



Student Engagement in Psychology Programs

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Step 2010 Project: Student engagement at UniSA

- STEP 2010 launched in 2007 for the implementation of a new Teaching and Learning Framework.
- Improve the quality and quantity of student engagement in *all* University programs
- A focus on three components of experiential learning:
 - teaching-research nexus,
 - practice-based learning and
 - service learning.
- A focus on what students do, rather than what staff do.

Domains of student engagement

The teaching-research nexus: a culture of scholarship as a basis for teaching and research

- Students learn to do research, about research and its contribution to the discipline.

Practice-based learning: links disciplinary knowledge to professional outcomes

- Students learn in the workplace or complete activities that emulate those undertaken by professionals and use the tools of the profession.

Service learning: the application of knowledge to actions of citizenship, meeting community needs, fostering community partnerships

- Students learn through the application and accommodation of knowledge, through personal reflection and the development of personal attributes.

Student engagement in psychology: teaching-research nexus

Psychology: a science and a practice, a long tradition of teaching research skills (APAC, 2008)

- At undergraduate level, students learn about the scientific basis of the discipline and learn the process of research
- At postgraduate level, students learn that science underpins evidence-based practice within the discipline, and practice informs the endeavour of knowledge creation

Student engagement in psychology: practice-based and service learning

Practice-based learning

Psychology: includes training in psychological practice at postgraduate level, training in psychological assessment, therapy and during placements

Service learning

Psychology: little formal emphasis on service learning per se, although some volunteering experience is valued for entry into postgraduate professional training

Mapping and comparing psychology courses for student engagement experiences

Two main activities:

- Mapping the student engagement content of courses;
- Benchmarking student engagement activities against local competitors and interstate GO8 and ATN universities.

Other sources of information

- CEQ data
- Suggestions from staff on the development of student engagement

Mapping psychology courses at UniSA

- Courses from four programs: Bachelor of Psychological Science, Bachelor of Psychology (Honours), Master of Psychology (Clinical), Master of Psychology (Work and Organisational).
- From these, all core courses for each program, and non-core undergraduate courses which stream into the two Masters programs were mapped (42 courses)
- Course co-ordinators interviewed and provided:
 - The number of hours and percentage of assignments dedicated to student engagement.
 - Examples of student engagement experiences.
 - Suggestions provided for improving student engagement within courses, thematically coded to identify the emerging themes.

Benchmarking interviews

Two Universities: one GO8, one ATN

Interviews addressed:

- the understanding of student engagement at the target university and
- the types, quantity, and quality of student engagement activities and experiences offered.

Interviews 1-1.5 hours, recorded, transcribed, unique themes were identified and coded.

Percentage of student engagement content in hours and the proportion of assessment for each program

Program	T-R Nexus	Practice-based learning	Service Learning	Total SE content	Assessment involving SE
B Psych Science	21.0%	23.2%	0.0%	44.2%	38.0%
B Psych Hons	38.5%	17.9%	0.0%	56.4%	42.0%
M Psych (Clinical)	28.2%	46.0%	0.0%	59.9%	76.0%
M Psych (Work & Org)	44.3%	32.1%	0.0%	54.1%	76.0%
Total across all programs	31.6%	31.2%	0.0%	53.7%	59.0%

Student engagement examples

Teaching research nexus

- Research report in which students design a questionnaire of participant attitudes to a contemporary issue and then use the questionnaire to answer a research hypothesis
- Students complete an independent research project as their Honours thesis
- Students critique theories and studies that have shaped the course of psychology

Student engagement examples

Practice-based learning

- Students apply knowledge and theory to solve a hypothetical organisational problem
- Students visit an Indigenous mental health organisation to learn about Indigenous mental health
- Students discuss psychological therapies and their applications

Suggestions for improving student engagement experiences

General

- Increase flexibility in teaching and learning arrangements
- Have smaller class sizes
- software/materials to support student engagement
- Improve tutor skills and retention
- Reconceptualise the way psychology students should be taught

T-R nexus

- Integrate postgraduates into the undergraduate program
- Provide opportunities for direct research experiences (e.g., placements, participation in studies)
- Improve clinical psychology program of research within the School
- Increase workload allocation for thesis supervision (to allow more time with students)
- Increase exposure to research conducted by our staff

Practice-based learning

- Introduce practice-based or service learning placements
- Include more and better qualified guest speakers²
- Increase the number of practical (skill application) sessions
- Develop simulation activities (e.g., court, assessment centre)
- Video fieldwork activities for discussion in class
- Provide time in staff workload for practice

Service learning

- Enhance (or introduce) the fieldwork activities/visits
- Form partnerships with organisations for service learning/fieldwork
- Set-up 'spaces' for T-R-P nexus involving staff and students across the School in interaction with the community

Other Universities' understanding of student engagement

GO8

- Promoting engagement with studies and campus life to increase student retention.
- Engagement activities targeted at first year.

ATN

- Work-integrated learning, involving authentic assessment, the application of knowledge, and community service or engagement
- The application of knowledge and skills to their and careers
- A vibrant campus life and experience.

GO8 University's student engagement activities and experiences

T-R nexus the major form of student engagement experiences

- Enquiry-based activities
- Intensive research experience offered to high achieving students
- Taught by staff who engage in research, practice psychology and supervise research
- Integration of practice experiences and professionally-relevant scenarios in lectures
- No service learning component within undergraduate psychology
- Level A tutors help students feel connected to the school
- Students deemed ready to engage in practice-based and service learning later in their degree

ATN University's student engagement activities and experiences

- Research reports and participation in research projects
- Emphasis on practice-based learning with three dedicated courses:
 1. First year: careers and graduate employment destinations.
 2. Third year: field placement including researching the organisation, identifying learning outcomes and reflection.
 3. Honours level: practice-based learning experience providing solutions to a contemporary organisational challenge for real client organisations.
- Teaching, research, and practice recognised in senior roles within the School including a Director of Community Engagement.
- Students deemed ready to engage in practice-based and service learning from first year.

Next steps toward 2010

- Formulate a plan for increasing practice-based and service learning within undergraduate psychology
- Integration of teaching, research and practice
- Develop the 3-year BPsychological Science degree in conjunction with APAC, industry and community to provide training for clear employment outcomes
- Evaluate the changes in collaboration with other ATN University(s)

Questions?



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