

‘SOMEWHERE TO HANG YOUR HAT’: THE SCHEMA AND SCAFFOLDING BENEFITS OF UNIT NARRATIVES AND ACTIVITY-LEVEL LEARNING OUTCOMES

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For accredited undergraduate programs like Psychology, it's often necessary for junior and intermediate units to cover the full breadth of the discipline to give students the foundational knowledge to build on in senior units. As a result of this, one unit may feature multiple series of content that are seemingly only slightly related or even from entirely disparate sub-disciplines, often with separate academics responsible for the content, leading to a siloing of each series. Given this may happen across multiple units, students are getting a fractured and fragmented experience of their Psychology program, and without intervention they are often left to piece it together on their own. Recognising this problem, we are introducing unit narratives and actionable activity-level learning outcomes to enable our students to complete the puzzle – we believe the former will give students the chance to develop schema to structure their understanding of their unit(s) in a meaningful way, and the latter will allow them to colour in that structure to the best of their ability. Beyond helping the cohort of students in each unit, we believe this will also give confidence to each of our academics for their role in our program's story and what students are to take away from their contribution, as well as better position our School to adapt to the rapidly changing assessment landscape by having a fully realised and granular overview of our curriculum. To determine the status quo and to evaluate the effectiveness of this new approach, we have been funded by a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) grant – we will conduct semi-structured interviews with groups of our First Year students and individually with the academics that teach into our First Year units, as well as an analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data from relevant Unit of Study Surveys.

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