good range of activities to prepare for lectures were identified. This included completing the recommended reading or pre-work, discussing content with peers, and taking 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 effectively 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 internet for using email and collaboration.

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 that students need to develop their referencing skills.

- Students described some confidence in their basic mathematical abilities but indicated a need to increase this to support success in the programme. Students are encouraged to use the resources available from the programme team. Students can also be referred to the Career Development service.
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
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...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module Title</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Submission Rate</th>
<th>Pass Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABE101 – Being Successful at Abertay</td>
<td>714 (100%)</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABE102 – Successful Writing at Abertay</td>
<td>410 (55.7%)</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABE103 – Digital Skills for University &amp; Beyond</td>
<td>355 (48.2%)</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABE104 – Dundee and Me</td>
<td>191 (26%)</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABE105 – Research &amp; Enquiry Skills for the Digital Age</td>
<td>310 (42.1%)</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABE107 – Planning your future career</td>
<td>490 (66.6%)</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABE108 – Welcome to the CommuniTAY</td>
<td>92 (12.5%)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABE109 – Wellbeing tools &amp; tricks</td>
<td>278 (37.8%)</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Drivers for a diagnostic approach?

- 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?
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?
## Student success

### Student Views
- Value
- Belonging
- Identity

### Student Outcomes
- Discovery
- Achievement
- Connection
- Opportunity

### Student Support
- Enabled
- Personalised

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**Analyzing Definitions – A Typology of Student Success**
*(Coates, Kelly & Naylor, 2016)*
Conversation 4: Your definitions

I define student success as 

My institution defines student success as 

My students feel successful when 

abertay.ac.uk