Queensland University of Technology (QUT)
The Student Success Program (SSP)

Context and purpose
The SSP is a University-wide student engagement and retention initiative that focuses on the early identification of students who may be at-risk of disengaging from their studies or university providing support before they lose confidence, stop participating, fail assessment or leave. The SSP provides proactive, purposeful advice and referrals to these students. The overall purpose of SSP is to increase student engagement and mitigate the issues related to failure and therefore prevent unnecessary attrition. The SSP monitors all students in a cohort, however, it is particularly focused on the experiences of students from under-represented social groups and those students for whom completion of a university course presents more challenges.

Key institutional references

QUT First Year Experience and Retention Policy
http://www.mopp.qut.edu.au/C/C_06_02.jsp

QUT Blueprint 3 2011–2016

Scale of the activity
The SSP emerged from early work in one faculty during 2004–2005 and a series of feasibility and pilot studies of increasing scope and reach which were funded by internal learning and teaching grants during 2006–2008. By 2009 the SSP was contacting students in all QUT faculties and has continued to grow in scale since then.
The scale of the activity has grown steadily since 2008 as represented in the figure below.

Organisational process

The SSP is organised around a series of campaigns – all of which have specific objectives – related to the student life cycle.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-semester</th>
<th>Orientation &amp; transition</th>
<th>During semester</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>14</td>
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Although originally implemented to support first year commencing students it is now applied to identify students at all stages of their undergraduate program. Drawing on the principles of the SSP, a similar intervention initiative exists for research students at key candidature milestones. Each campaign is subsequently broken down into several sub-campaigns which are operationalised through a series of call lists. A summary of the campaigns, objectives, sub-campaigns and examples of ‘at-risk’ indicators are provided on the following page.
### Campaign

**Follow up of offers**  
When: 48 hours post offer of a place, prior to semester (approx weeks -6 to -4)

- Late to accept.
- Course specific (e.g. engineering).
- To provide advice about university processes and support.
- To assist with administrative issues related to enrolment.
- Delay in accepting offer
- Cohorts under-represented in HE.
- Under-represented in course (e.g. female applicants for engineering).

**Welcome calls**  
Weeks -1 to 3

- Students who do not attend faculty or other ‘required’ orientation events.
- Welcome and welcome back to students from specific cohorts.
- To support commencing students by providing university and course specific information and advice.
- To emphasise and promote behaviours related to success for commencing cohorts.
- Absent from key orientation events.
- Member of known ‘at-risk’ cohort (e.g. rural students).
- Students without ‘assumed knowledge’.

**Learning engagement**  
(Weeks 2–13 of semester)

- Students in particular courses/programs.
- Students enrolled in particular units.
- To improve persistence and achievement of at-risk students.
- Absence from classes.
- Low or very high levels of on-line activity (LMS).
- Failure to submit or failure in progressive assessment items.
- Students in ‘at-risk’ courses (e.g. external courses).

**Cohort-specific**  
(Weeks 2–13 of semester)

- Administrative campaigns.
- Secondary school students.
- To reduce enrolment issues caused by administrative errors.
- To support school students undertaking a unit of study while simultaneously finishing senior.
- Bring over-enrolled with a low GPA.
- Enrolled without unit activity.
- Being a secondary school student.

**Academic performance**  
(weeks -4 to 2 and 5–6 of semester)

- First year at-risk students.
- First year students ‘on-probation’.
- To reduce the number of ‘at-risk’ students progressing to probation.
- To reduce the number of the ‘on probation’ students being excluded.
- Grade point average (GPA) < 4 in first and second semester.
- Meeting the criteria for on-probation.

**International student progression**  
(weeks -4 to 2 and 5–6 of semester)

- All international students identified as ‘at-risk’ or ‘on-probation’.
- To monitor international student progression (ESOS requirement).
- To provide advice, support and referral to services for International students.
- International students with GPA < 4 in first or second semester.
- International students who meet the criteria for probation.

Student Support Services which is responsible for organising orientation and other student life events and the provision of professional services such as counselling, careers, health services are key partners in the SSP, however, most functional areas of the university are involved in aspects of the SSP, including Student Business Services (student administration), faculty student support and student affairs, course and subject coordinators, international student services, academic skills advisers, language learning advisers.
The SSP is supported by a custom built contact management system — called Outreach which supports operations, evaluation and reporting of outcomes.

Outcomes and evaluation

The SSP is now an integral retention strategy at QUT that operates in a federated model between centrally provided services and in all QUT faculties and most undergraduate courses. Evidence of the impact of the SSP on student engagement and retention for various campaigns includes:

- **Follow up of offers**: An increase in acceptances by +1.8% and a corresponding decrease in rejected, lapsed and no responses. 74% of students who had not yet accepted a QUT offer and were successfully contacted by the SSP subsequently accepted their offer. 25% of students, who had not accepted an offer and reported to the SSP that they were undecided, subsequently accepted a QUT offer. Of the students who were not able to be contacted only 41% accepted a QUT offer.

- **Learning engagement**: An average difference in unit persistence (+10%) and achievement (+1 point on the 7 point scale) for students successfully contacted during the semester between 2008 and 2010.

- **Learning engagement**: A difference in student retention of +13%, in 2009 and 2010 of at-risk students successfully contacted in 2008 and 2009 respectively.

- **Academic performance**: A +10.6% difference in achievement and a +12% increase in enrolment status of students with a GPA less than 4 and successfully contacted at the end of semester.

- **The total impact** of the SSP intervention on student re-enrolment (across all campaigns) in 2011 was +4.8%. Analysis of the student data shows that 227 more students who were at-risk and successfully contacted by the SSP re-enrolled in the following semester (semester 2, 2011 or semester 1, 2012), compared with those students who were at-risk and not able to be contacted.

- **The estimated retained income** through the retention of an additional 2279 students is $3,745,000 for every remaining year of their enrolment.

SSP was recognised at the QUT 2012 Vice-Chancellor's Awards for Excellence. The Program took out a team award (Mixed – Professional and Academic) and was nominated for the following areas: Learning and teaching; Partnerships and engagement; Innovative and creative practice; and Leadership.

SSP was awarded with an Australian Award for University Teaching Citations for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning in September 2012. Announced by Australia’s Minister for Tertiary Education, Senator Chris Evans, the Program was awarded for ‘... a sustained commitment to proactively delivering tailored advice and referral to students so that they are empowered to reach their individual academic goals’.

In November 2012, the SSP was awarded with an Award for Programs that Enhance Learning in the 2012 Australian Awards for University Teaching. Announced by Senator Chris Evans, the Minister commented that the Program ‘... has set a benchmark for ongoing learning and teaching activities in Australian higher education institutions and the dedication of your team will continue to significantly impact student learning.’

Student Success Program website


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9 Estimated average total income $16,500 per student.
Critical success factors

These include:

- Key partnerships with institutional stakeholders
- Support and engagement of senior officers
- Philosophical basis that ensures operations are not based on a deficit model
- On-going maintenance and support of IT team
- Acceptance and buy-in of academic staff
- Institutional take up for scale and reach
- Transparency of activities to students.

Challenges

- Maintaining relationships with key stakeholders
- The ad-hoc nature of some sub-campaigns
- Timely reporting to meet the range of audience needs.

Contacts and key staff

- Professor Karen Nelson, Director Student Success & Retention
- Ms Carole Quinn, Manager Student Success Program
- Ms Jo Bennett, Lecturer and FYE & Retention Coordinator.

Key resources

- Scripts, email templates for contact and follow-up contact
- Customised contact management system (Outreach)
- Blackboard information on SSP
- PowerPoint information slides in lectures
- Training programs for SSAs
- Action plan for the student
- Service Agreement with Academic
- Report — to Unit Coordinator.

Dissemination


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Type: Training
Student Success Program (SSP) — Ethical Use of Student information

A critical inclusion in the training activities of the Student Success Advisors (SSA) is the incorporation of information about the ethical use of confidential student information.

In addition to complying with the QUT Code of Conduct (MOPP B/8.1), Student Success Advisors must comply with this code of conduct for dealing with personal information. SSA’s have access to confidential personal information about QUT students obtained from information systems, personal communications with QUT staff or students and discussions within the Student Success Program team. This information includes:

• any information disclosed to them by a QUT student during a telephone call or in an email in their role as a Student Success Advisor
• any information about QUT staff or students (past or present) to which they have access through QUT Virtual, and
• any information about QUT students to which they have access through the Outreach Contact Management System.

The training involves a PowerPoint presentation and group discussion on the ethical use of student information specific to QUT’s Manual of Policies and Procedures (MOPP) and SSAs receive this training prior to their first contact with students. Additionally, and as part of their employment with SSP, new Advisors must sign a ‘Student Success Advisor Code of Conduct for Dealing with Personal Information’.

Ethical Use of Confidential Student Information

Student Success Program Training

Alignment to the Social Justice Principles

This particular resource aligns with the principle of Rights whereby the program ensures the rights of the student and complies with a mandated code of conduct within the institution.

To access both the PowerPoint presentation and the SSA Code of Conduct contract, plus other artefacts associated with SSP, please visit https://safeguardingstudentlearning.net/?page_id=442
### Institutional profile*

The Queensland University of Technology (QUT) is an Australian public university that was established in 1882, becoming a university in 1988. The university has three main campuses in South East Queensland: Garden’s Point and Kelvin Grove (Brisbane) and Caboolture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total student enrolment</th>
<th>40,802</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>30,736</td>
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<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>9,026</td>
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<tr>
<td>Domestic+</td>
<td>83.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>International+</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
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### Student demographics

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<tr>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>1% this is average compared to other institutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regional/remote students+</td>
<td>11.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low SES+#</td>
<td>11.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-English speaking background+</td>
<td>2.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature age (over 25 years) undergraduates</td>
<td>21% this is average compared to other institutions</td>
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### Student study options

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate part-time</td>
<td>17% this is average compared to other institutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Undergraduate external or mixed mode</td>
<td>4% this is average compared to other institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate part-time</td>
<td>54% this is low compared to other institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate external or mixed mode</td>
<td>24% this is low compared to other institutions</td>
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### Student entry details

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<tr>
<td>School-leavers</td>
<td>52% this is average compared to other institutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prior TAFE credits</td>
<td>6% this is low compared to other institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International undergraduates</td>
<td>3,896 this is a big number compared to other institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International postgraduates</td>
<td>2,464 this is a big number compared to other institutions</td>
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+This profile information is from the Australian Government website MyUniversity with data collected for the 2011 year. QUT information is retrieved from http://www.myuniversity.gov.au/Queensland-University-of-Technology/Statistics/3042

#Currently in Australia the SES of higher education students is determined by the geographic area or postcode of the student’s home. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) Index of Education and Occupation (IEO) is used to rank postcodes. The postcodes that comprise the bottom 25% of the population aged between 15 to 64 years at the date of the latest census, based on this ranking, are considered low SES postcodes. Students who have home locations in these low SES postcodes are counted as ‘low SES’ students.