

Structuring an appropriate academic support strategy to assist Bachelor of Sport and Recreation (BSR) students to meet the BSR graduate profile.

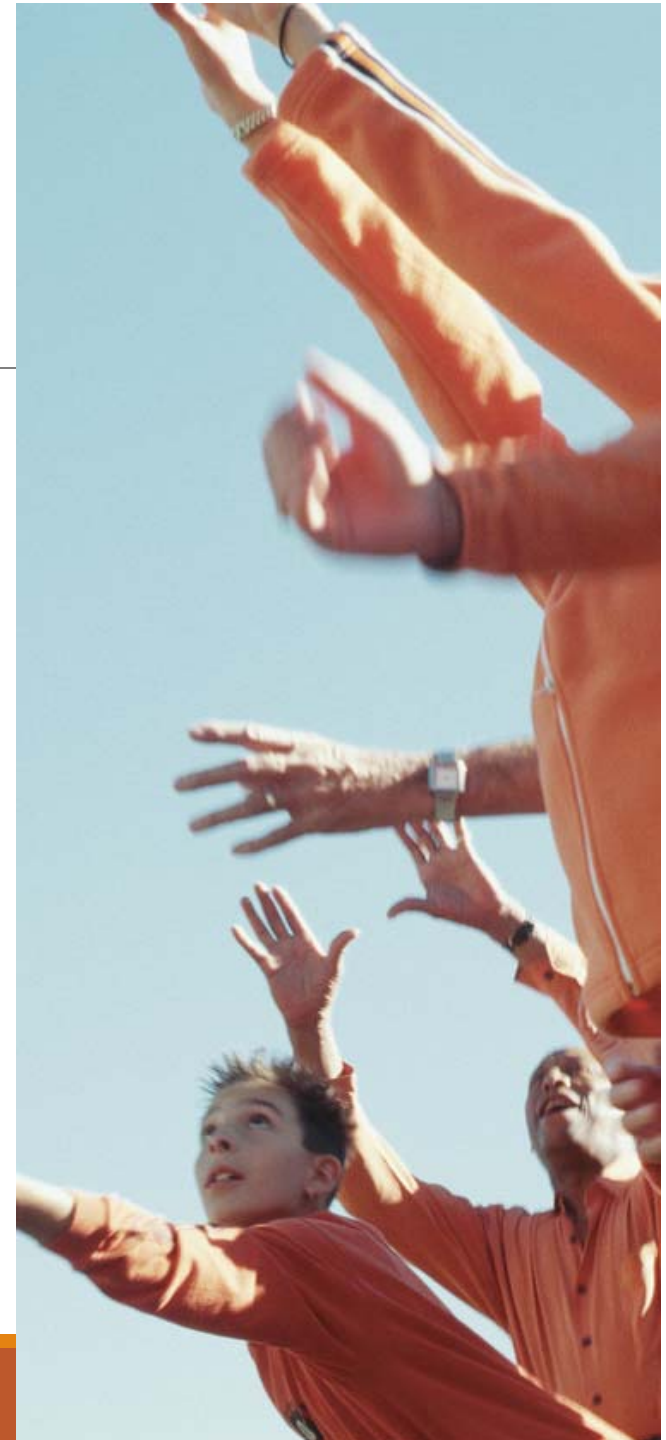
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The BSR staff and student context

A recent internal review by academic staff in the School of Sport and Recreation revealed concerns about the academic skill development of BSR students.



Project's Aim

The short-term aim of this study is to **draw upon student and lecturer perspectives** to inform the design and implementation of a pilot support strategy to be implemented commencing in 2015.

Focus groups with students and lecturers were conducted, asking the same questions of each participant group.

In adopting an **action research approach**, participants reflected upon their experiences as learners and teachers in the context of the BSR, towards reaching graduate capabilities.

Participants reflected on capabilities summarized by **leadership, adaptability, critical thinking, research and digital literacy**.



Action Research project

Framed within the Model of Pedagogical Reasoning (Shulman,1986)

Focussing on:

- pedagogical content knowledge,
- curricular knowledge,
- knowledge of learners
- knowledge on educational context.

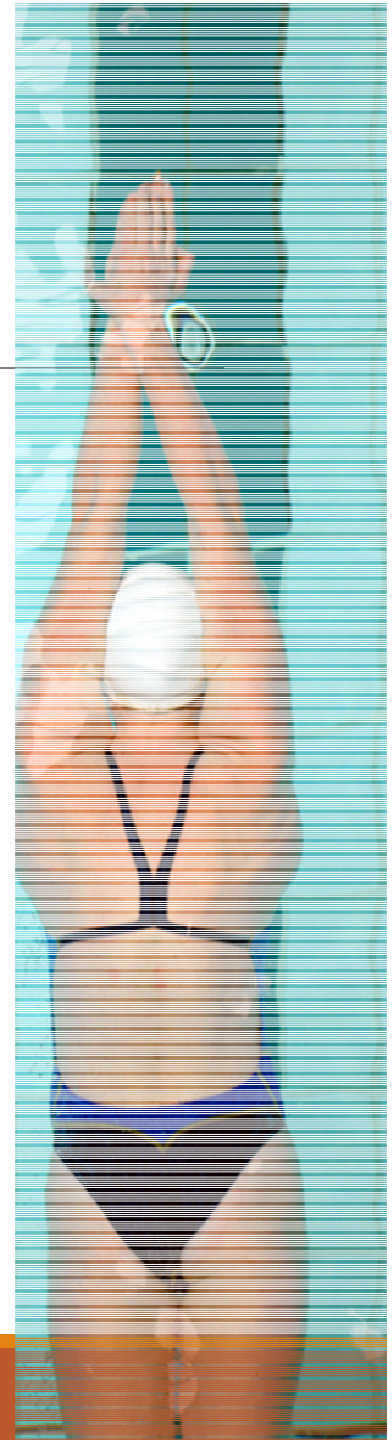
The project reflects on **learner** and **teacher** perspectives within the BSR student experience and curriculum and content delivery

Aim: to inform the design of a support strategy aligned with the programme design.



Providing the Context

Previous research indicates that **contextualizing the learning environment** brings significant benefits to the learning experience, as it provides a **link** between the learning and its application (Ambrose, Davis, & Zieger, 2013).



Pilot, implementation, reflection

The aims that were met became a platform for this pilot project (2014), to be implemented and reflected on further in 2015 and 2016.



Outcome 1

To map the skills currently identified in core papers towards meeting the BSR Graduate Profile.

This coincides with reflecting on student and lecturer perspectives towards improvements from staff and student focus groups 2014.



These strategies have had a positive impact at individual paper levels

The screenshot shows a Trello board for '2015 BSR Support Strategy' with the following content:

- BSR Graduate Profile:** Self-directed, reflective lifelong learners; Critical thinkers and creative problem solvers; Able to think and act professionally; Able to work collaboratively; Effective communicators; Knowledgeable in their major field of study.
- Skills:** Social/connection skills; Time management; Reading skills; Grammar; Referencing; Paragraphing; Academic writing (Essay); Research skills; Critical Thinking; Paraphrasing; Digital literacies; Literature reviews; Self-reflection; Self-reflection.
- 1st Year Core papers:** Social/connection skills; Knowledge, Enquiry and Communication; Time management; Human Anatomy and Physiology 1; Exam skills; Nutrition, Activity and Health; Managing Sport and Recreation; Reading skills; Grammar; Referencing; Paragraphing; Academic writing (Essay).
- 2nd Year core papers:** Sport and Recreation in Society; Research skills; Critical Thinking; Paraphrasing; Digital literacies; Legal Issues for Sport and Recreation; Industry Experience and Research; Literature reviews; Self-reflection.
- 3rd Year core papers:** Sport and Recreation Co-operative I; Sport and Recreation Co-operative II.



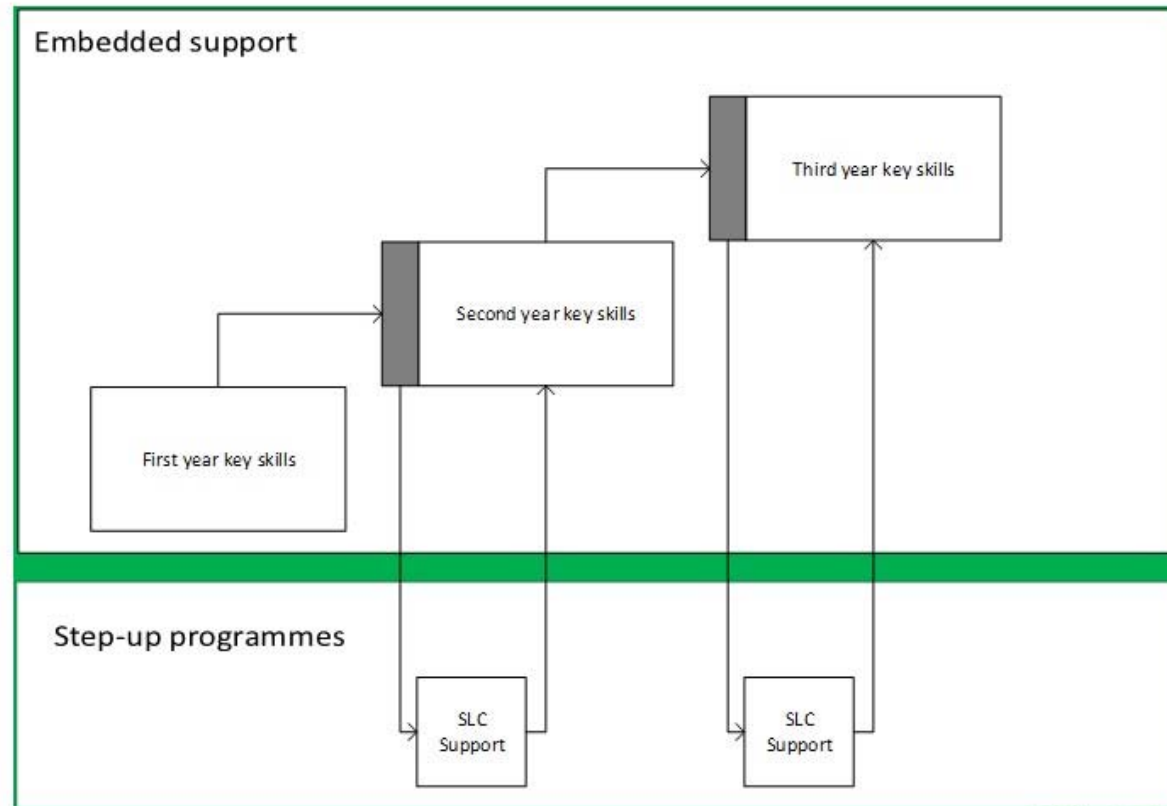
Outcome 2

Design and implementation plan for a pilot support strategy for BSR students in 2015.





BSR Support Strategy



Outcome 3

Heightened awareness of diverse learning needs of students that challenge pedagogical approaches towards improvement and development of academic skills to positively impact student retention and success rates.





Student focus group responses

“You keep everybody in the same classes throughout the entire programme so you really get to know each other. Without creating small groups you don’t really get to know anybody.”

“(We) want more hands on time doing the testing, especially for people who want to do the postgrad stuff.”

“I feel like I don’t learn in a big lecture hall so it’s better when the classes are smaller, more interactive.”

“I want more guidance learning, more inquiry learning... it feels like we are just getting taught, taught, taught what we are learning.”



Staff focus group responses

...that students feel afraid to be wrong and to participate

...that students are happy not to be challenged, and feel uncomfortable with problem solving

...that there is not a common understanding amongst lecturers about what critical thinking is, and how it can be developed

"We are still at a lecture format, where we throw knowledge at them."

"Do we change for them, or do they change for us?"





Outcomes and Directions

This project instigated reflections on academic skills expectations, considering diverse learning styles and approaches that engage learning and teaching relationships.

Future directions focus on scaffolding academic skills as graduate capabilities are met and student success leads to retention.

Ideally this fosters **application and reflection within their future areas of employment or study, nationally or internationally, in studying at AUT.**



Potential Benefits

To provide context and greater relevance for undergraduate students in the School of Sport and Recreation;

To heighten awareness of lecturers of the diverse learning needs of students;

To improve and develop student academic skills to positively impact student retention and success rates.

References

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Your thoughts?

Have we missed any skills?

Do you have suggestions for variations on our approach?

What value is there in embedding strategies in this context?

