A First Year School Wide Approach

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Role	First Year Coordinator (two years in position)
Program	Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Education (Primary)
	Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Education (Primary/Early Childhood)
	Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Education (Primary/Secondary)
	Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Education (Secondary)
	Bachelor of Education (Secondary)
	Bachelor of Technology Education
Level of learning	Introductory
Student cohort	450 to 480 students across eight units
Mode of delivery	Internal and distance education students across NSW

Strategies used to help students be successful in their study

Ensure students know who to contact for assistance	▶ If students don't understand anything, they know they can talk to someone. My role involves being invited to units where I speak to students at every campus orientation session. Students know they can contact me by telephone or email. If students ring Student Services they are put through to me.
	▶ Students can also contact me by the online Education Information Centre. This site includes links to all the information students need to know about the unit like special consideration applications, what to do if you need more help, how to access academic support. What I'm finding is students who feel they need assistance, feel comfortable about seeking assistance.
Establish clear roles	▶ My role as students see me is someone that they can talk to, I suppose I'm like an Ombudsmen as I get appeals and have to be very careful about that. I explain to students this is between you and your UA but by all means I'm happy to discuss what you might need to do to improve your work. In no way can I override anything within a unit but it can be made clear right across the UAs and markers about any inconsistencies.
Obtain information early to identify students at risk	▶ In the first week our team set a short writing task. It is not mandatory but almost one hundred percent of students completed the task. We employed a team of markers who understand how to provide feedback for the first writing piece.
	▶ We placed students into categories: Amber, Red and Green. Out of about four hundred students – about fifty were in amber, and about twenty were in red. Students found it very useful, particularly the ambers who suddenly realised that *"I thought I was okay but someone's pointed out to me I need to concentrate on this, so I'll do something about it"*.
	▶ Longer term we feel there has been some improvement in the first session attrition rate as responses were back to students within three days. From that experience, students have sought help. It has been more successful this year I believe, and confirming too, as you start to get a handle on your cohort.

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Seek information from Unit Assessors about how the unit operates	▶ A very important strategy learnt was to endear ourselves to Unit Assessors (UAs). Our team discovered what students were expected to do for first session assignments and expectations didn't match up across units. The UAs really came on board when this was pointed out and the assignment was changed for students to learn how to reflect on what they are doing, week by week.
	▶ All UAs give me access to their unit sites to see what's going on. UAs are receptive to suggestions and increasingly they're coming to me with what they have discovered. UAs are asking: *"What can we do to overcome this? Are other people having similar problems in their units?"* There is an element of peer review as the Course Coordinator has been closely involved.
Assist students to reflect on their progress, and provide feedback to students and the marking team	▶ For an across the School approach, students reflect on their own progress and look at the literature. Increasingly students would inform their discussion with the literature as they are starting from something that they know.
	▶ Students and markers were given assistance of how to write a reflection, and what teachers are looking for. This year two page with the most common errors identified in first year writing was sent to all markers and students. Students need to know this when writing their assignment. Markers need to know what the School have been telling students to reinforce this in their marking. The cooperation has been fantastic.
In conversations with your markers discuss criteria and seek feedback	▶ When I go to different campuses I buy the markers a coffee. Actually I'm meeting one in half an hour and he's going to buy me a coffee back. The conversations are about the same thing as the markers are the people who interpret the criteria.
	▶ For markers to come together, the initial approach was to set aside two extra contract hours at each campus to talk through what the School is doing. Unfortunately it was cancelled as the response was very poor. The team is now preparing for new courses where markers will have to attend an orientation.
	▶ New technology through Blackboard Rubrics has also rolled out. First year markers who have used the new marking tool couldn't believe they did their response, and it went straight to the student without having to download or upload anything.
Encourage use of different technologies to prepare students for their occupation	▶ The technology frontiers are being pushed because teachers going out into schools must understand technology. We push the boundaries in types of technology and the way it's used.
	▶ One technology which is done in a version of Second Life, called Sim on a Stick, is used in schools because it doesn't have a direct connection to the Internet. Initially students and tutors said *"we don't understand this"* but now a cohort are using it. Every student has to engage with technology and need to know there are other ways of delivery than PowerPoint.
Make clear links between university learning and professional practice	▶ Students are being introduced to the tools of the profession, all the digital resources teachers are using across Australia. Authentic assignments bring in tool use where students have to prove they are accessing the tools. Student presentations must demonstrate interactive whiteboard use in an interactive way, not use a projector.
	▶ Students are put into a situation where they're using technology in the same way they will in a classroom. They are very successful at this which shows in their professional experience placement. It is important that university learning spaces reflect learning spaces of the profession.
Cater for student diversity	▶ As academics we're expecting our students to go out into schools and meet the diversity there. Assignments have to show that they cater for diversity.
	▶ We have to understand the students who study education and accommodate to their needs. We have to be careful of walking the fine line between doing that and making students understand that they are also responsible for their learning.

Use a scaffolded approach for referencing	▶ The Course Coordinators and I are working on a gradated approach as we're not expecting any great referencing skills first session. If teachers are using texts and YouTube, students must also be able to cut and paste links into their assignments if they wish. We want to give students a model and know that they can develop from that.
Adopting a school wide approach works	▶ The fact that I have been given time to find out things school wide for improvements to present at staff meetings and to Course Coordinators seems to be having some effect. Results last year demonstrated retention has been improved.