

Improving Retention, completion and success in higher education Higher Education Standards Panel Discussion Paper, June 2017

Response from Monash University Library

Questions to guide discussion (Page 9 of Discussion paper)

The questions that are of specific relevance to academic libraries are as follows:

Supporting students to complete their studies

6. What identification, intervention and support strategies are most effective in improving student completion? (A list of strategies that have been suggested in this paper are at p66).

How could support strategies be better promoted and more utilised by those students who most need them?

Response: Learner engagement is well understood as essential for learning and completion, across all levels and types of education. For higher education students, this extends to all aspects of their learning journey and Institutional experience. Active use of their academic libraries has been shown to be central to student engagement with their studies and academic success.¹ Thus, the earlier students form effective patterns of physical and virtual use of their libraries resources, services and programs, the better they are likely to perform and the more likely they are to complete their studies.

Of the list of suggested strategies for improving student completion, it is suggested that the *Prior to entry* category also include reference to early development of a broad understanding of effective independent study and learning strategies, including effective use of academic libraries. It is also suggested that under *Teaching and learning*, the focus on effective learning and teaching strategies include development of effective skills for independent study and research, including use of academic libraries.

Support strategies could be more effectively used by students by greater sector consistency in both early communication to students prior to entry and their targeted, increasingly personalised inclusion at key times of the student journey across the weeks of semester or term and duration of their course. This includes elements of the Library experience for students at key times.

Disseminating best practice

8. What new and innovative approaches do evaluations suggest are improving student completion at individual higher education providers?

Expectations of increasingly personalised, tailored online experiences are occurring in all aspects of life, and are understood to increasingly drive engagement and satisfaction eg in the realm of online shopping and its interface with the physical retail experience (through SmartPhone technologies). In the higher education environment, personalised learning analytics provide great opportunities for individualised, targeted strategies to be communicated to students at point of need, eg through personalised online messaging or virtual 'mentors' (robotic VR or human). This could include

¹ Monash University Library 2015 User Survey results showed that 79% of students who used the Library achieved at least a Distinction.

personalised content related to learning strategies, skills development and Library services, programs and resources. Feedback from students² regularly reiterates the important role academic libraries play in providing individual and collaborative learning spaces that act as motivational and inspiring physical environments for learning. Personalised learning analytics provide opportunities for increasingly tailored approaches by Libraries to meet the study and research needs of students, eg in suggesting use of a collaborative Library space for a student working on a group assignment.

² During periodic focus groups at Monash University Library with representatives from University student associations.