



Micro: QAA Collaborative Cluster: Personalised Approaches to Resilience and Community (PARC)

Diagnostic Testing at Transition to HEI – Student/Programme (Micro) level implications

How can we best enable student success when our students enter our universities with an increasingly diverse range of abilities and skills?

PARC seeks to develop, implement and evaluate activities that better prepare the individual student to be successful through the adoption of diagnostic testing of students on pre-arrival/arrival.

This paper highlights the potential impact of diagnostic testing on the experiences of **individual students** at the institution. It discusses how diagnostic testing at your institution could support students' skills development, confidence and integration into the learning community.

A personalised transition into university with opportunities to take up development activities focused around individual needs is more important than ever, as students who have experienced 18 months of educational disruption take their first steps into our institutions. These students may well be underprepared for university study, feel less than confident in their abilities and have gaps in their learning, as well as potentially experiencing challenges to their mental health.

Keywords: *Students, personalisation, empowerment, success.*

Potential for impact on students

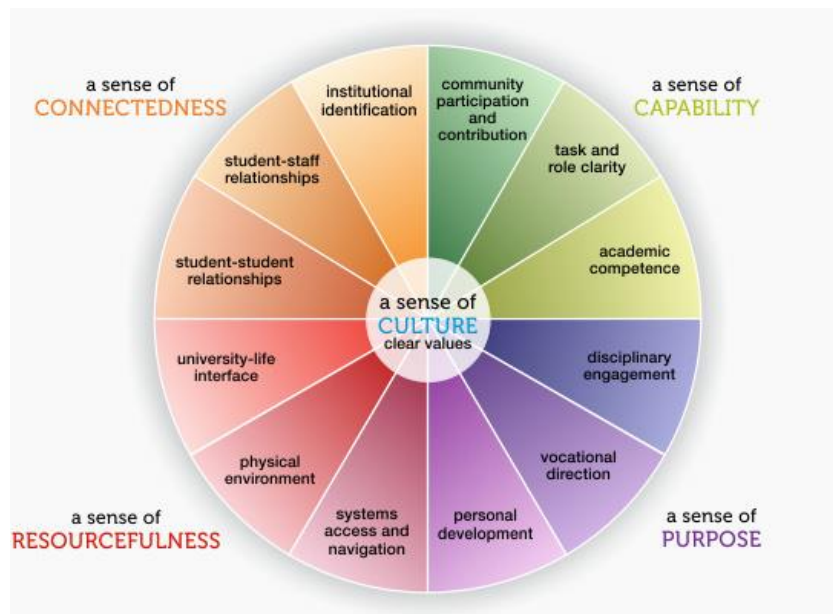
In utilising a diagnostic approach as students enter University, there is potential to directly impact them through creating a personalised, empowering learning experience:

- **Setting and understanding expectations.** Questions within the diagnostic can be designed to get students thinking about their expectations of university, as well as putting across some of the expectations the university has of them.
- **Improving confidence.** Using a 'strengths and areas for development' approach the tool can highlight skills students already possess. Students coming to university following a disrupted period of learning at school may be apprehensive about their ability to cope with study at this level. Reporting on their strengths and highlighting the support available to them could settle their worries, improve their confidence and empower them to actively drive their own learning journey.
- **Establishing gaps in understanding.** A diagnostic tool can provide an opportunity to (gently) highlight areas for development and provide an opportunity for students to begin to address these early in their university journey.
- **Raising awareness of the availability of support.** Part of the reporting process can include signposting and linking to the support systems available around the university. This means that students have an early understanding of where to find support when they need it and also have the chance to engage with that support straight away. This helps to 'normalise' engagement with university services that offer development and support. It moves away from the student view of these services as being remedial to one of developmental in which they are expected to engage.
- **Establishing support networks.** The tool offers opportunities to link students, personal tutors, central support services and subject teaching staff into a network that can utilise the outcomes to support students in a variety of ways – academic, wellbeing and digital, for example.
- **Tailoring of subject teaching to specific cohort needs.** A cohort report provided to a module leader enables them to embed development areas into their teaching and **impact student**

learning at the start of the academic year, rather than waiting for the first assignment to be marked before this can happen.

A key framework to consider (Student lifecycle model)

The student lifecycle model developed by Lizzio (2006) may be useful to use as a framework for considering student transition into and through your institution and highlights how the integration of diagnostic testing could enhance and personalise existing transitional/induction arrangements.



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

Questions to consider:

- How would diagnostic testing fit in with the existing arrangements for students entering your institution?
- What questions would you like to ask students that would help shape and personalise their study priorities?
- How could you use such a tool to enable students to engage with support systems and resources early in their time at university?
- How might it best be used to set student expectations of learning at your university and defining what successful looks like?

Useful References

- Briggs, A. & Clarke, J. (2012) Building Bridges: understanding student transition to university. *Quality in Higher Education*, 18(1), pp 3 – 21.
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