Festival of Learning Showcase

Facilitator(s): Mr Raphael Pereira, Student Transition and Retention Team (START) and Mr Peter Allen, School of Psychology and Speech Pathology

Strategic theme: Leading in innovative education

Subject Title: A three-year evaluation of UniPASS: A peer-led academic support program at Curtin University

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Brief Description/Abstract for the T&L Forum:

UniPASS is an accredited, peer-led academic support program at Curtin University currently supporting 37 units with a history of difficulty. A typical UniPASS session is facilitated by a trained peer educator who models and guides collaborative learning in a safe, non-hierarchical learning environment. Sessions are voluntary, open to all students in the unit, and non-remedial.

Bivariate analyses suggest that regular UniPASS participation is associated with substantially higher grades and pass rates. However, such analyses do not account for the possibility that regular UniPASS participants out-perform their non-regular peers simply because they are more capable and/or motivated to begin with. In the current research, this limitation, along with several others which pervade the peer assisted study session (PASS) literature, is addressed. We used UniPASS participation in a series of Generalised Linear Mixed Models (GLMMs) to predict the unit grades and pass rates for the population of students enrolled in UniPASS supported units in second semester 2012, 2013 and 2014, after controlling for university entrance rank, first semester performance and UniPASS participation, and a range of demographic factors. GLMM is preferable to ordinary least squares and logistic regression as it can account for dependencies arising from nested data structures (e.g., students nested within classes), repeated observations of the same subjects, and can also handle both normal and non-normal outcomes. Results indicated a robust and meaningful UniPASS effect on both unit grades and pass rates, which persisted after controlling for pre-existing differences in ability, motivation and demographics.

Time/Day: Thursday 19 March 2015, 10:30 – 11:30am

Duration: 45 minutes

No. of Sessions: One

Venue: Building 300:Rm219

Special Requirements: No special requirements needed