





## Identifying and assisting students at risk

Dawn Gleeson  
Department of Genetics  
University of Melbourne  
Director of Studies in First Year Biology

## Who are the students at risk? Where 'risk' is failure to complete their degree.

- Academic problems
  - background
  - study skills
  - motivation
- Social problems
- Language problems




## Identification on academic performance

### Students at Risk (SAR)

- Cohort 1
  - Failed 50% of first semester of study

Required that student meets with a Student Advisor (Attendance recorded)


Student completes a questionnaire which requires them to reflect on the semester - discussed with Advisor and together come up with strategies with strategies to help (Success in semester 2 workshop)



## Unsatisfactory progress

- Cohort 2: Failed 25-50%
- Cohort 3: Failed 50% once\*
- Cohort 4: Failed 50% twice\*
- Cohort 5: Failed 50% three times\*


\* in most recent 3 semesters



## Unsatisfactory progress

- Cohort 2: Failed 25-50%  
Recommended that student see a Student Advisor \*
- Cohort 3: Failed 50% once  
Required that student see a Student Advisor #
- Cohort 4: Failed 50% twice
- Cohort 5: Failed 50% three times  
Required that student meets with full Unsatisfactory Progress Committee #

\*attendance not recorded  
#attendance recorded



## How do we help the students in first year to avoid being at risk?

### What caused study difficulties in semester 1?

- Ineffective study skills including managing workload 56%
- Dealing with personal/family/emotional issues 42%
- Balancing work/social life/study 22%
- Had unclear idea of idea of the directions of the degree 20%
- Health problems 15%
- Language problems 8%
- Made the wrong subject choice
- Felt that did not fit in or identify with University environment of peer groups
- Rural or isolated background

### Identify academic problems earlier - end of semester 1 too late

- Mid-semester tests or other ongoing assessment
- Tutor's feedback
- Additional tutorials for students with less background

### Provide information on how to get help


- Transition program - Science 101

### Aims of Science 101

- To provide students who are new to University with a set of basic skills with which to tackle first year science subjects
- To create links for first year students to fellow students and members of staff within the Faculty
- To facilitate progress to second year Science
- To familiarise students with the services available to them

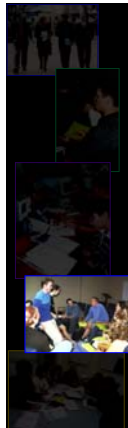
### Format of the Science 101 program

- Part I
  - 2 structured introductory sessions
    - Maximising value of lectures, tutorials/workshops and practical classes
    - Study styles and strategies (Language and Learning skills unit)
    - How to get help, careers in Science Kick Start Your Career
- Part II
  - formation of study groups




### Is the Science 101 transition program helping?

2003 data	Total	SAR no 101	SAR yes 101
ENTER <85	182	17/56 30.3%	28/126 22%
ENTER ≥85	713	14/191 7.3%	20/522 3.8%
	895		




*Provide information on how to get help*

- Transition programs
- Learning Centres



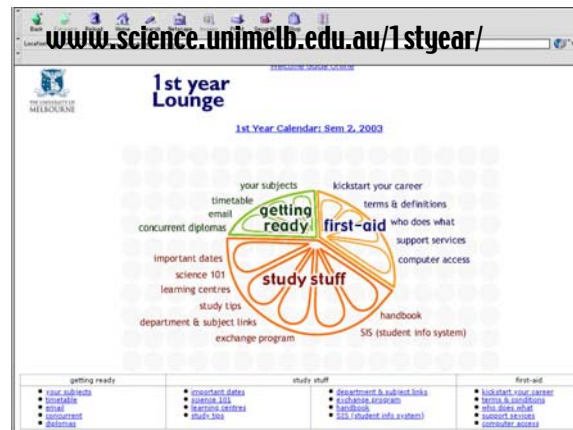
*Each Learning Centre*

- maximizes personal staff/student interaction;
- targets extra assistance;
- provides access to supplementary resources;
- facilitates students' meetings with peers;
- encourages a sense of learning community.



*Provide information on how to get help*

- Transition programs
- Learning Centres
- Easy access to appropriate websites



[www.science.unimelb.edu.au/1styear/](http://www.science.unimelb.edu.au/1styear/)

**1st year Lounge**

1st Year Calendar: Sem 2, 2003

your subjects    kickstart your career

timetable    terms & definitions

email    who does what

concurrent diplomas    support services

important dates    computer access

science 101


learning centres

study tips

department & subject links    handbook

exchange program    SIS (student info system)

getting ready	study stuff	first-aid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• your subjects</li> <li>• timetable</li> <li>• email</li> <li>• concurrent diplomas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• important dates</li> <li>• science 101</li> <li>• learning centres</li> <li>• study tips</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• kickstart your career</li> <li>• terms &amp; conditions</li> <li>• who does what</li> <li>• support services</li> <li>• computer access</li> </ul>



*Links to schools - a two way interaction for greater understanding*

**Students**

- Workshops - bringing students to the University before first year

**Teachers**

- Awareness of transition issues
  - Science 101
  - Learning Centre
- Intimate knowledge of the VCE curriculum
  - development of new subjects
- Casual conversations