The TAFE/VET student experience at UWS: 2010 -2013

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Overview

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On the basis on 2013 enrolments, UWS ranks 6th nationally for numbers of commencing undergraduate TAFE/VET pathways students.

From a peak of 2316 students in 2011, the number of commencing pathways students has since fallen to 1556 in 2013.
Certificate III and Certificate IV qualified students have grown to make up over 70% of commencing pathways students in 2013.

Percentage of commencing Diploma qualified students has fallen from over 50% in 2011 to less than 26% in 2013.
Commencing enrolments in the Bachelor of Business and Commerce (26%) and the Bachelor of Nursing (17%) accounted for 43% all TAFE/VET pathways students in 2010-2013.

In 2010-2013, 64% of commencing pathways students enrolled in a UWS degree in the same broad field of education as their TAFE/VET qualification.
The Challenges

• Attrition rates for commencing TAFE/VET pathways students in 2010-2013 were on average 14-times greater than UWS mean attrition rates.

• The mean attrition rate for pathways students over the period was 43%, compared to 3% for the UWS undergraduate population.
The Challenges

• In 2013, the pathways student attrition rate improved significantly to ‘only’ 29%.

• The average retention rate for TAFE/VET pathways students over the period 2010-11 to 2013-14 (78%) is on par with non-TAFE/VET pathways students.
Non-enrolled pathways student GPAs are significantly lower than for students who remain enrolled post-census.

There is no consistent evidence that pathways students with higher AQF Levels of qualification have lower attrition rates, than those with lower AQF Levels of qualification.
The Challenges

• At UWS, the GPA is measured over a range of 0 to 7 points per unit attempt, with a GPA = 4 representing an average ‘Pass’ grade.

• On average, pathways student’s GPAs (Fail-Pass) were 0.8 GPA-points lower than for non-pathways students (Pass-Credit) in 2010-2013.
The Challenges

- Five possible contributing factors were considered in attempts to explain this difference:
  - the amount of RPL awarded at commencement;
  - the broad Field of Education of the student’s prior qualification vs. their enrolled degree;
  - the number of credit points of passed at UWS;
  - the institution from which the student’s prior qualification was gained; and
  - the AQF Level of the student’s prior qualification.
• Pathways students with more RPL did not consistently underperform relative to those who received less RPL.

• TAFE pathways students did not consistently outperform pathways students from private providers.
The Findings

• Pathways students who study a degree in a different Field of Education (FoE) to their prior TAFE/VET qualification **marginally outperform** pathways students who study a degree in the same FoE as their TAFE/VET qualification.

• Pathways students with lower AQF Level qualifications **marginally outperform** pathways students with higher AQF Level qualifications.
The Findings

• The only significant and consistent predictor of future success is past success.

• GPAs of TAFE/VET pathways students increase significantly the more units of study they pass in their degree studies.
Recommendations

• The inconsistency of some findings with respect to relative pathways student performance, in particular those findings in relation to the impact of RPL and student’s origin (TAFE or private provider) highlights the need for adaptive and flexible strategies to support discrete cohorts within the commencing TAFE/VET pathways student group.