



# **VICE CHANCELLOR'S TRANSITION AND RETENTION TASKFORCE**

## CONFIRMED MINUTES

A meeting of the VC's Transition and Retention Taskforce was held on **Wednesday 01 December 2021** from **3.30 to 4.30 pm** via **Zoom**

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### **1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS**

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#### **1.1 Welcome**

Simon Bedford (Chair) opened the meeting and welcomed members and guest.

#### **Attendees**

Simon Bedford, PVC Learning Futures (Chair)

Natalie Bradbury, Director, Student Retention & Success

Michael Burgess, Chief Student Experience Officer

Jo-Anne Chuck, Head of Teaching and Curriculum

Colin Clark, Project Officer, Learning Futures

Jess Gleeson, Director, Data Integrity, Quality & Operations

Caterina Tannous, Director of Undergraduate Health Science & STARS/START Lead

Lynnae Venaruzzo, Head, Technology-Enabled Learning

#### **1.2 Invitees**

#### **1.3 Apologies**

Christine Croser, Director, Office of Competitive Intelligence & Analysis

#### **1.4 Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26th October 2021 were accepted without revision.

#### **1.5 Action sheet from previous meeting**

To assist members with monitoring and controlling the work of the Committee, the current action sheet (incorporating items arising from previous meetings) was discussed.

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### **2 GENERAL BUSINESS**

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#### **2.1 Research questions and ethics application (Jo Chuck)**

Prior to the meeting, Task force members were asked to rank the research questions presented to the group in October. The following two research questions were ranked highest.

- Does the availability of flexible learning/hyflex options effect transition or retention of students?

- Does offering different delivery options (e.g., face-to-face, online synchronous/asynchronous) via locked-in student choice models effect retention of students compared with allowing non-time dependant and free student transition between modes?

The members considered that any research would require clear definitions of ‘flexible learning’ and related concepts, as well as human ethics approval. The research projects will need access to data, such as the ability to identify study modalities at the activity level, and discrimination between timetable options that are ‘locked-in’ or ‘fluid’ during the term. These options are decided by Schools, not the Taskforce. One option is a targeted comparison of Schools with different delivery models. The evaluation metrics will be retention, based on the definition used by Prof. Sally Kift, and student success indicators such as grades, GPA, and progression rates.

Other issues included:

- Asynchronous teaching is not timetable.
- The need to capture timetable options that change during the term.
- The need for high quality of data that is dependent on School practices (including timetable capture data).
- The need for appropriate student tracking data. Zoom or BB Collaborate may be used to provide attendance data in the on-line space, however for other activities, mandatory recording of student attendance does not happen at present.
- Controls are required for quality of teaching/modality.

**Action:** Commence ethics application and investigate data sources (JC/CC).

## **2.2 Transition and Retention Strategy: review of 2021 and planning for 2022**

### **(Jo Chuck)**

At Senate Education Committee (SEC, Aug 2021), Schools were asked to evaluate their Transition and Retention strategy based on their workplans provided to SEC in April 2021. These data were to be used to construct a SEC paper, evaluating the impact of the University wide strategy. On reflection of the Schools’ responses, it was often clear that their work was not aligned to their workplans and not reporting on the progress of their identified themes or targets. While the success or otherwise of their new initiatives was not discounted, it made evaluation of the Strategy difficult.

The taskforce proposed that a template pre-populated with the April workplan goals, be provided to Schools so the returned information would align with agreed metrics and targeted activities.

The members discussed access to data to measure transition/retention. Schools could also use program review reports from Data Integrity, Quality and Operations. Retention data remains difficult to source, e.g., past year 1 with relevant databases appearing to be offline and needed to be reinstated.

**Actions:** MB to contact Stephen Butcher. SB to write to Christine Croser regarding dashboard availability. Colin Clark to approach Royson Valore about accessing program review reports.

## **2.3 Update on Step to Success (Jo Chuck/Natalie Bradbury)**

To increase uptake of the Step to Success program, ACAs and DAPs are currently being approached for student referrals, especially during results processing.

To promote the program to students, Western Success is planning to incorporate messaging about Step to Success as part of student communications aligned with results release. Moreover, a webinar will be held in the lead up to The College Term 1.

The program has been promoted at a recent Course Leaders' forum and to ADT&Ls, with mostly positive responses, although there remains a perception that load is being transferred to The College.

There is a possibility of opening the program to elective subjects and more courses.

The next recruitment drive will be in January, and the program will be discussed with STARS coordinators at their Community of Practice event on December 3<sup>rd</sup>. A flow chart and FAQ webpage have been created, with a student referral form for DAPs and ACAs.

**Action Item:** Jess Gleeson to investigate whether there are supplementary examinations in February, so to include a program of messaging for this cohort of students.

## **2.4 WSU Golden Record (Michael Burgess)**

An SEO team has been building its capability to manage its own data and transitioning it into the Golden Record (a database of student information). The team is considering failure rates, definitions of "failing" (e.g., F, FNS), and other data to facilitate the identification of students "at risk". This could be information based on a single subject, several subjects, or at a program level, depending on the definition of "at risk" used. The team requires input on what data to include and what definitions to use.

It was noted that the University's progression policy has definitions, for example, using unsatisfactory progress based on GPA. There is also a government Job-Ready Graduate definition of failing more than 50% of subjects, noting different criteria for Bachelor and Post-Graduate degrees.

Other criteria for intervention may include:

- Indicators of graduate outcome success – finding a job, employability indicators
- Time to completion measures
- Subject consumption and retention
- Study Leave applications and repeated subject attempts

## **2.5 Update on STARS/START (Cathy Tannous)**

The STARS network now includes an academic coordinator from each School, with new members nominated from the Schools of Science (Luke Barnes), Psychology (David Arness) and Computer, Data and Mathematical Sciences (Leanne Rylands)

The second STARS Community of Practice session (3<sup>rd</sup> Dec 2021) included discussions on:

- Learn2Learn and RefQuest (Speakers from TEL)
- Step to Success program (Cathy Tannous)
- Academic Integrity Module rollout for 2022 (Sandy Noakes, SoL)
- Using data to monitor student retention and success. Review of the dashboards

- available (Steve McGrath from CIA)
- Planning for 2022. We anticipate the group will meet bimonthly.

START research program facilitated the recent *How to Research and Publish your Teaching* session in Research Week. This was a success, with 150 registrations and about 100 attendees. The feedback was positive – 88.9% strongly or somewhat agreed that the workshop was useful, and they could apply what was learnt to their teaching and learning practices.

Participants requested future sessions on i) grant writing for Teaching and Learning research, ii) engaging students in Teaching and Learning research and iii) publishing in higher education journals.

The annual START report for HREC will be due soon so chief investigators will be approached for project progress/publications.

**Action:** Colin Clark to complete annual START report

**2.6 (For noting) Access, retention, attainment and progression: an integrative review of demonstrable impact on student outcomes (Sheffield Hallam University): Review article**

A summary of a literature review led by academic staff from Sheffield Hallam University (UK) was distributed to the task force members. The review covered demonstrable impacts on access, retention, attainment and progression from a wide variety of interventions. It emphasised the importance of early intervention and assessment, financial aid pre-and post-entry, interventions aligned with curriculum, personal support and guidance, use of learner analytics, and the concept of ‘mattering’, i.e., that the student feels they matter to the university.

The review and podcasts can be accessed via the following link:  
[AdvanceHET&Rreport](#)

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**3 NEXT MEETING**

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- 3.1** The next meeting will be on Tuesday February 8, 2022, from 2:00 to 3:30pm.