

TOWARDS A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION: IDENTIFYING THE GAP BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS OF FIRST YEAR SCIENCE STUDENTS AND TEACHING STAFF

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ABSTRACT

It is well known that students in the sciences face many challenges when they first embark on their tertiary education; but issues also confront academics when developing teaching and learning activities for these students. Academics teaching pure and applied sciences at one Australian regional university face more challenges than most because of the large cohort of off-campus and mature age students, along with a higher than average proportion of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. These factors, combined with an ever increasing reliance on online learning technologies, have led to a review of current approaches to the first year experience. This paper reports on a project that aims to identify the similarities and mismatches between expectations of first year students and teaching staff in the sciences, as well as the experiences and challenges of teaching these first year science students. The results from an analysis of responses to a series of questionnaires and interviews will be presented, with a view towards identifying areas of the first year experience that could be improved for first year science students and the staff who teach them.

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