34 Building Academic and Social Success: Abertay Discovery Tool

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

In September 2020, Abertay University launched a suite of microcredentials aimed at preparing students academically and socially for success. All first-year students completed a credit bearing, core microcredential upon enrolment to the university. This microcredential was called ABE101 Being Successful at Abertay and had embedded within it a diagnostic test (Abertay Discovery Tool). The University had taken the strategic decision to implement this approach to supporting student transition and success as these new students were entering the University with an interrupted, pandemic influenced, education. ABE101 had the core purpose of setting student expectations, signalling successful student behaviours and informing microcredential choices as the institution sought to build successful academic and social foundations with our students. This session will report on outcomes and discuss possible developments to enhance student success.

Full paper

The Abertay Discovery tool has 5 sections for students to complete. By undertaking the self-reflective questions, students receive feedback to help them identify strengths and areas for development. These tailored reports focus upon defining key terms, recommended actions for students to complete within their first 3 months of study and recommendations for which optional microcredentials to choose. The 5 sections of the Abertay Discovery tool are:

- Studying at University (10 questions covering study habits, expectations of university, independent learning etc).
- Academic Skills (19 questions covering writing, reading, referencing and basic numeracy skills).
- Digital Skills (5 questions covering Digital Collaboration, teamwork, and applications).
- Careers & Employability (5 questions covering career registration and previous work experiences).
- Wellbeing (5 questions covering building relationships, mindfulness and seeking support).

 As well as students receiving a personalised report, Programme leaders received a cohort level insight report by week 4 of term 1. These reports identified cohort strengths and areas for development. Where an area for development was identified the solution focused report offered key actions, resources or support available to implement within the students' modules and programme of study.

The Abertay offer is part of the QAA Scotland Collaborative Cluster project 'Personalised Approaches to Resilience and Community' https://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/resilient-learning-communities/flexible-and-accessible-learning/parc . The full institutional case study can be found at that site.

The Abertay Discovery Tool was a core formative feature of ABE101 Being Successful at Abertay. Students were able to attempt the sections as many times as they liked as they reflected on the questions. Interestingly, quite a number of the students on the module went back in again to redo the formative test as they reflected. There were 758 completed attempts from the 676 students.

 Amongst the 676 students who were enrolled onto this module:

- 618 Students (91.4%) completed all sections of the Abertay Discovery tool
- 34 Students (5%) completed some sections of the Abertay Discovery tool
- 24 Students (3.6%) did not engage with the Abertay Discovery tool

Students provided initial feedback linking the usefulness of the Abertay Discovery tool to identifying strengths and areas for development and being able to consider solutions.

"It helped me identify my strongest skills and qualities and also where I can improve in order to become the best version of myself in my university life." BA (Hons) Criminology Student

"It allowed me to identify areas that I struggle with such as procrastination - and provided me with possible solutions to manage this. It also allowed me to identify areas of support from other sources for when it is required." BSc (Hons) Psychology & Counselling Student

The presentation will share the latest data and the impact on retention, as well as considering future developments and the implications for student success.

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