Understanding the gaps between first year students’ expectations and experiences may help you bridge them

A workshop to disseminate the Staff and Student Experience and Expectations Research Results

Monday 17th February, 1.00-4.30pm at Murdoch University, Learning Link Building, LL 1.004
(see http://maps.murdoch.edu.au/show/building/south-street)
To register for this event (required for catering purposes) please email D.Macnish@murdoch.edu.au

OR

Tuesday 18th February, 9:30am-1pm at Building 8 Level 2 Room 201b, Edith Cowan University, 270 Joondalup Drive, Joondalup WA 6018. To register for this event (required for catering purposes) please contact Zina Cordery v.cordery@ecu.edu.au by Friday 14th February.

In the current university climate where student numbers are continually increasing and funding to institutions are decreasing do you have concerns about teaching first year students? Do you feel that it is no longer possible to rely on students having the requisite knowledge or skills that you relied upon when teaching them in past years? Are your expectations of students changing? Do you want to know more about what students expect from their experience at university and from their teaching staff?

The Staff and Student Experience and Expectations (SSEE) project, funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council and its successor the Office for Learning and Teaching, surveyed over 18,000 students from all three universities in South Australia and matched student survey data with their academic outcomes (http://www.adelaide.edu.au/teaching-projects/expectations/). The findings have indicated several areas where significant gaps occur in students’ expectations and experiences.

Although students’ expectations are derived from a variety of sources which include friends, family members, school counsellors, and information circulated by universities these expectations do not always reflect reality. In many cases the gaps between students’ expectations and their actual experiences have ramifications for student learning and satisfaction, as well as for retention and ultimately their overall well-being. These gaps are even wider for non-traditional students who are now entering universities in increasing numbers as a result of government policies to widen participation and uncap student places. The SSEE research shows that the students who have more realistic expectations of university life appear to have improved adaptation to the university environment.

In the workshop participants will:

- Reflect on their own expectations of first year undergraduate students and consider how these expectations influence their interactions with first year students practice;
- Discover what first year students’ have said about their expectations and experiences
- Consider implications for potentially high risk student groups (e.g. First in Family students) and the differences of experiences and expectations across these cohorts
- Develop strategies for addressing the gaps between student expectations and experiences within their own institution

Workshop participants will be provided with resources developed from the project that will help them develop a greater understanding of student expectations as well as strategies to provide more effective support for incoming students.

Both workshops will be facilitated by Dr Ann Luzeckyj and Dr Sharron King:

Dr Ann Luzeckyj is a Lecturer in Higher Education and First Year Undergraduate Teaching Adviser at Flinders University. Ann’s role allows her to draw on her knowledge and experience to provide advice and support to staff who work with first year students.

Dr Sharron King is a Senior Lecturer in Health Sciences at the University of South Australia. Her current research includes collaborative grants on student’s expectations and experiences of university study, student’s physical and emotional health and well-being during transition, and the affective dimensions of teaching and learning interactions.