

Students supporting Students, using Undergraduate Communities of Practice and Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS)

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Undergraduate Communities of Practice: how may they be designed, structured, and implemented for the improvement of the undergraduate student experience?

It is widely recognised that the quality of the student experience (particularly in the first year) establishes how students adjust academically, socially and emotionally to the University environment, which in turn affects their academic performance and retention (Tinto, 1993; Krause et al, 2005). A sense of belonging and connectedness with their program and career choice are factors cited as directly related to the quality of the student experience. The difficulties of establishing these senses are exacerbated by the decreasing time that students spend on campus and increasingly choose to study entirely off campus (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent & Scales, 2009). The reasons that some students lack engagement or leave study are not simply academic - they also cite feeling unsupported, isolated and stress as significant factors (Lau 2012). These issues strongly impact on the student experience, and are consistently found in both on and off campus populations (Nelson et al, 2008).

Whilst university student surveys show that formal academic student needs are being met by the accredited bachelor programs in place, students studying in all modes report that they may feel isolated and make few friends during their time at University (Nelson et al, 2008). Informal communities are spontaneously formed face to face and online via social media to counteract these issues, but they usually lack structure and the leadership to define professional boundaries. Learning communities such as Communities of Practice (CoPs) offer an opportunity to increase professional 'connectedness' and may be found in both face-to-face and online spaces or a blend of both. Communities of Practice promote improving practice and enhancing the learning of members in a supportive environment through mutually shared interests and goals. They are centred on concern and deep collaboration around practice and are embedded in the concept that people learn better in a socially networked environment with a focus on knowledge sharing. Members share a Vygotsky based apprenticeship-style interaction between an expert and novice, whereby less experienced members are inducted into the profession (Wenger et al, 2002). Undergraduate education may be viewed as in intellectual apprenticeship, and therefore a CoP would be likely to support this transformation from student to practicing evaluator. Bryk and Schneider (2002) cite James Coleman's theory of social capital as fundamental to the success of learning communities. They determined that learning communities build trust and that this affects student engagement and learning because vulnerability is reduced and students become more willing to engage in public problem solving which is a cornerstone of effective, active student

learning and midwifery practice. Despite this knowledge of CoPs, there is little in the literature as to their use in the undergraduate space, how best they may be structured and facilitated, or what benefits they may provide (Andrew et al, 2008). Therefore an investigation to determine the theoretical and practical roles of undergraduate CoPs is appropriate, and the structural and practical issues of developing and implementing one for a cohort of Midwifery students using McDonald et al's (2012) nurtured/supported model is reported in this paper

'Peer Assisted Study Sessions to Facilitate Transition for International Students'

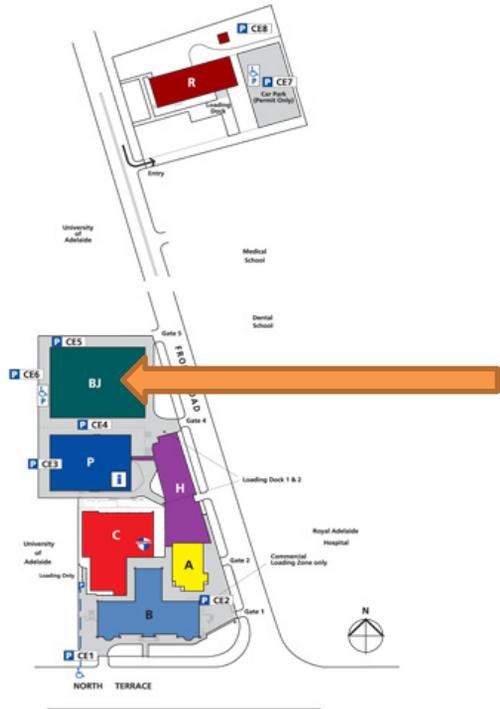
Abstract: Commencing university as an international student involves adjustment to multiple cultural frameworks: the host-nation culture, the multicultural student cohort, the institutional culture of the university, and the disciplinary culture of the area of study. Host-nation students may already possess much of this cultural knowledge and share learning spaces with international students but the two

groups do not necessarily interact. We felt that these issues could be addressed using Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS). PASS employs established, high-achieving students to facilitate study sessions for new students. In PASS, the facilitator acts as a model student, rather than as a teacher, as the group works through the study material together. This format provides a structured, discipline-based forum for interaction in a non-threatening, non-assessed context. In this project, Australian third year bachelor students acted as PASS facilitators for new international masters students, leading study session activities focussed on scientific communication skills. The results from this project provide insight into how peer interaction can facilitate transition to a new academic culture for international students.

City East campus



	Location
Barbara Hardy Institute	BJ
Bookshop	C
BreastScreen SA	BJ
Brookman Hall (Wheelchair access via Centenary Building)	B
Cafe	A
Cafeteria	A
Campus Central	P
CELUSA Centre for English Language in the University of South Australia	B
Centre for Applied Psychological Research	P
Centre for Sleep Research	P
Computer Barns	B, P
Computer Pools	C (access via Library) B, BJ, P
Division of Health Science	
Division office	P
Office of the Pro Vice Chancellor	P
FM Assist	P
HLS Health & Fitness Centre	C
Indigenous Student Service	P
Learning and Teaching Unit	P
Lecture Theatres	C, H, P
Library (entry via northern entrance)	B
Multi-Access Suite	B
Nutritional Physiology research Centre	BJ
Physiotherapy Clinic	C
Podiatry Clinic	C
Prayer Rooms	P
SAIBT South Australia Institute of Business and Technology	B
Sansom Institute for Health Research Main Office	P
School of Health Sciences	C
Centenary Office	C
Exercise and Physiology Clinic	C
Exercise Clinic	P
Head of School	C
Human Movement	H, P
Medical Radiation	BJ
Occupational Therapy	BJ
Physiotherapy	C
Podiatry	C
School of Natural and Built Environments	BJ
School of Nursing and Midwifery	C
School of Pharmacy and Medical Sciences School Office	C, H, P, R
security	P
Student Common Room	C
Transport Systems Centre	P
BJ	BJ
Ultrasound Clinical Skills Centre	BJ
UniLife	C
UniLife Counter	P
UniLife Representatives, Admin & Advocates	C
All Enquiries to: Campus Central	I
Information & Campus Services, Level 3	P
Security	
Freecall	1800 500 911
Internal	88 888
Contact Numbers	
Campus Central	8302 2511
Learning & Teaching Unit	1300 657 122
Library	1300 137 659
UniLife	8302 2882
UniLife Representatives & Advocates	8302 2881
UniSA Switchboard	8302 6611



Building legend

A	Food and Beverage Services
B	Brookman Building
BJ	Bonython Jubilee Building
C	Centenary Building
H	Basil Hetzel Building
P	Playford Building
R	Reid Building