

# Thriving in transition: A model for student support in the transition to Australian higher education

Final Report 2014

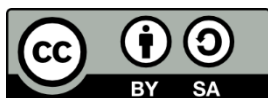
University of Tasmania

Dr Martin Harris

Associate Professor Tony Barnett

[www.ruralhealthtasmania.com.au/projects/thriving\\_in\\_transition/index.html](http://www.ruralhealthtasmania.com.au/projects/thriving_in_transition/index.html)

Support for the production of this report has been provided by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching. The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching.



With the exception of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms, and where otherwise noted, all material presented in this document is provided under Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>).

The details of the relevant licence conditions are available on the Creative Commons website (accessible using the links provided) as is the full legal code for the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/legalcode>).

Requests and inquiries concerning these rights should be addressed to:

Office for Learning and Teaching  
Department of Education  
GPO Box 9880  
Location code N255EL10  
Sydney NSW 2001

<[learningandteaching@education.gov.au](mailto:learningandteaching@education.gov.au)>

2014

978-1-74361-398-6 [PRINT]  
978-1-74361-399-3 [PDF]  
978-1-74361-400-6 [DOCX]

## Acknowledgements

The project team comprised the project leader Dr Martin Harris (Mental Health Academic, University of Tasmania, Department of Rural Health), Associate Professor Tony Barnett (Director of the University of Tasmania Department of Rural Health), Winthrop Professor Sandra Thompson (Director of the Combined Universities Centre for Rural Health, WA), Professor Lesley Barclay (Director of the University Centre for Rural Health, NSW), Judy Riggs (Project Officer/Student Support at CUCRH), Frances Barraclough (Student Coordination team manager at UCRH).

The project team is grateful to the participating universities and their dedicated staff: the University of Tasmania, Southern Cross University, Curtin University, The University of Notre Dame Australia (Fremantle), and Murdoch University.

Dr Merylin Cross (University of Tasmania Department of Rural Health, formerly at Monash University) was the external evaluator for the project and we thank her for her thoughtful, patient and insightful involvement.

The project had ongoing oversight by the project reference group comprised of:

Professor David Sadler (PVC Students and Education, University of Tasmania)

Dr Marion Myhill (Senior Lecturer in Education, University of Tasmania)

Rowan Hilton (Director Bond College, Bond University)

Annette Marlow (Director of Professional Experience in Nursing and Midwifery, University of Tasmania)

John Kirwan (COE, Northern Area Health Service, Tasmania)

Teena Downton (Senior Community & Advocacy Portfolio Rep and NRHA Liaison, National Rural Health Students' Network)

Matthew Hingston (Head of Student Advice Team, University of Tasmania)

For their particular contributions to the project, we would like to thank:

Associate Professor Chris Skinner (The University of Notre Dame Australia)

Maha Boulos (The University of Notre Dame Australia)

Martina Baumer (Southern Cross University)

Dr Melanie Burkhardt (Curtin University)

Dr Madeleine M. Laming (Murdoch University)

Mandy Kelly (Murdoch University)

Sarah Rowlings (University of Tasmania)

Peter Komsta (University of Tasmania)

Darren Grattidge (University of Tasmania)

Dr Ha Hoang (University of Tasmania)

Nevenka Alempijevic (University of Tasmania)

## List of acronyms used

ALTC	Australian Learning and Teaching Council Ltd
OLT	Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching
UDRH	University Department of Rural Health

## Executive summary

This project and the model proposed provided an innovative, staged and cyclic approach to the transition to tertiary study and provided many more opportunities to identify issues of concern and facilitate early intervention. The project provided practical support strategies for transition counsellors in higher education, contextually designed to account for current 'best practice' to provide a template for support that accounts for the stages of transition successfully negotiated. There have been five major themes associated with the project:

- Transition is cyclical;
- Support should be provided to students over year 1 (at least) of their course and preferably, over the duration of their course;
- Early interventions (with mechanisms for on-going monitoring) are more effective than a crisis intervention approach;
- 'Front-loading' (as occurs with many student orientation programs) is not the best approach and can result in overload. It provides material not needed (or recognised as needed) by students at that point of time;
- Successful transition programs may be those that include elements embedded in a program/course of study (rather than as 'add-ons').

These characteristics were derived through the project's literature analysis and are supported by the evidence from interviews with participating universities. From our observations and the workshops held with student counsellors engaged with the project, there have been a number of key messages or 'learning' around student transitions. These are summarised as follows:

1. Students who benefit most from transition support and intervention are those less likely to self-identify as needing support or seek it out.
2. High achieving students may help-seeking outside of the university system as accessing internal resources may be seen as "failure" (to thrive or achieve).
3. Students need to be coached on help-seeking behaviours, and such behaviours should be de-stigmatised.
4. Early signs of potential student difficulty include: failure to submit an assessable piece of work, failure to attend, decline in outputs or performance. The automated flagging of these indicators and the development of algorithms that assist in their predictive validity may assist with more efficient screening and follow-up of at risk students.
5. To embed transition support strategies in curricula will require different approaches to learning and teaching such as: more face-to-face or active telephone or e-mediated encounters between the learner and the teacher.
6. Informal forms of support may be just as effective as more formal support mechanisms. The model provides pathways for the identification of individual students and how these supports can be strengthened.

7. Students will have crises at various points during their course of study, thus the resources available to assist individual students and the organisations' response strategies should be clearly communicated to students.
8. Certain 'trigger points' for crises can be identified and anticipated (e.g. failure in an assessment task, lead up to exams, lack of feedback, financial difficulties, homesickness, clinical placements and placement encounters)
9. University student support programs ought to direct strategies across the learning lifecycle (i.e. from pre-university entry to graduate employment).
10. The pastoral work undertaken with students by academics (especially student advisors, or unit/course coordinators with large student cohorts) within schools is often not fully recognised as 'work' within the teaching-research-service concept of academic life. Such work can be difficult to measure and can exert a greater demand on time than the amount (often notionally) allocated.
11. Within the health sciences, the idea of a common or shared first year for students in the health professions is becoming more commonplace. Such a strategy may afford opportunities for more health-related transition initiatives to be put in place. These may include content and activities related to interpersonal relationships, field placement adjustments and re-locations, and the broader concept health 'transitions'.
12. The whole concept of being a 'first year' student begs the question of background and the experiences a student brings to the transition. Finer filters are required to better understand the commonalities that certain groups possess to allow timely and effective interventions to be applied.

The Thriving in Transition model provides particular benefit to students in transition by a focused, staged approach that recognises the individual journeys involved. In the future it is recommended that:

- (a) The model is applied to selected cohorts with identifiable concerns (e.g. CALD students, Indigenous students) to allow the testing of the stages for particular application.
- (b) The web-based materials are developed to provide an interactive resource.
- (c) The web-base is maintained as a repository of information and support material.
- (d) Support staff are adequately resourced and trained.

The Web material and training materials are available to the sector via the project site at: [www.ruralhealthtasmania.com.au/projects/thriving\\_in\\_transition/index.html](http://www.ruralhealthtasmania.com.au/projects/thriving_in_transition/index.html)

More detailed information is described in the body of this report and in the appendices.

# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	3
Executive summary .....	5
Tables and Figures .....	9
1. About this Report .....	10
2. About the Project .....	11
2.1 Rationale.....	11
2.2 Aims and objectives.....	12
2.3 Scope .....	12
2.4 Theoretical underpinnings.....	12
2.5 The conceptual framework for the project .....	13
3. The literature review .....	16
3.1 Transition.....	17
3.2 Thriving .....	20
3.3 Factors that Impact on Transition .....	20
3.4 Support for Health Science Students.....	23
3.5 Challenges of the First Year .....	24
3.6 Challenges for Disadvantaged (equity) Groups.....	25
3.7 Transition Support .....	26
3.8 Conclusion .....	28
Table 1: Examples of Transition programs .....	29
4. Project management .....	30
4.1 The deliverables.....	30
5. Project Method.....	32
5.1 Approach and recruitment .....	33
5.2 Ethics.....	33
5.3 Activities and Resources .....	34
5.4 Participation .....	34
5.5 Scoping.....	34
5.6 External Evaluator .....	42
5.7 Participant training in Thriving in Transition Model.....	42
5.8 Website.....	43
6. Process challenges.....	51
6.1 Ethics.....	51
6.2 Data collection .....	52

7.	Links to Stages .....	54
7.1	Stage 1 .....	56
7.2	Stage 2 .....	57
7.3	Stage 3 .....	58
7.4	Stage 4 .....	59
8.	Discussion .....	61
8.1	Case Study outcomes .....	61
8.2	University of Tasmania .....	61
8.3	Southern Cross University .....	67
8.4	Curtin University .....	72
8.5	Murdoch University .....	77
8.6	Notre Dame University .....	83
9.	Dissemination .....	88
10.	Conclusion .....	90
10.1	Key findings and outcomes .....	90
11.	Recommendations.....	94
	Bibliography .....	96
	External evaluator's report .....	104
	Appendices.....	118
	Appendix 1 Questionnaires stages 1-4 and scoring .....	105
	Appendix 2 Links to stages .....	112
	Appendix 3 Invitation to participate .....	129
	Appendix 4 Consent form .....	130
	Appendix 5 Participant information sheet .....	132
	Appendix 6 Website user guide .....	135



# Tables and Figures

## Tables

Table 1: Examples of Transition Programs .....	29
Table 2: Project Stages.....	32
Table 3: Scoping .....	36
Table 4: Stage 1 concepts .....	56
Table 5: Stage 2 concepts .....	57
Table 6: Stage 3 concepts .....	58
Table 7: Stage 4 concepts .....	59
Table 8: Links to Stages (University of Tasmania).....	64
Table 9: Links to Stages (Southern Cross University).....	69
Table 10: Links to Stages (Curtin University) .....	75
Table 11: Links to Stages (Murdoch University) .....	81
Table 12: Links to Stages (Notre Dame University) .....	85
Table 13: Dissemination table .....	88

## Figures

Figure 1: The Thriving in Transition cycle .....	15
Figure 2: Ethics matrix.....	51
Figure 3: Links to Stages.....	55
Figure 4: Revised Thriving in Transition cycle .....	92

# 1. About this Report

Though this report is addressed largely as a report of research undertaken by project academics and student support staff, it has been written in such a way that it should be accessible to a wide range of interested readers. It provides a template and explanation of a theoretical construct for transition and provides a lens through which individual transitions can be monitored and explained.

**The project rationale:** This section begins with an introduction to the project and the theoretical underpinning of the 'Thriving in Transition' model. For students entering into tertiary study, particularly those from rural and remote communities, low SES backgrounds or without a frame of reference for the university experience, this is a significant challenge. The experience of a period of transition between their 'old' and 'new' lives can have a positive or negative effect on their future career. The 'Thriving in Transition' model describes positive outcomes (*thriving*), in comparison to less positive (*surviving*), or even negative (*languishing*). A more nuanced and detailed approach to the transition and any associated intervention strategies is described; one that is cyclic rather than linear.

**The project management, method and challenges:** This section describes the project scaffolding and the selected methodology to test the model in five university locations. The oversight of the project was undertaken by a multi-disciplinary team, including student representation that provided guidance and review throughout the project. This section also describes the website and web-based materials that facilitated the project training, project management and application. The challenges were largely in regard to the timeframes for project involvement (in an already crowded agenda); and the ongoing challenges of ethics approval in a multi-site project. Internal challenges were in regard to data gathering in an increasingly eclectic environment and the links to the model stages.

**Discussion:** This section takes a 'case-study' approach to the model in the five settings, exploring each in turn through (a) context, (b) recruitment, (c) application, (d) enablers, (e) barriers and limitations, (f) stage related information, and (g) recommendations. We report on the individual site's experience of the model and describe both how the 'Thriving in Transition' model contributed to practice, and how the practice informed the model.

**Conclusions:** This section describes the key findings of the research and the links with the 'Thriving in Transition' model. It describes the key applications and staged interventions and the contributions of the research to the development of the model. This section describes the observable outcomes at each of the sites and the extent of the achievement of the project aims. The revised model is described and explained. Further the recommendations that flow from the report are recorded.

**Evaluation and dissemination:** This section contains the independent evaluators report, the dissemination table and, finally the references and appendices.

## 2. About the Project

This project began in March 2011 and concluded in March 2013.

### 2.1 Rationale

This research project examined the application of a model of transition to assist students to better manage and cope with their transition to tertiary study in health professional courses - especially where this may have involved a physical re-location as might be required by those from a rural background. It was developed in response to the ALTC priority area “Strategic Priority Projects: Investigating equity and student support in Australian higher education.”

Across Australia, participation in higher education for disadvantaged youth is lower. This may be linked to the lower SES background of students, reduced access to quality educational resources, rurality, cost and lower aspirational levels. As a consequence, the recruitment of such disadvantaged youth to tertiary education courses can be difficult and their retention within the system can also be problematic as their entry characteristics, expectations and reservoirs of resilience may be much different to others recruited from less advantaged regions (DEEWR 2008; James, Krause et al. 2010).

There is significant convergence of these concerns as students from a low SES background are much more likely to be rural (26% as compared with 13% for urban counterparts). Furthermore, low SES students are concentrated in the fields of education and health. These areas are traditional first generation pathways into higher education (DEEWR 2008). A corollary of this is that Australia faces a critical shortage of (tertiary qualified) health care professionals in rural and remote areas. This compounds the health differentials that can exist between the city, country and more remote areas (McIlveen, Ford et al. 2005; Marks 2007).

Educational strategies put in place to help bolster the number of health professionals working in rural areas have included: the introduction of more health professional courses in rural campuses of universities, the active recruitment of students from rural areas (on the basis that these students are more likely to return to a rural region to establish or progress their careers), the placement of students in rural health care facilities for clinical (practical) experience as a part of their course (exposure to a rural placement sensitises students to possible work in these areas on graduation); the establishment of both university departments of rural health (UDsRH) and rurally-based “clinical schools” (RCSs) to manage and support students whilst undertaking a clinical placements and “rural clubs” – to support the social and professional networking of students. Despite these efforts, up to 40% of disadvantaged students may fail to graduate. Many of these students experience significant difficulties in managing the transition to tertiary study.

This project contributed to those activities and initiatives currently taken by universities to assist student transition by the application of a new model of transition (Harris, Myhill et al. 2012). It specifically focussed upon the experiences and needs of dislocated students undertaking health professional courses with a goal to assist them to manage this

experience and “thrive”. As a consequence of the intervention, they can recognise when additional support may be required, how to access and best utilise such support and then to learn from these experiences so that they are better equipped to manage similar challenges in the future. By detailing these activities and providing guidelines that may be used or adapted for use by universities across a range of different cohorts of students, this project contributes to the enhancement of learning and teaching in higher education.

## 2.2 Aims and objectives

This project was designed to make a number of contributions to an understanding of the positive aspects of dislocating transitions and inform the implementation of more effective interventions. In particular, the project contributed to a set of three program goals:

- A more robust understanding of the transition to tertiary study;
- Informed interventions that accommodate individual accounts of transition, to provide the best opportunity to thrive in challenging circumstances; and
- Contribute to new, emerging models of transition that will assist institutions to implement strategies that provide the best opportunity to enable students at higher risk of languishing to succeed.

As a consequence, this project made a significant contribution to the strategies and planning that will contribute to the retention of students in challenging circumstances.

## 2.3 Scope

The target group for this study were principally the student support officers/transition coordinators (however described) within the target clusters of universities: University of Tasmania, Curtin University, Southern Cross University, Murdoch University and Notre Dame University (Fremantle) Three collaborating University Departments of Rural Health (UDsRH) were involved: University of Tasmania UDRH (Director: Associate Professor Tony Barnett), Northern Rivers UDRH (Director: Prof Lesley Barclay) and the Combined Universities UDRH of Western Australia (Director: Prof Sandra Thompson). These participating organisations provided the conduit through which the cross-section of institutions and personnel were included in the study. Each university department of rural health (UDRH) nominated a representative who informed the study in regard to local issues, observations and practices associated with the transition of (rural) students to tertiary study (e.g. the particular orientation mechanism that were in place).

## 2.4 Theoretical underpinnings

The outcomes from this research provide a template for those supporting students in the transition to higher education. This has often been seen as a linear process, primarily an orientation program that bridges that gap between school and tertiary institutions. While other research has explored the risks for retention and dropout (Tinto 1975; Tinto 1993; Braxton 2000; Thomas 2002) in the education journey, this research explains the particular pathways of students as they move through the transition to tertiary study; and identifies the trajectories and early interventions that augur towards a satisfying career. This is

particularly poignant for students from rural backgrounds or those from low SES backgrounds where the successful transition to tertiary study is less likely (Skene, Hogan et al. 2006).

This project draws on the learning from the experience of transition (e.g. Kralik, Visentin et al. 2006) and the characteristics of thriving in challenging circumstances (e.g. Spreitzer, Sutcliffe et al. 2005) and the particular concerns of disengaged communities (e.g. James, Baldwin et al. 2004). In particular it applies a model of transition that moves away from the traditional linear, crisis-driven model to a model of transition viewed as a cycle of stages, which if well-resolved, provided the best opportunity to succeed (Harris, Myhill et al. 2012).

The contributions this project makes to the higher education and organisations within the sector include:

- A clearer understanding of the pathways and trajectories for students in transition;
- A greater opportunity to provide a more supportive educational environment for those entering the systems that are at risk;
- Data that can be shared for research future research into retention across the range of student backgrounds and across sectors and states. This will allow comparisons to be made that will further contribute to strategies for early intervention;
- Clear templates for early intervention for student support programs that go beyond the traditional orientation programs and crisis response;
- Guidelines and information for student support staff within universities and higher education organisations.

For policy and learning it provides:

- A series of recommendations on early intervention that address the particular needs of students in challenging circumstances;
- An understanding of the cyclic process (the individual components at the stages of the cycle and the indicated trajectories), that enables early identification of concerns and a mappable process for programs of support;
- Policy recommendations that provide particular guidance for workforce training needs in the health sector generally.

In 2006, over 9% of Australia's workforce was employed in health and community services occupations - a 26% increase from 2001. Over the same period, the health and community services workforce aged with the proportion of workers in the 55 to 64 years age bracket increasing by 4 percentage points (AIHW, 2006). As the areas of health and education are the traditional 'first generation' pathways, this research provides strategies that support the passage through challenging transition often experienced by dislocated youth as they embark on their career in health.

## 2.5 The conceptual framework for the project

Historically, transition has been described as a linear process involving the abandonment of the familiar, a period of disequilibrium and a new beginning (Bridges 1986). It has also been described as a progression from separation, through disequilibrium to a productive equilibrium and stability (Nortier 1995). Similarly Selder (1989) described a transition as the disruption of an existing reality requiring the resolution of uncertainty, where making sense of the new situation is pivotal to the healthy decision making. These largely linear processes were challenged by Schlossberg (1989) who described a more personal account where the experience of the transition was the product of the characteristics of the experience of the transition, the individual, and the resources available to the individual. Despite this scaffolding, the experience of negotiating a challenging transition is not well understood. Informed by this work and by working with elite young athletes, the principal researcher (Harris, Myhill et al. 2012) identified those personal characteristics that augur well for a successful transition in challenging circumstances, and provided a new model to assist the understanding of the particular processes of navigating and negotiating those challenges.

A commitment to tertiary study requires considerable personal investment. The difficulties and challenges encountered by rural and remote communities (e.g. Goold, Turale et al. 2002) and groups from lower SES backgrounds is significant. Transitions can be viewed as a role shift, or as a boundary crossing and status transformation where there is "... an event... resulting in changes in individual psychosocial assumptions concerning oneself or one's organisational environment, social environment, or one's relation to one's environment" (Murray 1998). This commitment to the future involves an understanding of the transition and an investment in the stages of transition. Specific theories of transition had emerged from a wide range of research areas such as change management, counselling psychology, occupational psychology, and human resource management. Taken together, this combined literature has informed an understanding of the requirements of negotiating a transition. However a more detailed analysis of the particular stages, characteristics and processes (Harris 2009; Harris 2009a; Harris, Myhill et al. 2012) provides a workable model that has application to challenging transitions, and indicators for early interventions. This research describes a cyclic process of stages as described below:

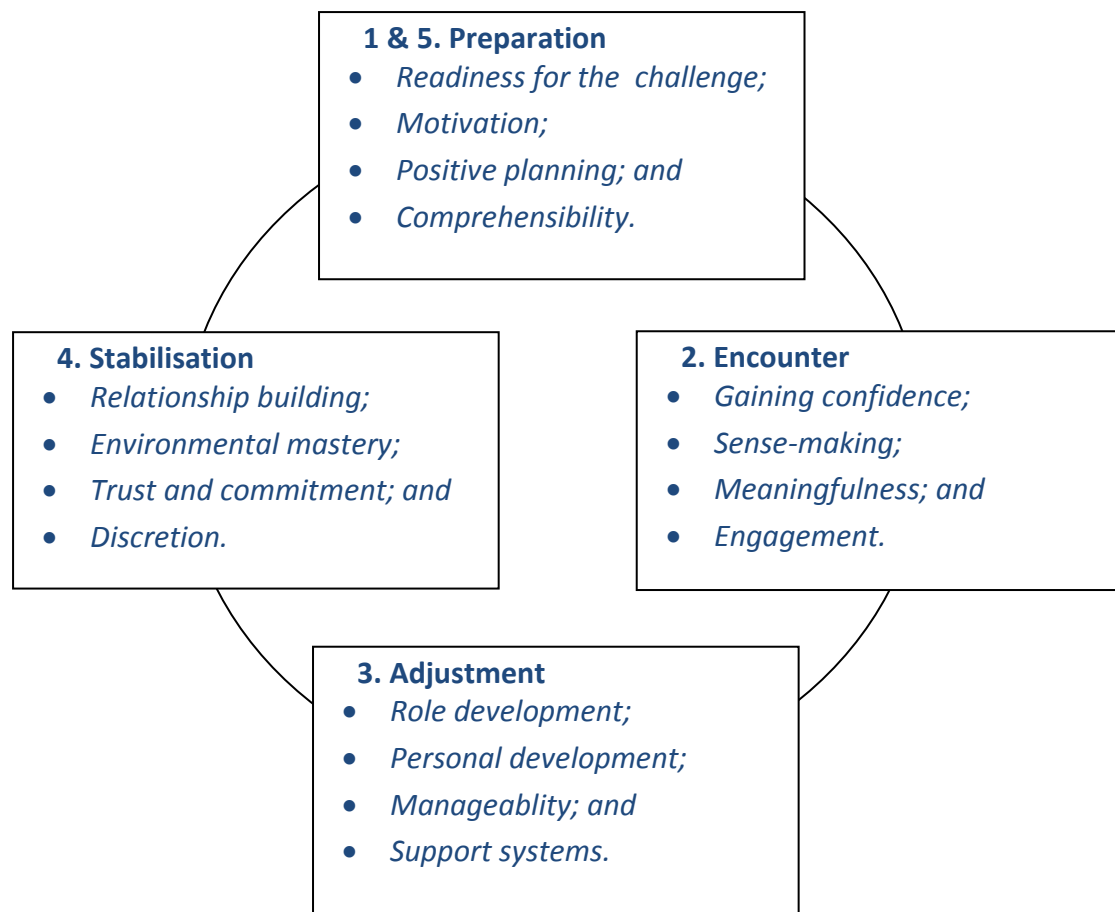


Figure 1: The Thriving Transition Cycle (Harris 2008)

This approach conforms to the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching (formerly the Australian Learning and Teaching Council) objectives to provide change that enhances learning; the contributions to teaching outcomes played by health and wellbeing; excellence in institutional practice; and the identification of issues that contribute to better outcomes, in this case thriving in periods of transition.

The project was accomplished by recruitment through the collaborating University Departments of Rural Health (UDRH) who nominated a partner project team member who invited their constituent universities to participate in the study. This also involved local observation of practices associated with the transition of rural students to tertiary study (e.g. the particular orientation mechanisms that have been put in place or may be useful to students).

The participating universities identified the “transition coordinator/student support officer” from their university for us to contact with a view to inviting them to participate in the study at each site; and to inform the further development (scoping) and roll-out of the study. At each university site, we worked with transition coordinators to develop and implement a transition ("thriving") program suited to their needs.

We participated at 5 five sites, each with 2-5 transition coordinators who were trained, supported and interviewed as part of the study. Each coordinator identified a small number of “at risk” students (those likely to experience challenging circumstances) for monitoring and the application of the model to their transition.

### 3. The literature review

Attrition or withdrawal of undergraduate students from their courses has been identified as a major concern for higher education institutions in Australia.

There is increased pressure for universities to reduce their attrition rates. “The ability to hold students in their programs until successful completion is of social, financial and reputational interest to any university” (McKavanagh & Punell, 2007, p.29). In the current economic climate in Australian higher education is heavily influenced by “budgetary constraints, growing competition, shrinking in international clientele and fewer local students applying for entry” (Jardine & Krause, 2005, p4). Government funding strategies now place an emphasis on completion and “as such there is a need to recognise that transition problems equate to high attrition rates that may lead to fewer graduation students and thus less funding” (Darlson-Jones *et al.*, 2003, p.1).

Contributing to the economic-rationalist argument, universities are also “businesses” and in order to get a return on their investment they need to recognise and deal with transition problems. “In short, governments invest, so they want a return, which translates into maximising the retention of students in courses and course completion” (Norton, 2010, p.56). Arguably, an added pressure is the need for universities to increase the number of non-traditional students and those belonging to equity groups: “people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, people from rural and isolated areas, people with a disability, people from non-English speaking backgrounds, women in non-traditional areas of study and higher degrees and Indigenous people” (James, 2008, p.1).

The cost of attrition is high. From a university’s point of view it is more cost-effective to retain their students than to enrol new ones, as recruitment involves costs (Gabb *et al.*, 2006; Elliott *et al.*, 2011; Rayner & Beckman, 2011) and “more than one in four first year students in Australian universities seriously consider dropping out of their initial year” (Krause, 2005, p.58). Woodley & Meredith estimate an average cost of \$36 million per university may be attributable to attrition (Woodley & Meredith, 2011). Adams *et al.* reported that “every 1% drop in attrition would save Australia’s public universities almost one billion dollars, or up to \$2.6 million per university” (Adams *et al.*, 2010, p.18).

This review will focus on the challenges of transitioning to university, primarily for students enrolled in health science courses. It recognises that there is no universally accepted student transition or retention model. Models that have been developed are a combination of various theories and concepts drawn from a variety of fields and that in practice no “one-size-fits-all” (Harvey, S. *et al.* 2006). For example, in a recent review of the literature, Gale and Parker (2011) described three ways in which student transition could be conceived: Induction, or a process involving “defined periods of adjustment”; Developmental, in which there are “qualitatively distinct stages of maturation involving trajectories of maturation” and; Becoming, or “a perpetual series of fragmented movements involving whole-of-life fluctuations in lived reality.” (Gale and Parker, 2011, p.25).

Most of the research selected for this review comes from studies conducted in Australia however a sample of overseas research is also included to add depth. All the studies were



published between 1986 and 2011. The literature was sourced using the following databases: CINAHL, ERIC, ProQuest, PsycINFO, Pubmed/MEDLINE and SCOPUS. Keywords used for the search included: transition, attrition, retention, persistence, entry to university, first year experience, school leaver, higher education, health science, student, mature age, and non-traditional student. Further searches were undertaken of relevant journals, recent proceedings from the annual “Pacific Rim First Year in higher Education Conference” and the Office of Learning and Teaching (OLT) resource library. In addition, the reference list of all selected articles was scanned for further links.

The first section will describe the process of transition including the work of some early theorists in the area with the concept of “thriving” positioned as a characteristic of successful transition. A brief overview of health science students is provided prior to a broader discussion of the student transition to university and the challenges this entails. Within the later sections of the review, a selective emphasis has been placed on the literature reporting on students identified as being ‘at risk’ on entering university.

### 3.1 Transition

Transition refers to an awareness of and response to change over time and has been defined as “the capacity to navigate change” (Gale and Parker, 2011, p.25).

William Bridges (1991) stated that change is not similar to transition. Change is situational: the new job, the new start at university. Change is external, transition is internal. Bridges (1991) emphasised that unless transition occurs, change will not work. Transition begins with an ending or letting go of something. He contended that it is a three-part process involving the abandonment of the old patterns, a period of limbo, and a new beginning (Bridges 1991). For example, for students, moving from high school to university is a change. When they start university, high school students may have had to leave their old familiar environment and network of friends. Their high school social network may have come to an end. That is the first step of transition. The second step is the neutral zone which is the “no-man’s land between the old reality and the new” (Bridges 1991). When students move from high school to university, the change can occur very quickly. However, that is just the external situational change; the psychological transition occurs much more gradually (Bridges 1991). This is because instead of becoming a new student immediately, the student actually battles for a time in a state that is neither the old nor the new. The neutral zone is the very centre of the transition process. If the student escapes prematurely from the neutral zone, he/she will not only compromise the change but also lose a great opportunity of learning and growing. The last step of transition is the ending-neutral zone-new beginning (Bridges 1991). Students make the new beginning only if they have first made an ending of their familiar high school environment and experienced some time in the neutral area.

Selder (1989) describes transition as a situation where there is a disruption of an existing reality that requires reconstruction, and consequently the resolution of uncertainty that “... bridges from a reality which has been disrupted to a newly constructed or surfacing reality” (p. 437). In this context, uncertainty is important, because it acknowledges the need for order and the ‘leap of faith’ required to bridge from the old reality to the new one; and the possibility of relinquishing aspects of self that had previously been defining. In those

circumstances “...the person feels as if he were a stranger; he feels cut off from his environment and his usual connectedness with other human beings... (and) may fail to grasp what is actually occurring. They distort experiences...” (Selder 1989). The consequent ‘sense-making’ is the individual’s attempt to regain the equilibrium state, and provides meaning to the experience and a frame of reference for interpreting and understanding events in the new environment.

Transition has also been described as the period between the ‘before’ and ‘after’ (Nortier 1995), and described as a five-stage model involving initial equilibrium, a separation stage, a crisis stage characterised by confusion and reactive behaviour, a renewal or rebirth stage when behaviour is more proactive and, finally, a new period of equilibrium and stability. Nortier’s (1995) separation stage involves the difficulty and confusion of applying old schemas to new situations. The crisis phase is a more precarious period, or tipping point, where a person is committed to the new environment and there is no chance for turning back. This awareness of the crisis is important to the motivation to look for new meaning and to start the process of mastery of the new environment (Nortier 1995). Transitions are associated with this kind of vulnerability and exposure to the new interactions, environments and experiences, and the problems associated with poor coping strategies (Meleis, Sawyer et al. 2000).

Schlossberg (1989) describes the importance of the individual’s perception of their transition and the resources available to the individual to cope effectively with the experience. This experience is characterised by “...a change in assumptions about oneself and the world and this requires a corresponding change in one’s behaviour and relationships” (Schlossberg 1989). Sargent and Schlossberg (1988) propose that “...first, the person will see whether he or she has enough resources to get through a particular transition successfully: and second, he or she will discover how to strengthen areas of weakness” (p. 60). This is comparable with the ‘thriving’ literature (e.g. O’Leary and Ickovics 1995; Ickovics and Park 1998; Spreitzer, Sutcliffe et al. 2005) where successful adaptation is framed by the process of learning rather than a passage of time. Transitions are associated with vulnerability and exposure to the new interactions, environments and experiences, and the problems associated with poor coping strategies (Meleis, Sawyer et al. 2000). We are motivated to learn (and hence the ability to thrive) by our constant need to control, master, renew and take stock (Sargent and Schlossberg 1988).

From this perspective, the successful transition is a product of situational aspects including the nature of the transition (e.g. welcome, unwelcome, expected, unexpected), aspects of self-including dispositional factors, previous experiences, openness to experience and the ability to deal with ambiguity. It would also include supports including social networks, friends and family, and the nature of that support; and strategies for coping including a plan of action and the availability of resources to cope.

There has been an increased need to move away from a linear model to a more holistic view of transition. Nicholson (1990) describes a complex, comprehensive model for the investigation of transition in four stages – preparation, encounter, adjustment and stabilisation. This explores the perspective of the organisation and the psychosocial impact on the individual. The patterns of response contribute to a better understanding of

transitions. Nicholson's (1984; 1987) emphasis was on the experience of transition as a passage through time from the initial point to more strategic adjustments; the synthesis of which is described in the 'transition cycle'. Based on Nicholson's model, Harris and colleagues (2012) developed a new transition model that focuses on transitions 'well resolved' rather than problems associated with the change. They extend that concept where the 'heat' of the challenge becomes the catalyst for change where three outcomes are possible: thriving, surviving, or languishing. In this model, thriving is a process that is "forward focussed, clear, ordered, and purposeful" and where individuals are "confident, pro-active and self-assured" (Harris, Myhill et al. 2012).

An American scholar, Tinto (1993) asserted that students' commitments to their new educational environment and aspirations are formed and refined by their informal and formal academic experiences. The level of academic and social integration that students encounter helps them to re-evaluate their purpose and intent. Consequently, this affects their decisions on remaining or dropping out of higher education (Tinto 1993). According to Tinto, students who integrate tend not to discontinue their studies.

Braxton and colleagues (2000) expanded Tinto's theory of student retention and suggested that active learning plays an important role in influencing students' commitment to integration and study. Active learning helps students to acquire knowledge, understand their courses and perceive their course as a personal gain. This in turn drives students to dedicate the energy required to integrate with the social component of their higher education environment (Braxton, Milem et al. 2000). Braxton and Hirschy (2004) asserted that the concepts of institutional integrity and communal potential are important. Institutional integrity is the consistency between actions of administration and academic staff and the institutional mission and values. Communal potential is the student-perceived possibility of an affinity group. According to these authors the greater the degree of institutional integrity and dedication to the student success the more likely the student will reach social integration and therefore the more likely they are to remain at the institution. Likewise the stronger the perception of the communal potential of campus life the more integrated the student tends to become (Braxton and Hirschy 2004).

Although Tinto's model of student retention has been widely applied, his theory has encountered criticism (Harvey, S. et al. 2006). For example, it has been argued that Tinto's model has been shaped around the middle-class, white, and young American in their first year in private residential institutions (Stage and Anya 1996) and that cultural aspects of transition were not well represented (Tierney 2000). Other scholars have commented that academic and social integration have been implemented in diverse ways and the model is too limited to deal with the various effects of all of those on student progression (Yorke and Longden 2004).

## 3.2 Thriving

Thriving is defined as a positive response to a challenge (Carver 1998) where gains occur, rather than the minimisation of loss (O'Leary and Ickovics 1995). Thriving can be described as a response to 'challenging circumstances' rather than adversity, with a focus on learning and growth. It is concerned with situations that are adequately destabilising to demand the individual to re-assess the self, and the means through which the individual is motivated to function at a higher level (Spreitzer, Sutcliffe et al. 2005). Bergland & Kirkevold (2001) describe the concept of thriving as developing physical and psychological well-being in difficult circumstances, and where an individual "...acquires new skills and/or knowledge that may promote mastery of similar situations in the future". This is similar to O'Leary's (1998) description of thriving as the "...the ability to go beyond the original level of psychosocial functioning" (p. 429). Carver (1998) draws some finer distinctions where those who are able to thrive (a) are desensitised (i.e. the challenge did not worry them as much); (b) have enhanced recovery potential (i.e. they learn new strategies); and (c) achieve at a higher level as a consequence of engagement with the challenge (i.e. they learn from the experience). Together these are also markers for well-being (Ryff and Singer 2006).

An individual who thrives (a) gains experience and knowledge that can be used to the next stage of a challenge (Nicholson 1987; Carver and Scheier 1999), (b) grows confidence in future decision making based on the reflective awareness of what worked (Aldwin and Revenson 1987), (c) develops stronger social networks of support (Moos and Schaefer 1986), and (d) masters strategies to deal with the difference between expectations and experience (Bergland and Kirkevold 2001). Contextually, O'Leary and Ickovics (1995) describe engaging a challenge as transformative, with three possible outcomes (a) languishing, affected by the stressor and unable to make progress; (b) surviving, with a return to a baseline of strategies; or (c) thriving, where growth and learning is evident.

Thriving is consistent with personal growth, where there is an expanded capacity for well-being enhanced by self-knowledge (Spreitzer, Sutcliffe et al. 2005), and is a move away from a vulnerability/deficit model, to one that recognises the adaptive processes of recovery. In that regard, thriving is the product of individual resources, social resources and the developmental process; managed by the individual to produced positive outcomes (O'Leary 1998); and resulting in 'value-added' growth and enhanced well-being (O'Leary and Ickovics 1995; Park 1998). Thriving is apparent when individuals' "...feel progress and momentum, marked by a sense of learning" (Spreitzer, Sutcliffe et al. 2005).

## 3.3 Factors that Impact on Transition

Research on transition to university tends to focus on individual, social or organisational issues in order to determine the factors that impact on a student's decision to persist or forgo their chosen university course.

### 3.3.1 Individual Factors

Early research on transition focused on individual characteristics which may aid or hinder the transition process. Individual capacity to plan and prepare for the transition and psychological and emotional well-being contribute to a successful transition, academic success, and satisfaction (Burton & Dowling, 2005; Clark & Ramsay, 1990; Willcoxson *et al.*, 2011). In contrast, low self-esteem and self-efficacy, poor time-management, dissatisfaction with work-life balance and stress experienced by adjusting to university have all been shown to be linked to depression (Bitsika *et al.*, 2010).

Likewise, past experiences of transition are likely to impact on future transitions. Individuals who have had successful transitions in the past are more likely to find it easier to deal with another transition, whereas individuals who have had painful or incomplete transitions may “have a real difficulty in dealing with any new transitions, even minor in appearance” (Nortier, 1995, p.36). It has been reported that “previous academic performance was the most significant predictor of university performance for first year Australian university students” (Burton & Dowling, 2005, p.76).

Factors such as anxiety can have a long term influence on a successful transition to university. One study found that “the amount of stress that students reported immediately prior to beginning their university studies was significantly related to their adjustment to university six months later” (Pancer *et al.*, 2000, p.51). These challenges are consistent across all student groups, however many health science courses also require students to balance professional and clinical aspects of their chosen course and are “expected to be self-directed, reflective and analytical, which could be a huge academic leap for many” (Shepherd, 2008, p.42). A study conducted with nursing students found that clinical stressors associated with the first year of study were “lack of practical skills, negative attitudes of ward staff and misunderstanding of supernumerary status” (Edwards *et al.*, 2010, p.79). Male Bachelor of Nursing (BN) students face a number of additional challenges, such as dealing with the feminine stereotype of nurses, and feelings of isolation and exclusion from academic and clinical settings (Stott, 2007). As a result “there is evidence to suggest that between 40% and 50% of male students who enter nursing courses, either drop out, fail or transfer to other courses” (Stott, 2007, p.326). To date, little has been done to attract male students to the profession (Wilson, 2005).

It has also been suggested that “high levels of subjective or perceived stress are found significantly more often among medical students during training than in the general population” (Radcliffe & Lester, 2003, p.32). They reported that the transition into the university was described as being stressful for most students especially with regard to competing with students of similar or greater intellectual ability (Radcliffe & Lester, 2003).

Economic circumstances also impact on different groups of people in different ways. Adolescent students tend to be dependent on their families with the majority still living at home. These students are trying to balance transiting to university with emerging adulthood. “The opposing pressures of biological and social adulthood and family and academic dependence are often difficult for students to deal with” (Findlay, 1994, p.4). Research also shows that students who are dependent on their family for financial support

are more likely to persist with university compared to students who receive government support or are in paid employment (Krause, 2005). Rural and remote students entering university often have to adjust to a larger city, a different climate, financial pressures and isolation. “Many find themselves facing financial hardship and renting a considerable distance from campus” (Skene & Evamy, 2009, p.5).

Although the costs of living are consistent across disciplines, a number of added costs are evident in health science fields. Funding clinical placements has been a reported financial issue for many students, with part-time students struggling more than full-time students (Cuthbertson *et al.*, 2004). This issue has been addressed by the National Review of Nursing Education in Australia in 2002 with the objective being to assist disadvantaged students fund clinical placements (Andrew *et al.*, 2008; Cuthbertson *et al.*, 2004).

### 3.3.2 Social Factors

Every Australian university has recognised the need and the importance of social aspects in supporting transition. Students entering university often do not know one another. The lack of friendship networks has been a critical factor in students’ level of adjustment to the university, many stating that peer interaction is most crucial in addressing transition issues (Calder, 2004; Findlay, 1994; Kantanis, 1997; Kantanis, 2000).

Kantanis has stated: “the lack of friendship networks undermines self-confidence and self-esteem, inhibits development of socialisation skills, precludes discussions in a learning community, increases the difficulty of obtaining and sharing scant resource material, restricts the speed of familiarisation of the university, its resources, facilities and culture and reinforces feelings of negativity towards the institution, others and self” (Kantanis, 2000, p.4). Wilcox *et al.*, reported that many first year students rely on their old support networks such as family and friends during the initial stages of transition to university, and “as students develop social networks at university these become their main source of social support during term-time” (Wilcox, *et al.*, 2006, p.718). Carolan & Kruger reported that midwifery students felt overwhelmed and unsupported in their first year of study. Issues included lack of information prior to enrolment about time commitments, course requirements and workload. Students also felt unsupported, alone and unsure if others were experiencing similar difficulties (Carolan & Kruger, 2011).

### 3.3.3 Organisational Factors

Tinto, an advocate of ‘learning communities’ to assist transition, explains that for successful transition to university, both the student and the university need to take responsibility. “Institutions have to take seriously the notion that the failure of students to thrive in college lies not just with the students but also in ways they construct the environments in which they ask students to learn” (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008, p.11). Learning communities allow students to “connect with faculty and other students in efforts of forming supportive peer interaction... therefore bridging the academic demands of university with social needs of students” (Tinto, 2000, p.49). This model has proven to “enhance student learning and persistence and enrich faculty professional lives” (Tinto, 2006, p.10).

Holden highlighted that “persistence and performance are dependent on a student becoming familiar with the *modus operandi* of the university. The ways of operating and ways of knowing, in university contexts, need to be far more transparent, enabling persistence and performance to be positively reinforced early in the first year of study” (Holden, 2005, p.37). Kantanis also reported that the physical environment of a university can be “daunting for first year students whose experience up to the time of commencement had been restricted to the secondary school campus, which, on average, is limited in terms of size, spread and population” (Kantanis, 1997, p.15).

### 3.4 Support for Health Science Students

Health sciences encompass a large number of disciplines. These include: medicine, nursing, midwifery, speech therapy, nutrition, food science and technology, oral health, pharmacy and physiotherapy. Most transition research in Australia within these disciplines has focussed on nurses (Andrew *et al.*, 2008; Cohen *et al.*, 2011; Drury *et al.*, 2007; Hutchinson *et al.*, 2011; McPhail *et al.*, 2009; Mehta *et al.*, 2008; Steele *et al.*, 2005; Wollin *et al.*, 2006), a small number on midwives (Carolan & Kruger 2011; Mehta *et al.*, 2008), and medical students (DiCorpo, 2009).

There is a shortage of doctors, nurses and other health care professionals, especially in rural and remote regions of Australia. This is of concern due to rural/urban health disparities, the poor state of Aboriginal health and a growing demand for healthcare services from an ageing population. As a result, government initiatives have been designed to increase access into health science courses for people from rural and remote areas, low SES, Indigenous backgrounds, mature age students, and people from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds (Kelly *et al.*, 2009; Mehta *et al.*, 2008; Usher *et al.*, 2005,).

Some of these initiatives include providing scholarships for students enrolled in rural areas, and scholarships for clinical placements in rural areas (Croxon & Maginnis, 2007). Similarly, the Australian Government has initiated “hundreds of undergraduate bonded scholarships and established eight new medical schools in the past seven years, which will result in a significant increase in medical graduates over the next decade” (PhED, 2008, Sec 2:1). Other initiatives include “Rural Health Clubs at universities, reduced university entrance scores for students of rural background who meet other selection criteria and health careers promotion days conducted through Rural Health Training Units” (Heaney, 1999, p.1). The reasons behind an increased push to rural areas and rural students is that “there is increasing evidence that undergraduate rural training, postgraduate rural training and medical entry that favours rural students increases the likelihood of rural practice” (Harding & Pilotto, 2010, p.143).

Access to health science courses for rural students is still limited, with students from rural areas underrepresented in medical schools and often other health related courses (Heaney, 1999). They often have lower academic scores than students from metropolitan areas, which restrict their chances of entering highly competitive courses such as medicine. It has been commented that the academic performance of rural students is “disadvantaged by limited subject choice, inexperienced and highly mobile teachers, their lower expectations and the lack of a competitive academic environment” (Jones & Stradley, 1995, p.332). In



addition, students who enter university from rural areas are also more likely to be from lower SES backgrounds, mature age, first in the family to attend university and from farming families (Croxon & Maginnis, 2007).

### 3.5 Challenges of the First Year

For most students, the first year is an important transition point which can influence their views on their learning pathway at tertiary level and beyond (Hillman 2005). First year students face many difficulties which eventually influence involvement and accomplishment (Australian Council for Educational Research 2008). It has been observed that most academic failure and withdrawal occurs in the first year of university (McInnis 2001). Krause (2005) suggested that more than 25% of first year university students in Australia seriously consider discontinuing their study. However, James *et al.* reported a fall in the number of students who consider discontinuing their study from 28 per cent in 2004 to 23 per cent in 2009 (James, Krause et al. 2010). A study of nearly half a million students in 32 Australian universities in 2006 found that the attrition (drop out) rate was as high as 30.3% (Olsen, Spain, & Wright, 2012).

A broad range of factors affect both attrition rates and progression, such as institutional practices, personal interaction and social attributes. Harvey and Smith (2006) reviewed more than 500 publications on the factors that influence first-year progression and retention in tertiary education and found that the picture was very complex. Students' decisions to quit are often the consequence of a build-up of causes and a result of a complicated mix of personal factors, external burdens and institutional factors (Harvey, S. et al. 2006). Similarly, a UK study concluded that students drop out of their study as a consequence of a combination of inter-related causes (Jones 2008).

Yorke and Longden (2008) identified seven contributing factors to premature departure: (1) wrong choice of courses; (2) poor quality learning experience; (3) dissatisfaction with institutional resource; (4) difficulties in coping with academic demands; (5) dissatisfaction with location and environment; (6) social integration issues; and (7) financial and employment issues. In recent research (Quinn, Thomas et al. 2005) the authors also found the reasons for withdrawal included: wrong course choice, academic difficulties, a lack of institutional belonging and other life commitments. McInnis (1995) reported that the factors for students discontinuing were manifold including academic boredom, isolation, change of goals, outside university commitments, lack of adaptation, learning challenges, financial issues and the wrong selection of course. James *et al.* identified a range of factors which indicated students were at risk including: poor performance, financial pressure, lack of understanding from parents, lack of social support, inadequate preparation for higher education learning, and too much time spent working. The authors stressed the importance of providing students with not only academic support, but also personal, physical and emotional support (James, Krause et al. 2010).

A recent study that explored causes of student attrition in each year of a three year business degree at six Australian higher education institutions reported: "factors related to attrition are generally university-specific and reflect both student characteristics and their responses to the specific institutional culture and environment" (Willcoxson, Manning et al. 2011). The



authors noted that ‘lack of a clear reason for being at university’ and ‘the feeling of having insufficient ability to succeed at university’ were the only attrition triggers common to most institutions and most study years. In line with the literature, the study suggested that attrition appears to be the consequence of “the aggregation of diverse factors generally followed by ‘the straw that broke the camel’s back’” (Willcoxson, Manning et al. 2011).

### 3.6 Challenges for Disadvantaged (equity) Groups

Equity groups include people from rural and isolated areas, people from lower socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds, Indigenous people, people with disabilities, people from non-English speaking backgrounds and women in non-traditional areas of study (Hillman 2005). Equity groups historically had been under-represented in tertiary education and should be the target of specific interventions to boost their presence at universities. Participation in higher education by rural, remote and low SES sectors of the population is significantly lower than the other groups despite an equity policy having been in place for 15 years (Centre for the Study of Higher Education 2008). In particular, low SES people are about 30% as likely as high SES people to take part in universities. Low SES background students are likely to be rural (James, Krause et al. 2010) and compared with people from low SES backgrounds in urban areas, those from rural areas are further underrepresented in tertiary education (Centre for the Study of Higher Education 2008).

The challenges encountered in first (and subsequent) years may accumulate for low SES students. These students tend to spend relatively more time in a paid employment and face the challenges of juggling study and work due to a higher financial burden (Krause, Hartley et al. 2005). Students from low SES backgrounds are likely to be the first in the family to participate in higher education and are more likely to study in the areas of education, health and pathways courses into tertiary education (James, Krause et al. 2010). In addition, the educational aspirations of students from low SES backgrounds and that of their parents are more likely to be less clearly defined and not as high as those observed in families from high SES backgrounds (Schoon and Parsons 2002; Krause, Hartley et al. 2005). These students tend to depend on their families for full support and parents regularly mention that they are not sure how to give advice to their children and don’t know where to seek help from the university (Lysaght 2007).

Compared to other SES groups, retention rates for low SES students are lower (James, Baldwin et al. 2004). There are also gaps in the first year results of rural, remote students and Indigenous students when compared to other cohorts (Hillman 2005). Hillman (2005) suggested that in spite of having made the effort to participate in university, these students face difficulties in persevering with their studies. As governments and universities try to make higher education more accessible, the student population is also becoming more diverse. Some students may require a higher level of support and assistance such as those with multiple risk factors. They may encounter cultural and social challenges in blending with the university community and completing their degrees (Hillman 2005). With assistance however, students can form supportive peer groups, learning communities and friendships. As Abbott-Chapman asserts: “With adequate preparation and high motivation which achievement brings, even disadvantaged students are likely to overcome the barriers

and handicaps to successful course completion and graduation” (Abbott-Chapman *et al.*, 2004, p.81).

### 3.7 Transition Support

Given that attrition from university is generally highest in the first year, arguably the period requiring the most adjustment by students (Krause, 2005), much work has been focussed around how students adapt and cope to university life and how this transition can best be supported (Sillburn & Box, 2008). The range of institutional initiatives directed to this aim has been described as “generational” (Wilson, 2009). First generation approaches to supporting the First Year Education (FYE) were seen as “co-curricular” and represented activities around or in adjunct to the curriculum, typically induction or campus orientation programs provided to students prior to formal classes commencing. Second generation FYE strategies were seen to be more curriculum focussed and included attention to pedagogy, learning space and technology. These more integrated approaches encouraged student transition capabilities to be nurtured and developed as part of their course. Third generation approaches are characterised when first and second generation curricular approaches “are brought together in a comprehensive, integrated, and coordinated strategy that delivers a seamless FYE across an entire institution and all of its disciplines, programs, and services”. To achieve this, a “whole-of-institution transformation” is required (Kift, 2009, p.1).

A wide variety of supports for (especially) first year students have been developed including: induction or orientation at commencement of a course, new students websites, first year advisors, workshops and classes to develop specific academic and life skill sets, student counselling, student guidance services, and student mentoring programs (Willcoxson, Manning *et al.* 2011). See Table 1.

Mentoring programs provide an avenue for first year students to be supported by either more experienced students or faculty staff, especially as feelings of isolation and disconnection from the university is associated with a greater susceptibility to withdraw (Heirdsfield *et al.*, 2008). Elliott *et al.* reported that “mentors were influential in a student’s decision to remain at university” (Elliott *et al.*, 2011, p.5).

Orientation programs, conducted over a few days or the initial few weeks of semester programs, allow students the opportunity to gain knowledge of campus layout, mentoring programs, clubs and offer the opportunity to meet other students.

However, students can also find such days “a stressful and isolating experience” (Reid & Solomonides, 2011, p.4). Induction of students is regularly reported as being confusing, overwhelming, bureaucratic and not user-friendly (Harvey, S. *et al.* 2006). It is suggested that during induction or orientation, students should be provided with information gradually and be given opportunities to better integrate into their new environment and to socialise with other students (Harvey, S. *et al.* 2006). Orientation is most useful if it is a longer process rather than an event, beginning before enrolment and lasting throughout the first semester or the first year. This could enable students to make stronger sense of the information provided, socialise with the staff and other students, assimilate and engage in their new learning environment at university.

Other student support such as academic support, skills development and pastoral support may be provided by a range of staff including professional staff, academic staff, peers and the student union (Jones 2008). Harvey and colleagues (2006) reviewed the literature on student support programs and concluded that much of the support provided is based on perceived student needs rather than developing student's individual strengths. The support tends to be on the deficiencies of the first year students and how to compensate for them, rather than on examining their individual learning needs and building on their strengths (Harvey, S. et al. 2006).

Whilst all Australian universities have implemented transition programs of some type, it has been reported that "students were unaware of support services available to them, how or where to access information, what employment opportunities were available to them on graduation, or even how to find their way around the campus" (Darlaston-Jones *et al.*, 2003, p.43). An extensive survey of students in Australian Universities found that only a minority of students had used specific support services (McInnis and James 1995). Similarly, another survey found that most students have either not made use of or are not aware of the support services available (Willcoxson, Manning et al. 2011). In addition, many students who would benefit from available support services are not willing to look for support (Dodgson and Bolam 2002). Research suggests that those first year students who are in need of support are not often those who use the support (Harvey, S. et al. 2006).

Universities should therefore focus on the way this information is disseminated to their first year students. Walker suggests that the content and quantity of information should be provided in ways that are "sensitive to the emotional stresses and confusion many new students experience when first attending university" (Walker, 2001, p.37).

Tinto (2006) has argued that students tend to remain and succeed in a learning environment that promotes learning, holds high expectation of their success, equips them with consistent information, informs them about their options, provides support academically, socially, and personally and engages them in the institution. Tinto (2006) suggests that the structure and practices of the university need to be changed in order to improve retention; essentially, an integrative approach that moves beyond add-on services which are frequently at the edges of university life. In related research (Pitkethly and Prosser 2001) it was indicated that each higher education institution must recognise the experiences of its own students if it is to tackle the retention issue and concluded that a coordinated, informed, university-wide response to transition issues will enhance the learning experiences of all students in their first year (Pitkethly and Prosser 2001).

Andrew *et al.*, reported that nursing students had different motivations to exit study in the first and second semesters of the course. "Implementing strategies to retain students in the first semester may not be worthwhile as these students probably are not suited or committed to the course. Targeting strategies to assist students in the second semester may be more successful" (Andrew *et al.*, 2008, p.871). Willcoxson made similar findings across six universities in Australia. Those contemplating departure in the first semester reported "issues of personal commitment to studies, university status, career direction, engagement with learning, teacher and admin staff support, and the social environment offered by the

university... by second semester... students reported time management difficulties, especially relating to social life” (Willcoxson, 2009, p.11). Jeffreys reported that “first semester students often underestimate the rigorous demands of a nursing program and often overestimate their supports. First semester students are at high risk of misperceptions, attrition, and/or poor academic outcomes” (Jeffreys, 2007, p.416).

The amount, type and timing of information provided to first year students can be overwhelming, and there is growing evidence to suggest that students should be engaged with the process and information should be disseminated at a much slower pace. Successful transition can take time and, ideally, support programs should be integrated within course and university processes. Thus, there is a need for a proactive or integrated approach to the issue. Higher education institutions should provide students with a coordinated network of support programs and services with the longer-term goal of self-management in mind (McInnis, James et al. 2000; Krause, Hartley et al. 2005). There also needs to be a balance between the support offered to students and the opportunity for them to deal with challenges using their own initiative and resources. “Universities need to support, mentor but not nanny students, preserving instead students’ genuine capacity to experience independence in a staged fashion (along with the capacity to tolerate a normal amount of anxiety)” (Norton, 2010, p.66).

### 3.8 Conclusion

Although there are a large number of transition programs and initiatives that universities can employ, providing them in ways that are cost effective and that meet the needs of a diverse student population is a significant challenge. First year students are especially vulnerable to factors which can influence their likelihood to succeed. Targeting those students on entry to university has therefore been a focus for many transition programs. Thriving refers to a positive response to transition with a focus on learning and growth. An individual who thrives, gains abilities and understandings that can be applied to the next challenge, be that at university, on employment and or in life more generally.

A wide range of support services exists for students including: induction programs, skill workshops, mentoring programs and counselling. However, research indicates that students may not be aware of the available support services and those who most need and would benefit from such services are reluctant to seek or make use of them. Short duration induction and orientation programs delivered at the commencement of a university course can be confusing, overwhelming and not user-friendly. Other support services tend to focus on the deficiencies of first year students rather than building on their strengths.

Failure in a course of study or a student’s decision to withdraw from study is the consequence of a complex mix of personal characteristics, life circumstances and institutional factors. Equity groups, especially low SES, rural, remote and Indigenous students are under-represented in tertiary education. These students are more likely to face financial difficulties, cultural and social challenges integrating with a new educational environment and may therefore need earlier intervention and targeted support.

Models of student retention have been developed in response to the challenges of transition to university and whilst models of social and academic integration currently dominate, there is no one-size-fits-all model. There is evidence that there should be a coordinated, informed, university-wide approach to transition to benefit the learning experiences of all students and that will enable them to thrive.

**Table 1: Examples of Transition programs**

<p>Edith Cowan University: mentoring initiatives in which students were matched with an academic mentor who would be a contact person available to assist the students when required, were designed for first year nursing students . It was also noted in support of the program, that “mentorship has been highlighted within nursing literature as contributing to early, positive socialisation experiences within the profession” (Cohen <i>et al.</i>, 2011, p.3 ). The Cadigal orientation program for Indigenous nursing students is a two week structured teaching period focusing on teaching Anatomy and Physiology. Participants found this program useful as it “enabled them to meet other Cadigal students, gain some experience in the study of difficult subjects, develop academic learning skills, and become familiar with the university’s geography and procedures”. The orientation program also helped build learning communities by enabling students to form friendships, swap lecture notes and form study groups (Farrington <i>et al.</i>, 2001).</p> <p>The Faculty of Health Sciences at Curtin University has designed an inter-professional first year curriculum to aid transition to university. This year long course teaches academic skills, professional practice and discipline skills, allows for flexibility for students who wish to change courses and has a number of support programs attached to the curriculum including mentor programs, follow up programs for students at risk of disengaging, student-led study support programs in science and support in development of English language proficiency (Jones <i>et al.</i>, 2011).</p> <p>The School of Nursing and Midwifery at Logan Campus, Griffith University promotes a holistic view of university life by integrating social, community and academic activities such as first year induction, peer teaching, tutorials, support (mentoring, assignment planning, exam preparation, strategies to manage workload and other commitments and referral to other university services) and group activities in the hope of improving a sense of community and citizenship (Wollin <i>et al.</i>, 2006).</p> <p>The Queensland University of Technology (QUT) School of Nursing in collaboration with the Oodgeroo Unit have been successful in increasing retention of Indigenous students enrolled in the BN program. The Oodgeroo Unit coordinates tutor assistance, academic support, cultural support and a social hub for Indigenous students. This enables new students to link with other Indigenous students, build learning communities and a sense of belonging. The School of Nursing has implemented additional strategies such as morning teas, drop-in sessions and telephone calls to students to monitor their progress (Meiklejohn <i>et al.</i>, 2003).</p> <p>The School of Medicine at the University of New South Wales (UNSW) has built in a Foundation Course in the first eight weeks of the first year of study. This course is designed to help students learn through group work, peer teaching and self-directed learning. Support is also given in the form of a study group for students who need help with assignment writing, reflection, presentations and referencing. Peer mentoring is also provided to help ease transition (Di Corpo, 2009).</p>
--

## 4. Project management

- (a) Governance was provided by a project management team comprised of two representatives from each of the three partner University Departments of Rural Health: Tasmania, New South Wales and Western Australia.
- (b) Oversight of the project was provided by a project reference group comprised of seven representatives drawn from a range of university settings and from the health sector.
- (c) Budget management and responsibility was taken by the University of Tasmania, Department of Rural Health.
- (d) The project was managed by the project leader, Dr Martin Harris of the University of Tasmania, Department of Rural Health. This included the ongoing management of the project, training, data gathering and management, website construction and maintenance, and reporting.

### 4.1 The deliverables

The project delivers a model for the management of transition for tertiary institutions. The model and supporting frameworks, tools and data management devices are available through the project website <

[http://www.ruralhealthtasmania.com.au/projects/thriving\\_in\\_transition/index.html](http://www.ruralhealthtasmania.com.au/projects/thriving_in_transition/index.html)>

This comprehensive website is the repository for information:

1. About the project and the project team;
2. A conceptual framework (password protected access) that provides the user with the model template, data entry points, subjective observations, and strategies for intervention;
3. Transition tools in the form of questionnaires and scoring for each of the stages to complement the subjective judgements of the transition coordinators/student support staff;
4. A supporting literature summary;
5. Project documents in the form of ethics guidelines and accompanying documentation;
6. Information on the partner organisations participating in the project;
7. Resources in the form of a detailed diagram of the model process, and a website 'conceptual framework' guidebook;
8. A list of events at which the project was presented.

The project deliverables have and will continue to contribute to improved transitions for students to tertiary study in health science through the adaptation of the thriving transition cycle to contextual practice. This process has involved:

- Theoretical and conceptual thinking about transition and the processes of thriving in challenging circumstances;
- Scoping of contextual best practice;
- The development of institutional leadership to facilitate the appropriate changes;
- The provision of training and support to transition coordinators/student support staff;
- The collection of exemplars of effective initiatives with regard to transition support.

The project has contributed to an emerging body of theoretical and conceptual work around transition as a cyclic process, consisting of stages (which if well resolved) contribute to improved health outcomes and stronger commitment to the challenges of university study in health science.

The project has developed and disseminated a suite of resources that assist institutions provide appropriate and timely support to students in transition, through

- Contextual directions for institutions;
- Practical guidelines for transition coordinators/support staff;
- Tools for transition coordinators/support staff;
- A repository of effective programs and practice (see scoping details)

The training workbook is available in the Appendix (see Appendix 6).

## 5. Project Method

The project was developed as a phased process with a number of distinct strategies. This was a qualitative, sequential study and comprised of the following phases and strategies:

Phase	Strategies
1. Project planning, recruitment and scoping	<p>Project Team and Reference Group confirmed.</p> <p>Project management processes described and reported.</p> <p>Relevant local approvals secured (including HREC approvals).</p> <p>Participating UDRH partners identify participants.</p> <p>Project evaluation process activated (evaluator recruited, briefed, timeframes established and reporting deadlines described).</p> <p>With and through collaborating UDRH:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rural, regional, low SES and non-traditional student backgrounds scoped as contextual data,</li> <li>• Existing strategies for monitoring student transitions and provision of support scoped,</li> <li>• Participant sites (5 university campuses across Australia) identified and invited to participate (i.e. student counsellors 2-5 at each site).</li> </ul>
2. Model adaptation and training	<p>Through consultation and negotiation, the model originally developed as an explanation for thriving in a dislocating challenge was adapted to suit local contexts (i.e. complement strengths of existing transition programs and strategies already in place at each site).</p> <p>Relevant transition coordinators/counsellors and student support staff trained at each site.</p> <p>Data collection procedures finalised (mixed methods approach, primary data source: transition coordinators and support staff. Procedures included interviews, group discussion and student outcome metrics).</p> <p>Ongoing contact established - reporting and support mechanisms for coordinators with project team members.</p>
3. Implement	<p>Thriving in Transition model implemented at each site</p> <p>The duration and impact of each intervention used by counsellors for students at each site documented and assessed.</p> <p>Support and feedback at each site provide by Project Team to add value to interventions strategies across sites.</p>
4. Evaluation and dissemination	<p>Data collated and analysed.</p> <p>“Thriving In Transition” guidelines drafted.</p> <p>Provisional project findings workshopped with participants (e.g. site transitions coordinators, UDRH collaboration managers).</p> <p>Project evaluation team drawing summative and process assessments.</p> <p>Budget finalised (reconciled income with expenditure against project outcomes/deliverables).</p> <p>Final Report prepared and submitted, including recommendations on the implementation of “Thriving In Transition” guidelines.</p> <p>Pursue the publication of project results in relevant international journals and at relevant conferences. Disseminate results through ARHEN.</p>

Table 2: Project stages



## 5.1 Approach and recruitment

The project was supported by the University Department of Rural Health in three locations. In Tasmania by the University of Tasmania Department of Rural Health (UDRH); in New South Wales by the University Centre for Rural Health, North Coast (UCRH) and in Western Australia by the Combined Universities Centre for Rural Health (CUCRH). At each of these centres, a partner/facilitator provided on-site supervision and support. This was managed in phases as links to the participating universities was established. The project was introduced as a program to provide practical support strategies for transition counsellors in higher education, through the application of the “Thriving in Transition” model. The project would then account for current ‘best practice’ through contextual analysis with participating universities.

The commitment of the participating university transition coordinators was to (a) facilitate the contextualisation of the model to existing, local frameworks, (b) participate in training in the application of the model to complement existing programs, (c) apply the model to selected at-risk students over a designated period, (d) participate in interviews and discussion to provide data to support the project objectives.

An invitation was extended to universities through the Departments of Rural Health to participate in the study in four phases:

**Phase 1:        *With the collaborating UDRH***

Extend an invitation to transition coordinators/counsellors to participate in the study.

***With the participating university***

Examine and review existing transition strategies.

Seek information on rural, low SES and non-traditional students as background data.

**Phase 2:        *With the collaborating UDRH and the participating university***

Consult and adapt the “Thriving in Transition” model to suit local contexts.

Prepare and support the transition coordinators/counsellors in the application of the model.

Identify the student target group.

**Phase 3:        *With the collaborating UDRH and the participating university***

Apply the “thriving in Transition” model to the identified students.

Document and assess type, duration and impact of intervention.

Communicate “critical learning’s” that may add value to intervention strategies.

**Phase 4:        *With the collaborating UDRH and the participating university***

Participate in interviews and discussion to support the project objectives.

Participate in workshops to review findings.

Assist with recommendations on the implementation of “Thriving in Transition” guidelines.

## 5.2 Ethics

Ethics permission was granted by the University of Tasmania Human Research Ethics Committee in two stages; (a) permission to locate and examine the ‘Thriving in Transition’ model within the university support strategies, and examine the experience through the student support staff observations, and (b) permission to locate and examine the ‘Thriving in Transition’ model within the university support strategies, and examine the experience through the student perspective.

Despite the recognition of UTAS and other ethics approvals from partner universities, the requirement for local HREC approval was inconsistent. The workload attached to pursuing local ethics approval added significant workload burden to prospective partners and potentially undermined their participation and commitment. The issue of requiring multiple ethics approvals, all written to local requirements, inevitably poses challenges and creates delays that required early and vigorous attention.

The response to the challenge of requiring local ethics approvals was to provide the participating universities with templates for ethics, semi-completed Information Sheets and Consent Forms and the other documentation, and instruments that might be required for local ethics approval.

### 5.3 Activities and Resources

The project was predicated on a cyclic model of transition, adapted to reflect the opportunities to thrive in challenging circumstances in a university framework. The multiple locations provided the setting for a range of contextual transitions; each one representing a case study from which local data could be drawn, and aggregate data contributed to an analysis of the common elements.

### 5.4 Participation

The project was designed to provide practical support strategies for transition counsellors through the application of the 'Thriving in Transition' model. Consequently the commitment of the participating university transition coordinators was to (a) facilitate the contextualisation of the model to existing, local frameworks, (b) participate in the application of the model to complement existing programs, (c) apply the model to selected at-risk students through a challenging transition, and (d) participate in interviews and discussion to provide data to support the project objectives.

Initially, seven universities expressed interest in participating in the study (i.e. University of Tasmania, Curtin University, Notre Dame University, Southern Cross University, Murdoch University, University of Western Australia and Edith Cowan University). Edith Cowan University and the University of Western Australia withdrew from the study as a consequence of internal changes that precluded them from participating.

### 5.5 Scoping

The Thriving in Transition project required independent scoping in the partner institutions and this information shaped the way in which the model was applied (together with the accompanying training).

The scoping information was sourced by:

1. Identifying university programs that supported student transitions (e.g. peer support programs);
2. Identifying university policy documents that guided processes and programs;
3. Identifying individualised programs that fell outside the broader schemes (e.g. those that have a health science focus and might be unique to a department or school);

#### 4. Interviews with transition support officers (however called).

The project was concerned with factors that contribute to successful transition and in particular any specific programs for health science students (especially those who travel off-campus for clinical experience). This was interesting to the project as it posed a particular challenge that had been identified in the literature as 'problematic'. To that end we sought to understand:

- a) The key concerns around their student transition.
- b) The opportunities that exist for individual attention and support.
- c) The indicators for successful transitions.
- d) The descriptions of successful/unsuccessful student trajectories.

In particular, we focused on specific interventions/programs for disadvantaged groups; (e.g. rural and remote students, low SES, CALD, non-traditional background students) and sought to understand:

- a) If (and how) these students were identified.
- b) Whether specific university programs were available across departments and schools.
- c) The nature of ongoing support strategies.
- d) Outcome measurement that might be in place.

Other more general issues of interest included:

- a) The dilemma of limited resources; (primary prevention v. crisis intervention)
- b) The use of external support structures or resources.
- c) Types or groups of students that may require more services than others.
- d) The 'fit' for programs in place for cohorts with different needs (e.g. based on low ENTER scores, literacy, mature age etc.)

In regard to particular programs of support we sought to understand the transition support (and orientation) programs in place within their organisation, such as:

- a) The policy framework for the programs.
- b) The types of programs available.
- c) The organisational framework (centralised, de-centralised, school or faculty-based).
- d) The resources that are in place for these programs.
- e) The student referral system.
- f) The screening or other mechanisms for the early detection of 'at risk' students.
- g) The 'triggers' for an intervention.

The project applications required contextual consideration of university programs. This was reviewed through the 'lens' of the model and the summary data is described in Table 3. Some aggregation across components indicates a consistent pattern of approach, with some variations.

The full review is contained within the individual case studies of the five universities.

<b>Stage 1 Preparation</b>	<b>Curtin University</b>	<b>Murdoch University</b>	<b>Notre Dame University</b>	<b>Southern Cross University</b>	<b>University of Tasmania</b>
<p><b>Readiness for the challenge</b> examines the ability to engage the challenging transition in a purposeful way.</p> <p><b>Aggregate review: ***</b></p>	<p><b>Orientation Program</b> Familiarise with the campus, meet other students, talk to teaching staff, locate classrooms, learn about the library, and discover Curtin's social and community networks.</p>	<p><b>Orientation Program</b> School welcome and course advice. <b>My-Murdoch</b> sessions for online learning. Campus tours and library tours. International students program extends to living, travel and culture.</p>	<p><b>Orientation Program</b> through the <b>Student Life</b> program: an academic orientation covering Uni systems, timetables, support services and university tours.</p>	<p><b>Orientation Program (4 weeks)</b> to help students to familiarise themselves with their course requirements, the university services, both academic and social and take time to learn about preparing for university life.</p>	<p><b>Orientation</b> as a preparation program, familiarity with surroundings, study organisation skills, support and pathways to academic success. Online variations available.</p>
<p><b>Motivation</b> provides an indication of willingness to engage in the dislocating transition, and particularly whether their approach is tentative or confident.</p> <p><b>Aggregate review: **</b></p>	<p><b>JumpSTART program:</b> to offer a helping hand to students who show signs of experiencing difficulty in their study at the early stage as possible.</p>	<p><b>UniEdge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Succeeding at university;</li> <li>• Time management strategies;</li> <li>• Tackling your first assignment;</li> <li>• Effective ways to learn and study.</li> </ul> <p>Give students <i>the edge</i> on all of Murdoch's student support services.</p>	<p><b>Success Now</b> study-skill type workshops available to all students-lunchtime workshops.</p>	<p><b>Getting Started at SCU</b> is a Uni-wide program designed as a one-stop access to information regarding getting started at Uni. Good tools but reliant on the capacity of the students to source material on-line.</p>	<p><b>UGrow USucceed</b> modules assist in the development of the skills that students need to be successful at University and beyond.</p>
<p><b>Positive planning</b> presents an indication of the ability to negotiate and plan personal pathways.</p> <p><b>Aggregate review: *****</b></p>	<p><b>UniPASS</b> program week one tutorials. Planning and study sessions designed for small group participation/mentor leadership. Voluntary program to plan through historically difficult courses or programs.</p>	<p><b>UniEdge</b> This program continues to provide planning and pathways advice; together with <b>First Year Advisors (FYA's)</b> who have direct responsibility for student progress and their well-being and progress.</p>	<p><b>Smart Reading and Success with Writing, Success Now; One2One</b> Support includes time management, essay writing, managing the reading/work load, understanding feedback from assessments, exam anxiety and general Uni survival tips.</p>	<p><b>Generic workshops:</b> effective reading, referencing, writing essays, writing paragraphs and maths and science. <b>Targeted workshops</b> are organised by arrangement with staff in particular courses and units. <b>Drop-in workshops</b> are</p>	<p><b>UniStart</b> aims to help students develop the essential skills required for independent learning and success at University, such as critical thinking, critical reading and academic writing.</p>

				for small groups of students studying the same unit or units.	
<p><b>Comprehensibility</b> describes the ability to identify <i>what</i> issues in the transition process are worthy of engagement.</p> <p><b>Aggregate review: ***</b></p>	<p>Identified through 'flags'. <b>START</b> referrals link to team support. <b>JumpSTART</b> faculty driven where difficulty in units has been identified.</p>	<p>Identified through 'flags'. <b>First Year Advisors (FYA's)</b> have a lead role in early identification of transition difficulty. Links with <b>Mentor</b> program provide affirming experiences.</p>	<p>Identified through 'flags'. <b>One2One</b> program support for academic issues <b>Success Now</b> workshops for learning support <b>MED 100</b> coordinators and through Clinical debriefing (<b>CD</b>) tutors, Student life office (<b>SLO</b>).</p>	<p>Identified through 'flags'. <b>Getting Started at SCU</b> gives info and direction to new students. <b>Study Support</b> workshops online. <b>PASS</b> program of peer assisted support is offered. <b>Student Mentoring</b> program uses experienced students to guide and support.</p>	<p>Identified through 'flags'. <b>UniStart</b> delivers essential skills for success and is preparatory. <b>UGrow</b> and <b>USuccess</b> provide tools through modules and workshops for understanding the transition to Uni. <b>PASS</b> program provides extra assistance through leadership.</p>
<b>Stage 2 Encounter</b>	<b>Curtin University</b>	<b>Murdoch University</b>	<b>Notre Dame University</b>	<b>Southern Cross University</b>	<b>University of Tasmania</b>
<p><b>Gaining confidence</b> focuses on the ability to negotiate the transition experience, particularly the disparity between the anticipated pathways and their experience.</p> <p><b>Aggregate review:****</b></p>	<p><b>JumpSTART program and Learning Support</b> provides ongoing support through a monitoring process and feedback loops.</p>	<p><b>UniEdge</b> sessions provide information. <i>Gaining Confidence</i> is often in the hands of the <b>First Year Advisors (FYA's)</b>. Links with <b>Mentor</b> program provide affirming experiences. <b>The Counselling Service</b> provides ongoing support.</p>	<p><b>Smart Reading and Success with Writing</b> provides the literacy support for increased confidence. <b>Success Now</b> workshops to encourage skill development. <b>Counselling Support</b> through the <b>Student Life Office</b></p>	<p><b>Learning Support</b> is provided in a range of linked services. An after-hours email support service will answer queries. The <b>PASS</b> program is involved in the student transition program and <b>PASS</b> leaders carry a significant responsibility in that regard.</p>	<p><b>UniStart UGrow USucceed</b> as described offers a range of courses, units and support that augur towards confidence. <b>Health</b> offer a <b>mentor</b> program and remedial skill sessions; and <b>supervision</b> that is individually tailored.</p>
<p><b>Sense making</b> describes the ability to make sense</p>	<p><b>JumpSTART program</b> provides some elements</p>	<p>The <b>First Year Advisors (FYA's)</b> have primary</p>	<p>This responsibility falls largely with the <b>MED 100</b></p>	<p>This responsibility rests with <b>Student Mentors</b></p>	<p>This responsibility is within the role of the</p>

<p><i>of their transition experience.</i></p> <p><b>Aggregate review:**</b></p>	<p>that provide sense-making through explanation. Student <b>mentor</b> programs have the potential to facilitate <i>sense-making</i>. Similarly the <b>START</b> student advisors are able to provide this support. Response often the consequence of early concerns with transition</p>	<p>responsibility and respond to concerns. Links with <b>Mentor</b> program provide affirming experiences. <b>The Counselling Service</b> provides ongoing support. Response often the consequence of early concerns with transition</p>	<p>coordinators and through Clinical debriefing <b>(CD)</b> tutors, Student life office (SLO). Response often the consequence of early concerns with transition</p>	<p><b>and Student Counselling staff.</b> Response often the consequence of early concerns with transition</p>	<p><b>Student Counselling staff.</b> Response often the consequence of early concerns with transition</p>
<p><b>Meaningfulness</b> describes <i>why</i> the components of the challenge are worthy of engagement.</p> <p><b>Aggregate review:*</b></p>	<p><b>START</b> student advisors may be able to respond if they have the time and opportunity.</p>	<p>The <b>First Year Advisors (FYA's)</b> student advisors may be able to respond if they have the time and opportunity.</p>	<p>The <b>MED 100</b> coordinators may be able to respond if they have the time and opportunity.</p>	<p><b>Student Mentors and Student Counselling staff</b> may be able to respond if they have the time and opportunity.</p>	<p><b>Student Counselling staff</b> may be able to respond if they have the time and opportunity.</p>
<p><b>Engagement</b> explores the commitment to the transition, particularly the ability to be meaningfully engaged in the adjustment tasks.</p> <p><b>Aggregate review:****</b></p>	<p>Engagement can take a variety of forms and many of these are presented to students in orientation. Strong elements of engagement through the <b>Academic Mentor Program</b>, the <b>JumpSTART</b> program and <b>Next Step Mentoring Program</b> (Careers Centre)</p>	<p>Engagement can take a variety of forms and many of these are presented to students in orientation. Elements of engagement through the <b>My Murdoch sessions</b>, and <b>mentoring programs</b> and strongly supported through the <b>First Year Advisors</b></p>	<p>Engagement can take a variety of forms and many of these are presented to students in orientation. Strong elements of engagement through the <b>Success Now</b> program, and through counselling support. Individual attention through the <b>MED 100</b> coordinators.</p>	<p>Engagement can take a variety of forms and many of these are presented to students in orientation. <b>SCU orientation</b> is robust and extends beyond the 'normal' introduction period. Assisted by the <b>PASS</b> program, student <b>mentoring</b> and <b>counselling support</b>.</p>	<p>Engagement can take a variety of forms and many of these are presented to students in orientation. Health Science offer mentoring program and the schools have a range of programs of support. These are complemented by <b>UniStart</b>, <b>PASS</b> and a strong <b>Student Advisor</b> team</p>
<p><b>Stage 3 Adjustment</b></p>	<p><b>Curtin University</b></p>	<p><b>Murdoch University</b></p>	<p><b>Notre Dame University</b></p>	<p><b>Southern Cross University</b></p>	<p><b>University of Tasmania</b></p>
<p><b>Role development</b> is a reflection of altruism and competitiveness in the</p>	<p>Role development is only addressed when individuals are flagged</p>	<p>Role development is only addressed when individuals are flagged</p>	<p>Role development is only addressed when individuals are flagged</p>	<p>Role development is only addressed when individuals are flagged</p>	<p>Role development is only addressed when individuals are flagged</p>

<p><i>context of the evolving role-fit relationship.</i></p> <p><b>Aggregate review: *</b></p>	<p>within the system. It is often crisis driven and the result of changing priorities. <b>Student Counselling Services</b> respond as required.</p>	<p>within the system. It is often crisis driven and the result of changing priorities. <b>First Year Advisors</b> respond as required.</p>	<p>within the system. It is often crisis driven and the result of changing priorities. <b>MED 100 tutors</b> respond as required.</p>	<p>within the system. It is often crisis driven and the result of changing priorities. <b>Counselling Support Services</b> respond as required.</p>	<p>within the system. It is often crisis driven and the result of changing priorities. <b>Student Advisor</b> team members respond as required</p>
<p><i><b>Personal development</b> is an indication of an ability to process the experience of the transition in a meaningful way and to learn from the experience.</i></p> <p><b>Aggregate review: **</b></p>	<p>Measurement in this component is challenging. Individual improvement can be assessed across a range of outcomes (including academic). This is also a potential Stage 4 component as it is an opportunity for reflection.</p>	<p>Measurement in this component is challenging. Individual improvement can be assessed across a range of outcomes (including academic). Consider this a potential Stage 4 component as it is an opportunity for reflection.</p>	<p>Measurement in this component is challenging. Individual improvement can be assessed across a range of outcomes (including academic). Consider this a potential Stage 4 component as it is an opportunity for reflection.</p>	<p>Measurement in this component is challenging. Individual improvement can be assessed across a range of outcomes (including academic). Consider this a potential Stage 4 component as it is an opportunity for reflection.</p>	<p>Measurement in this component is challenging. Individual improvement can be assessed across a range of outcomes (including academic). Consider this a potential Stage 4 component as it is an opportunity for reflection.</p>
<p><i><b>Manageability</b> describes <u>how</u> to meet the demands of the challenge, particularly the balance of competing interests.</i></p> <p><b>Aggregate review: ****</b></p>	<p>The individual strategies for balancing competing demands will always be contextual. The <b>JumpSTART</b> program , <b>UniPASS</b>, mentoring; together with <b>Counselling support</b> provides much of the needed information</p>	<p>The individual strategies for balancing competing demands will always be contextual. Murdoch's <b>UniEdge</b>, extended <b>orientation</b> program and the <b>First Year Advisors</b> provide most of this information.</p>	<p>The individual strategies for balancing competing demands will always be contextual. Notre Dame's <b>orientation</b> program, <b>Success Now</b> program and <b>Counselling support</b>; together with the faculty <b>tutor system</b> provides much of this support</p>	<p>The individual strategies for balancing competing demands will always be contextual. Southern Cross's extended <b>orientation program</b>, <b>mentoring</b> and <b>Counselling support</b> delivers this information</p>	<p>The individual strategies for balancing competing demands will always be contextual. The <b>UniStart</b> program, <b>UGrow</b> and <b>PASS</b> program, together with <b>Counselling</b> provides a wide range of support</p>
<p><i><b>Support systems</b> are an indication of the nature and availability of information, social companionship, tangible resources and emotional support.</i></p> <p><b>Aggregate review: ****</b></p>	<p>A student may be <b>referred</b> through an online support process. <b>JumpSTART</b>, <b>Mentoring</b> and links to the <b>Student Transition and Retention Team</b> are the main resources.</p>	<p>Murdoch links closely with students in an extended <b>orientation</b> program. The <b>First Year Advisors</b> carry much of the extended support responsibility.</p>	<p>The Notre Dame has general orientation programs and enabling programs for the whole community. Within Medicine, the <b>MED 100</b> tutors, together with the <b>CD</b> team and the <b>Student Life Office</b> provide the bulk of support.</p>	<p>The extended <b>orientation</b> program and the <b>Student Advisors</b> provide the bulk of the support</p>	<p>UTas have a substantial number of <b>support programs</b> and consequent links to appropriate personnel. <b>Mentor</b> programs, <b>Student Advisors</b> and <b>faculty facilitators</b> provide the support</p>

<b>Stage 4 Stability / Reflection</b>	<b>Curtin University</b>	<b>Murdoch University</b>	<b>Notre Dame University</b>	<b>Southern Cross University</b>	<b>University of Tasmania</b>
<p><b>Relationship building</b> provides an indication of the ability to form meaningful and sustained relationships after the transition.</p> <p><b>Aggregate review: ***</b></p>	<p>The university provides many opportunities develop relationships and much of this is through orientation activity. <b>Student mentoring</b> provides another important link and the <b>START</b> provides oversight.</p>	<p>The <b>First Year Advisors</b> carry much of the responsibility and together with student <b>Mentors</b>, assist students to develop meaningful relationships. The <b>Student Learning Centre</b> also provides support</p>	<p>Together with the <b>orientation programs</b> and <b>enabling programs</b> UND offer mentorship and small <b>tutor</b> environments to build relationships.</p>	<p>SCU build on the extended <b>orientation program</b> to embed the opportunity to develop relationships. Together with the student <b>mentors</b> and the <b>counselling staff</b>, support is provided.</p>	<p>UTas has extensive programs that promote the development of relationships e.g. <b>UniStart, UGrow, PASS</b>. The <b>Support and Equity</b> unit and the <b>Student Advisor Team</b> provide this support,</p>
<p><b>Environmental mastery</b> describes the ability to control and influence the environment. In particular it involves the mastery of strategies to account for the disparity between expectations and experience.</p> <p><b>Aggregate review: n/a</b></p>	<p>Reflection on the transition in terms of environmental mastery as a product of the experiences and resolution of the stages.</p>	<p>Reflection on the transition in terms of environmental mastery as a product of the experiences and resolution of the stages.</p>	<p>Reflection on the transition in terms of environmental mastery as a product of the experiences and resolution of the stages.</p>	<p>Reflection on the transition in terms of environmental mastery as a product of the experiences and resolution of the stages.</p>	<p>Reflection on the transition in terms of environmental mastery as a product of the experiences and resolution of the stages.</p>
<p><b>Trust and commitment</b> is an indication of levels of assurance in the negotiation of the transition and confidence in the future. In particular it is the ability to navigate the time-bounded aspects of the transition in a meaningful way.</p> <p><b>Aggregate review: n/a</b></p>	<p>Reflection on the transition in terms of levels of confidence in the next cycle and chosen pathways.</p>	<p>Reflection on the transition in terms of levels of confidence in the next cycle and chosen pathways.</p>	<p>Reflection on the transition in terms of levels of confidence in the next cycle and chosen pathways.</p>	<p>Reflection on the transition in terms of levels of confidence in the next cycle and chosen pathways.</p>	<p>Reflection on the transition in terms of levels of confidence in the next cycle and chosen pathways.</p>



<b><i>Discretion</i></b> is a reflection of the scope to determine the content and scheduling of the transition, i.e. to plan personal pathways.  <b>Aggregate review: n/a</b>	Reflection on the transition in terms of levels of confidence in planning and achieving goals through the next cycle.	Reflection on the transition in terms of levels of confidence in planning and achieving goals through the next cycle	Reflection on the transition in terms of levels of confidence in planning and achieving goals through the next cycle	Reflection on the transition in terms of levels of confidence in planning and achieving goals through the next cycle	Reflection on the transition in terms of levels of confidence in planning and achieving goals through the next cycle
--	---	--	--	--	--

Table 3: Scoping

Aggregate Review:	*	Minimal impact
	**	Some influence
	***	Selectively operative
	****	Positive values
	*****	Effective

## 5.6 External Evaluator

The external evaluator was actively involved in the project, providing guidance in regard to the scope and focus of the project; the operational processes developed to achieve the outcomes; the conceptual and theoretical framework underpinning the project; the context of the project; and the key values that drove the project. A detailed evaluation of the project is contained herewith.

## 5.7 Participant training in Thriving in Transition Model

The training process for the Student Transition Coordinators (however called) involved a series of steps, beginning with an orientation to the model and concluding with one-to-one training on the application to the particular university with regard to the contextual programs described. The steps were designed to contribute to a better understanding of student transitions and provide resources for future programs.

### ***Step 1 Scoping***

Together with the research team the individual universities provided information in regard to existing programs of support. This involved some discussions and the provision of information that enabled the research team to design a model that accurately represented current practice.

### ***Step 2 Cohort identification and recruitment***

Each university identified a cohort with whom the research took place. The appropriate ethics permission was obtained (in consultation with the research team in regard to reciprocal arrangements and/or templates to facilitate the application). The cohort was then invited to participate (together with the Information Sheets and Consent Forms provided).

### ***Step 3 Training***

Together with the research team, the Thriving in Transition model was adapted to provide an operational plan for the individual universities. This involved familiarisation with the model components and processes and resulted in a project plan for each university. A series of distance, and face-to-face workshops took place to provide (a) an overview of the model, (b) an understanding of the application of the model to the cohort, and (c) use of the associated instruments and data management systems.

### ***Step 4 Application***

The adapted model was then applied to the cohort at each site and participants documented the type, duration and impact of the interventions. These “critical learning’s” were communicated to the research team and review was conducted to add value to intervention strategies.

### **Step 5 Reflection**

Each university joined with the research team to participate in interviews and discussion to reflect on the project objectives. Each university participated in workshops to review findings and assist with recommendations on the implementation of “Thriving in Transition” guidelines.

## **5.8 Website**

As an informing process (and for consistency), the program was placed on-line and the pages of the website populated with material that (a) reflected the historical progress of the project, (b) provided information and material to support engagement with the requisite personnel at the different institutions, (c) provided an online version (password protected) of the model with interactive processes to allow participating universities to plot, plan and store data related to the project, (d) provided other tools to support the program aims (e.g. questionnaires, ethics templates, literature review). The project website can be located at [http://www.ruralhealthtasmania.com.au/projects/thriving\\_in\\_transition/index.html](http://www.ruralhealthtasmania.com.au/projects/thriving_in_transition/index.html).

The web-base for the project provided a convenient repository for information, training programs, data storage through a password protected embedded facility, and historical documentation.

- (a) The Home page provided an introduction to the project and the requisite disclaimers. It introduced the project as a new staged and cyclic approach, providing many more opportunities to identify issues of concern and facilitate early intervention for students in transition. The project was described as providing practical support strategies for transition counsellors, contextually designed to account for local, current ‘best practice’, and to provide a template for support that accounts for the stages of the transition model successfully negotiated.

The project was described as enabling for students in that it makes it possible to identify needs earlier in the transition process and appropriate interventions assigned. The project was described as having three broad stages:

- (1) Collaborative scoping of the Thriving in Transition model to suit local contexts; and training and support of transition coordinators/counsellors in the application of the model.
- (2) Application of the Thriving in Transition model to the identified student population. Documentation of the type, duration and impact of intervention; and communication of the “critical learning’s” that may add value to intervention strategies.
- (3) Participation in data collection forums to support the project objectives; and assistance with drafting the Thriving in Transition guidelines.

- (b) The About Us page described the project team as a team of academic and professional staff committed to a better understanding of the characteristics and processes of transition to university. It described our particular interest in better outcomes for students who might be ‘at risk’ (e.g. from rural and remote settings, from low SES backgrounds, first in family etc.).

- (c) The Project Overview page described the project in the context of higher education where transition has been traditionally seen as a linear journey, and the failure to thrive (reflected in retention rates) had not been adequately explained. For students from non-traditional and low SES backgrounds, the transition was more acutely felt and retention rates have been disappointing. The project and the model proposed described an innovative, staged and cyclic approach to the transition where many more opportunities to identify issues of concern and facilitate early intervention exist. The project was described as providing practical support strategies for transition counsellors in higher education. These were contextually designed to account for current 'best practice', and provided a template for support that accounted for the stages of transition successfully negotiated. The program provided guidelines for support staff and actionable interventions for students facing particular transition challenges.

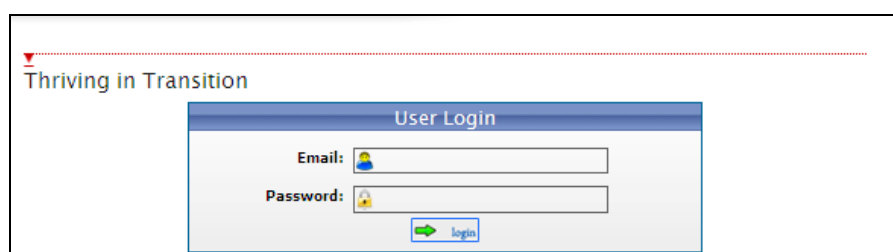
The project was designed to be enabling for students, in that it was possible to identify needs earlier in the transition process and to assign appropriate interventions. The model described a detailed analysis of the particular stages, characteristics and processes that had application to challenging transitions, and indicators for early interventions.

The commitment of the participating university transition coordinators was to:

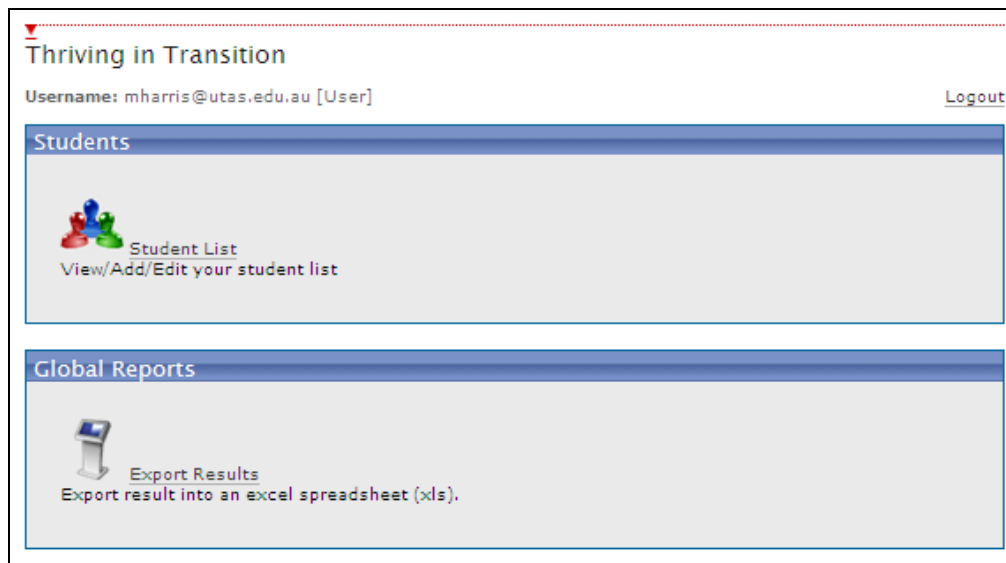
- Facilitate the contextualisation of the model to existing, local frameworks,
- Participate in training in the application of the model to complement existing programs,
- Apply the model to selected at-risk students in a selected transition challenge,
- Participate in interviews and discussion to provide data to support the project objectives.

- (d) The Conceptual Framework page was a separate embedded database with storage and data management components.

The Conceptual Framework provided the essential material to run the program at the participating sites. The password-protected portal allowed each of the universities to access their student files and to explore the pathways determined by the resolution of the stages of the particular transition.



After signing in, transition co-ordinators were offered two pathways.



The first was the student list portal, and the second was the Global Reporting (summary reporting) portal to convert entries into an Excel spread-sheet. The student list allowed a View/Add/Edit option to the student list. The Add student button enabled additional students to be listed, together with comments (currently titled “presenting challenges”).

The screenshot shows the 'Add Student' form within the 'Thriving in Transition' system. The form has a title bar 'Add Student'. It contains two required fields: '\* First Name:' and '\* Last Name:', each with a text input box. Below these is a section for 'Presenting Challenge/s:' which includes a rich text editor with various formatting icons (bold, italic, underline, etc.) and a large text area for input. At the bottom right of the form is a green plus icon followed by the word 'add'.

A Review button redirected the Transition Co-ordinator to a page where they was required to make subjective judgements about the student’s progress against the stage components. The Transition Co-ordinator could select from three (3) options for each stage component (i.e. Languishing, Surviving or Thriving).

These **responses selections** were summarised on this page, and Transition Co-ordinators could ‘drill down’ to edit their selection via the Edit Response button.

Student List	
<div> <div>delete</div> <div>[Delete Selected]</div> <div>add</div> </div>	
Name	Options
Johnson, Ben	<input type="checkbox"/> <div>edit</div> <div>review</div>
McNeal, Jill	<input type="checkbox"/> <div>edit</div> <div>review</div>
<div>add</div>	

Any historical selections were captured in the summary page, so graduation from one level to the other was observable as historical information.

Thriving in Transition

Username: mharris@utas.edu.au [User]

Logout

Student: Ben Johnson

Stage 1

Readiness for the challenge

Examines the ability to engage the challenging transition in a purposeful way.

[Languishing]

At this stage, this student is unaware of the tasks that confront them, nor the strategies that might be usefully devised or applied.

[Edit Response]

Motivation

Provides an indication of willingness to engage in the dislocating transition, and particularly whether their approach was tentative or confident.

[Surviving]

They are less confident and inclined to be overwhelmed by the challenge to move from the known to the unknown. They find it difficult to identify the priority tasks, and are motivated by the excitement of the occasion rather than an awareness of the strategic opportunity. They are less likely to seek feedback, and the influence of feedback is often confusing and sometimes counterproductive.

[Edit Response]

Positive planning

Presents an indication of the ability to negotiate and plan personal pathways

[Languishing]

This student is often confused and struggle with the new responsibilities; they are consumed by fears of failing, rather than seeking support from others.

[Edit Response]

Comprehensibility


Describes the ability to grasp concerns in the transition process, particularly a clear, ordered and structured understanding of the imminent challenge.

[Thriving]: They have a positive vision, and an understanding of what is required. They are aware of the process of transition and make specific requests for information and the timeframes involved. They are positive about the experience and not deterred by a lack of information.

[Edit Response]

[Stage Report]

The Edit Response button was accessed at each of the stage components and viewed one-at-a-time. The characteristics of the component were described and, once selected, it was possible to view suggested strategies and to record comments in regard to particular responses that might have been effective for that student (this built an early intervention strategy for the individual student and also contributed to a database of effective strategies that might be applied to someone at that level of transition (stage and subjective judgement of progress)).


**Thriving in Transition**

Username: mharris@utas.edu.au [User]
Logout

**Student: Ben Johnson**

**Question Response [Stage 1]**

**Question:** Readiness for the challenge

**Description:** Examines the ability to engage the challenging transition in a purposeful way.

**Question TSL's:** ☐ [Thriving]


This student is purposeful, aware and selective. Their readiness is formed by astute reasoning and purposeful investigation and they are able to identify features of the transition that are familiar. They will be able to identify features of the transition that are familiar and, in regard to the challenging transition, and be aware that it is a shared journey.

☐ [Surviving]

This student is broadly aware of the challenge ahead but find difficulty in defining it in any meaningful way. There is often a lack of congruence between their expectations and the experience as they struggle to visualise a transition pathway.

☒ [Languishing] - [ View Strategy and Comments ]

At this stage, this student is unaware of the tasks that confront them, nor the strategies that might be usefully devised or applied.


update

The recommended Strategies were described and space made to contribute comments for the student's profile (and the database of suggested strategies).

**Student:** Ben Johnson

[Print Report](#)

### Question Response [Stage 1]

 delete

[Delete Selected]

**Question:** Readiness for the challenge

**Description:** *Examines the ability to engage the challenging transition in a purposeful way.*

**Summary:** At this stage, this student is unaware of the tasks that confront them, nor the strategies that might be usefully devised or applied.

**Strategy:** Those languishing need more frequent and individual attention to build confidence. Consider the external factors that might contribute to a lack of readiness (e.g. home, finance, frames of reference) and explore ways to mitigate these. Experiencing success will be a significant contributor to an improved trajectory.

**Add Comment:**

**B** *I* U        

 add

Once the Transition Co-ordinator had created a student list and entered their levels and comments, it was possible to view the students profile and to print a Stage Report documents for a “paper based” record.



## Student: Ben Johnson

### Stage 1

#### ► Readiness for the challenge

Examines the ability to engage the challenging transition in a purposeful way.

##### [Languishing]

At this stage, this student is unaware of the tasks that confront them, nor the strategies that might be usefully devised or applied.

[Edit Response]

#### ► Motivation

Provides an indication of willingness to engage in the dislocating transition, and particularly whether their approach was tentative or confident.

##### [Surviving]

They are less confident and inclined to be overwhelmed by the challenge to move from the known to the unknown. They find it difficult to identify the priority tasks, and are motivated by the excitement of the occasion rather than an awareness of the strategic opportunity. They are less likely to seek feedback, and the influence of feedback is often confusing and sometimes counterproductive.

[Edit Response]

#### ► Positive planning

Presents an indication of the ability to negotiate and plan personal pathways

##### [Languishing]

This student is often confused and struggle with the new responsibilities; they are consumed by fears of failing, rather than seeking support from others.

[Edit Response]

#### ► Comprehensibility

Describes the ability to grasp concerns in the transition process, particularly a clear, ordered and structured understanding of the imminent challenge.

[Thriving]: They have a positive vision, and an understanding of what is required. They are aware of the process of transition and make specific requests for information and the timeframes involved. They are positive about the experience and not deterred by a lack of information.

[Edit Response]

[Stage Report]

The Stage Report opened in a separate window and provided a condensed, printable summary.

## Stage Report

**Student: Jill McNeal**

### Stage 1

#### Readiness for the challenge

**Surviving:** [01-Oct-2013] This student is broadly aware of the challenge ahead but find difficulty in defining it in any meaningful way. There is often a lack of congruence between their expectations and the experience as they struggle to visualise a transition pathway.

[01-Oct-2013]: Student is challenged!

#### Motivation

**Thriving:** [01-Oct-2013] They are confident, optimistic and have proactive coping strategies. This is particularly evident in their ability to understand and respond to feedback and their capacity to develop confidence in the transition pathways.

[01-Oct-2013]: Student is highly motivated

#### Positive planning

**Thriving:** [01-Oct-2013] This student is assured, has positive detachment, and confidence in planning. They are able to execute their plan and learn from the experience.

[01-Oct-2013]: Student has a positive approach ...

#### Comprehensibility

**Surviving:** [01-Oct-2013] They are less clear about the tasks ahead and are inclined to follow the example of others rather than to understand the personal nature of the journey

### Condensed Result

This student is broadly aware of the challenge ahead but find difficulty in defining it in any meaningful way. There is often a lack of congruence between their expectations and the experience as they struggle to visualise a transition pathway. They are confident, optimistic and have proactive coping strategies. This is particularly evident in their ability to understand and respond to feedback and their capacity to develop confidence in the transition pathways. This student is assured, has positive detachment, and confidence in planning. They are able to execute their plan and learn from the experience. They are less clear about the tasks ahead and are inclined to follow the example of others rather than to understand the personal nature of the journey

To complement the subjective judgement of the Transition Co-ordinator the Thriving in Transition project offered a Stage Questionnaire. This questionnaire has reasonable levels of face validity, but still requires stronger psychometric analysis to be relied upon. It was offered here to assist student counsellors in their assessment of student progress through the stages and provide a level of objectivity to the assessment process. Each Stage Questionnaire and Scoring Sheets was available in PDF documents through the Transition Tools portal (See Appendix 1).

## 6. Process challenges

### 6.1 Ethics

Ethical issues were carefully considered in the planning of the project. Some were clear and addressed in the original applications e.g. anonymity, confidentiality, appropriate methods for collecting storing, reporting data, and ensuring staff and students were not impacted unfairly by evaluation activities or unfairly disadvantaged by not receiving the project benefits.

Nevertheless, across multiple sites the ethics requirements became complex and created significant hurdles throughout the life of the project.

Initial ethics permission was granted by the University of Tasmania in two staged components:

- (a) Permission to train the relevant student support staff in the operation of the model to allow them to consider and (where appropriate) explain the support strategies they employed through the lens of the model. This involved the recruitment of student support officers (however called) to participate and reflect on the experience.
- (b) Permission to examine the student experience as a consequence of this revised application of support strategies. This involved the recruitment of students to the study to be involved in the study for a deeper understanding of the impact of the support strategies employed through the lens of the model.

The anticipated approach is described in the diagram below:

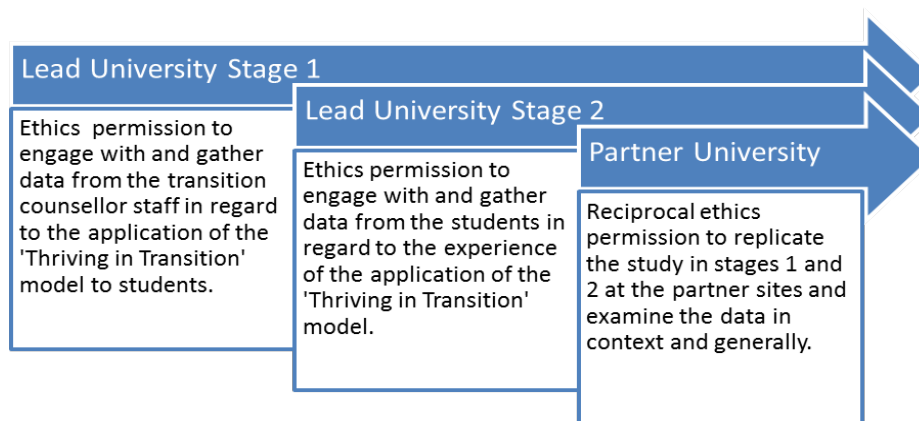


Figure 2: Ethics matrix

The process of engaging five universities in a common purpose was fraught with problems and each had to be negotiated with care and balance.

While the model was theoretically feasible, the reality was diverse. Despite the universality of ethical concerns, the participating universities required different levels of internal approval. None of the participating universities were able to grant full reciprocal permission, and responses varied between acknowledgement (and parallel applications), through to the need for full applications at the local level with no acknowledgement of the preceding processes. It made equivalent progress extremely difficult and it became clear that comparable developments would be challenging. This was reported in the project progress report and a shift to case study focus was flagged.

The case study focus was a measure to promote and sustain focus for the project and to include short-term as well as long-term transitions within the study parameters. The case study approach allowed for:

- Independent ethics applications to be submitted based on the application of the Thriving in Transition model's relevance to specific student cohorts.
- A timeframe that was feasible in regard to the specific student cohort and the contextual academic calendar.

## 6.2 Data collection

The identification of data sources involved a range of formative strategies, in particular enquiring into (a) the process design (b) the implementation activities and (c) the monitoring and reflection procedures.

Questions that led that formative stage were:

- a. How well had the program model been developed and articulated?

The program model was developed as a paper-based process with an emphasis on the ability of the individual organisations to articulate the material for their context. This was time consuming and led to some reluctance to commit to the process. A move to web-based access was beneficial and gave a more consistent point-of-contact for material and data management. This improved the data collection opportunities by providing a repository of information for each university in a password protected section of the website. The information therein provided a case-study opportunity for the model in terms of usability and efficacy; and a viewable record of interventions and stages resolved.

- b. Was the program operating as planned? (What operational changes were required?)

The program had the capacity to operate as designed but there were clear messages from the participating universities that the expectation for them to manage the project for an extended period of time was unrealistic. The transition to university is not a single entity and is comprised of a number of smaller, independent but interdependent transitions. The formative process indicated that these smaller transitions were a more productive source of data, easier to articulate and more likely to occur. This was reported to the funding body and the revised directions became the priority. The data gathering opportunities became more independent and, while some aggregate

conclusions can be drawn, the individual components of the transition experience were more easily observed through the model at the individual sites.

c. Was the staffing adequate for the purposes of the project?

The staffing arrangements were complicated, for at each participating university there were multiple levels of authority and engagement. While there was a need/requirement to have the requisite approvals to operate, the contact required was often with a “less informed” transition officer (however called). This required repeated explanations and gentle persuasion for them to depart from the familiar and to embrace the model with any enthusiasm. This had a flow-on effect on the speed of the uptake, student recruitment and effective use of the resources.

d. Had the requisite participants been recruited?

The requisite participants were recruited at the universities where the project was firmly established, but the shift to a case-based approach allowed some flexibility in regard to the target group (i.e. a move away from the *start of semester* focus to one of an *identified challenge*). The data gathering processes were then individually negotiated.

e. Did they receive the appropriate services/interventions?

The services and interventions were similarly staged; albeit not aligned with one another. The process of negotiating the challenging transition could be observed and the stages of the model used as a template for that observation.

The data sources were accurately described in the ethics application as the student support officers/transition coordinators (however described) within the target clusters of universities. Three collaborating UDRH organisations were involved: University of Tasmania, Northern Rivers, and the Combined Universities UDRH of Western Australia. These participating organisations provided the conduit through which an appropriate cross-section of institutions and personnel were included in the study. Each University Department of Rural Health (UDRH) has nominated a representative who informed the study in regard to local issues, observations and practices associated with the transition of students to tertiary study (e.g. the particular orientation mechanism that have been put in place or may be useful to students). As described earlier, the final group of participating universities were:

- University of Tasmania
- Curtin University
- Notre Dame University (WA)
- Southern Cross University, and
- Murdoch University

The trained personnel were able to document and assess the type, duration and impact of each intervention used at each site. The project team were able to provide support and feedback at each site and to communicate “critical learning” that added value to interventions strategies across sites. At the conclusion of the application of the model to the identified challenging transition, the participating student support staff members were interviewed in regard to process and outcomes.

## 7. Links to Stages

The selected transition was interrogated by the universities through a series of stages, determined as thriving, surviving or languishing in their resolution. The stages 'well-resolved' were regarded as the stage goals and indicators and interventions described, each outcome at each stage was described. The aggregate learning that informed intervention strategies has been added in italics to each of the intervention points, both in the examples in the body of the report and in the full description in the complete set of Stage guides in Appendix 2.

## Links to Stages

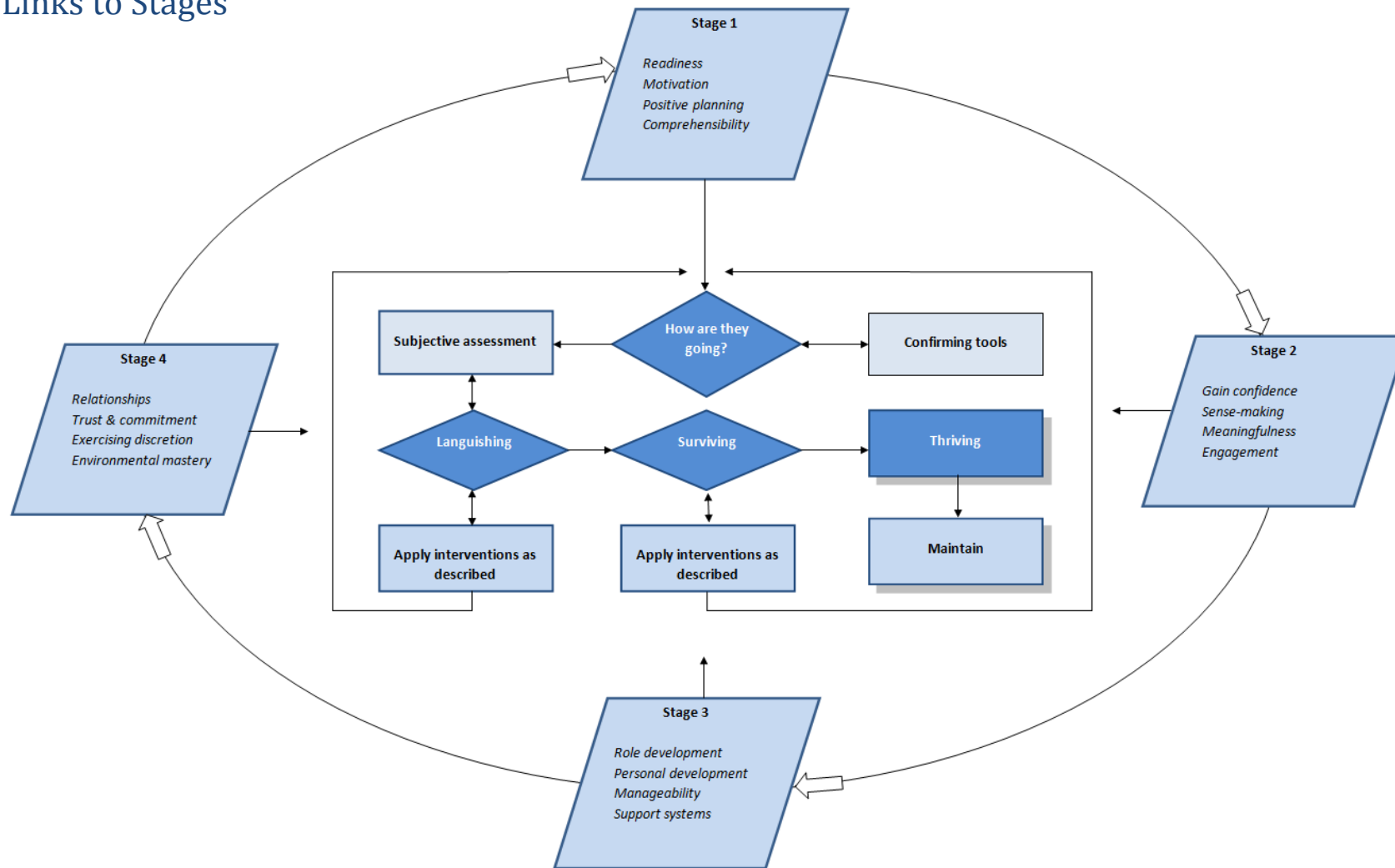


Figure 3: Links to stages

## 7.1 Stage 1

Data concepts	Processes of thriving	Processes of surviving	Processes of languishing
Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Purposeful</li> <li>Selective mastery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Broadly aware</li> <li>Visualisation difficulty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unaware</li> <li>Lacking resources</li> </ul>
Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confident</li> <li>Proactive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trouble with priorities</li> <li>Confused by feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bewildered</li> <li>Overwhelmed</li> </ul>
Positive planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Self-assured</li> <li>Positively detached</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guarded</li> <li>Struggle with competing interests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fear of failing</li> <li>Weighed down by expectations</li> </ul>
Comprehensibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Forward focussed</li> <li>Clear and ordered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unclear about tasks</li> <li>Mimicking others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lacked understanding</li> <li>Confused</li> </ul>

Table 4: Stage 1 concepts

A Stage one example is **Motivation** that provides an indication of willingness to engage in the dislocating transition, and particularly whether their approach is tentative or confident.

Those that thrive are confident, optimistic and have proactive coping strategies. Those surviving are less confident and inclined to be overwhelmed by the challenge to move from the known to the unknown. They find it difficult to identify the priority tasks, and are motivated by the excitement of the occasion rather than an awareness of the strategic opportunity. They are less likely to seek feedback, and the influence of feedback is often confusing and sometimes counterproductive. Those languishing are bewildered by the experience and find little assistance in the guidance offered to them. They are excited by the prospect of the transition, but unable to motivate themselves in a way that is productive

Indicated strategies that may contribute to better outcomes may include (but not limited to):

- An examination of the strategies in place (e.g. motivated students will be proactive in regard to matter such as timetabling, time-management etc.):
- When opportunities arise, inquire into the students motivation for study (i.e. articulation assists with more concrete objectives and planning):
- Take opportunities to inquire into student's adjustment to the new surroundings and the changes they have had to make, with an emphasis on prioritising.
- *Motivation is more complex than confidence vs. bewilderment and needs to be inclusive of contextual issues including living arrangements, language skills, financial pressures. Some students are motivated but lack the confidence to be fully involved: others are confident but lack the frame of reference to fully understand (or articulate) their motivation.*



Motivation is less related to enthusiasm for the challenging tasks, but more to the preparations for the transition and the application of their resources to accommodate the psychological need to plan for what is coming. Those that THRIVE are confident, optimistic and had proactive coping strategies. This is particularly evident in their ability to understand and respond to feedback and their capacity to develop confidence in the transition pathways. Those SURVIVING will require investment from student support programs that build up their confidence levels. Peer mentoring at this stage can be helpful. Look for opportunities to give students the confidence that the challenge is not as overwhelming as it seems to them. Specific skill sessions (academic, time-management) will be helpful. Those LANGUISHING require patience to give them the required confidence not be confused. Clear support pathways need to be described. Provide simple instructions and appoint a mentor for these students. Clarity is the key to reduce bewilderment and identify short-term, clear targets for which motivation is able to be mustered. Motivation slowly leads to productivity. More of a one-on-one approach will be helpful to these students.

The complete set of Stage 1 guides are described in Appendix 2

## 7.2 Stage 2

Data concepts	Processes of thriving	Processes of surviving	Processes of languishing
<b>Gaining confidence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive self - concepts</li> <li>Capacity to learn</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Searching for direction</li> <li>Haphazard progress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No frame of reference</li> <li>Limited learning</li> </ul>
<b>Sense making</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarity of purpose</li> <li>Commitment to the process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Difficulty applying learning</li> <li>Inundated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confused</li> <li>Struggled for direction</li> </ul>
<b>Meaningfulness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conscious of transition components</li> <li>Attach meaning to engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keen to please</li> <li>Lacked insight</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Afraid to fail</li> <li>Perplexed by the series of tasks</li> </ul>
<b>Engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Linking with others</li> <li>Accessing resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wrestled with competing emotions</li> <li>Self-conscious</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Afraid to let go</li> <li>Tentative</li> </ul>

Table 5: Stage 2 concepts

A Stage 2 example is **Gaining Confidence** that focuses on the ability to negotiate the transition experience, particularly the disparity between the anticipated pathways and their experience. This 'gained confidence' is the product of the learning process and those that thrive have strong self-concepts, a capacity for recovery, and learn what is required to negotiate the transition. Survivors are less confident about the transition and search for direction. Their learning is haphazard and it is difficult for them to apply information and resources to the tasks they face. Those languishing find it difficult to describe a frame of reference for their transitional journey and become locked into strategies that do not serve them well and, as a consequence, their opportunities for productive learning are very limited.

Strategies that may contribute to better outcomes may include (but not limited to):

- Those activities that build confidence and time and opportunity to reflect on the experience.
- Programs that progress the development of time-management skills and study strategies may be beneficial at this time.
- *Students need an opportunity to reflect on the soundness of their planning and the usefulness (or not) of strategies.*

Those that THRIVE are more able to learn from the experience and are confident and resourceful. They continue to apply their new-found skills to the challenge. The trajectories for students become apparent at this stage where the cyclic pathways for learning can be observed as the recursive, disjunctive but interdependent stages of a transition. Thriving students will demonstrate strong associations with the constructive aspects of this concept, i.e. positive self-concepts, a capacity for recovery, and learning what was required to negotiate the transition. Those SURVIVING will be assisted by promoting 'help-seeking' and short term goal focus. Programs should review the transition (thus far) and provide direction where this has been problematic. A lack of confidence is often a by-product of the disparity between the old and the new and made worse by clinging to old coping strategies and (often) elements of homesickness. The message is "...help is available and it's okay to ask for help". More confidence in accessing and using resources is appropriate at this time. Those that LANGUISH have difficulty in establishing a frame of reference regarding their transition. Programs should give them information to slowly build a frame of reference for the university experience and discuss various strategies and options to their advantage. The homesick languisher is less able to build confidence and programs should acknowledge and address the debilitating elements of homesickness.

The complete set of Stage 1 guides are described in Appendix 2

### 7.3 Stage 3

Data concepts	Processes of thriving	Processes of surviving	Processes of languishing
<b>Role development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of transition</li> <li>• Connectedness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trouble selecting strategies</li> <li>• Keen to conform</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resigned to external influences</li> <li>• Disconnected</li> </ul>
<b>Manageability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsive to challenge</li> <li>• Attentive to tasks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trouble seeing components</li> <li>• Using old skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Besieged</li> <li>• Instinctive</li> </ul>
<b>Support systems</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify support systems</li> <li>• Access support systems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unable to access support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unable to identify support</li> </ul>
<b>Personal development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify transition pathways</li> <li>• Learn from the experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lacking satisfaction</li> <li>• Unable to gather understanding from experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stagnating</li> <li>• Disabled by criticism</li> </ul>

Table 6: Stage 3 concepts

A Stage 3 example is **Manageability** that describes the ability to meet the demands of the challenge, particularly the balance of competing interests. Those that thrive have an acute awareness of the component parts of the challenge and are able to allocate resources accordingly. They are able to accommodate the pressure of dislocation with a balanced approach and a sense of the manageability of the requisite tasks. Those that survive are more likely to see the transition as a 'whole' rather than the component parts and are less able to access the resources or strategies to assist them. Those that languish struggle to manage the transition and are often overwhelmed by the apparent magnitude of the experience. They are confused and inclined to embark on strategies that are instinctive rather than connected to a frame of reference.

Strategies that may contribute to better outcomes may include (but not limited to):

- Programs that build on stages 1 and 2 'well resolved', particularly in regard to the link between the transition being comprehensible (stage 1) meaningful (stage 2) and now manageable, i.e. students understand what is involved and why it's important and what remains to be mastered is how they are going to do it.
- Valuable information might centre on the balance between study, home-life and outside interests.
- *The 'old' skills students bring to the challenge might not be sufficient to function effectively and they need to be actively sourcing the new skills/tools for the tasks.*

Those that THRIVE are able to accommodate the pressure of the transition with a balanced approach and a sense of the manageability of the requisite tasks. Those SURVIVING are more likely to have the ability to manage tasks if given the right information and help in balancing their competing interests. These students need management skills. Breaking the transition demands into component parts, and showing the connections will help (e.g. "this task well resolved will enable you to do X") ... rather than a formless goal towards which they must struggle. Those that LANGUISH are often overwhelmed by the whole transition experience and find support and feedback difficult to interpret. Their strategies are often the product of misunderstanding and desperate efforts to make sense of the challenge. In these students "old habits" are often the problem and it is important to provide the right kind of support to make the "leap of faith" to new strategies. Small incremental steps are required. The complete set of Stage 1 guides are described in Appendix 2

## 7.4 Stage 4

Data concepts	Processes of thriving	Processes of surviving	Processes of languishing
<b>Relationship building</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent</li> <li>• Capable of intimacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unsure of lessons learned</li> <li>• Unsure of connections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disturbed by transitions</li> <li>• Reluctant to move from old to new</li> </ul>
<b>Environmental mastery</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competent in new environment</li> <li>• Controls complex activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lacked self-confidence</li> <li>• Unable to balance competing concerns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lacked strategies to cope</li> <li>• Remained as outsiders</li> </ul>

<b>Trust and commitment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Willingness to be vulnerable</li> <li>• Receptive to future challenges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less assured</li> <li>• Hesitation to commit to the next phase</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unable to discriminate between what did and didn't work</li> <li>• No vision for the future</li> </ul>
<b>Discretion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Autonomous planning</li> <li>• Strategic insight</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constrained</li> <li>• Longing for approval</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dependent on structure</li> <li>• Requiring direction</li> </ul>

Table 7: Stage 4 concepts

A Stage 4 example is **Discretion** that describes the scope to determine the content and scheduling of the transition, i.e. to plan personal pathways. Those that thrive are aware of the dominant structure of the environment, but are able to act autonomously and appear to have the freedom to make decisions and choices. Those surviving are more constrained and lack the confidence to exercise their independence. They struggle to interpret advice and feedback and are more inclined to follow the lead of others than to exercise discretion. Those languishing are unable to make important decisions, and are limited by the perceived constraints of the new environment. They are dependent on the structure around them and resigned to the pathways outlined for them.

At the Stability Stage, Discretion is the student's perception of their ability to determine aspects of the transition. A transition to a structured and low discretion environment may still require discretionary thinking and planning to navigate it successfully. Those that THRIVE choose carefully from limited options and learn quickly about the benefits of independent thinking. They are also able to set goals and self-regulate behaviour.

Strategies that may contribute to better outcomes may include (but not limited to):

- Programs that reward independent thinking and encourage engagement (e.g. recognition of effort).
- Information that describes opportunity for discretionary thinking and behaviour will assist confidence (e.g. elective programs that provide benefit; reward programs for mentoring and the like).

Those that THRIVE are able to exercise autonomous thinking and have strategic insight into the next cycle of the transition. They can, to some extent, select the pathways that are the most productive and exclude those that may be unessential. Those SURVIVING may be able to exercise limited discretion, but lack the confidence to exercise their independence. It is important to build confidence and show interest in their work and provide meaningful feedback. Make them aware that the more independent they get, easier will be the transition for them. Those that LANGUISH are unlikely to exercise discretion. They are more likely to slavish to guidelines or copy those around them who appear to do well. These students need programs that help them make decisions and encourage them to think independently. Give them the skills they need to have confidence in themselves.

The complete set of Stage 1 guides are described in Appendix 2

## 8. Discussion

### 8.1 Case Study outcomes

At each of the study sites, the Thriving in Transition model was applied to the 'best-fit' cohort for the purposes of the study. Invitations to participate (see Appendix 3) were sent to the identified student cohort and consent (see Appendix 4) and information sheets provided (see Appendix 5).

The project qualitative methodology was supplemented by a questionnaire (see Appendix 1). The questionnaire was designed as a confirming tool to augment the subjective judgement of the transition coordinators and variously employed by the universities involved in the project. The questionnaire was developed for each stage to provide an objective measurement for the student at the stage and for movement through the stages. This tool was used by three of the five universities with the caveat that it should not replace the subjective judgement of the transition counsellors. While not the focus of this report, the participating universities found it to be a confirming and useful tool. The psychometric evaluation of this tool continues.

For consistency and comparison, these outcomes are described through a series of sub-sections:

### 8.2 University of Tasmania

#### 8.2.1 Context

Student support at the University of Tasmania is most often initiated through 'flags' of concern as students' progress (e.g. academic issues). This is supplemented by a number of programs designed for orientation and ongoing support. UniStart delivers essential skills for success and is preparatory; UGrow and USuccess provide tools through modules and workshops for understanding the transition to university; and the PASS program provides extra assistance through peer leadership.

The University of Tasmania provided two sites for the model.

Two nursing campuses are located at the University of Tasmania (Launceston in Tasmania and Rozelle in NSW). Many of the nursing entry level students are from a CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) background requiring support in the transition to university study. The Thriving in Transition project model provided a context for application of the model at the Tasmanian and NSW campuses in the outreach work at schools (pre-university) and subsequently to career start.

In Launceston the model was applied to the UPP (University Preparation Program) Diploma and PSP, (Prepare for Success Program) with a focus on realistic perceptions and university entry. This enabled CALD and other readiness indicators to be examined. The uptake in Launceston was 12 students, 2 of whom withdrew.

In Sydney the model was applied to 1<sup>st</sup> year nursing students. The rationale for selecting this group was that the Bachelor of Nursing coordinator identified the group at Rozelle as at greatest risk of attrition and because all support contact and services are provided remotely from Launceston. The uptake in Sydney was 6 students, 2 of whom withdrew.

### 8.2.2 Recruitment and Project Process

The University of Tasmania participated in the Thriving in Transition training program that consisted of face-to-face training, electronic communication, the exchange of material, and support.

In Launceston students in the UPP framework were recruited by invitation at the start of semester.

Key contact times were negotiated with the student to examine the model stages (i.e. before semester, census date and before exams).

The targeted groups complied with the project criteria i.e. a vulnerable cohort; students typically from lower SES/ CALD/ non-English speaking background (NESB) background, and first in family to undertake Higher Education.

### 8.2.3 Application

The model was useful addition to the support program as it informed the support program and provided for more proactive interventions. The Thriving in Transition program was applied in two settings. The University of Tasmania supports a number of humanitarian refugee and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) students (the University of Tasmania has approximately 500 CALD students).

The Thriving in Transition model was applied to the outreach work at schools pre-university and then a follow-up application through a university entry pathway (Diploma of University Studies). The University Preparatory Program (UPP) focuses realistic perceptions, is free and guarantees university entry and enables CALD and other readiness indicators to be assessed.

The NSW based Bachelor of Nursing commencement was the second focus of the application of the Thriving in Transition program. The Sydney nursing cohort was identified to be a vulnerable cohort; with students typically from lower SES/ CALD/ NESB background, and first in family to undertake higher education.

The University utilised the resource tools (i.e. questionnaires and web-based data resources to track student progress over 2 semesters. The tools were used (as recommended) to augment the subjective judgement of the student advisers in regard to whether a student was surviving, thriving or languishing. The web-based resources aided the work already being done and provided a reasoned strategy to follow that fitted with and confirmed the student adviser assessment.

The student questionnaire data provided linked feedback and enabled discussion with the student at a face-to-face opportunity.

#### 8.2.4 Enablers

Stage 1 of the Thriving in Transition model provided excellent guidance and resonated well with the critical pre-entry work. As a consequence of their involvement in the program, the higher achievers appeared to engage more frequently (i.e. had 'permission' to be enquiring and were highly motivated). Stage 1 fitted well with and became an integral part of the UPP approach. The model also provided a starting point to identify 'flags of concern': e.g. pre-semester and student check points at other key times; and helped identify triggers to seek help (and avoiding crisis).

While most students don't reflect on their studies, the tools (questionnaires) do this quite well, e.g. '...my circle of friends has grown'. Mature students tended to be more help-seeking and positively concerned about their performance (i.e. wanting to achieve Distinctions and High Distinctions). The model indicators suggest that the mature age students may have more insight and ability to reflect and understand their progression.

The lens of the model enabled the student advisors to be more aware of the stages through which students might be passing. In a face-to-face setting the tools used became the framework for discussion and direction. The student advisers observed changes in interactions and the responsiveness of students, including increased confidence, self-awareness and a sense of agency. In this sense the model was useful as a point of reference for interpreting how independent/stable students had become. "The model was confirming of what we do with the CALD students and our intuition about the level students have attained" (UTas. S.A.). While contact time was limited, the 'human' contact promoted by the model encouraged communication, promoted feedback, and offered reassurance.

The Thriving in Transition tools were used to examine the students' awareness of the stages of transition and as a confirming tool for the subjective judgement of the student support staff. The tool was applied in the first and second semester.

#### 8.2.5 Barriers / Limitations

A University of Tasmania challenge was engaging students in semester 2 because of practicums and a significant amount of time spent off-campus for clinical placements. The Sydney program was intense and maintaining contact with students was 'haphazard'. The time allowed was too short to correlate with academic results. It's difficult to attribute outcomes to this project but generally CALD students were surviving, with some movement in some areas to thriving. Student results were generally Credits and Distinctions.

#### 8.2.6 Stage information

The links to the stages were explored throughout the project and the effective components noted at each of the participant sites.



Stage 1: How the model informed practice	How practice informed the model
<b>Readiness:</b> This stage helped deepen the pre-semester or start of semester context for the Student Adviser team, particularly in regard to their readiness for University. Moreover, this stage of the Thriving in Transition Project (TiTP), was used in concert with an online self-diagnostic/readiness tool, and was especially useful to open up discussions about resource awareness and environmental mastery.	Readiness was confirmed as a Stage 1 component where purposeful, selective pathways are productive. Students, who were aware, focussed and persistent had the best start. Some evidence suggests that the age of the student is a critical factor, with more mature age students able to reckon with the importance of readiness as a factor of their success.
<b>Motivation:</b> Typically for the CALD students, the theme of motivation is examined much earlier in the student engagement (i.e. as early as outreach visits to school and after initial Uni application), but motivation also come up when discussion progression with students throughout their studies. The skills/experiences relating to confidence, being proactive, prioritising etc., are discussed in more detail once students are enrolled and have a timetable. This TiTP stage was however useful in adding the themes of bewilderment and feeling overwhelmed into early discussions about Motivation.	Motivation was confirmed as a Stage 1 component. Motivation is more complex than confidence vs. bewilderment and needs to be inclusive of contextual issues including living arrangements, language skills, financial pressures. The early intervention 'permitted' by this stage (i.e. well resolved) can have a powerful influence on the transition.
<b>Positive Planning:</b> This TiTP stage also helped inform early discussing about readiness, time management and most importantly expectations. Amongst the CALD student cohort and broader community there are many myths and expectations about Uni life and about adjusting to university that do become deeply ingrained if not examined early. Hence, Student Support work and the TiTP have helped staff realise the more buoyant, prepared and self-assured students are the more likely to manage the early transition to university.	Positive Planning was confirmed as a Stage 1 component. Positive Planning requires a degree of positive detachment and the balancing of competing interests. The need for early intervention to counter obstructive beliefs is important. Assumptions that student arrive 'prepared' is a myth and early planning should be a priority.
<b>Comprehensibility:</b> This TiTP stage helped CALD staff and other Student Advisers pre-empt the type of information and messages that were sent out to students in the early engagement. Again coupled with the self-diagnostics readiness indicator, discussion about information comprehension was critical in pre-empting attrition pitfalls.	Comprehensibility was confirmed as a Stage 1 component. This important component focuses on the <i>what</i> (as opposed to the <i>why</i> and <i>how</i> ). Students need a 'clear run' at the tasks and 'order' is a priority. Recommended interventions should reflect this.

Stage 2: How the model informed practice	How practice informed the model
<b>Gaining Confidence:</b> Stage 2 was examined for the most part once students were enrolled and had engaged with Uni/classes for a few weeks. Hence, conversations about confidence may have come out throughout those weeks 3 & 4 meetings with student, but the primary focus in those weeks was still broader adjustment/transition issues. The CALD advisers reflected on the level of a student's confidence and ability learn (whilst thinking about	Gaining Confidence was confirmed as a Stage 2 component. While a broad category, Gaining Confidence requires a position from which change can be 'measured' and this early reflection provides a frame of reference. Early interventions can place conversations in this context.



stage 2), and found it useful.	
<b>Sense Making:</b> Along with engagement, the sense making part of stage 2 was the main focus for conversations with students during this time. This stage was a reminder to discuss issues of commitment, purpose as well as self-awareness and agency, to assist motivational tools for student success.	Sense Making was confirmed as a Stage 2 component. The links to commitment are a natural segue and offer points for discussion. The concept of Sense Making was to develop clarity of purpose, and commitment... one requires the other.
<b>Meaningfulness:</b> This stage was various useful in discussions around what is meaningful / important and what is less meaningful / important during this period of the semester.	Meaningfulness was confirmed as a Stage 2 component. This important component focuses on <i>why</i> (as opposed to <i>what</i> and <i>how</i> ). Students need to be conscious of the components and the (relative) importance of tasks. Insight and clarity are key and interventions should reflect this.
<b>Engagement:</b> Engagement has been a common theme of discussions with new students especially transitioning to University for the first time. This stage was useful in deepening conversations about engagement by examining themes of data/resource engagement, data/resource/information access, dealing with emotions, barriers to engagement and change/resistance to change.	Engagement was confirmed as a Stage 2 component. As with Gaining Confidence, a frame of reference is required but engagement is a measured a personal framework. Linking with others (to enhance the experience), linking with resources (to be empowered), having the confidence to embrace change and make the best of the challenge.

<b>Stage 3:</b> How the model informed practice	How practice informed the model
<b>Role Development:</b> This adjustment stage was partly done before census date i.e. week 4-5 and after census date weeks 5-7, and once assessments started coming and for some students (feedback about assessments) . The role development part of stage 3, helped inform conversation and intervention around awareness of students role as a student in terms of seeking feedback about assessment, engagement with other students and on MyLo, and making strategic study decisions.	Role Development was confirmed as a Stage 3 component. The connections between components are important to the transition, especially where choice is involved. Strategic planning (rather than conformity) and 'clever' planning (rather than resignation) are important components. Given the purpose of this component, it is more accurately described as <b>Role Adjustment</b> and this will be reflected in the Model Revision.
<b>Manageability:</b> Similar to the role development part of stage 3, examining manageability also helped inform conversation and intervention around self-management and being proactive rather than re-active. Student advisors found it was useful to see how the students that were starting to languish with studies and workload, were being instinctive and reactive rather than strategic and proactive.	Manageability was confirmed as a Stage 3 component. This important component focuses on <i>how</i> (as opposed to <i>what</i> and <i>why</i> ). Students need to be attentive and responsive. The old skills they brought to the challenge might not be sufficient and they need to be actively sourcing the skill/tools for the tasks.

<b>Support Systems:</b> Discussions about support systems, did inform practice, but earlier i.e. the start of semester time period rather than middle of semester. Having said that, for some students' confidence with on-line learning, MyLo etc., as opposed to seeking assistance, troubleshooting, was a key point in their student development and was examined during this stage.	A Support System was confirmed as a Stage 3 component. This Stage is about Adjustment and the consideration of Support Systems is important; especially in regard to how well they are working, whether they are adequate for the challenge, what's missing and how can it be accessed.
<b>Personal Development:</b> The personal development part of stage 3 informed by helping to articulate to students the themes of managing criticisms (i.e. during practicums for nursing students, building on past experiences whether positive or negative, and setting individual pathways for study), and how they affect a student's growth.	While Personal Development offers some particular characteristics e.g. the ability to navigate pathways, to understand the experience and to avoid the disablement that might be the consequence of criticism, it is more likely to be the process of reflection. A more accurate model pathway would be to shift Personal Development into <b>Stage 4</b> and to shift <b>Relationship Development</b> into <b>Stage 3</b> .

<b>Stage 4:</b> How the model informed practice	How practice informed the model
<b>Relationship Building:</b> Stage 4 was discussed with students, both pre-post exams (depending on student availability) as well as in discussion with students when they were reviewing their exam results/semester performance. This relationship building stage also informed practice when developing guide for CALD student mentors and student engagement.	While Relationship Development offers some particular characteristics; independence, evidence of closeness, awareness of connections and the ability to 'let go', it is less a product of reflection. It is better placed in <b>Stage 3</b> as a stage to be 'well resolved' and replaced by <b>Personal Development</b> in <b>Stage 4</b> .
<b>Trust and Commitment:</b> This trust or commitment stage did not really inform practice in my experience with CALD students particularly for (Humanitarian Entrant) students, as these issues were discussed much earlier in the outreach/pre-admission stage. However, the questions about future orientation and vision did help with discussion about build rapport/respect for Nursing staff/clinicians on pracs. that may in the future be interviewers, employers of students.	Trust and Commitment was confirmed as a Stage 4 component. It is an opportunity for Reflection on the levels of understanding (of the system and the demands) and the readiness for future challenges. Knowing 'what worked' and how to best tackle the next challenge are evidence of the component 'well resolved'.
<b>Exercise Discretion:</b> The majority of the CALD students even though they were thriving did still require guidance and structure even after a few semesters, but this part of stage 4 did help discussions around planning for following year, yearly planning, career planning etc.	The Exercise of Discretion was confirmed as a Stage 4 component. The strategic insight that flows from this reflection encourages autonomous planning. It removes the dependence on structures and encourages self-confidence.
<b>Environmental Mastery:</b> This stage was very useful to use a guide for new students in helping them map out all the key tasks, information and knowledge required to successfully transition to and through the first year at university. Student Advisors also used this stage to help students reflect on year 1 and to plan for year 2.	Environmental Mastery was confirmed as a Stage 4 component. It is an opportunity to reflect on the transition journey and to take stock. The component well resolved should invoke feelings of competence and control, the ability to prioritise competing demands and to have strategies that indicate mastery.

Table 8: Links to stages (University of Tasmania)

## 8.3 Southern Cross University

### 8.3.1 Context

Student support at Southern Cross University is most often initiated through 'flags' of concern as students' progress (e.g. academic issues). Programs such as Getting Started at SCU and StudySupport provide information and direction for new students; and the PASS program and Student Mentoring programs offer peer assisted support.

Southern Cross University applied the model at the Gold Coast campus. In regard to teaching and learning liaison, there has been a shift in focus to on-line support rather than face to face contact. Four models of support, geared to promoting academic skills and integrity are contained in two units of study as a proactive way of embedding students' learning needs into the curriculum. This also provides a way of flagging early thrivers, survivors and languishers (in the context of the model). The student support has shifted from a student centred perspective to a learning centred perspective where the resources are provided, but access is largely the students' responsibility.

The nursing program flags problems early but it is more difficult to flag struggling students because of administrative complexity. The Thriving in Transition model application allowed the existing support services to be examined in stages and to look more closely at the students' engagement profile. Four students participated in the study.

### 8.3.2 Recruitment and Project Process

Southern Cross University participated in the Thriving in Transition training program that consisted of face-to-face training, electronic communication, the exchange of material, and support.

Recruitment occurred via direct self-initiated contact and referral from lecturers. Four eligible students in transition from secondary studies were recruited in late March 2012. Applying the Thriving in Transition model, students were encouraged to undertake the self-diagnostic processes (i.e. questionnaire) at stages of the year and this provided a link to the discussion of transition and progress when face-to-face opportunities were available.

The transition coordinator (in this university, the Learning Adviser) was able to use the staged Thriving in Transition model to design and implement strategies (e.g. providing skills support and targeted interventions to increase confidence – Stage 2).

### 8.3.3 Application

Originally, Southern Cross student support involved teaching and learning liaison with 1:1 relationships with units. The application of the model was pre-empted by a shift to more on-line support rather than face to face contact. The four models of support geared to promoting academic skills and integrity were contained in two units of study as a proactive way of embedding students' learning needs into the curriculum. This shift from a student centred perspective to a learning centred perspective, i.e. provide the resources and let the students access appears to privilege those academically inclined; and disadvantage those who need help most.

The Thriving in Transition lens applied to these learning units provided a way of flagging early thrivers, survivors and languishers and gave insight into the flawed belief that help-seeking is within the capacity of most students.

While the nursing program flags problems in the filters available (e.g. submission of assignment, attendance in lectures, examination results), difficulties (especially administrative) remain in the early identification of struggling students.

Interestingly the drivers for participation seemed to be mature age who wanted to achieve the best they could and to access supports to facilitate this. Those missing out are often the ones that need it most. They don't turn up, engage or attend. The model allowed for these observations to be cast against the Thriving template and, in applying the model encourage students to undertake self-diagnostic processes at stages of the year. It also involved the Student Advisors engaging more with students in more than email.

The resource tools (questionnaires) and tool kit anchored the support program during the project period. The actions were logged and the website utilised for data storage.

#### 8.3.4 Enablers

Ideally it is important to be able to flag if students are under-performing as early as possible. While the new MYLO system allows us to track students' engagement profile, the model encouraged proactive contact and reflection on the stages 'well resolved'.

At Southern Cross the formal access to students is limited; however the self-referred students were very highly motivated and continued to engage throughout the project, required little direction and were keen to enlist any support available. The correlation between the use of the model and the student behaviour is hard to determine, however the progress of the students involved was all positive and showed improvement over time.

The Thriving in Transition tools were used to examine the students' awareness of the stages of transition and as a confirming tool for the subjective judgement of the student support staff. The tool was applied in the first semester to coincide with direct self-initiated contact and/or referral from lecturers. When entered, the students' questionnaires data provided linked feedback. This feedback enabled the student advisors to talk through the results with the student face to face. The students found self-reflective tools useful and reason enough to think about their journey and to reflect on the individual components.

The Learning Advisors regarded the model as a guide to interventions and a reference point for strategies, e.g. a student identified as having poor support system was provided specific skills support and a supportive relationship she became much more confident.

### 8.3.5 Barriers / Limitations

The shift to a stronger on-line presence resulted in more difficulty for students to physically access student support. Although access through Skype increases capacity to service more students, the shrinking personnel ratios means less support. Adding to that, the student intake has doubled but the hours of service have been cutback.

Those students 'fresh' from secondary school found motivation issues difficult and were unlikely to engage until required.

The time-poor students (needing time to read information) found participation difficult. These students often lack a frame of reference for the transition; they are not interested in anything that requires 'extra' work.

A number of students are referred from disability services with mental health issues and learning disorders. These students were very reluctant to engage and avoided participation because of concern about it stigmatising or labelling them. The model offered a framework that was less about 'what has gone wrong' and more about 'what works'. These students required initial encouragement but clear benefits were obtained by early attention to their needs.

### 8.3.6 Stage information

Stage 1: How the model informed practice	How practice informed the model
<b>Readiness:</b> This stage helps inform the Student Support Academic and support staff to identify the students' readiness for university. From the data, those who have undertaken some form of academic preparation are better able to deal with the transition. Often mature age students are ready and motivated whereas students without the life-experiences lack the necessary preparation. Early attention to these students is now a priority.	Readiness was confirmed as a Stage 1 component where purposeful, selective pathways are productive. The model should account for the disparate pathways that lead students (back) to university. Mature age students need to 'suspend' some workplace skills to return to academic study in a receptive frame of mind.
<b>Motivation:</b> According to student anecdotal information those who self-refer to ASD are usually highly motivated to do well, but seem to lack confidence. Those referred by academic staff or support services (identified with special needs) are rather reluctant to take part. Students moving directly from secondary school found motivation issues difficult and were unlikely to engage until required.	Motivation was confirmed as a Stage 1 component. There appears to be some contradictions in expression of this stage. Some students are motivated but lack the confidence to be fully involved. Others are confident but lack the frame of reference to fully understand (or articulate) their motivation. Both these groups are at risk of Languishing and interventions need to be layered to have a comprehensive understanding of the background circumstances.

<b>Positive Planning:</b> This stage was helpful in collaborative learning planning. Most students were grateful to receive guidance.	Positive Planning was confirmed as a Stage 1 component. Positive Planning requires a degree of positive detachment and the balancing of competing interests. This stage component is often the focus of institutional orientation and, as such, contains a lot of information. The <u>relevant application</u> of this planning is very important.
<b>Comprehensibility:</b> This stage was particularly helpful as students could self-identify and express of what they are aware that is required as new students. It seemed that students were mostly confused about the requirements, but with some guidance eager to clarify tasks.	Comprehensibility was confirmed as a Stage 1 component. This important component focuses on the <i>what</i> (as opposed to the <i>why</i> and <i>how</i> ). Students, particularly those that Languish or Survive feel 'surrounded' by information and find it difficult to select or prioritise. These difficulties should be addressed in the design of intervention strategies.

Stage 2: How the model informed practice	How practice informed the model
<b>Gaining Confidence:</b> This was very helpful as students became aware of their confidence levels and develop strategies to gain confidence e.g. using small steps, setting short term goals, accepting setbacks, breaking down task into its component in terms of academic tasks and personal life.	Gaining Confidence was confirmed as a Stage 2 component. It allows for some reflection on the 'soundness' of their planning and the usefulness (or not) of strategies. Intervention strategies should help with the accuracy of 'directions' and building a frame of reference for more independent decision making.
<b>Sense Making:</b> This stage again helped understand student difficulties to adjust, how they navigate between prior experience, their expectations and the reality that has not been fully comprehended. Students mostly anticipated a clear goal – to get the degree but were unclear how everything 'fits together'.	Sense Making was confirmed as a Stage 2 component. The link (or disparity) between the 'expected' and the reality are important considerations. The wider the gap the more unlikely students will find choices they made make 'sense'. Those connections and alternate pathways need to be the focus of the intervention strategies.
<b>Meaningfulness:</b> This stage was helpful as students (particularly mature age students) struggled to see the meaningfulness of university tasks in relation to the workplace; e.g. teaching classroom. Doubts were informed by prior experience in the field.	Meaningfulness was confirmed as a Stage 2 component. This important component focuses on <i>why</i> (as opposed to <i>what</i> and <i>how</i> ). Sometimes it is a struggle between unlearning the learned and being critical and reflective in practice. Interventions should describe this dichotomy.
<b>Engagement:</b> This stage was important, particularly in the second half of the sessions as students became aware that university life was highly demanding and finding a balance between university, work and family and friends were challenging. For those from further away little or no-social support was particularly difficult to handle and impacted on their morale.	Engagement was confirmed as a Stage 2 component. There are important milestones to be assessed in the transition in regard to engagement (e.g. how useful, how balanced, how relevant) and importantly unpacking the 'best fit' for the individual.

Stage 3: How the model informed practice	How practice informed the model
--	---------------------------------

<p><b>Role development</b> this is a point that might need to be separated in the future as personal development crosses with task or university demands. In the first 3 weeks (approx.) students are enthusiastic and happy to take part, as there are many tasks and demands. They become increasingly overwhelmed. Guidance with task planning does help some students. Group acceptance is a diverse issue reflecting a diverse student cohort.</p> <p>Students experience a culture shock – leaving home and needing to develop and build new relationships. Age differences (high school leavers versus mature) play a major role, however, this could be facilitated a) through planning in terms of tutorial mixed groups b) sensibility on tutors’ part embrace particular differences as strength into e.g. group work (I did this in the Prep for Success program) so students contribute to the particular group through their strength e.g. younger ones with IT skills older ones in planning etc. which creates a greater group cohesion that continues outside the tutorial.</p>	<p>Role Development was confirmed as a Stage 3 component. Another comment regarding the nomenclature and a more accurate descriptor as <b>Role Adjustment</b>.</p> <p>Knowing how to manage a ‘system’ is an important skill and that awareness can remove a lot of frustration.</p>
<p><b>Manageability</b> –Students manage on a micro and macro level.</p> <p>As the environment, life and tasks are new students seem to focus on the micro level first – assignments which emerge quickly. It takes students a considerable time and that may take more than one session until students can see the bigger picture – in relation to the tasks, units, course and how it fits in with the university and later life paths. Clear instruction how the university system works and where students fit in does help.</p>	<p>Manageability was confirmed as a Stage 3 component.</p> <p>The shift from the micro to the macro is an interesting point. The portability of those skills might be a useful intervention discussion, particularly when the old skills they bring to the challenge might not be sufficient.</p>
<p><b>Support System</b></p> <p>Students tend to rely on family and friends first. If these are not in place, they may reach out. However, students are reluctant to be identified as ‘at risk’ ‘in need’ or somehow other than ‘normal’.</p> <p>(We have seen over the years a slump in demands, and now this year a spike in accessing ASD service: last year ASD was rarely mentioned by the Schools staff (budgetary considerations) this year we are in high demand as stats (failure rates of assignments and attrition rate) showed that our support has value and achieves or improves academic outcomes. )</p>	<p>A Support System was confirmed as a Stage 3 component. The nature of help-seeking is a key factor with the utility of support systems. It should be noted that (ironically) those Languishing are the least likely to seek help or have robust support systems. Proactive work is required with this group.</p>
<p><b>Personal development</b></p> <p>Students at the early stage rarely asking themselves how this new learning will impact on them as people or further in life. Students are occupied with ‘getting things done’.</p> <p>Those that do reflect and there are only few also critically evaluate those things that might and how it impacts on them.</p>	<p>While Personal Development offers some particular characteristics e.g. the ability to navigate pathways, to understand the experience and to avoid the disablement that might be the consequence of criticism, it is more likely to be the process of reflection. A more accurate model pathway would be to shift Personal Development into <b>Stage 4</b> and to shift <b>Relationship Development</b> into <b>Stage 3</b>.</p>



Stage 4: How the model informed practice	How practice informed the model
<b>Building relationships</b> takes time. Some students are better equipped to build relationships due to their personal characteristics, whereas others struggled and find the new environment rather threatening. Building relationships is also influenced by previous learning experiences in e.g. high school or other learning environments. ASD has limited options to foster those relationships.	While Relationship Development offers some particular characteristics; independence, evidence of closeness, awareness of connections and the ability to 'let go', it is less a product of reflection. It is better placed in <b>Stage 3</b> as a stage to be 'well resolved' and replaced by <b>Personal Development</b> in <b>Stage 4</b> .
<b>Trust and commitment</b> stage seemed fluid oscillating from one end to the other depending on new influences or demands. The 'higher' the unpredictability the less trust and commitment depending on urgency.	Trust and Commitment was confirmed as a Stage 4 component. As a reflective stage it becomes the 'litmus' for the earlier stages 'well resolved'.
<b>Discretion</b> seemed to emerge as students gain more control of the learning situation, in terms of ASD at a later stage or when 'things' become clearer. Students struggle to see/grasp the significance and interconnections of academic, professional study and workforce demands until later in the year or even course.	The Exercise of Discretion was confirmed as a Stage 4 component. The strategic insight that flows from this reflection encourages autonomous planning. It removes the dependence on structures and encourages self-confidence. Things "become clearer".
<b>Environmental mastery</b> takes place gradually. As students settle in, study life becomes manageable in relation to other demands such as work, and/or family the environment is less confusing. However, students tend to negotiate their particular needs for balance/fun-time/time-out with university and work demands compromising their physical and psychological well-being.	Environmental Mastery was confirmed as a Stage 4 component. It is a gradual and layered process but, on reflection, should invoke feelings of competence and control, the ability to prioritise competing demands and the conscious possession of strategies that indicate mastery.

Table 9: Links to Stages (Southern Cross University)

## 8.4 Curtin University

### 8.4.1 Context

Curtin University applied the model in the School of Nursing at the Perth campus. The student support program at Curtin University exists at multiple levels, with some university-wide programs of orientation and academic support (e.g. START); and faculty driven programs where difficulty in units has been identified (e.g. JumpSTART).

Within the nursing department, the support structure operates through referral or identified through 'flags of concern' (e.g. work outstanding, unfinished assignments) and still not on track after unit level support. The model was seen as a very useful fit for the available programs of support "...a natural synergy". Initially, the transition coordinators explored the EN-RN (enrolled nurse – registered nurse) conversion, and looked more at students who have been languishing rather than the whole cohort. The small number involved (n=8) have varied in intensity and opportunity.

For Curtin University, the model use was more about a stronger community of support (e.g. the strategic use of student mentors); and the knowledge that students are likely access a balance of centrally provided services and those provided by the school.



The school this year has implemented 'Channels of communication', a process documented and posted around the school indicating the appropriate communication channel for different situations. It was in that context that the model was examined.

#### 8.4.2 Recruitment and Project Process

Curtin University participated in the Thriving in Transition training program that consisted of face-to-face training, electronic communication, the exchange of material, and support.

The model was applied on a case by case basis with languishing students and for those students identified as being in crisis. The intent was to provide additional supports in the nursing school. Students were referred to the associate director undergraduate studies, or self-presented with transition issues and invited to be part of the Thriving in Transition model approach. The recruitment focus isolated a cohort of EN conversion students, and looked more specifically at students who were languishing.

#### 8.4.3 Application

The model was applied case by case with languishing students. These students were experiencing difficulty in managing their situation, but were on-track to fail and presenting with other academic, personal/social or mental health issues.

These students had not previously presented and it was a priority for the Student Support team to improve the capacity of the (existing) system to identify students as early as possible and not to wait to crisis. Some of the processes of the common (inter-professional) first year have been tightened up; there is now a coordinator of common first year and unit coordinators flag people who miss first assignment or first laboratory sessions. The model has contributed to the staged concerns and opportunities for pro-active interventions. While there is a focus on first year transitions, there is growing concern for second, third, fourth year students who have no 'resolved' their transitions, many of which are common first year to second, final clinical practicums and the like.

The Student Support team have ownership around 2 units, but it was recognised that common first year would mean massive numbers and an increasing need to communicate across schools. Communication is good between teaching staff and courses and the Year 1 team works together in small groups. The model allowed an exploration of the shared responsibility (and plans) for students and the First Year coordinators.

#### 8.4.4 Enablers

The model creates significant reflective moments; helps students make meaning of the clinical setting in the context of meeting their personal goals. Within the context of a transition for EN conversion students, the model was extremely helpful. Initially, the Student Support team looked more at students who had been languishing rather than the cohort. In this way the student support team have been able to 'capture' (identify) more of these students that otherwise may have been overlooked. They worked with these students as they entered the transition, but saw the transition more as a series of mini-transitions. The unit coordinator struggled with directions but the model encouraged a coordinated

approach across units; this reinforced the capacity to work beyond the structural frameworks.

Curtin applied the Thriving in Transition program as a change model. They examined the challenge of managing a large cohort and were able to draw direction from the model as they exercised their pastoral care role (e.g. activity in Stage 3 and linking them into support systems where students were seeking higher level advice). Nevertheless students presented in crisis across units for complex reasons, and multiple reasons require a coordinated approach and communicating with others about supports. The model enabled the coordination of effort and resources to provide students with the opportunity to thrive and helped the Student Support team to be aware of students who were at delicate stages of transition, (i.e. some students don't 'follow the plan').

The Student Support team acknowledged the model as a useful "...language flow chart make meaning and sense." In developing the role as the Student Advisor the model provided a reference for the communication of ideas and strategies, (e.g. in providing a template to build a school community so students can engage)? The model was identified as validating a sense of community and the supportive context to allow students to thrive. In this way the model was able to provide the scaffolding to think about how students get from crisis to thriving rather than a 'problem child': a much more positive outcome. The model allowed that to happen by a shift in focus to the ways students make sense of things and is helping the Student Support team to develop their roles and use the model as a common medium when talking to colleagues. They identified a natural synergy, particularly in flags used to identify languishing students.

The model provided a template for action in the first five weeks of university: students need to adjust quickly as they are only on campus for a short period of time. Further there is a need for a specific orientation structure for final semester to flag 'at risk' students (e.g. international students and flag them from the moment of engagement in semester 6). The model provides the template for that to occur and is part of the Curtin planning for later in the year.

The model has also created more options in the support program by (hopefully) creating a learning opportunity for students when interventions are early and crisis have been avoided. The opportunity to reflect helps them make meaning (Stage 2) of the clinical experience by putting it in the context of meeting their goals (Stage 1). The model helps to put that in place because it is non-ambiguous. (It also helps the board of examiners as well because we've got a lot of information and evidence). Without the model, the unit doesn't have a clear pathway.

The Student Support team identified the model as a 'system' for students that can help them to make informed decisions (i.e. they're better informed about the supports and resources available).

For the Student Support team it gives a rationale for action and 'permission' to do what we are doing.

### 8.4.5 Barriers / Limitations

The Student Support team identified a dichotomy where they need to think about what can be done as a cohort rather than at the individual level (time frames and staffing). In that regard they may have to review the flags they use to identify issues of concern so they align with the model and early opportunities. Structures and system processes have rules that limit what they can do.

CALD (international) students tend not to help-seek and see the problem as the university's to fix. A review of the application of the model to this cohort would be useful.

### 8.4.6 Stage information

Stage 1: How the model informed practice	How practice informed the model
<b>Readiness:</b> The model provided the 'language' for the discussion in regard to readiness. It provided specific direction rather than 'gut' reactions. It provided validation of subjective (expert) judgement in an already busy and crowded environment.	Readiness was confirmed as a Stage 1 component where purposeful, selective pathways are productive. It is important to provide the language for discussion. This awareness is a product of early intervention (activity) that is enabling.
<b>Motivation:</b> The early identification of students with issues (either 'flagged' or self-referred) provided an opportunity to examine motivation in more detail. Particularly poignant for those who have been placed though a preference other than 1 <sup>st</sup> . 'Misplaced' students have a chance to adjust when these issues are canvassed early enough.	Motivation was confirmed as a Stage 1 component. Motivation is a complex component and there needs to be 'room' for the exploration of the 'lack' of motivation that might be a precursor to the transition. There is definite risk of poor outcomes (languishing) if these are not addressed.
<b>Positive planning:</b> As a cyclic process this is important and the understandings were transferable for other parts of the course. While the transition to the start of the course is demanding and requires a significant planning process, the planning process is a constant through the course. Particularly important at N7 (third year transition) when an 'end of course' planning is required and students move away from the comfort of timetabled academic programs.	Positive Planning was confirmed as a Stage 1 component. The recurrence of positive planning through the cycle is a good indicator of the helix effect and the need to be mindful of the stages. Reflection and review of earlier aspects of the components throughout the cycle is a good plan.
<b>Comprehensibility:</b> Provides a realistic discussion around decision-making and a chance to examine the 'what is required' questions. Important in the context of other aspects of Stage 1. For some students it is about transferability and the realistic options. This stage, sensibly discussed, provides early options for students in the post 'honeymoon' phase.	Comprehensibility was confirmed as a Stage 1 component. Students need to be clearly aware of what is involved AND what is possible in regard to transferability and planning. These issues should be addressed in the design of intervention strategies.

Stage 2: How the model informed practice	How practice informed the model
<b>Gaining confidence:</b> The common first year compounds the difficulty for student confidence. Nevertheless this provides opportunity for students to 'step up' and look for leadership positions as they transition. For thrivers this is a natural consequence of the process, but for languishers or survivors, it is a 'tappable' opportunity.	Gaining Confidence was confirmed as a Stage 2 component. Students need to be aware of the opportunities to 'step up' and take more responsibility for their progress. Interventions should allow for those that 'want more' and those who need assistance to build a frame of reference for more independent decision making.
<b>Sense making:</b> The clarity of purpose is enhanced if this stage of the transition is examined purposefully. Gives an opportunity to share knowledge (e.g. peer	Sense Making was confirmed as a Stage 2 component. The clarity of direction is important for planning. A more purposeful approach is going to

mentoring) and contribute to self-confidence. This stage component gives an opportunity for mapping direction in a purposeful way	assist students in the process of 'making sense' of the transition and interventions should support this process.
<b>Meaningfulness:</b> As indicated in Stage 1 (Positive Planning) the challenge for meaningfulness continues throughout the transition. While an early understanding of the requisite components is important, it is vital that the transition to 'nursing' has meaning beyond the academic program. The reality of the required professional responsibility is part of this.	Meaningfulness was confirmed as a Stage 2 component. This important component focuses on <i>why</i> (as opposed to <i>what</i> and <i>how</i> ). The interventions should look beyond the academic program and look for the connections to practice.
<b>Engagement:</b> The common first year is a limitation to the engagement process... at least it is delayed. The student advisory team must rely on 'flags' for response unless the student self refers. The model reinforces the need for connectivity; i.e. the importance of renewed connection between students and peers, and also with the peak bodies and professional links.	Engagement was confirmed as a Stage 2 component. Engagement needs to be broader than the obvious connections with other students and the system.

Stage 3: How the model informed practice	How practice informed the model
<b>Role development:</b> While the centralised role of student care at Curtin draws away from individual support, the model describes the importance of 'managing' the system to its best advantage. The model allows for more accurate identification of those students who fail to thrive, albeit at a later stage in the transition.	Role Development was confirmed as a Stage 3 component. Another comment regarding the nomenclature and a more accurate descriptor as <b>Role Adjustment</b> . Knowing how to manage a 'system' is an important skill and that awareness can remove a lot of frustration.
<b>Manageability:</b> The model encourages the support staff to engage with students in regard to 'how' to best manage the transition. It opens the channels of communication to discussions around pathways, processes and the services that will help.	Manageability was confirmed as a Stage 3 component. Keeping the channels of communication open is very important and the interventions should describe the many pathways, processes and services that assist the management of the transition. This could be actively mapped and reviewed as an exercise in thriving in this component.
<b>Support systems:</b> The model identified the 'hit and miss' nature of student support (2300 students) and the reliance on the skills and patience of the student support team. The model highlighted how 'system driven' the support program has become and the dichotomy between 'rules' and support.	A Support System was confirmed as a Stage 3 component. With a large student cohort, the student advisors require creative solutions to the ways in which students are assisted. Connections, information, links and aspects of social media are all options.
<b>Personal Development:</b> The model provided the language to have the discussion about personal directions and pathways. The model provided a navigable map of resources and access and the better students were able to find the right 'place and person'.	While Personal Development offers some particular characteristics e.g. the ability to navigate pathways, to understand the experience and to avoid the disablement that might be the consequence of criticism, it is more likely to be the process of reflection. A more accurate model pathway would be to shift Personal Development into <b>Stage 4</b> and to shift <b>Relationship Development</b> into <b>Stage 3</b> .

Stage 4: How the model informed practice	How practice informed the model
<b>Relationship Building:</b> The model gave a perspective for this stage 'well resolved'... i.e. the capacity to be independent and to gather the people and resources required to succeed. In some cases it is the struggle	While Relationship Development offers some particular characteristics; independence, evidence of closeness, awareness of connections and the ability to 'let go', it is less a product of reflection. It is better

to let go of strategies that have served in the past, but are inappropriate or dysfunctional for the current challenge.	placed in <b>Stage 3</b> as a stage to be 'well resolved' and replaced by <b>Personal Development</b> in <b>Stage 4</b> .
<b>Trust and Commitment:</b> The model emphasised the benefit to Year 3 (N5-N6) transition of an ability to negotiate the challenge with confidence.	Trust and Commitment was confirmed as a Stage 4 component. It is an opportunity for Reflection on the levels of understanding (of the system and the demands) and the readiness for future challenges. Knowing 'what worked' and how to best tackle the next challenge are evidence of the component 'well resolved'.
<b>Exercise Discretion:</b> The successful N5-N6 transition is described at this stage component in the ability of students to show leadership and to mentor others. It is a 'marker' of their capacity to exercise discretion.	The Exercise of Discretion was confirmed as a Stage 4 component. The strategic insight that flows from this reflection encourages autonomous planning. It removes the dependence on structures and encourages self-confidence.
<b>Environmental Mastery:</b> The model emphasises the importance of a broad understanding of the 'industry' expectations and the 'disconnect' between academic nursing and industry nursing. This mastery is a factor of the skills acquired.	Environmental Mastery was confirmed as a Stage 4 component. It is an opportunity to reflect on the transition journey and to take stock. The component well resolved should invoke feelings of competence and control, the ability to prioritise competing demands and to have strategies that indicate mastery.

Table 10: Links to Stages (Curtin University)

## 8.5 Murdoch University

### 8.5.1 Context

Murdoch University provides student support predominantly through the First Year Advisors (FYA's). They have the lead role in the early identification of transition difficulty and provide assistance tailored to the student's needs. This level of support is time consuming and reliant on personnel, but there are strong links to the student Mentor program.

Murdoch University applied the model to the nursing school at the Mandurah campus. The nursing school draws a large contingent of CALD students, those from low SES (socio-economic status) and from rural and remote backgrounds. The application of the student support program at Murdoch substantially paralleled the stages of the model and was confirming.

The first year nursing students were invited to participate in the program of support and 7 students agreed to participate, 1 withdrew. The participating students completed a Thriving in Transition questionnaire (see Appendix 1).

Students were invited in to discuss the survey results; and subsequently in the lead up to the first practical placement, (e.g. "How adequately prepared do you feel?").

### 8.5.2 Recruitment and Project Process

Murdoch University participated in the Thriving in Transition training program that consisted of face-to-face training, electronic communication, the exchange of material, and support.

Eligible students (e.g. low SES, first in family, rural and remotely located) in the school of nursing were invited to participate in the program. Murdoch elected to use the Thriving in Transition questionnaire to launch the model with the students. Students were invited in for a discussion of what surveys had shown. Students were invited to reflect on the survey data in the lead up to the first practical placement, (e.g. 'How adequately prepared do you feel?' in Stage 1). Contact with students as part of the Murdoch University First Year Advisors' program was explored using the lens of the model throughout the stages of this initial transition, particularly to examine the challenge of making sense of placement post clinical placement, and allowed for reflection (in Stage 4).

A second transition, the period leading up to exams, was examined using the same methodology.

### 8.5.3 Application

The application of the model at Murdoch University allowed the examination of a connected set of transitions. The first application examined the placement post clinical within first year nursing. Their first placement was in geriatrics and this identified their main concerns about doing a placement in aged care. Students were tracked through the placement and post-placement when they were asked to reflect on the placement i.e. making sense of why they are doing the course. "What am I doing here?" Did they have an "aha!" moment?

The model was used to confirm interventions and discussions with students to assist them to move towards a sense of "I can do this", that they were doing the right course and that nursing was for them. The model allowed the Student Advisors to 'drill down' into specific components of the stages, e.g. motivation (Students wanting better life opportunities, better salary, more security).

The Student Advisors confirmed the correlation of the tool vs. subjective judgement in regard to student progression. The tool identified (or confirmed) those having/not having problems and was able to distinguish between those thriving, surviving and languishing.

A parallel group was the first year EN students doing the conversion course (i.e. an 18 month EN program and 12 months practicum then entry into second year) comprised of 15-20 students.

In this regard, the concept of 'first year' is misleading and the entry points are distributed across the study years. The model confirmed earlier observations that these students lack the embedded transition knowledge regarding assignments, writing and learning, and systems of submission.

The consequence is that their first year is all academic skills. The value of the enhanced learning skills program for EN students has foundations in the model and has been confirming.

The second transition examined the period leading up to examination. In this regard the students generally had a good level of self-awareness. With the model guiding student

support, confidence increased and there was evidence of stabilisation and reflection, (e.g. “I can see where I’ve come from.”). Those students flagged and reported to be ‘at risk’ (i.e. missing class or prac, missing an assignment deadline, don’t submit, fail an assessment task, or examination) receive early warnings and the model aligns well with Murdoch strategies. The value-adding of the model was to be more aware of a student’s languishing... while other moments are more intuitive.

The model also informed the ‘gap’ in the system between ‘acceptance’ and ‘enrolment’. It indicated the need for a strategy to account for these students, which is currently administered on a case-by-case basis by the Student Advisor team. Similarly the model indicated the advantage of early intervention in regard to the withdrawal process, particularly the timing around the census dates. Some students are inactive but still enrolled. Consequently the Student Advisor team have adopted the practice of a pre-exit interview.

The model also underscored the need for an early review of students that leave. The reasons for student departure aren’t captured well and the follow-up should begin to untangle the places in the system that need better tracking.

An unintended outcome of the project was awareness of how many different factors students have to juggle simultaneously with study – and how much clinical pracs complicate these. Almost all participants were working mothers and the younger children were (e.g. pre-school age), the more complex the issues.

The Student Advisor team indicated that the model had “confirmed” and sharpened their perceptions in some cases “rather than changed what we are doing”, but made them more proactive.

#### 8.5.4 Enablers

The most salient driver for the program model was self-interest...it was free and there was some potential for advantage. While this is a likely enabler it also indicates that the cohort involved were not so easily categorised and that, while they were not help-seeking, they were aware of their circumstance and the limited opportunities available.

Further into the stages of the model, the enabling characteristics were not as easily identified. Some students are returning to study after working in the clinical setting and, in some cases, going out of their way to hide their experience in Aged care (i.e. as a care worker they do certain things as a student he can't do - tasks unsupervised). Being conscious of the transition boundaries was a good example of a confident (thriving) move through Stage Three [role development] and Stage four [the exercise of discretion]).

The Student Advisor team indicated that evidence of movement through stages became more obvious in the second transition in the preparation for examinations. There was an opportunity to track students through the stages and to monitor their ‘resolution’ of the components. This allowed the Student Advisors to focus on particular concerns in a timely fashion and was seen as an early intervention to engage students positively, rather than reactive. The team found the model confirming and allowed for a degree of ‘anticipation’.



The student advisors found the tools (questionnaires) very useful in confirming insight into students. They indicated that the students put a lot of thought into their answers and regarded it as a good survey: it was short and provided a good base to talk to students and students were communicative.

The results correlated very well with how students were progressing. It identified those having/not having problems and was able to distinguish between those thriving, surviving and languishing. The Student Advisors could see a difference in student attitudes and confidence, particularly in the first six months where there have been fewer presentation (of difficulty) and less need for mentors. The model has assisted in anticipating a solution to something that might become a problem.

The Student Advisors commented on the similarity of the model to Murdoch programs and what was already happening in a dedicated position. The enabler for many students was permission to tell their story, a feel good factor, want to make it better for others. The project hit a nerve with students as nursing is a helping profession. Further the students felt empowered by the surveys and the Student Advisors noted their willingness to share and actively reflect and evaluate "... there was a level of meta-cognition involved by going through this process that is not normally there". This translated in a shift in student confidence and self-awareness between first and second semester. Decreased access/recourse to the Student Advisors meant that there was less reliance over time "...you could see progression in their understanding of the course, their understanding of self as a student and greater awareness of themselves as nurses - enculturation of themselves as nurses had moved along".

### 8.5.5 Barriers / Limitations

Student advisors were able to use the model to identify complexity not fully addressed in the model, e.g. the complex nature of the contextual issues surrounding Stage One of the model: Motivation, Readiness, Positive Planning and Comprehensibility... and the compounding problems of geographic dislocation and lack of familiar support systems. The student advisors were able to identify (in the model) those factors that might indicate 'thriving' but subsequent 'surviving' as a consequence of a fatalistic attitude. (E.g. a student indicating there being no point worrying ... "I've done my prep and know what's expected of me but what happens happens"). This 'resignation' might be missed in the model analysis of the stage.

The Student Advisors indicated that, on occasion, it is difficult to be proactive about a transition (e.g. in anticipation of a prac. experience because of all the contextual components. Despite being 'prepared', the Student Advisors felt it was hard to apply a model normalising help-seeking behaviours. They also felt in some transitions the naming of stages and the levels of resolution are somewhat artificial and the link to the 'philosophical alignment' is more important than slavish adherence.

Money and time are real issues and there are multiple competing demands on students' time and energy. The model needs to account for the disparate pressures that students



bring to their studies, at least as a component of understanding for interventions in Stage One.

The web resources were regarded as very useful and the student list was easy to follow. However the Student Advisors felt a graphic overview would be useful to track student progress. Similarly it needs to be carefully calibrated to clearly distinguish between these students that are surviving and others not doing so well.

### 8.5.6 Stage information

Stage 1: How the model informed practice	How practice informed the model
<b>Readiness:</b> This stage allowed the First Year Advisor (FYA) to raise questions about student goals and elicit students' knowledge of the University services and resources.	Readiness was confirmed as a Stage 1 component where purposeful, selective pathways are productive. At Murdoch University the focus was to ensure that the students were well prepared. The model provided a broad framework for a discussion with student and develops goals.
<b>Motivation:</b> This stage allowed the FYA to focus on goal setting, specifically use of the Goal Card. Students fill in the card with specific goals for the year and the course. It also facilitated discussion about students' reasons for enrolling. Also involved an examination of student experiences and a reflection on the underlying reasons for choosing the course in the first place.	Motivation was confirmed as a Stage 1 component. Most students in the cohort were from "high risk" categories, albeit different combinations of factors. Reason enough to deal with individual motivation components, rather than cohorts of students entering the course.
<b>Positive planning:</b> This stage dovetailed with UniEdge, a Murdoch program that helps students with planning, time management and other academic skills.	Positive planning was confirmed as a Stage 1 component. Much is invested in this component ... often the substantial part of orientation programs. While some of this can be 'front loaded', it is important to reflect on the planning process throughout the transition.
<b>Comprehensibility:</b> This stage assisted the FYAs to work with students to clarify their academic tasks and responsibilities – attending class, preparing for class, submitting work on time.	Comprehensibility was confirmed as a Stage 1 component. The clarification of tasks ties this component to other useful discussion and interventions should point out these opportunities. Students, who have forward focused, clear, ordered pathways can move quickly through the stage with some confidence. For those who are unclear about tasks, or confused with the relevance of tasks need to have assistance that is relevant and early.
Stage 2: How the model informed practice	How practice informed the model
<b>Gaining confidence:</b> This stage assisted the FYAs to work with students to further clarify their tasks and responsibilities, particularly in relation to clinical practice.	Gaining confidence builds on experience and the transition to the university framework is more than orientation. The experiences of clinical practicums (and other course related external expectations) need to be factored into the stage and the range of factors that might augur towards better learning opportunities.

<b>Sense making:</b> This stage allowed the FYAs to concentrate on helping students to prepare for their professional role as nurses.	Sense making was confirmed as a Stage 2 component. The focus on 'visible' goals indicates the need for specific interventions that help describe the student's purpose and direction.
<b>Meaningfulness:</b> This stage assisted the FYA to forge links between students and the academic staff and to build confidence in their skills. Meaningfulness is not easily categorised as each student will present with an array of concerns, they need to be aware of their circumstance and the limited opportunities available.	Meaningfulness was confirmed as a Stage 2 component. The question <i>why (?)</i> is central to commitment and the <u>conscious</u> engagement with the components of the transition. Interventions should directly address that exploration to provide insight and the relevance of the tasks.
<b>Engagement:</b> This stage allowed the FYAs to encourage peer relationships among the students and to deal with their anxieties. The model "confirmed" and sharpened our perceptions in regard to engagement rather than changing what we do. It made us more proactive.	Engagement was confirmed as a Stage 2 component. Building relationships is more than contact but involves the experience of success and the early increase in confidence. Interventions should address these issues.

<b>Stage 3:</b> How the model informed practice	How practice informed the model
<b>Role development:</b> This stage allowed the FYAs to concentrate on helping students to deepen their understanding of their professional role as nurses. Also relevant to the consideration of workplace training (e.g. as a aged care worker) and academic training (as a student nurse).	Role development was confirmed as a Stage 3 component. It is important to factor in the skills and experience that the individual brings to the transition to be able to assist them to reconcile the role options. It will always be strategic but not always in the same direction.
<b>Manageability:</b> This stage allowed the FYA to further develop their planning skills in response to the changing nature of the work covered in 2 <sup>nd</sup> year units. These are more theoretical and consequently more challenging to many of the students. It's an opportunity to revise the skills learned in the UniEdge program.	Manageability was confirmed as a Stage 3 component. It is an important check-and-respond component to attend to <i>how</i> to progress (and the barriers that might exist) It is about building up the capacity to respond and pulling down the dysfunctional strategies that don't contribute.
<b>Support systems:</b> This stage enabled the FYA to extend and develop their support networks on campus and in their personal lives. It was useful to identify and respond to the compounding problems of geographic dislocation and lack of familiar support systems.	Support systems were confirmed as a Stage 3 component. It brings a reflective component to the success or otherwise of the linking components in Stage 1 (Positive Planning) and Stage 2 (Engagement). Interventions can build on these components to give clarity to the concept of support.
<b>Personal Development:</b> This stage assisted the FYA to encourage students to reflect on their cognitive development & understand the cyclical nature of learning – what they are learning now, build on what they learned last year; their achievements last year build their confidence.	As a reflective component, this is probably better placed in <b>Stage 4</b> and replaced by <b>Relationship Building</b>

<b>Stage 4:</b> How the model informed practice	How practice informed the model
---	---------------------------------

<b>Relationship Building:</b> Stage 4 was discussed with students, both pre-post exams and in anticipation of practicum placement. It provided a platform for discussion of outcomes and support systems. It is a reflective moment that occurs throughout the Murdoch student support program.	While Relationship Development offers some particular characteristics; independence, evidence of closeness, awareness of connections and the ability to 'let go', it is less a product of reflection. It is better placed in <b>Stage 3</b> as a stage to be 'well resolved' and replaced by <b>Personal Development</b> in <b>Stage 4</b> .
<b>Trust and Commitment:</b> This is also a reflective moment that occurs throughout the Murdoch student support program. It could be identified in the post-practicum discussions with mentors and inform their roles.	Trust and Commitment was confirmed as a Stage 4 component. It is an opportunity for Reflection on the levels of understanding (of the system and the demands) and the readiness for future challenges. Knowing 'what worked' and how to best tackle the next challenge are evidence of the component 'well resolved'.
<b>Exercise Discretion:</b> Some students could map a way forward but this was the product of 'life experiences' as much as the consequence of the application of the model. It is, nevertheless, a skill worth understanding. It did help discussions around planning for following year.	The Exercise of Discretion was confirmed as a Stage 4 component. The strategic insight that flows from this reflection encourages autonomous planning. It removes the dependence on structures and encourages self-confidence.
<b>Environmental Mastery:</b> This stage provided a reflective point for discussion, rather than as a stage completed. As such it was 'visited' from time-to-time as students were asked to reflect on aspects of their transition.	Environmental Mastery was confirmed as a Stage 4 component. It is an opportunity to reflect on the transition journey and to take stock. The component well resolved should invoke feelings of competence and control, the ability to prioritise competing demands and to have strategies that indicate mastery.

Table 11: Links to Stages (Murdoch University)

## 8.6 Notre Dame University

### 8.6.1 Context

Notre Dame applied the model to the first year medical student cohort, specifically those experiencing the dislocating transition of relocation from the eastern states to Western Australia. The Notre Dame program typically identifies students 'at risk' through the 'flags' in academic progress and adjustment. They provide program support for academic issues (One2One), and workshops for learning support (Success Now), but rely heavily on the Med 100 coordinators and Clinical Debriefing (CD) tutors to provide support, albeit augmented by the Student Life Office (SLO).

### 8.6.2 Recruitment and Project Process

Notre Dame University participated in the Thriving in Transition training program that consisted of face-to-face training, electronic communication, the exchange of material, and support. Further training to familiarise facilitators and students about the Transition Model and the different stages involved was provided.

Notre Dame University postponed the application of the model to capture a substantial cohort (n=100 approximately) of medical students for whom relocation from the eastern states was required. These students (MED 100) were invited to participate in the application of the model, particularly to provide:

- A better understanding of the East-West transition;
- A greater opportunity to provide a more supportive educational environment for those entering the system.

### 8.6.3 Application

The model was applied case by case with the Med 100 through invitation. The take-up was approximately half the cohort and these students were given an introduction to the program and invited to participate in a series of tutorial sessions to explore the model and its application.

These students had not previously presented and as a proactive program of support the application of the model was intended to identify student issues as early as possible and not to wait for a crisis to occur.

The tutors were able to use the questionnaire (Appendix 1) as an introductory tool for discussion and a method of introducing the components of the stages. While there is a focus on first year transitions, there is ongoing concern for the year transitions and the particular (unresolved) issues of dislocation.

### 8.6.4 Enablers

For Notre Dame University the enabling process took place over time and deep consideration was given to the range of applications that might warrant attention. The university is aware of the particular issues surrounding the 'east-west' transition of students to take up their study program. While these have been traditionally handled within a standard orientation program, the identified concerns were still unresolved. The model provided a staged process, but one where tutors could engage individually with students and begin to map their transition through the model lens.

The Thriving in Transition tools were used to examine the students' awareness of the stages of transition and as a confirming tool for the subjective judgement of the Med 100 tutors. The tool was used to provide the 'language' for discussion of the transition stages with the students, with a particular focus on self-awareness. The cycles of discussion enabled tutors to identify the particular concerns of the individuals (i.e. In this cohort, issues of homesickness and geographic dislocation were disabling).

### 8.6.5 Barriers / Limitations

The delays in regard to internal university policy (e.g. ethics processing, faculty decision-making) fragmented the project. The decision to apply the model to the 'east-west' cohort required an appropriate entry point and data gathering plan.

The Tutors were able to apply the model to complex problems of geographic dislocation and lack of familiar support systems, but found the model difficult to apply in terms of timely interventions. It is anticipated that the 'next round' of student intake will have the benefit of this understanding.

The Tutors indicated that it is sometimes difficult to be pro-active with regard to a particular cohort and that there is a danger of unnecessarily 'labelling' a student as at-risk. There are particular concerns (derived from experience) in regard to students that have been granted entry to the university as a lower preference (e.g. 6<sup>th</sup> preference). These students bring a number of underlying concerns not specifically addressed by the model (however, these could be useful developments within the framework).

Tutors felt that environmental issues beyond the university responsibility (e.g. finance, accommodation, and multiple competing demands on students' time and energy) must be considered and expressed a wish to use the model to identify these concerns. The model must account for the disparate pressures that students bring to their studies, at least as a component of understanding for interventions in Stage One.

### 8.6.6 Stage information

Stage 1: How the model informed practice	How practice informed the model
<b>Readiness:</b> The model raised awareness of the merit of assessing student readiness prior to their arrival to the university. The application of the model to the 'east-west' cohort indicated that earlier attention to these students would have benefits.	Readiness was confirmed as a Stage 1 component where purposeful, selective pathways are productive. At UND the value of early preparation is a priority. The model can provide more direct strategies for early attention to the needs of students who are geographically dislocated, removed from their traditional support systems and unsettled.
<b>Motivation:</b> 'Getting started' requires students to be reasonably settled in a new environment and the model draws attention to the need for these concerns to be addressed individually. Concerns around homesickness, accommodation, transferability compete with the more academic considerations and require early attention.	Motivation was confirmed as a Stage 1 component. Most students in this cohort were high achievers but dislocated, sometimes chronically homesick, sometimes reluctant entrants (granted course entry as a 5 <sup>th</sup> or 6 <sup>th</sup> preference). The issues for motivation are complex but the requirements to thrive are an ability to prioritise, and to have clear objectives.
<b>Positive planning:</b> The use of the model in small (tutorial) groups provided the opportunity to share experiences and gave the 'language' for that discussion to take place. Through this focus, student could be encouraged to become more organised and to plan accordingly.	Positive planning was confirmed as a Stage 1 component. The failure of orientation programs to provide relevant material means that this stage of the model must provide information AND the most appropriate strategies for students to move forward and thrive.
<b>Comprehensibility:</b> Problem Based Learning (PBL) presents specific challenges for students, particularly those who are unfamiliar with the process. Bright, perceptive students may apply dysfunctional academic strategies and be disabled as a consequence. The model emphasises the need for students to have a robust understanding of <i>what</i> is required, before they can come to terms with the	Comprehensibility was confirmed as a Stage 1 component. For a new 'way' of learning (e.g. PBL) there are real challenges for students. Those that languish or survive will mimic others and rely on strategies that have served them well in the past (but are not necessarily relevant for the current challenge). The model must provide pathways for this adjustment and meaningful benchmarks against which student can measure progress.

<i>why and how.</i>	
---------------------	--

Stage 2: How the model informed practice	How practice informed the model
<b>Gaining confidence:</b> Self-confidence and self-awareness are important components of thriving and the model informs the students and staff of the importance of this 'confidence' at this stage of the cycle.	Gaining confidence (and thriving in that regard) is more about self-awareness than command of the requisite tasks. Interventions should have that emphasis and focus.
<b>Sense making:</b> The model allows the med students to see the demands of the program in perspective. It gives permission to search for the right balance between their well-being, the busy curriculum, and the demanding schedule. This understanding provides a base for discussion and the individual balance to be a priority.	Sense making was confirmed as a Stage 2 component. Students need to be able to have a clear purpose and pathway. Discussions with students should examine the 'clarity' of their directions in detail and provide templates for action.
<b>Meaningfulness:</b> The model highlighted the tendency for the students to be slavishly attentive to content (issues around 'bootleg' curriculum documents circulating and similar perceived attempts at 'advantage'). The model allows for a shift in emphasis to an understanding of the components in the broader sense (the 'why'); and a need to develop a stronger 'process' around PBL.	Meaningfulness was confirmed as a Stage 2 component. Students need to have a good grasp of the theoretical aims and objectives of the challenging transition; and also the purpose of their engagement with the component parts of that challenge... they need to know why they're doing <i>what</i> they're doing.
<b>Engagement:</b> The model provides a perspective for the links and patterns of student engagement. Original tutor groups and friendship groups are not necessarily the most productive. Attempts to vary and adjust student engagement must be seen in the broader perspective of self-confidence.	Engagement was confirmed as a Stage 2 component. The model needs to accommodate the changing nature of engagement as the transition takes place. This might involve new or more sophisticated alliances and more strategic engagement when directions are clear. It will also involve the 'skill' of 'letting go'.

Stage 3: How the model informed practice	How practice informed the model
<b>Role development:</b> UND are very aware of the contracts of the system and the professional expectations (both internal and external). Clinical competence requires the acquisition of skill, but the manner of that acquisition is still debated. They are aware of the need to 'change' some things about the 'system' but these are firmly entrenched.	Role development was confirmed as a Stage 3 component. In some circumstances this is about 'role adjustment' and the balance of competing interests.
<b>Manageability:</b> The model assists in a better understanding of the skills required to 'thrive' in PBL. It is the 'how' in the equation and some students (those inclined to languish) do not engage in the process, but are consumed by the content.	Manageability was confirmed as a Stage 3 component. It is an important check-and-respond component to attend to <i>how</i> to progress (and the barriers that might exist). It is about building up the capacity to respond and pulling down the dysfunctional strategies that don't contribute.
<b>Support systems:</b> UND have elective and faculty based support, but resources are stretched and the opportunity for one-on-one is rare. The model	Support systems were confirmed as a Stage 3 component. It is important to understand the 'resource limits' of organisations and provide creative

indicates the preference for more individual support and personal planning	solutions to individual planning. As mentioned elsewhere, It brings a reflective component to the success or otherwise of the linking components in Stage 1 (Positive Planning) and Stage 2 (Engagement). Interventions can build on these components to give clarity to the concept of support.
<b>Personal Development:</b> Students need to be able to see (visualise) the pathways and strategize ways to develop the requisite skills and competencies. It is less about knowledge and more about understanding. It is also a reflective moment for self-awareness	As a reflective component, this is probably better placed in <b>Stage 4</b> and replaced by <b>Relationship Building</b>

<b>Stage 4:</b> How the model informed practice	How practice informed the model
<b>Relationship Building:</b> Stage 4 was discussed UND staff and identified as a useful moment of examination in regard to the development of independence and self-awareness (regarded as essential components of student success)	While Relationship Development offers some particular characteristics; independence, evidence of closeness, awareness of connections and the ability to 'let go', it is less a product of reflection. It is better placed in <b>Stage 3</b> as a stage to be 'well resolved' and replaced by <b>Personal Development</b> in <b>Stage 4</b> .
<b>Trust and Commitment:</b> The passage through medicine at UND <u>requires</u> a willingness to take risks and to 'prove out' understanding thorough the PBL process. Reflection on this process is very important.	Trust and Commitment was confirmed as a Stage 4 component. It is an opportunity for Reflection on the levels of understanding (of the system and the demands) and the readiness for future challenges. Knowing 'what worked' and how to best tackle the next challenge are evidence of the component 'well resolved'.
<b>Exercise Discretion:</b> The ability to reflect on the 'wisdom' of their choices is a powerful contributor to self-awareness. The development of autonomy and strategic insight is a worthy point of reflection... has it been done... how well has it been done?	The Exercise of Discretion was confirmed as a Stage 4 component. The strategic insight that flows from this reflection encourages autonomous planning. It removes the dependence on structures and encourages self-confidence.
<b>Environmental Mastery:</b> This stage provides a reflective point for discussion, rather than as a stage completed. As such it ought to be 'visited' from time-to-time as students are invited to reflect on aspects of their transition.	Environmental Mastery was confirmed as a Stage 4 component. It is an opportunity to reflect on the transition journey and to take stock. The component well resolved should invoke feelings of competence and control, the ability to prioritise competing demands and to have strategies that indicate mastery.

Table 12: Links to Stages (Notre Dame University)



## 9. Dissemination

<b>Date/s of the event</b>	<b>Event title, Location (city only)</b>	<b>Brief description of the purpose of the event</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Number of Higher Education institutions represented</b>	<b>Number of other institutions represented</b>
18th March 2011	Rural Health Symposium, Burnie Tas.	Dissemination of rural health research activities	20	1	6
29th June 2011	FYHE conference (Fremantle)	Paper presentation (nuts and bolts) describing the project directions	32	9	2
4th July 2011	Project workshop	Presentation and Q & A to transition coordinators (Edith Cowan University)	2	1	0
4th July 2011	Project workshop	Presentation and Q & A to transition coordinators (Curtin University)	3	1	0
5th July 2011	Project workshop	Presentation and Q & A to transition coordinators (University of Notre Dame)	6	1	0
6th July 2011	Project workshop	Presentation and Q & A to transition coordinators (Murdoch University)	5	1	0
7th July 2011	Project workshop	Presentation and Q & A to transition coordinators (University of Western Australia)	3	1	0
31st August 2011	First Year Teaching Forum (Launceston)	Dissemination of education research activities	62	4	5
29 <sup>th</sup> March 2012	UNE "Thriving Project Workshop"	Presentation of the model	5	2	0



	Armidale				
17 <sup>th</sup> May 2012	UWA "Teaching and Learning Research Colloquium" Perth	Bringing WA universities together to discuss research activities	15	1	0
6 <sup>th</sup> June 2012	Bond Uni "Enabling Symposium" Gold Coast	Bringing NSW and Qld. Universities together to discuss transition	35	12	2
27 <sup>th</sup> July 2012	FYHE conference Brisbane.	Refereed paper International conference on First Year Experience	52	16+	4+
16 <sup>th</sup> October 2012	Project Workshop Fremantle	Training workshop to Notre Dame University	11	1	0
17 <sup>th</sup> October 2012	Project Workshop Perth	Training workshop to Curtin University	7	1	0
18 <sup>th</sup> October 2012	Project Workshop Fremantle	Training workshop to Murdoch University	2	1	0
30 <sup>th</sup> November 2012	Data workshop Launceston	Data gathering and evaluation workshop with University of Tasmania and Southern Cross University	7	2	0
4 <sup>th</sup> December 2012	Data workshop Fremantle	Data gathering and evaluation workshop with Murdoch University	5	2	0
5 <sup>th</sup> December 2012	Data workshop Perth	Data gathering and evaluation workshop with Curtin University	6	2	0
22 <sup>nd</sup> March 2013	Data workshop Fremantle	Data gathering and evaluation workshop with Notre Dame University	<b>TBA</b>	<b>TBA</b>	<b>TBA</b>

Table 13: Dissemination table

## 10. Conclusion

This project was designed to make a number of contributions to an understanding of the positive aspects of dislocating transitions and inform the implementation of more effective interventions. In particular this project aimed to provide a more robust understanding of the transition to tertiary study.

The project informed a model of understanding (i.e. the Thriving in Transition Cycle) to accommodate individual accounts of transition and provide the best opportunity to thrive. This model described the scaffolding for universities to design early interventions. The collective application of the model and the review of stages led to a model revision. This describes the transition to tertiary study as a cycle, where the stages 'well resolved' provide the best opportunity to thrive. Each of the stages has been reviewed and the component intervention strategies informed by the project experience.

### 10.1 Key findings and outcomes

#### 10.1.1 Observable outcomes

The transition to university is a complex constellation of factors for which a front-loaded orientation process provides little guidance. First year students are not a homogeneous cohort. They vary in age, experience, capacity and incentive. The transition for students from low SES backgrounds, those from rural and remote backgrounds, and those who lack a familial background for university study, is even more complex.

From the data, those from low SES backgrounds face discouraging financial and family burdens, where university study variously involves financial sacrifice, or balancing part-time work with university study. The impact on family is multifaceted but often involves complicated child care, inadequate living (and study) arrangements and financial hardship. The Thriving in Transition model provides opportunity to identify the individual concerns and strategic pathways.

From the data, those from rural and remote communities often share the concerns of those from low SES backgrounds. These are compounded by distance from home (and homesickness), and a lack of familiar support systems. The Thriving in Transition model provides opportunity to identify the individual concerns and strategic pathways.

From the data, those 'first in family' (or those who lack a familial background for university study) lack a frame of reference for the demands of tertiary study and will often 'cling' to dysfunctional coping strategies when pressures mount. Their capacity for achievement is often limited by a lack of mindfulness in regard to the pathways that might provide support. The Thriving in Transition model provides opportunity to identify the individual concerns and indicated strategies.

In all categories, the capacity to *thrive* is predicated by the resolution of the stages of the transition. Across the cyclic process of the four stages (i.e. preparation, encounter, adjustment and stability/reflection), three guiding principles hold true. The transition (a)

has recursive qualities with one stage leading to the next through the cycle; (b) has disjunctive qualities/characteristics at each stage; (c) has interdependent and dynamic antecedent qualities with the resolution of one stage defining the next. The cycle provides a dynamic and detailed framework for the examination of the transition process.

Furthermore, a number of intervention strategies were added to the stage information/strategies as a consequence of the participant analysis. These are:

- (1) The age of the student is a critical factor, with more mature age students able to reckon with the transition as a factor of their success; however mature age students need to 'suspend' some workplace skills to return to academic study in a receptive frame of mind.
- (2) Motivation is more complex than confidence vs. bewilderment and needs to be inclusive of contextual issues including living arrangements, language skills, financial pressures. Some students are motivated but lack the confidence to be fully involved: others are confident but lack the frame of reference to fully understand (or articulate) their motivation.
- (3) Planning for a challenging transition requires a degree of positive detachment and the balancing of competing interests. Assumptions that student arrive 'prepared' is a myth and early planning should be a priority. The current misplaced focus of institutions is upon orientation, rather than the relevant application of individual planning.
- (4) Students need an unencumbered understanding of the tasks that face them. Students, particularly those that languish, feel 'surrounded' by information and find it difficult to select or prioritise.
- (5) Students need an opportunity to reflect on the soundness of their planning and the usefulness (or not) of strategies.
- (6) The link (or disparity) between the 'expected' and the 'reality' are important considerations. The wider the gaps, the more likely students will be unable to make 'sense' of the transition in which they are involved.
- (7) Students need to be conscious of the components and the (relative) importance of tasks. Insight and clarity are key considerations. Sometimes it is a struggle between unlearning the learned and being critical and reflective in practice.
- (8) Some student struggle to become genuinely engaged in the new environment. Linking with others (to enhance the experience), linking with resources (to be empowered), and having the confidence to embrace change are the most challenging components.
- (9) Strategic planning (rather than conformity) and 'clever' planning (rather than resignation) are important components.
- (10) The 'old' skills students bring to the challenge might not be sufficient to function effectively and they need to be actively sourcing the new skills/tools for the tasks.
- (11) Students need to actively review their support systems; especially in regard to how well they are working, whether they are adequate for the challenge, what's missing and how can it be accessed.
- (12) Students need to review their awareness of connections and the ability to 'let go' of old patterns that are not serving them well.

### 10.1.2 The extent the intended outcomes have been achieved

Initially there was some institutional reluctance to move away from the linear, reactive, crisis driven student support system to a more pro-active system of staged transition. Despite the clear advantages, the known “local” system seemed more attractive to the stakeholder partners than the unknown. Nevertheless once the project was established it allowed the exploration of the model in five university settings. As a consequence of the complexity of the transition challenge the individual transitions varied, however the underlying principles of the project (where an understanding of the trajectories of thriving, surviving and languishing assists in providing student support), held true.

This project made a number of contributions to an understanding of the positive aspects of challenging transitions and informed more effective interventions. In particular, the project contributed to a more robust understanding of the transition to tertiary study. It provided a methodical analysis of the transition to tertiary study through the lens of the Thriving in Transition model at five universities and informed interventions that accommodated individual accounts of transition, to provide the best opportunity to thrive in challenging circumstances. The application of the model has informed practice at all the sites, particularly in the move away from orientation to a more holistic approach to the transition challenge. Further, the project has contributed to a new model of transition that will assist institutions to implement strategies that provide the best opportunity to enable students at higher risk of languishing, to succeed. As a consequence, this project has made a significant contribution the strategies and planning that will contribute to the retention of students in challenging circumstances.

### 10.1.3 The Revised Thriving in Transition model

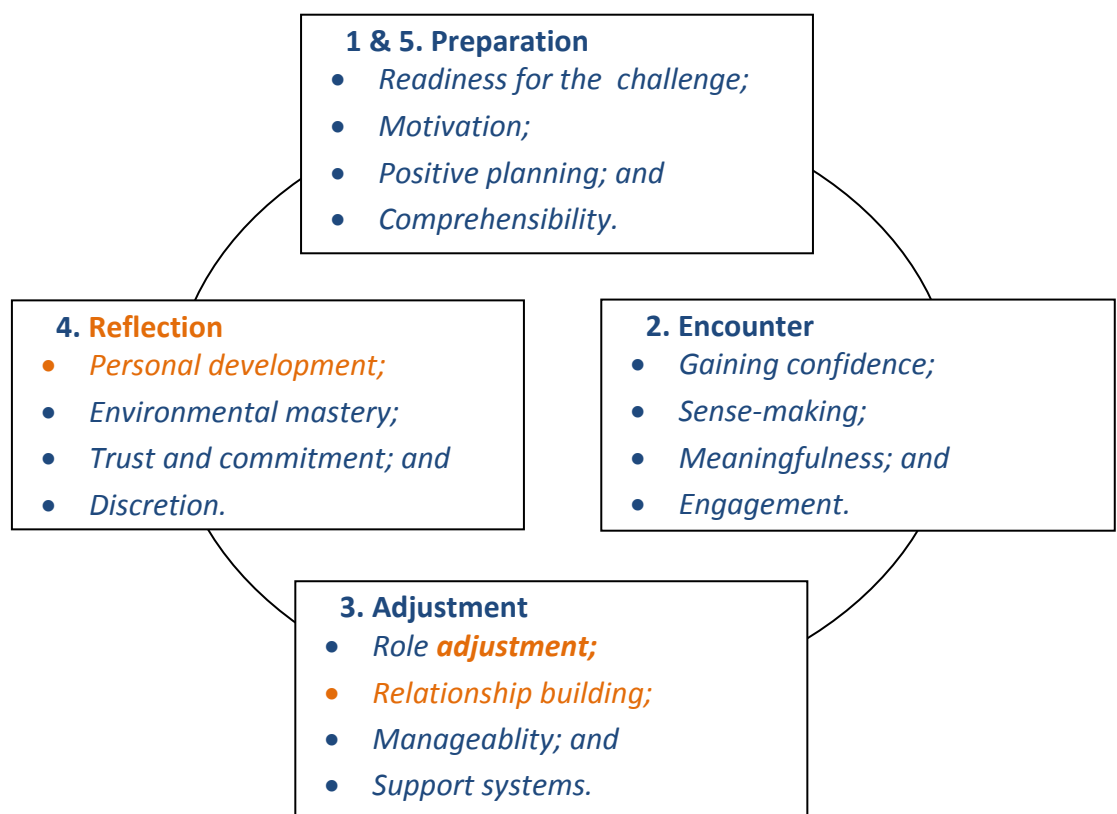


Figure 4: Revised Thriving in Transition model

In this revised model, a more accurate pathway shifts Personal Development into Stage 4 and shifts Relationship Development into Stage 3. The component characteristic and the descriptors for the resolution of the stage (i.e. thriving, surviving or languishing) remain accurate descriptors.

The Stage 3 component (Role Development) was renamed Role Adjustment to better reflect the processes and characteristics involved. Further the model Stage 4 (Stability) was more accurately described as Reflection, given the cyclic, recurrent nature of the model and the opportunity to review the transition at a point where issues have been described and engaged.

The Student Advisors felt the model had been a very useful addition to their work management strategies. It had made them more aware of other applications and opportunities to be pro-active, and had confirmed that what they were doing had positive outcomes.

#### 10.1.4 Concluding remarks

Traditionally the pattern of transition to Higher Education is viewed as linear; typically with a suite of orientation programs and support programs attending to the inequities and concerns of the cohort. An alternate view is that transition is a cyclic process of stages and, if poorly negotiated, the students languish and are unlikely to be retained; and when these are well-resolved, the students thrive.

Through application at five university sites, this project was designed to make a number of contributions to an understanding of the positive aspects of dislocating transitions and inform the implementation of more effective interventions. In particular, the project contributed to a set of three program goals:

- A more robust understanding of the transition to tertiary study;
- Informed interventions that accommodate individual accounts of transition, to provide the best opportunity to thrive in challenging circumstances; and
- Contribute to new, emerging models of transition that will assist institutions to implement strategies that provide the best opportunity to enable students at higher risk of languishing to succeed.

As a consequence, this project made a significant contribution the strategies and planning that will contribute to the retention of students in challenging circumstances.

Thanks must go to the OLT (the predecessor organisation to the ALTC) for their generous support and guidance throughout the project; and to the participating universities and university staff for their insightful and thoughtful contributions.

## 11. Recommendations

1. The project informed practice across the university sites and generated interest with regard to the potential of the model to enhance outcomes within particular cohorts, including retention. In that regard it is recommended:

- (e) The future application of the model is to selected cohorts with identifiable concerns (e.g. CALD students) to allow the testing of the stages for particular application.
- (f) That the program be launched very early after starting university to provide students a quick self-assessment of performance.
- (g) It was noted that Indigenous background students bring a completely different framework to the transition and that the model, if able to be applied specifically to an Indigenous group, might prove-out as an especially beneficial guide to their transition. An application of the model to an Indigenous cohort is recommended.

2. The web-based repository of information was regarded as a valuable, albeit static program facility. It provided a training base for participants (including testing instruments), a password protected facility for student information, and a referential point for the application of recommended interventions. It was criticised for its lack of 'interactivity' and lack of capacity to visually capture 'student' progress through the stages (especially as graphic or tabular presentation) as a printable extract (e.g. for reflective discussion with students). In that regard, it is recommended:

- (a) The website and web-based materials be revised and improved to provide more interactive opportunities.
- (b) That the webpage be simplified with printable 'student' progress pages for file and discussion. The model could be improved by facility in the data to provide this feedback of progress 'standing within the model framework' (e.g. one page print-outs with graphs of progress). This requires a more interactive site rather than embedded PDF files.
- (c) That the web page has the ability to visually graph student progress and to plot these against the mapping with thriving, surviving and languishing.
- (d) That the website is modified to include a menu bar to display the 4 stages of the model, a site map and drop boxes to improve navigation.
- (e) That the website has the ability to see trends and tendencies; and link to resources and strategies.
- (f) For tracking purposes, that a facility be built-in to give students more frequent feedback, rather than the existing loop of support staff information storage. The existing project feedback was more about the application of the model, but it is also a comment on the efficacy of the web base for the model and the centrality of a data system.

3. Documentation for the model to be applied in a variety of settings proved to be a difficulty within the project timeframe. The disparate processes and requirements required much duplication of effort and information. For the model to be applied to other settings it is recommended:

- (a) The collection and storage of historical documents deemed useful to the project as building block for local settings, such as application for approval, project amendment approval, consent forms, student information sheets.
- (b) That the student materials (especially the student questionnaires) be reviewed for language simplicity and usability.

4. The model describes the importance of the individual attention required for a successful transition and the risks associated with crisis driven responses. The staffing of support programs is not the subject of this project, however sufficient resources need to be dedicated to provide students with the necessary tools to allow them to thrive. It is recommended that:

- (a) Student transition is viewed as a cyclic process throughout the student's enrolment and that orientation programs supply only a small component of their requirements.
- (b) That Student Advisors are not limited to 'first year' but have licence to follow students as required, to allow the application of the model more broadly. In this regard the transition is not time-limited and it is understood that different cohorts have different needs at different times.
- (c) A finer filter is required to be applied to the concept of 'first year students' to account for background, age and experience that a student brings to the transition.

5. The revised and reviewed model is available to organisations, and provides a sustainable support plan that is adaptable to local settings. A series of workshops (state based) would allow this material to be more broadly understood, distributed and embraced; and also provide a flow of data to improve and develop the model.

## Bibliography

Abbott-Chapman, J., Braithwaite, J., & Godfrey, J. (2004). *Promoting access, increasing opportunities for university education: A study of mature-aged students from disadvantaged regions*. Retrieved from [http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher\\_education/publications\\_resources/profiles/university\\_education\\_matureaged\\_students.htm](http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher_education/publications_resources/profiles/university_education_matureaged_students.htm)

Adams, T., Banks, M., Davis, D., & Dickson, J. (2010). *The Hobsons Retention Project: Context and Factor Analysis Report*. Paper presented at the Australian International Education Conference 2010, Sydney. [http://www.aiec.idp.com/pdf/2010\\_AdamsBanksDaviesDickson\\_Wed\\_1100\\_BGallB\\_Paper.pdf](http://www.aiec.idp.com/pdf/2010_AdamsBanksDaviesDickson_Wed_1100_BGallB_Paper.pdf)

Aldwin, C. M. and T. A. Revenson (1987). "Does coping help? A re-examination of the relation between coping and mental health." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 53(2): 377-348.

Andrew, S., Salamonson, Y., Weaver, R., Smith, A., O'Reilly, R., & Taylor, C. (2008). 'Hate the course or hate to go: Semester differences in first year nursing attrition'. *Nurse Education Today*, 28, 865-872.

Australian Council for Educational Research (2008). "Attracting, engaging and retaining: New conversations about learning. Australasian student engagement report: Australasian Survey of Student Engagement." Retrieved 19/11, 2012, from [http://www.acer.edu.au/documents/AUSSE\\_2007Report.pdf](http://www.acer.edu.au/documents/AUSSE_2007Report.pdf).

Bitsika, V., Sharpley, C.F. & Rubenstein, V. (2010). What stresses university students: An interview investigation of the demands of tertiary studies. *Australian Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 20(1), 41-54.

Bergland, A. and M. Kirkevold (2001). "Thriving - a useful theoretical perspective to capture the experience of well-being among frail elderly in nursing homes." *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 36(3): 426-432.

Braxton, J., Ed. (2000). *Reworking the student departure puzzle*, Vanderbilt University Press.

Braxton, J. and A. Hirschy (2004). Reconceptualizing antecedents of social integration in student departure. *Retention and Student Success in Higher Education*. M. Yorke and B. Longden. Buckingham, Open University Press and Society for Research into Higher Education: 89-102.

Braxton, J., J. Milem, et al. (2000). "The influence of active learning on the college student departure process: toward a revision of Tinto's theory." *Journal of Higher Education* 71(5): 569-590.

Bridges, W. (1986). "Managing organizational transitions." *Organizational Dynamics* 15(1): 24-33.

Bridges, W. (1991). *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*. Reading, MA, Addison-Wesley.

Burton, L.J. & Bowling, D.G. (2005). *In search of the key factors that influence student success at university*. HERDSA 2005 International Conference: Higher Education in a Changing World, 3-6 July 2005, Sydney, Australia.

Calder, A. (2004). Peer interaction in the transition process. *Journal of the Australia and*



*New Zealand Student Services Association*, 3, 4-16.

Carolan, M.C. & Kruger, G.B. (2011). Concerns among first year midwifery students: Towards addressing attrition rates. *Contemporary Nurse*, 38 (1-2), 139-147.

Carver, C. S. (1998). "Resilience and thriving: issues, models, and linkages." *Journal of Social Issues* 54(2): 245-266. Addresses the distinctions underlying concepts of resilience and thriving and issues in conceptualising thriving. Explores confidence and mastery. Interesting article and leans towards my thinking

Carver, C. S. and M. F. Scheier (1999). Optimism. *Coping: The psychology of what works*. C. Snyder. New York, Oxford University Press.

Centre for the Study of Higher Education (2008). PARTICIPATION AND EQUITY A review of the participation in higher education of people from low socioeconomic backgrounds and Indigenous people Melbourne University of Melbourne 1-149.

Clark, E.E. & Ramsey, W. (1990). Problems of retention in tertiary education. *Education Research and Perspectives*, 17(2), 47-59.

Cohen, L., Harman, B., Lauva, M., Rassau, A., Brown, J., Crevacore, C. & Lawrence, T. (2011). Mentoring matters: Embedding peer support frameworks in first year undergraduate programs. 14<sup>th</sup> Pacific Rim First Year in Higher Education Conference, 28 June – 1 July, 2011. Fremantle.

Croxon, L. & Maginnis, C. (2007). The total learning environment and implications for rural student nurse retention. *Focus on Health Professional Education: A multidisciplinary journal*, 9 (2), 60-70.

Cuthbertson, P., Lauder, J., Steele, R., Cleary, S. and Bradshaw, J. (2004). A comparative study of the course-related family and financial problems of mature nursing students in Scotland and Australia. *Nurse Education Today* 24(5):373-381.

Darleston-Jones, D., Cohen, L., Hanould, S., Young, A., & Drew, N. (2003). The retention and persistence support (RAPS) project: A transition initiative. *Issues in Educational Research*, 13, 1-12.

Darleston-Jones, D., Pike, L., Cohen, L., Young, A., Haunold, S., & Drew, N. (2003). Are they being served? Student expectations of higher education. *Issues in Educational Research*, 13 (1), 31-52.

DEEWR (2008). Review of Australian Higher Education. Canberra, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

Di Corpo, S. (2009). Foundations – supporting FY medical students @ UNSW. *First year in Higher Education Conference*, 29 June – 1 July, 2009, Brisbane.

Dodgson, R. and H. Bolam (2002). *Student retention, support and widening participation in the north east of England*. Sunderland, Universities for the North East.

Drury, V., Francis, K. & Chapman, Y. (2007). Mature learners becoming registered nurses: A grounded theory model. *Australian Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 26(2), 39-45.

Goold, S., S. Turale, et al. (2002). Gettin em n keepin em. *Report of the Indigenous Nursing Education Working Group*. Canberra, Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health.

Elliott, J., Beltman, S. & Lynch, E. (2011). "If you make a difference, you have changed

someone's life": Outcomes from a university student mentor program. *14th Pacific Rim First Year in Higher Education Conference, 28 June–1 July, Fremantle.*

Ellis, N. (2002). The First year experience project. *University of Adelaide learning and teaching development Unit.*  
[http://www.adelaide.edu.au/clpd/resources/reports/FYE\\_Report.pdf](http://www.adelaide.edu.au/clpd/resources/reports/FYE_Report.pdf)

Engstrom, C., & Tinto, V. (2008). Access without support is not opportunity. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning, 40*(1) 46-50.

Farrington, S., Page, S. & DiGregorio, K.D. (2001). The things that matter: Understanding the factors that affect the participation and retention of Indigenous students in the Cadigal program at the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Sydney. *Journal of Australian and New Zealand Student Services Association, 18*, 40-55.

Findlay, B. (1994). Transition to university: A different learning environment. *Australian Journal of Career Development, 3*-5.

Gabb, R., Milne, L., & Cao, Z. (2006). *Understanding attrition and improving transition, a review of recent literature.* Melbourne: Postcompulsory Education Centre, Victoria University.

Gale, T. and Parker, S. (2011). Good practice report. Student transition into higher education. Australian Learning and Teaching Council. <http://www.altc.edu.au>

Harris, M., M. Myhill, et al. (2012). "A Promising Career? The Thriving Transition Cycle." *International Journal of Sports Science* 2(3): 16-23.

Harris, M. W. (2009). Thriving in Transition: the characteristics and processes of thriving in periods of geographic dislocation. *Department of Rural Health.* Launceston, University of Tasmania. PhD.

Harris, M. W. (2009a). A new conception of thriving. *Enabling Pathways: 3rd National Conference of Enabling Education.* Toowoomba

Harris, M. W., M. Myhill, et al. (2012). "A Promising Career? The Thriving Transition Cycle." *International Journal of Sports Science* 2(3): 16-23.

Harding, C. & Pilotto, L. (2010). Rural student doctors top city colleagues: Representation of a rural clinical school in rural press. *The Australian Journal of Rural Health, 18*, 143-147

Harvey, L., S., D., & Smith, M. (2006). *The first-year experience: a review of literature for the Higher Education Academy.* York: HEA.

Heaney, S. (1999). Overcoming the 3Ms! Marks! Money! Motivation!: How can more secondary students from rural and remote areas be encouraged to choose a career in rural and remote health care? *5<sup>th</sup> National Rural Health Conference, 17-17<sup>th</sup> March, 1999, Adelaide.*

Hillman, K. (2005). The first year experience : the transition from secondary school to university and TAFE in Australia. Victoria, LSAY Research Reports. Longitudinal surveys of Australian youth research report ; n.40.

Holden, H. (2005). A qualitative study of persistence and performance: factors in the motivation of first year tertiary education students. *Education in Rural Australia, 15*(1), 28-40.

Hutchinson, L., Mitchell, C. & John, W. (2011). The transition experience of enrolled nurses

to a Bachelor of Nursing at an Australian university. *Contemporary Nurse*, 38 (1-2), 191-200.

Ickovics, J. R. and C. L. Park (1998). "Paradigm shift: Why a focus on health is important." *Journal of Social Issues* 54(2): 237-244.

James, R., G. Baldwin, et al. (2004). Analysis of equity groups in higher education 1991-2002. Canberra, Department of Education, Science and Training.

James, R., G. Baldwin, et al. (2004). Analysis of equity groups in higher education. Canberra, Australian Department of Education, Science and Training.

James, R., K. Krause, et al. (2010). The First Year Experience in Australian Universities: Findings from 1994-2009. Melbourne, University of Melbourne.

James, R., K. Krause, et al. (2010). The First Year Experience in Australian Universities: Findings from 1994 to 2009. Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education, The University of Melbourne.

James, R. (2008). Implications of the Bradley review's recommendations for student equity groups. *ANU Equity Panel: The future of student equity and higher education, University of Melbourne*. [http://www.equity101.info/files/ANU\\_Equity\\_Panel\\_Richard%20James.pdf](http://www.equity101.info/files/ANU_Equity_Panel_Richard%20James.pdf)

Jardine, A. & Krause, K. (2005). Once they arrive how do we keep them? Student persistence research and implications for the retention of non-traditional students. *Enhancing Student Success Conference*.

<http://134.148.4.164/Resources/Conferences/Enhancing%20Student%20Success/Enhancing%20Student%20Success%202005/PDFs/AnnJardine.pdf>

Jeffreys, M. R. (2007). Tracking students through program entry, progression, graduation, and licensure: Assessing undergraduate nursing student retention and success. *Nurse Education Today*, 27, 406-419.

Jones, J. & Stradley, A. (1995). Recruitment of rural students to the health professions. 3<sup>rd</sup> *National rural Health Conference*, 3—5 February, 1995, Mt Beauty.

Jones, R. (2008). Student retention and success: a synthesis of research, Evidence Net 1-43.

Jones, S., Davis, M. & Brewer, M. (2011). Transforming the FYE in Health Sciences: Development and evaluation of an interprofessional first year curriculum. 14<sup>th</sup> *Pacific Rim First Year in Higher Education Conference*, 28 June – 1 July, 2011. Fremantle.

Kantanis, S.T. (1997). *Factors that affect student transition from Year 12 to the first year of university: A case study of Arts undergraduates at Monash University*. A paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education Conference Brisbane (November 30 – December 4 1997).

Kantanis, T. (2000). The role of social transition in students' adjustment to the first-year of university. *Journal of Institutional Research*, 9(1), 100-110.

Kelly, H., Robinson, A., Drysdale, M., Chesters, J., Faulkner, S., Ellender, I. & Turnbull, L. (2009). "It's not about me, it's about the community": Culturally relevant Health Career promotion for Indigenous students in Australia. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 38, 19-26.

Kift, S. (2009) Articulating a transition pedagogy to scaffold and to enhance the first year student learning experience in Australian higher Education. *Australian Learning and Teaching Council*. <http://www.altc.edu.au>

- Kralik, D., K. Visentin, et al. (2006). "Transition: A literature review." *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 55(3): 320-329.
- Krause, K. (2005). "Serious thoughts about dropping out in first year: Trends, patterns and implications for higher education." *Studies in Learning, Evaluation Innovation and Development* 2(3): 55-68.
- Krause, K., R. Hartley, et al. (2005). *The first year experience in Australian universities: Findings from a decade of national studies*. Canberra, Australian Department of Education, Science and Training.
- Lysaght, P. (2007). "First Year in Higher Education: New Tools to Support Students in Transition." *Learning and Socio-cultural Theory: Exploring Modern Vygotskian Perspectives International Workshop 2007* 1(1): 108-113.
- Marks, G. (2007). *Completing University: Characteristics and Outcomes of Completing and Non-Completing Students, Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth. Research Report 51 (ED496493)*. Melbourne, Australian Council for Educational Research.
- McIlveen, P., T. Ford, et al. (2005). "Facilitating Transition from Rural Schools to University." *Australian Journal of Career Development* 14(1): 11-17.
- McInnis, C. (2001). "Researching the first year experience: Where to from here." *Higher Education Research and Development* 20: 105-114.
- McInnis, C. and R. James (1995). *First Year on Campus: Diversity in the initial experiences of Australian Undergraduates*. Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service.
- McInnis, C., R. James, et al. (2000). *Trends in the first year experience: In Australian universities*, Centre for the Study of Higher Education, University of Melbourne.
- McKavanagh, M. & Purnell, K. (2007). Student learning journey: Supporting student success through the student readiness questionnaire. *Studies in Learning, Evaluation, Innovation and Development* 4(2) 27-38.
- McPhail, R., Fisher, R., & McConachie, J. (2009, June 30). *Becoming a successful first year undergraduate: When expectations and reality collide*. Paper presented at the 12th annual Pacific Rim First Year in Higher Education conference, Townsville, Qld.  
[http://www.fyhe.com.au/past\\_papers/papers09/content/pdf/11D.pdf](http://www.fyhe.com.au/past_papers/papers09/content/pdf/11D.pdf)
- Mehta, H., Robinson, K., & Hillege, S. (2008). Expectations, perceptions and experiences of first year students enrolled in Nursing and/or Midwifery courses at three NSW universities. *Focus on Health Professional Education: A Multi-Disciplinary Journal*, 10(1), 11-25.
- Meiklejohn, B., Wollin, J.A., & Cadet-James, Y.L. (2003). Successful completion of the Bachelor of Nursing by Indigenous people. *Australian Indigenous Health Bulletin*, 30 (2), 1-9.
- Meleis, I. A., L. M. Sawyer, et al. (2000). "Experiencing transitions: An emerging middle-range theory." *Advances in Nursing Science* 23(1): 12-28.
- Moos, R. H. and J. A. Schaefer (1986). *Life transitions and crisis: a conceptual overview. Coping with life crisis: an integrated approach*. R. Moos. New York, Plenum Press.
- Murray, T. A. (1998). "Using role theory concepts to understand transitions from hospital-based nursing practice to home care nursing." *The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing* 29(3): 105-111.
- Nicholson, N. (1984). "A theory of work role transitions." *Administrative Science Quarterly*

29: 172-191.

Nicholson, N. (1987). The transition cycle: A conceptual framework for the analysis of change and human resources management. *Personnel and Human Resources Management*. J. Ferris and K. Rowland. Greenwich, CT, JAI Press. 5.

Nicholson, N. (1990). The transition cycle: causes, outcomes, processes and forms. *On the Move: The Psychology of Change and Transition*. S. Fisher and C. Cooper. UK, John Wiley & Sons.

Nortier, F. (1995). "A new angle on coping with change: Managing transition!" *Journal of Management Development* 14(4): 32-46.

O'Leary, V. E. (1998). "Strength in the face of adversity: Individual and social thriving." *Journal of Social Issues* 54(2): 425-445. Potential for crisis and opportunity. A variety of individual and social resources hypothesized to promote thriving are explored with an eye towards identifying a set of conceptually meaningful categories for future use in theoretical development and empirical investigation

O'Leary, V. E. and J. R. Ickovics (1995). "Resilience and thriving in response to challenge: An opportunity for a paradigm shift in women's health." *Women's Health: Research on Gender, Behavior, and Policy* 1: 121-142.

Olsen, A., Spain, J., & Wright, R. (2012). Staying the Course: Retention and Attrition in Australian Universities.

<http://www.spre.com.au/download/AUIDFRetentionResultsFindings.pdf>

Pancer, S. M., Hunsberger, B., Pratt, M. W., & Alisat, S. (2000). Cognitive complexity of expectations and adjustment to university in the first year. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 15, 38-57.

Park, C. L. (1998). "Stress-related growth and thriving through coping: The roles of personality and cognitive processes." *Journal of Social Issues* 54(2): 267-277.

PhED Consulting (2008). *NT Review of Medical Education and Training*, NT Department of Health and Community Services, Darwin.

[www.health.nt.gov.au/Publications/Corporate\\_Publications/index.aspx](http://www.health.nt.gov.au/Publications/Corporate_Publications/index.aspx)

Pitkethly, A. and M. Prosser (2001). "The first year experience project: a model for university-wide change." *Higher Education Research and Development* 20(2): 185-198.

Quinn, J., L. Thomas, et al. (2005). "From Life Crisis to Lifelong Learning. rethinking working class 'drop out' from higher education." from <http://www.irf.org.uk/bookshop/details.asp?pubID=730>.

Radcliffe, C. & Lester, H. (2003). Perceived stress during undergraduate medical training: a qualitative study. *Medical Education*, 37 (1), 32-38.

Rayner, G. & Beckman, J. (2011). Old lessons relearned: effective mentorship of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. *14th Pacific Rim First Year in Higher Education Conference, 28 June–1 July, Fremantle*.

Reid, E. & Solomonides, I. (2010) 'Diverse transitions' *13th Pacific Rim First Year in Higher Education Conference, Adelaide, Australia*

[http://www.fyhe.com.au/past\\_papers/papers10/content/pdf/2C.pdf](http://www.fyhe.com.au/past_papers/papers10/content/pdf/2C.pdf)

Ryff, C. D. and B. Singer (2006). "Best news yet on the six-factor model of well-being." *Social Science Research* 35(4): 1103-1119.

Sargent, A. G. and N. K. Schlossberg (1988). "Managing adult transitions." *Training and Development Journal* 42(12): 58-60.

Schlossberg, N. K. (1989). "A model for analyzing human adaptation to transition." *The Counselling Psychologist* 9(2): 2-18.

Schoon, I. and S. Parsons (2002). "Teenage aspirations for future careers and occupational outcomes." *Journal of Vocational Behaviour* 60: 262-288.

Selder, F. (1989). "Life transition theory: The resolution of uncertainty." *Nursing and Health Care* 10(8): 437-451.

Skene, J., J. Hogan, et al. (2006). Easing the transition to university study: Ideas and practice. *9th First Year in Higher Education*. Brisbane.

Shepherd, J. (2008). Adolescent student nurses: implications for retention. *Paediatric Nursing*, 20 (3), 42-45.

Silburn, J. & Box, G. (2008). Travelling against the current: An examination of upstream and downstream educational interventions across the life span. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 48 (1), 9-29.

Skene, J., & Evamy, S. (2009). Does access equal success? The critical role of the FYE in achieving equity in higher education. First year in Higher Education 2009 Conference. [http://www.fyhe.com.au/past\\_papers/papers09/content/pdf/4A.pdf](http://www.fyhe.com.au/past_papers/papers09/content/pdf/4A.pdf).

Spreitzer, G., J. D. Sutcliffe, et al. (2005). "A socially embedded model of thriving at work." *Organization Science* 16(5): 537-549.

Stage, F. and G. Anya (1996). A transformational view of college student research. *College Students: The evolving nature of research*. F. Stage, G. Anya, J. Bean, D. Hossler and G. Kuh. Boston, Pearson Custom Publishing.

Steele, R., Lauder, W., Caperchione, C., & Anastasi, J. (2005). An exploratory study of the concerns of mature access to nursing students and the coping strategies used to manage these adverse experiences. *Nurse Education Today*, 25(7), 573-581.

Stott, A. (2007). Exploring factors affecting attrition of male students from an undergraduate nursing course: A qualitative study. *Nurse Education Today*, 27(4): 325-332.

Thomas, S. (2002). "Student retention in higher education: The role of institutional habitus." *Journal of Educational Policy* 17(4): 423-432.

Tierney, W. (2000). Power, identity and the dilemma of college student departure. *Reworking the Student Departure Puzzle*. J. Braxton. Nashville, Vanderbilt University Press: 213-234.

Tinto, V. (1975). "Dropout from Higher Education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research." *Review of Educational Research* 45: 89-125.

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Tinto, V. (2006). Taking student retention seriously. *Keynote presentation and paper at Maricopa Community College District*

Usher, K., Lindsay, D., Miller, M., & Miller, A. (2005). Challenges faced by Indigenous nursing

students and strategies that aided their progress in the course. A descriptive study. *Contemporary Nurse*, 19(1), 17-31.

Walker, K. (2001). The concerns of commencing students at Adelaide University. *Journal of Australia and New Zealand Student Services Association*, 18, 20-39.

Wilcox, P., Winn, S., Fyvie-Gauld, M. (2006). “It was nothing to do with the university, it was just the people”: the role of social support in the first-year experience of higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 30(6), 707–722.

Willcoxson, L. (2009). The whole of university experience project: Lessons on attrition from first year and beyond. *HERDSA news*, 31 (3), 10-12.

Willcoxson, L., M. Manning, et al. (2011). The Whole of University Experience: Retention, attrition, learning and personal support interventions during undergraduate business studies. Surry Hills NSW, The Australian Learning and Teaching Council

Wilson, G. (2006). The experience of males entering nursing: A phenomenological analysis of professionally enhancing factors and barriers. *Contemporary Nurse*, 20, 221-233.

Wilson, K. (2009). The impact of institutional, programmatic and personal interventions on an effective and sustainable first-year student experience. Keynote address, *12 Pacific Rim First Year in higher Education Conference*, Townsville 29 June.

Wollin, J., Cannon, C., Douglas, H., Fairweather C., Perrett, S., Ingamells A., Purcell, C., & Creedy D. (2006). Attracting and retaining Indigenous school students to university for nursing education. *Centre for Learning Research*, 13(1), 1-6.

Woodley, C. & Meredith, C. (2011). Supporting International Students’ Transition: Have a chat. *14th Pacific Rim First Year in Higher Education Conference*, 28 June–1 July, Fremantle.

Yorke, M. and B. Longden (2004). *Retention and Student Success in Higher Education*. Maidenhead, UK, Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press.

Yorke, M. and B. Longden (2008). The first-year experience of higher education in the UK: The final report The Higher Education Academy.

# External evaluator's report

**Dr Merylin Cross**

## Project overview

This research project, developed in response to the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC), now Government Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) priority area “Strategic Priority Projects: Investigating equity and student support in Australian higher education,” examined the application of a theoretical model of transition to assist potentially vulnerable at-risk students undertaking health science courses to manage and cope with their transition to tertiary study. The projected health workforce shortage in Australia, particularly in rural areas, makes it imperative that universities attract, retain and graduate more health science graduates - though these are known to include ‘at risk’ student groups (Skene et al., 2006). This project, led by the University of Tasmania, Department of Rural Health (UDRH), was a multi-site study undertaken between March 2011 and March 2013 in collaboration with four universities: Southern Cross University (NSW) and Curtin, Murdoch, and Notre Dame (WA). Collaborative partnerships were established with the University of Tasmania UDRH, the University Centre for Rural Health (NSW) and the Combined Universities Centre for Rural Health (WA) to facilitate the project, provide local knowledge and serve as a conduit for reaching and recruiting suitable student support staff and health science students within the target cluster of universities. Student cohorts targeted included medical and nursing students coming from a background known to constrain their successful transition such as: a rural and/or interstate background necessitating physical re-location, being first in family to undertake tertiary study, or coming from a culturally and linguistically different (CALD), Indigenous or lower socio-economic background. Each collaborating university chose to apply the model to a student cohort they identified as being ‘at risk’. Participating stakeholders also had the discretion to apply the model at times and in ways that were most convenient and desirable to them in the context of their individual workplace, local issues and the perceived fit of the model with their role and existing local transitional support programs. By allowing this flexibility, the project and its processes were designed to respect the existing workloads, priorities and practices of student support workers (however titled) at different universities and to minimise disruption to teaching/learning, whilst complementing and extending the work already being undertaken.

The project was necessarily flexible as the complex bureaucratic structures and processes that characterise higher education render collaborative studies difficult and time challenging. Inevitably, collaborating universities began and progressed through the project at different times. However, the university context also facilitated the project, in that student retention is valued and universities have dedicated student support workers and systems and programs in place to facilitate students’ transition to higher education. The variation in timing necessitated the Thriving in Transition model be applied at different ‘transitional moments’ by different stakeholders. The variation in the application of the model, differences in the nature of the student cohorts to which it was applied and variances between universities in the supportive frameworks and programs they provide have influenced how the project has been evaluated.

This evaluation of the project was framed around the key criteria specified by the ALTC at the inception of the project (Carrick Institute, 2007) and supplemented by the OLT learning and teaching



project evaluation framework.

The focus and scope of the project, its aims and objectives, were clearly defined and articulated by the project leader by means of a project brief, via teleconferenced meetings with all key stakeholders, one-on-one briefing with local participants and via a dedicated project website: [www.ruralhealthtasmania.com.au/projects/thriving\\_in\\_transition/index.html](http://www.ruralhealthtasmania.com.au/projects/thriving_in_transition/index.html)

## 1. Clarity of the project

The focus and scope of the project and the need to adapt these over time were communicated through teleconferenced meetings, interim progress report to the OLT and reinforced through personal communications between the project leader and student support workers/ counsellors. The evaluator was appointed in May 2011, soon after the commencement of stage 1 of the project so was aware of and had opportunities to comment on and clarify decisions and changes to the project as they arose.

## 2. Purpose and scope of the evaluation

Evaluations can serve numerous purposes but cannot be all things to all people/stakeholders. At various stages of the project, evaluation was proactive and interactive, served to monitor the progress and conduct of the project and to evaluate its impact. The primary purposes of this evaluation were to: demonstrate accountability to the funder by examining the value and conduct of the project, the congruence between the project aims and objectives, the proposed application of the Thriving in Transition model, and how this was executed by collaborating universities and the project impact and outcomes; namely, to identify the strengths and limitations of the project and to inform and justify continuing efforts to test and apply the model. The aspects of the project that worked well and the barriers and impediments that limited or delayed its implementation and/or compromised its outcomes have been identified to assist others undertaking similar projects in the future to optimise their outcomes by taking these factors into consideration. Other goals of the evaluation were to examine the policy implications of project findings in the medium to longer term.

This evaluation reports how consistently the project was undertaken in accordance with the proposal, how effectively and fully the project has been implemented and the resources utilised, the utility of strategies adopted and how extensively the potential for further applications of the model to advance learning and teaching have been explored. The evaluation has been based on formative and summative stakeholder feedback. Formative feedback was garnered throughout the term of the project by means of teleconferenced meetings with collaborating UDRHs, reviewing and following up issues raised during project team meetings, reviewing and responding to feedback related to on-line resources which were developed to orientate and support participants, and periodic discussions between the project leader and local project team. Summative data were gathered by means of reflective narrative accounts and focus group discussions and/or semi-structured interviews with participants (student support staff and transition coordinators). Participants reported on the components of the model that were applied, the path/s they chose to take, the stages of the model they were able to target and work with, how and in what ways the lens of the Thriving in Transitions model was useful in facilitating pro-active rather than crisis led intervention and how some students shifted in terms of attitudes and behaviour. This approach and these forms were considered most suited to evaluating the project from the perspective of multiple stakeholders.

### 3. Stakeholders and target audiences

The primary project stakeholders include transitional coordinators and student support staff/counsellors (however titled) at participating universities.. Secondary stakeholders are Faculty Learning & Teaching Committees and collaborating University Departments of Rural Health. The target audiences for this report include the OLT, primary and secondary stakeholders. Primary stakeholders work with students transitioning to university as a matter of routine and therefore are particularly concerned to continually strive to better understand the stages and processes of transition and to find and implement better ways to support and enable students to achieve their potential. The remit of the federally funded University Departments of Rural Health include increasing and improving rural experiences for health science students, expanding educational opportunities pertinent to rural and remote practice and progressing the rural health agenda within medical and health science faculties. Increasing the recruitment and retention of students in the health sciences to produce more graduates is critical to addressing projected workforce needs (AIHW, 2012). Health disciplines are often a target destination of first in family students and those entering higher education from lower socio economic and rural backgrounds; characteristics known to put students 'at risk' of languishing and failure. Students from these backgrounds are attracted to health sciences and constitute a significant proportion of health science students. Recruiting students from rural areas is also known to be a key factor in building the rural health workforce. The increasing recruitment of these vulnerable students to higher education (DEST, 2003; James, 2008) renders it imperative that universities recruit and implement supportive strategies and programs to enable them to survive and thrive. Additionally, all universities have a responsibility to operate efficiently and effectively (McKavanagh & Punell, 2007; Norton, 2010) and this entails Faculty Learning & Teaching Committees dedicating expertise to refining and implementing programs epitomising best practice. Other audiences for whom this report may be of interest are other universities, vocational education and training (VET) sector and other education providers because of their parallel needs and interests in supporting students to survive and thrive, retaining students and optimising course completion.

#### Reporting strategies

The evaluative strategies adopted have been formative and summative. Evaluation was structured into the project from its inception (Table 1) with the appointment of an external evaluator who was briefed on the project by the project leaders for two days, given access to web-based materials and resources and invited to attend teleconferenced project meetings with collaborating UDRH stakeholders. This link provided the evaluator with regular progress reports and opportunities to discuss evaluation. The evaluator was subsequently included as an active team member in local project team meetings to enable input and comment on planned activities - including the final interim report. Formative evaluation occurred by means of regular project team meetings and observing the efforts applied to communication and negotiation, particularly around the project leader providing support related to ethics applications and understanding and interpreting the model. Formative evaluation also occurred throughout the project as local team members attended to the substantive literature review and scoping the transitional support programs available through specific universities. Adopting this formative approach and linking the evaluator into regular meetings, enabled the evaluator to witness throughout the project, the functioning of the project team, effectiveness of coordination and timely and responsive adaptation of the project to suit the

project timeframe and local stakeholder needs. Summative evaluation has been incorporated into the overarching project report as a means to making transparent the methodology and processes involved in implementing the project and linking these to its outcomes.

The nature of the project and variations in how the Thriving in Transition model was applied warranted a qualitative approach to evaluation. The timeframe of the project and ethics of accessing individual student data mitigated the appropriateness and availability of objective performance data such as academic results or course progression/completion. Semi-structured interviews, or where this was preferred, focus group discussions with transition coordinators and/or student support workers of collaborating universities, provided rich and meaningful insight into: how the project was implemented, the student cohort the model was applied to, the issues that arose and/or were dealt with, the perceived outcomes - if any, the potential to re-think and refine the model and the perceived potential of the model to be applied to other groups or in alternative ways. These discussions also provided a means to evaluate the training workshops, the support provided by the project leader and the utility of the web-based resources provided.

#### 4. Key evaluation questions

- What processes were planned and what were actually put in place?
- Were there any variations between the processes/activities that were planned and implemented? And if so, why?
- What were the observable short term outcomes?
- To what extent have the intended outcomes been achieved?
- What factors helped and hindered the outcomes?
- What lessons have been learned from the project and how might these be of assistance to other organisations?

Table 1 Evaluation timetable

Activity	Time frame	
Appointment of external evaluator and project reference group comprising 7 members from education, health and psychology	May 2011	✓
External evaluator spent 2 days with project leaders being briefed on the project and working through project materials	May 2011	✓
Develop evaluation plan and criteria in consultation with project leaders	May – July 2011	✓
Clarify scope and context of the project	Ongoing via link to project team meetings	✓
Observe and monitor project progress and processes	Ongoing via teleconferenced project team meetings	✓
Observe and comment on project activities and methodology	Ongoing via regular project team meetings	✓
Evaluate project team function, effective coordination and adaptation of project to suit project timeframe and local stakeholder needs	Ongoing via regular project team meetings	✓
Comment on final interim report	November 2012	✓

Develop evaluation interview guide/ criteria in consultation with project leader	October/November 2012	✓
Attend/observe a selected professional development training briefing with student support workers	Curtin University December 2012	✓
Evaluate that training is completed, workshops were effective and participants enabled	Staged roll out as participants came on board	✓
Conduct interviews with transition coordinators/student support workers from collaborating universities post project to evaluate a) the impact of the intervention and b) the conduct of the project	University of Tasmania & Southern Cross University November, 2012 Curtin & Murdoch Universities December 2012 and University of Notre Dame (Fremantle), March 2013.	✓
Transcribe interview/ focus group notes	December 2012	✓
Disseminate transcribed notes to project leader for circulation and verification from participants to ensure that data are robust and meaningful	December 2012	✓
Thematically analyse findings and discuss with project leader	February 2013	✓
Prepare summative evaluation report including the project's contribution against deliverables	March 2013	✓

## 5. Data collection

A mixed methods approach was adopted to elicit evaluative data. The data matrix below (Table 2) depicts the relationship between the key evaluative questions and the data sources utilised to gather relevant information.

Table 2 Data matrix

Key evaluation questions	Data source			
	Original proposal	Minutes of teleconferenced meetings	Minutes of Project team meetings	Semi-structured interviews/ focus group discussions
What processes were planned and what were actually put in place?	✓	✓	✓	✓
Were there any variations between the processes/ activities that were planned and implemented, and if so, why?	✓	✓	✓	✓
What were the observable short term outcomes?				✓

To what extent were intended outcomes achieved?	✓			✓
What factors helped and hindered the outcomes?			✓	✓
What lessons have been learned from the project and how might these be of assistance to other organisations?			✓	✓

Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with transition coordinators and/or student support staff at collaborating universities [Murdoch (3); Southern Cross (1); UTas (2); Curtin (4); Notre Dame (3)]. Interviews were undertaken by the project leaders and evaluator and scribed by the evaluator and/or a member from CUCRH. Interview transcripts were augmented by field notes, including the reflections and discussions between one or both project leaders and the evaluator following an interview or focus group discussion. Interview and focus group data were cleaned and an electronic copy returned to participants for verification and amendment. Each account was accepted as a complete and accurate record requiring no amendment.

#### Comparing the processes: planned versus actual

Narrative accounts of how the model was applied draw attention to how earnestly participating student support staff committed to the project, targeted an 'at risk' student cohort and applied the thriving in transition model to a specific transitional moment such as writing and submitting a first assignment, undertaking a first clinical placement and adjusting to geographic dislocation. Their accounts reflect the discrepancy between the more holistic over-arching transitional process originally planned and the need to abbreviate the transition the model was applied to in order to complete one application within the timeframe of the project.

Comparing the original proposal to the minutes of teleconferenced meetings with members of collaborating UDRHs and the local project team reveals that, as originally proposed, five institutions participated in the study. However, the comparison also reflects the limited engagement of some stakeholders, a resultant delay in uptake and a shift between expected and actual participation. The scoping activity to explore the transitional supports available to students at each collaborating university, originally planned to be undertaken face-to-face with participating transition coordinators/student support workers was converted to a desk top analysis to expedite the process and ground the project leader in local knowledge in a timely way to inform his engagement with individual organisations.

#### Reasons for variations in the processes and activities planned

The primary reason for changes to the scheduled processes related to the pragmatic need to adapt to delays, most of which were attributable to the inability to obtain reciprocal ethics approval for the project and difficulty in gaining ethics approval through multiple Human research ethics Committees (HRECs). The most significant impact of the delays arising from the difficulties in obtaining ethics approval was the adaptation of the model to reinterpret and contract its application to fit the term of the project. The delays fragmented the project into a series of discrete mini projects, complicated coordination and potentially, jeopardised the outcomes of the project. It is notable that the model

has such broad application it can be readily adapted and applied to a variety of situations. The ability of the project leader to foster initiative and of transition coordinators and student support workers to envisage a raft of transitional moments to which it was suitable to apply the model, should be commended, for without such flexibility and initiative it would have been very difficult to achieve the project goals and intended outcomes.

Observable short term outcomes in student attitudes and behaviours

Three student advisers claimed they could see a difference in students' attitudes and confidence.

- In the 6 months between getting newbies coming to see me, there's been less need for mentors. Mentees no longer need them - epiphany - that is a good thing -they are comfortable coping on their own.
- Confidence definitely increased and there was evidence of stabilisation and reflection, "I can see where I've come from."

Three other student counsellors reported observing changes in the interactions and the responsiveness of students.

- For a lot of students they now know what resources are available should they need them in the future.
- They are able to go away and develop a well-informed learning contract to enable them to work effectively through the coming semester.
- Change emerged, not a dramatic step because of very close alignment with what we were doing. One thing students did that was a real difference was their response to the surveys; in their willingness to share and actively reflect and evaluate. There was a level of meta-cognition involved by going through this process that is not normally there. A shift in their confidence and self-awareness between first and second semester. Decreased access/ recourse to the FYA and there was less reliance over time. All students were positive and indicated they would be happy for [M] to be back in touch to follow up in the new year (February). Two students have indicated they are keen to become mentors.

Extent to which intended outcomes were achieved

Intended outcomes have almost all been achieved, however the model could be tested in a more robust way if able to directly access more students and track student performance metrics over a longer time frame. Whilst further application and testing is needed to validate the model, the ways the model have been applied in the course of this project have shed valuable and meaningful insight into the phenomenon of transition to higher education, the need to reconceptualise transition as a non-linear, time-limited process and has produced an array of lessons learned that can be used to inform policies around transition, decisions related to resourcing student support services and the nature of programs suited to enabling students to thrive in transition and optimise student retention. The following table captures the congruence between intended and actual outcomes.

Table 3 Congruence between intended and actual project outcomes

Objectives (intended outcomes)	Project activities/processes	Outcomes
A more robust understanding of the transition to tertiary study;	Review of Transition Literature. Provide staff development training workshops on the Thriving in Transition model  Undertake semi-structured interviews/ focus group discussions with student support staff from five universities	A clearer understanding of the pathways and trajectories undertaken by students transitioning to higher education.
Informed interventions that accommodate individual accounts of transition, to provide the best opportunity for students to thrive in challenging circumstances;	Apply the theoretical model of Thriving in Transition to students enrolled in health science courses at five universities	Theoretically informed guidelines and resources for training the transition coordination and student support staff within higher education.
Contribute to new, emerging models of transition that will assist institutions to implement strategies that provide the best opportunity to enable students at higher risk of languishing to succeed;	Review of transition literature  Undertaking a scoping and analysis of existing support programs provided to health science students in seven Australian universities	A template for those supporting students in the transition to higher education that encourages them to view transition as a helical, individual rather than linear, universal process. A range of opportunities to provide a more supportive educational environment for those entering the higher education system who are at risk.
Make a significant contribution to the strategies and planning that will contribute to the retention of students in challenging circumstances.	Reflect on and revise the Thriving in Transition model on the basis of the project findings	Refinement of Thriving in Transition model Templates for early intervention for student support programs that go beyond the traditional orientation programs and crisis response. A series of recommendations on early intervention that address the particular needs of students in challenging circumstances

#### Factors that facilitated outcomes

##### 1. How adequately the needs of staff were met

The needs of participating staff from collaborating institutions were met by the project leader providing an initial workshop briefing of the project and overview of the theoretical model. Additional support was provided to participants throughout the term of the project through the development of a web-based repository of information, resources and templates. Providing this static on-line infrastructure support rendered it readily available to whomever, whenever needed

and circumvented difficulties in dealing with competing needs of participants operating at different stages of the project. Feedback from participants regarding the utility of the web based support materials indicated these were variously used or not used, and that when used, they provided a valuable confirmatory tool that supported their intuitive knowing about which students were struggling versus surviving or thriving.

## 2. The appropriateness of project activities in relation to staff capabilities

The project activities were eminently suited to the capabilities of transitional coordinators and student support workers because of how well they aligned with their everyday role, skills, needs and interests. Much of the everyday workload of these staff would involve addressing the needs of students struggling with their transition to higher education.

- There's a lot of synergy between the model and how I practice as a clinical psychologist. It gives me ways to think about how students make sense of things and is helping me to develop my role and use the model as a common medium when talking to colleagues. I see natural synergy...

The match between staff expertise, needs and this model may account for how eager participants were to support the continuation of the project and to apply the model to other transitional situations.

- At the beginning of discussions [related to the project] we looked more at students who have been languishing rather than the cohort itself. Isolating a cohort of EN conversion students we've been able to capture more of these students that were languishing that otherwise may have been overlooked.

## 3. Operational processes developed to achieve the outcomes

The operational processes planned to achieve the project outcomes all contributed to the outcomes actually achieved. The literature review revealed a substantive body of work and interest in the field of transition across a range of disciplines. The scoping exercise to examine the nature and availability of transitional support programs revealed a plethora of programs, though often somewhat time limited and generic. There were some specific programs for some vulnerable groups such as CALD and Indigenous students. Programs to support Health science students were limited although this may reflect that these operate at a faculty or disciplinary rather than university level. Awareness of the conceptual and theoretical framework underpinning the Thriving in Transition project has been instrumental in motivating student support staff to conceptualise transition as more than orientation or for lasting only a short period of time; rather, as being an individual process requiring individualised support and one-on-one systems and processes; and in being an effective way to optimise the potential of all students by facilitating them to thrive rather than survive or languish. Furthermore, the model has influenced the practice of student support staff at each university. The recommendations made by these staff to continue applying the model to additional student groups and in a variety of ways; including incorporating theoretical understanding about transition into curricula and even mapping a students' progress through a variety of key transitions over the duration of the course by means of an e-portfolio, are testimony to their value and regard for the model and templates provided.



## Factors that hindered outcomes

Delays in institutions committing to the project, lack of reciprocal ethics approval and requirement that each collaborating university prepare and submit an ethics application delayed the process of recruiting transition coordinators and student support staff to the project. These delays jeopardised project outcomes by necessitating a shift away from applying the model to the overarching process of transition to higher education. Instead, and to the credit of the project leader, the model was subsequently applied to a range of selected brief but salient 'transitional moments' influenced and constrained by the timing organisational ethics approval was granted. Nonetheless, time was a barrier to achieving optimal outcomes, e.g. "We didn't use survey tools due to time constraints."

The variations in range of transitional moments to which the model was applied and numbers of students involved (16, 6, 8, 6, 30) provided enlightening insight to the potential of the model but precluded comparisons and validation and thus limited the extent to which the model was tested.

## 6. Criteria for making evaluative judgements

The Thriving in Transition model was applied by collaborating universities to augment the pre-existing transitional support programs offered through their local institution. All of those who participated indicated the model provided value-added insight to supporting students in their transition and could see ways the model would influence their practice.

When asked whether the lens of the model had changed their thinking and response to students, one student adviser reported it "confirmed" and sharpened their perceptions, "rather than changed what we are doing." "Knowing about the model confirmed what we are doing and has made us more pro-active."

- In developing my role it has been great to be able to refer to the model. A helpful communication medium with others. Has been really helpful in establishing the bigger picture - How do we build a school community so students can engage? The model helps because it validates a sense of community and there are flow-on effects; flags in place. [The model] made me think about how to create a supportive context to allow students to thrive - very helpful in that way to have words.

For another student adviser the model:

- Made me think about how students get from crisis to thriving. Words [provide] a tipping balance; not "problem child." Thriving a much more positive outcome.

One transition coordinator sees potential adding to the model and starting to expand the first year adviser into second year advisory role.

- [Currently] the name label restricts and tends to be time limited, but there is an identified need and opportunity to apply the model more broadly. Can see transition is not time-limited and that different cohorts have different needs at different times to other student groups.

The scoping activity undertaken early in the project revealed a profusion of programs geared to support students' transition to higher education, however these were generally geared to

orientation, were largely generic and time-limited and reflect a flawed understanding of the individual, cyclical and recursive nature of the stages and processes of transition. On the basis of these findings, it is possible that incorporating understanding of the thriving in transition model into student support services would constitute transitional best practice. One transition coordinator, reported:

- We are developing links across services and [the university] has put a lot of training into first year counsellors. First year advisors (FYAs) are trained in advanced communication, mental health first aid and allied training. Those students flagged and reported to be 'At risk' are missing class or prac, miss an assignment deadline (submit late or don't submit), fail an assessment task, exam. They get a warning letter. The model aligns quite well with [the University's] strategies.

#### Modifications recommended for the future

To test the model more substantively it needs to be applied to more students over a longer period of time.

It would be beneficial and increase the utility of the web-based resources if the feedback provided by student counsellors/transition coordinators such as formatting surveys as Likert scales and building in an ability to generate interactive report summaries and graphic indicators. These adaptations would build on what were perceived to be very useful tools and would also facilitate metric data collection and assist with validating the model.

#### Unintended outcomes

One student counsellor revealed an unintended outcome of the project; greater sensitivity to the complexity surrounding transition to higher education in general and in particular, the transition of working mothers.

- An unintended outcome of the project was awareness of how many different factors students have to juggle simultaneously with study – and how much clinical placements complicate these. Almost all [of the students supported under the umbrella of this project] were working mothers and the younger children were, e.g. pre-school age, the more complex the issues.

Another unintended outcome related to an advisor acknowledging that students other than those that are languishing benefit from having access to student advisers.

- We do a lot of pastoral care that is not recognised - even those not languishing who need to touch base. [This is] not recognised or valued outside the school though it takes so much time.

#### Impact of the project

The actual processes implemented as opposed to those that were planned have been reported and the changes between these accounted for. Strategies to strengthen the project have been identified throughout the report. The observable short-term outcomes have been identified, as too, the extent to which the intended outcomes have been achieved. Unintended outcomes such as support

for embedding transition into health science curricula have been identified and factored into the recommendations. The facilitators and barriers to achieving the outcomes have been identified and the intended outcomes modified accordingly. For example, it was impossible to report on student outcome metrics eg. course/unit progression rates.

The measures that were taken to promote and sustain the project's focus included: the development of web-based support materials and templates, the project leader maintaining regular email and/or phone contact with participants and developing a table for participants to populate that required them to demonstrate understanding and ability to interpret and apply the model. On the basis of this project, the model has been further refined and participants have suggested the web based resources could be very useful if strengthened to be interactive and to generate a visual graphic report. To sustain the project's outcomes participants were asked to consider how knowledge of the model has informed their practice and to identify ways the model might be factored into new and existing transitional support programs. Plans to disseminate the findings to a broader audience through conference presentations and publication have been scheduled for the coming six months.

#### The lessons learned from the project

From our observations and the workshops and interviews held with transition coordinators and student counsellors engaged with the project, there have been a number of key messages or "learnings" around student transitions. These are summarised as follows:

1. Students who would benefit most from transitional support and early intervention are those less likely to seek assistance or self-identify as needing support.
2. High achieving students may help-seek outside of the university system as accessing internal resources may be seen as "failure" (to thrive or achieve).
3. Students need to be coached on help-seeking behaviours and such behaviours should be de-stigmatised.
4. Early signs of potential student difficulty include: failure to submit an assessable piece of work, failure to show for tutorials and labs, a decline in outputs or performance. The automated flagging of these indicators and the development of algorithms that assist in their predictive validity may assist with more efficient screening and follow-up of at risk students.
5. To embed transition support strategies in curricula will require some different approaches to learning and teaching such as: more face-to-face or active 'phone or e-mediated encounters between the learner and the teacher.
6. Informal forms of support may be just as effective as more formal support mechanisms (further research is warranted to explore how these can be identified for individual students and how such supports can be strengthened)
7. Students need to be aware of the resources available to assist them because it is predictable that they may experience personal crises at various points during their course.

8. Certain “trigger points” for crises can be identified and proactively planned for (eg. failure in an assessment task, lead up to exams, lack of feedback, financial difficulties, clinical placements and placement encounters)
9. The “new wave” of university student support programs appears to direct strategies across the learning lifecycle (ie. from pre-university entry to graduate employment).
10. The pastoral work undertaken with students by academics (especially student advisors, or unit/course coordinators with large student cohorts) within schools is often not fully recognised or valued as “work” within the training-research-service concept of academic life. Such work can be difficult to measure and can exert a greater demand on time than the amount (often notionally) allocated.
11. Within the health sciences, the idea of a common or shared first year for students in the health professions is gaining currency. Such a strategy may afford opportunities for more health-related transition initiatives to be put in place. These may include content and activities related to interpersonal relationships, field placement adjustments and re-locations, and the broader concept health “transitions.

## Conclusion

This project has demonstrated that the thriving in transition model has numerous applications and is well suited to promoting successful transition to higher education, promoting student performance, retention and course completion. Though the thriving in transition model was applied, for the purposes of this project, to student cohorts identified to be ‘at risk’ and vulnerable to languishing, it has implications for all students in that it aspires to assist students to not only survive, but to thrive. The project has been very effectively led and executed, the model has been refined and recommendations have been proposed to strengthen the web based resources. Having attended to the feedback provided and revising the survey instruments, the project leaders and team should be encouraged to further test and validate the model. Collaborating partners have proposed a broad range of applications and universally indicated their interest in further engaging with the model. The project has also generated the interest of one academic to such an extent they are keen to apply the thriving in transition model as the basis of their Doctoral research. The model has resonated quite profoundly with higher education experts in supporting students’ transition and the project leader and team have demonstrated a diligent and methodical approach to project management so should be encouraged to continue this valuable work.

The outcomes of this project have implications for further testing and validating the Thriving Transitions model in the context of enabling students transitioning to higher education to not only survive but to thrive and in so doing, provide an evidence base for developing, reviewing and/or maintaining transitional student services and support initiatives.

Finally, the portability and transferability of the thriving transitions model has far wider implications than higher education. There are implications for all education sectors and for supporting students at all year levels, particularly those transitioning to major milestones within a program such as clinical placement.

Ethical issues have been addressed within the project include anonymity, confidentiality and ensuring appropriate methods were utilised for collecting, storing and reporting data. Efforts were

also taken to ensure staff and students were not impacted unfairly or that teaching/learning was not disrupted unnecessarily by project and evaluation activities. Participants were encouraged to incorporate the model and/or utilise the resources provided if they saw these to be useful. Students were made aware of the project and self-selected to participate. Enabling students to self-select addressed the issue of student equity and ameliorated concerns about unfairly disadvantaging students not receiving the project benefits.

## References

Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher education (2007). *ALTC Grants scheme – Evaluating Projects*.

DEST (Department of Education, Science and Training). *Engaging the untapped workforce: Training solutions for the community services and health industry*. Department of Education, Science and Training/Community Services and Health Training Australia Ltd, 2003.

James, R. (2008). Implications of the Bradley review's recommendations for student equity groups. *ANU Equity Panel: The future of student equity and higher education, University of Melbourne*.  
[http://www.equity101.info/files/ANU\\_Equity\\_Panel\\_Richard%20James.pdf](http://www.equity101.info/files/ANU_Equity_Panel_Richard%20James.pdf)

McKavanagh, M. & Purnell, K. (2007). Student learning journey: Supporting student success through the student readiness questionnaire. *Studies in Learning, Evaluation, Innovation and Development* 4(2) 27-38.

Norton, J. (2010). Retention and personal development: Assessing the role of universities in assisting students to navigate psychological demands of higher education. *Journal of Australia and New Zealand Student Services Association*, 35, 55-70.

Skene, J., Hogan, J., & Brown, J. (2006). *Easing the transition to university study: Ideas and practice*. Paper presented at the 9th First Year in Higher Education Conference.

Date 27.03.13

## Appendices

Appendix 1 Questionnaires stages 1-4 and scoring.....	105
Appendix 2 Links to stages.....	112
Appendix 3 Invitation to participate .....	129
Appendix 4 Consent form .....	130
Appendix 5 Participant information sheet .....	132
Appendix 6 Website user guide .....	135

## Appendix 1      Thriving in Transition      Stage 1 Questionnaire

Thinking about your current transition, please circle the number that best expresses how you feel.

1.	I do things				
	1	2	3	4	5
	<i>Because there is a purpose</i>			<i>Because I'm told to</i>	
2.	My problems				
	1	2	3	4	5
	<i>Are holding me back</i>			<i>Are usually solved</i>	
3.	Mistakes I've made in the past				
	1	2	3	4	5
	<i>Still bother me</i>			<i>Don't worry me now</i>	
4.	What is required of me				
	1	2	3	4	5
	<i>Is clear from the beginning</i>			<i>Is never really clear</i>	
5.	I work out how to do things				
	1	2	3	4	5
	<i>Before I start</i>			<i>While I'm doing them</i>	
6.	My pathways				
	1	2	3	4	5
	<i>Are mapped ahead</i>			<i>Are unmapped territory</i>	
7.	I plan				
	1	2	3	4	5
	<i>Intuitively</i>			<i>Strategically</i>	
8.	When something goes right				
	1	2	3	4	5
	<i>It is hard to identify the process</i>			<i>I can describe my achievement</i>	
9.	If I'm not sure about something				
	1	2	3	4	5
	<i>I improvise</i>			<i>I find out</i>	
10.	Things I've done				
	1	2	3	4	5
	<i>Had a purpose</i>			<i>Just needed to be</i>	
11.	The future				
	1	2	3	4	5
	<i>Requires foresight and planning</i>			<i>Is unknown</i>	
12.	Challenges I face				
	1	2	3	4	5
	<i>Are indistinct</i>			<i>Are clear</i>	

## Appendix 1      Thriving in Transition      Stage 2 Questionnaire

Thinking about your current transition, please circle the number that best expresses how you feel.

1. My friends and colleagues				
1	2	3	4	5
<i>Don't really know me</i>			<i>Understand me</i>	
2. When trying to fit in				
1	2	3	4	5
<i>I don't really know what to do</i>			<i>I fit in easily</i>	
3. I am enrolled				
1	2	3	4	5
<i>Because it is important to me</i>			<i>Because it's expected of</i>	
4. To reach my goals				
1	2	3	4	5
<i>I do whatever it takes</i>			<i>I plan carefully</i>	
5. My journey				
1	2	3	4	5
<i>Has been a shared one</i>			<i>Has been mine alone</i>	
6. The "big picture"				
1	2	3	4	5
<i>Is clear to me</i>			<i>Is unclear</i>	
7. Mostly I've tackled problems				
1	2	3	4	5
<i>Because I could see why I should</i>			<i>Because I had to</i>	
8. When I fail				
1	2	3	4	5
<i>I find out what went wrong</i>			<i>I don't think about it</i>	
9. I feel like I am involved				
1	2	3	4	5
<i>Seldom</i>			<i>Most of the time</i>	
10. My future directions				
1	2	3	4	5
<i>Are clear and ordered</i>			<i>Are random</i>	
11. What I have done				
1	2	3	4	5
<i>Is hard to</i>			<i>Makes sense to me</i>	
12. Reaching my goals				
1	2	3	4	5
<i>Has involved a long term plan</i>			<i>Has been a day-to-day process</i>	



## Appendix 1      Thriving in Transition      Stage 3 Questionnaire

Thinking about your current transition, please circle the number that best expresses how you feel.

9. In my role as a student				
1	2	3	4	5
<i>I go with the flow</i>				<i>I make firm plans</i>
10. Things I experience				
1	2	3	4	5
<i>Help me develop</i>				<i>Don't change me</i>
11. My friendship group				
2	2	3	4	5
<i>Provide me with support</i>				<i>Are just mates</i>
12. Things I have been asked to do				
1	2	3	4	5
<i>Have been unreasonable</i>				<i>Have been reasonable</i>
13. To find information				
1	2	3	4	5
<i>I know where to look</i>				<i>I don't know where to</i>
14. The things I have learned				
1	2	3	4	5
<i>I can apply now</i>				<i>I find difficult to apply</i>
15. When I need help				
1	2	3	4	5
<i>I don't know where to go</i>				<i>I know where to go</i>
16. In my current transition				
1	2	3	4	5
<i>I'm not sure what is going on</i>				<i>I know exactly what is going on</i>
13. As part of a team				
1	2	3	4	5
<i>My own progress is important</i>				<i>My own progress is unimportant</i>
14. Unfamiliar experiences				
1	2	3	4	5
<i>Are often distracting</i>				<i>Are often stimulating</i>
15. My support systems				
1	2	3	4	5
<i>Are easy to identify</i>				<i>Are difficult to identify</i>
16. Finding the resources to help me				
1	2	3	4	5
<i>Has been a difficult process</i>				<i>Has been an easy</i>

## Appendix 1      Thriving in Transition      Stage 4 Questionnaire

Thinking about your current transition, please circle the number that best expresses how you feel.

17. The next stage of my transition					
	1	2	3	4	5
	<i>Is a mystery</i>			<i>Is clear</i>	
18. I've got to where I am					
	1	2	3	4	5
	<i>By knowing what to do</i>			<i>Mostly by luck</i>	
19. Decisions about my future					
	3	2	3	4	5
	<i>Have mostly been made by others</i>			<i>Have mostly been made by me</i>	
20. The other students					
	1	2	3	4	5
	<i>Are reliable</i>			<i>Are unreliable</i>	
21. I am able to let go of the past					
	1	2	3	4	5
	<i>Easily</i>			<i>With some difficulty</i>	
22. I learn from others					
	1	2	3	4	5
	<i>By doing what they do</i>			<i>By seeing what they do</i>	
23. I am able to choose my directions					
	1	2	3	4	5
	<i>Most of the time</i>			<i>Seldom</i>	
24. I have confidence in the people around me					
	1	2	3	4	5
	<i>Most of the time</i>			<i>Rarely</i>	
17. The difficult things I have experienced					
	1	2	3	4	5
	<i>Slowed me down</i>			<i>Helped me grow</i>	
18. The way this university system works					
	1	2	3	4	5
	<i>Is a mystery to me</i>			<i>Is clear to me</i>	
19. The choices I have made					
	1	2	3	4	5
	<i>Have been limited by the system</i>			<i>Have been creative</i>	
20. The support services					
	1	2	3	4	5
	<i>Know how I feel</i>			<i>Have no idea how I feel</i>	

## Appendix 1

## Thriving in Transition

## Stage 1 Scoring

Readiness for the Challenge				
1		Has difficulty identifying the challenges ahead. Attempts tasks without understanding the relative importance; lacks preparatory insight. Unable to be sure of directions	Able to identify the challenges ahead, but not really sure of the purpose attached to each challenge. Some doubt in regard to directions	Is able to identify the challenges ahead. Able to identify and see purpose in directions Purposeful exploration of pathways. Enthusiasm with insight
5				
9 (R)				
Total				

0 5 10 15

Motivation				
2 (R)		Lacks motivation and responds through compliance rather than enthused direction	Wrestles with competing interests; having some motivating moments but confused in regard to direction	Energetic and motivated with direction. Has a clear and exciting pathway. Problems not debilitating
6				
10				
Total				

0 5 10 15

Positive Planning				
3		Has laboured concerns about the requisite planning process. Finds it hard to plan in a positive manner. Doesn't really know how the system works	Wrestles with competing interests. Has some direction but is distracted and has shifting priorities.	Plans positively and has positive expectations; a clear view of the future and how to get there. Knows how the system works
7				
11 (R)				
Total				

0 5 10 15

Comprehensibility				
4		Not really aware of <u>what</u> is required to succeed. Confused by the collective requirements of the process.	Some awareness of <u>what</u> is required. Able to see the component parts for what they are and the necessary priorities.	Acutely aware of <u>what</u> is required. Can identify the processes and their parts.
8				
12 (R)				
Total				

0 5 10 15

Languishing

Surviving

Thriving

## Appendix 1

## Thriving in Transition

## Stage 2 Scoring

Engagement				
1		Friends and colleagues are not engaged or absent.	Friends and colleagues understand but are not fully involved.	Friends and colleagues understand the way they function.
5		Has little awareness of other's journey and a sense of loneliness in their own.	Awareness of journey is not always understood or reciprocal. Transition journey has been a mixture of shared and lonely experiences.	Reciprocal awareness .The transition journey has been shared with others.
9 (R)		Journey has been alone.		Participant is fully involved in the process.
Total				

Sense Making				
2		Doesn't know what to do and finds fitting in difficult.	The processes to move forward are not completely understood.	Knows what to do and finds fitting in easy.
6		Is unable to see the 'big picture' and finds the components difficult to explain.	The 'big picture' is apparent but the details are still unclear.	Can see the 'big picture' clearly and unambiguously.
10 (R)		Future directions do not make much sense.	Future directions are understandable but are not always easy to navigate.	Future directions make sense.
Total				

Meaningfulness				
3		Can't really see where the journey is taking them	Can sometimes see where the journey is heading.	Can always see where the journey is heading.
7		Tackles problems because they are there.	Tackles problems because it seems to make sense at the time.	Tackles problems because it definitely makes sense to do so.
11 (R)		Can't explain decisions clearly or logically.	Can't always explain the logic	Is able to explain the logic behind decisions.
Total				

Gaining Confidence				
4		Does whatever it takes to fit in	Chooses pathways carefully but not always confidently.	Chooses pathways carefully
8 (R)		Doesn't understand failure or success.	Is able to see the markers for success and failure.	Understands why strategies are successful or have failed.
12		Has mostly short term plans and no long term strategy.	Has a mixture of short and long term plans but they are not always complementary	Has long term plans complemented by short term strategies.
Total				

0 ..... 5 ..... 10 ..... 15				
Languishing				
Surviving				
Thriving				

## Appendix 1

## Thriving in Transition

## Stage 3 Scoring

Role Development				
1 (R)		<i>Fails to plan ahead; does not know what is required of them. Does not know how to find information; pressured by time constraints.</i> <i>Worries about fitting into the group and cannot clearly define their role.</i>	<i>Experiences difficulty in planning ahead and understanding requirements. Accessing information is haphazard and often ill-timed.</i> <i>Finds group expectations in occasional conflict with personal development.</i>	<i>Plans ahead and has an understanding of the required role. Knows where to look for information and is able to access it in a timely fashion.</i> <i>Can manage individual, as well as group expectations.</i>
5				
9 (R)				
Total				

Personal Development				
2		<i>Stagnating rather than developing personally. Finds it difficult to embrace new experiences and clings to old habits.</i> <i>Finds new challenges daunting.</i>	<i>Personal development lacks direction and clarity.</i> <i>New experiences are challenging but provide some growth.</i> <i>New challenges are sometimes overwhelming.</i>	<i>Develops personally as a result of the experience. Embraces new experiences as part of the learning structure.</i> <i>Is excited by new and challenging experiences.</i>
6 (R)				
10				
Total				

Support Systems				
3		<i>Friends and colleagues cannot provide meaningful support.</i> <i>Accessing help and advice is difficult and daunting.</i> <i>Finds it difficult to identify support systems.</i>	<i>Friends and colleagues are not always able to provide the necessary support.</i> <i>Help and advice is not always accessible or meaningful. Support systems are sometimes difficult to identify.</i>	<i>Friends and colleagues provide meaningful support.</i> <i>Knows where to go to get help and advice.</i> <i>Can easily identify support systems.</i>
7				
11 (R)				
Total				

Manageable				
4 (R)		<i>Does not know what is going on.</i> <i>Finds requests/instructions difficult to interpret and action.</i> <i>Finds it difficult to locate and use helpful resources.</i>	<i>Sometimes has trouble working out what is going on.</i> <i>Finds complicated requests challenging.</i> <i>Sometimes finds resources hard to locate</i>	<i>Knows what is going on. What is asked of them is usually seen as fair and reasonable.</i> <i>The resources to thrive could be located.</i>
8				
12				
Total				

0 ----- 5 ----- 10 ----- 15				
<div>Languishing</div> <div>Surviving</div> <div>Thriving</div>				

## Appendix 1

## Thriving in Transition

## Stage 4 Scoring

Trust and Commitment	
1	
5	
9 (R)	
Total	

The next stage of the journey is unclear. Old habits “die hard” and it is difficult to let go of established patterns. The current demands do not line up with current abilities.

The next stage of the journey is ambiguous and it is difficult to commit. Past experiences make it difficult to fully commit to the new environment. Past experiences provide only a partial frame of reference for the future.

The next stage of the journey is clear. They are able to let go of the past and concentrate on the future. They learn from experience and trust in their ability to cope with future demands.

0 5 10 15

Environmental Mastery	
2 (R)	
6 (R)	
10	
Total	

The new environment is confusing and destabilizing. Strategies largely comprise of observing others and “doing what they do”. Finds the new environment difficult to understand.

The new environment is challenging and demanding. Has some difficulty in applying the wisdom from lessons learned. Finds the new environment “gets in the way”.

Unfazed by the demands of the new environment. Selectively observes others and applies the learning to the new environment. Understands how the new environment works and uses it.

0 5 10 15

Discretion	
3 (R)	
7 (R)	
11	
Total	

Does not exercise much control in the directions taken. Does not become actively involved in the decision-making process. Feels as though the system imposes structures on them.

Exercises limited control in the directions taken. Does not always become involved in the decision-making process. Experiences difficulty in getting the “system” to line up with plans.

Exercises control in the directions taken. Is involved in the decision-making process. Works within the system to maximise opportunities.

0 5 10 15

Relationship Building	
4	
8	
12 (R)	
Total	

Finds colleagues unreliable. Finds it difficult to trust others sharing the journey. Cannot really empathise with those around them.

Finds colleagues unpredictable. Trusting others is a selective experience. Sometimes able to empathise, sometimes not.

Finds colleagues reliable. Is able to trust others with aspects of the transition. Has an empathic relationship with those around them.

0 5 10 15

Languishing

Surviving

Thriving

## Appendix 2

# Links to Stages

### Stage 1

Data concepts	Processes of thriving	Processes of surviving	Processes of languishing
Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Purposeful</li><li>Selective mastery</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Broadly aware</li><li>Visualisation difficulty</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Unaware</li><li>Lacking resources</li></ul>
Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Confident</li><li>Proactive</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Trouble with priorities</li><li>Confused by feedback</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Bewildered</li><li>Overwhelmed</li></ul>
Positive planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Self-assured</li><li>Positively detached</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Guarded</li><li>Struggle with competing interests</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Fear of failing</li><li>Weighed down by expectations</li></ul>
Comprehensibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Forward focussed</li><li>Clear and ordered</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Unclear about tasks</li><li>Mimicking others</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Lacked understanding</li><li>Confused</li></ul>

**Readiness for the challenge** - examines the ability to engage the challenging transition in a purposeful way. Those who thrive are purposeful, aware and selective. Their readiness is formed by astute reasoning and purposeful investigation and they are able to identify features of the transition that are familiar. They have strong associations with three positive aspects of this concept, i.e. purposeful, aware and selective. In that context, their readiness is formed by astute reasoning and purposeful investigation. In addition, the thrivers are able to identify features of the transition that are familiar and, in regard to the challenging transition, they are aware that it is a shared journey.

Those who survive are broadly aware of the challenge ahead but find difficulty in defining it in any meaningful way. There is often a lack of congruence between their expectations and the experience as they struggle to visualise a transition pathway. They require specific explanations in regard to the challenges they face, rather than generalised information. They will benefit from solution-focussed information. They will benefit from a deeper understanding of how to handle the discrepancy between the "old and the new". Support systems need identifying and enlisting.

Those languishing at this early stage are unaware of the tasks that confront them, nor the strategies that might be usefully devised or applied. Languishers need to be identified as soon as possible and "risk factors" might be an enabling start position (early flags of concern). These students need more frequent and individual attention to build confidence. Experiencing success will be a significant contributor to an improved trajectory.

Strategies that may contribute to better outcomes include (but are not limited to):

- Interviews that explore expectations and challenges;

- early engagement with peer support programs;
- pre-orientation sessions that provide simple, staged information;
- *The age of the student is a critical factor, with more mature age students able to reckon with the transition as a factor of their success; however mature age students need to 'suspend' some workplace skills to return to academic study in a receptive frame of mind.*

**Motivation** - provides an indication of willingness to engage in the dislocating transition, and particularly whether their approach is tentative or confident.

Those that thrive are confident, optimistic and have proactive coping strategies. They are confident, optimistic and had proactive coping strategies. This is particularly evident in their ability to understand and respond to feedback and their capacity to develop confidence in the transition pathways.

Those surviving are less confident and inclined to be overwhelmed by the challenge to move from the known to the unknown. They find it difficult to identify the priority tasks, and are motivated by the excitement of the occasion rather than an awareness of the strategic opportunity. They are less likely to seek feedback, and the influence of feedback is often confusing and sometimes counterproductive. They require investment from student support programs that build up their confidence levels. Peer mentoring at this stage can be helpful. Look for opportunities to give students the confidence that the challenge is not as overwhelming as it seems to them. Specific skill sessions (academic, time-management) will be helpful.

Those languishing are bewildered by the experience and find little assistance in the guidance offered to them. They are excited by the prospect of the transition, but unable to motivate themselves in a way that is productive. They require patience to give them the required confidence not be confused. Clear support pathways need to be described. Provide simple instructions and appoint a mentor for these students. Clarity is the key to reduce bewilderment and identify short-term, clear targets for which motivation is able to be mustered. Motivation slowly leads to productivity. More of a one-on-one approach will be helpful to these students.

Indicated strategies that may contribute to better outcomes may include (but not limited to):

- An examination of the strategies in place (e.g. motivated students will be proactive in regard to matter such as timetabling, time-management etc.):
- When opportunities arise, inquire into the students motivation for study (i.e. articulation assists with more concrete objectives and planning):
- Take opportunities to inquire into student's adjustment to the new surroundings and the changes they have had to make... emphasis on prioritising.
- *Motivation is more complex than confidence vs. bewilderment and needs to be inclusive of contextual issues including living arrangements, language skills, financial pressures. Some*



*students are motivated but lack the confidence to be fully involved: others are confident but lack the frame of reference to fully understand (or articulate) their motivation.*

Motivation is less related to enthusiasm for the challenging tasks, but more to the preparations for the transition and the application of their resources to accommodate the psychological need to plan for what is coming.

**Positive planning** - presents an indication of the ability to negotiate and plan personal pathways.

Those that thrive are assured, have positive detachment, and confident in planning. They are able to execute their plan and learn from the experience. They are able to demonstrate assuredness, positive detachment, and confident planning. These resources give them the confidence to plan, exercise that planning and learn from the experience.

Those surviving are more guarded about the experience and feel their way through the process. Their expectations are often coloured by observations within the new environment and they struggle with the competing interests. They need more time to adjust and require patience. Programs that explore their expectations will be helpful. Similarly assistance with organisation will reduce the tendency to struggle alone. Help these students to be aware of the opportunities; give them feedback more often; seek their opinion on the feedback given to ensure that the feedback is absorbed by them correctly.

Those languishing are often confused and struggle with the new responsibilities; they are consumed by fears of failing, rather than seeking support from others. They require clarity and programs should focus on the removal of confusing and the incremental building of confidence (that comes with clarity of thinking). Regular work check (with lecturers and tutors) will maintain the consistency of the message... positive planning should result in positive outcomes (i.e. think 'positive reinforcement'). Programs should develop the student's confidence to approach their teachers for help and support.

Strategies that may contribute to better outcomes may include (but not limited to):

- Proactive planning appointments that clearly articulate the links between goal-setting and planning.
- Programs that emphasise the importance of the work-life balance and the stability of both will help.
- Similarly programs that articulate the realities of university study and the transition from the familiar to the unfamiliar will be of assistance.
- *Planning for a challenging transition requires a degree of positive detachment and the balancing of competing interests. Assumptions that student arrive 'prepared' is a myth and early planning should be a priority. The misplaced focus of institutions is upon orientation rather than the relevant application of individual planning.*

**Comprehensibility** describes the ability to grasp concerns in the transition process, particularly a clear, ordered and structured understanding of the imminent challenge.

Those that thrive have a positive vision, and an understanding of what is required. They are aware of the process of transition and make specific requests for information and the timeframes involved. They are positive about the experience and not deterred by a lack of information. They have a positive vision, and an understanding what is required. They are aware of the process of transition and make specific requests for information in regard to what is required of them and the timeframes involved. They are positive about the experience and not deterred by a lack of information.

Those surviving are less clear about the tasks ahead and are inclined to follow the example of others rather than to understand the personal nature of the journey. They will be assisted by calendars of events and an improved understanding of tasks well ahead of time. The calendar will also help the support staff, when speaking to the student. These students benefit from time-management skills. They need the confidence to make their own judgements and not necessarily follow the example of others.

Those at risk of languishing have little understanding of what is required of them and are only able to engage in the transition process in the most mechanical of ways. They struggle with the process from the outset, and information designed to be facilitating and supportive is often confusing and bewildering. They will also benefit from a calendar of events but more time should be spent explaining the calendar and making sure the student is grasping the contents and the time frames. These students will benefit from check to ensure the student understands what is required from them. Make the processes very clear and very simple, so that the students can start using the processes to their advantage rather than confusing them.

Strategies that may contribute to better outcomes may include (but not limited to):

- Clear and ordered information that describes the challenges as well as the content.
- Appointments with student support that provides individual Q and A as an expectation of the orientation process will be useful.
- An understanding that the transition to university is *ongoing* and that you get "better and better" at it as you learn and grow will assist their transition.
- *Students need an unencumbered understanding of the tasks that face them. Students, particularly those that languish, feel 'surrounded' by information and find it difficult to select or prioritise.*

## Stage 2

Data concepts	Processes of thriving	Processes of surviving	Processes of languishing
<b>Gaining confidence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive self -concepts</li> <li>• Capacity to learn</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Searching for direction</li> <li>• Haphazard progress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No frame of reference</li> <li>• Limited learning</li> </ul>
<b>Sense making</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarity of purpose</li> <li>• Commitment to the process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty applying learning</li> <li>• Inundated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confused</li> <li>• Struggled for direction</li> </ul>
<b>Meaningfulness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conscious of transition components</li> <li>• Attach meaning to engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keen to please</li> <li>• Lacked insight</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Afraid to fail</li> <li>• Perplexed by the series of tasks</li> </ul>
<b>Engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linking with others</li> <li>• Accessing resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wrestled with competing emotions</li> <li>• Self-conscious</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Afraid to let go</li> <li>• Tentative</li> </ul>

**Gaining confidence** focuses on the ability to negotiate the transition experience, particularly the disparity between the anticipated pathways and their experience

This 'gained confidence' is the product of the learning process and those that thrive have strong self-concepts, a capacity for recovery, and learn what is required to negotiate the transition. They are more able to learn from the experience and are confident and resourceful. They continue to apply their new-found skills to the challenge. The trajectory for students becomes apparent at this stage where the cyclic pathways for learning can be observed as the recursive, disjunctive but interdependent stages of a transition. Thriving students will demonstrate strong associations with the constructive aspects of this concept, i.e. Positive self-concepts, a capacity for recovery, and learning what was required to negotiate the transition.

Survivors are less confident about the transition and search for direction. Their learning is haphazard and it is difficult for them to apply information and resources to the tasks they face. They will be assisted by promoting 'help-seeking' and short term goal focus. Programs should review the transition (thus far) and provide direction where this has been problematic. A lack of confidence is often a by-product of the disparity between the old and the new and made worse by clinging to old coping strategies and (often) elements of homesickness. The message is "...help is available and it's okay to ask for help". More confidence in accessing and using resources is appropriate at this time.

Those languishing find it difficult to describe a frame of reference for their transitional journey and become locked into strategies that do not serve them well and, as a consequence, their opportunities for productive learning are very limited. They have difficulty in establishing a frame of reference regarding their transition. Programs should give them information to slowly build a frame of reference for the university experience and discuss various strategies and options to their advantage. The homesick languisher is less able to build confidence and programs should

acknowledge and address the debilitating elements of homesickness. In addition, programs should focus on immediate goals and build on the experience of success.

Strategies that may contribute to better outcomes may include (but not limited to):

- Those activities that build confidence and time and opportunity to reflect on the experience.
- Programs that progress the development of time-management skills and study strategies may be beneficial at this time.
- *Students need an opportunity to reflect on the soundness of their planning and the usefulness (or not) of strategies.*

**Sense making** describes the ability to make sense of their transition experience.

Those that thrive have clarity of purpose, meaningful engagement, a commitment to the process, and a willingness to leave the old and embrace the new. They selectively abandon familiar support systems, and selectively accept supports that make sense in the new surroundings. The opportunity to thrive is often contingent on the readiness for the transition (see stage one), and an acute awareness of the process. Thrivers can demonstrate strong associations with the positive aspects of this concept, i.e. clarity of purpose, meaningful engagement, a commitment to the process, and a willingness to leave the old and embrace the new.

Those surviving struggle for clarity of direction and have difficulty in applying knowledge. Further they are inclined to see the transition and the challenge as a single entity rather than a suite of demands. The keys to assisting survivors are the drivers of clarity, support, and direction. It is important to make sure students understand the help imparted to them and how to use it properly. Programs should demonstrate to them that their transition and the subsequent challenges they face do not amount to one entity and that they need to approach every challenge with an open mind.

Those languishing are confused and struggle for direction. They grasp at any opportunity and mimic others to try and make sense of their experiences. They often become frustrated as effort and resignation become polarised positions and they become increasingly unable to have meaningful engagement. They require more patience and understanding in regard to assumptions about clarity and more guidance (especially planning, directing and reducing confusion). Caution should be exercised in regard to the effectiveness of their strategies as many who languish will try to use other students' experiences as their own. Help them in ensuring that they are directing their efforts in the right channels, which do not lead to frustration and resignation. Make sure they understand what is required and expected from them.

Strategies that may contribute to better outcomes may include (but not limited to):

- Programs that provide practical outcomes for shared problems ("how to..." programs rather than "information sharing").
- Programs that acknowledge the difficulties associated with leaving the "old life" and managing the new one.

- Programs that encourage reflection and learning about the challenges faced and how well resolved they were.
- Peer mentoring programs that facilitate all of these objectives.
- *The link (or disparity) between the 'expected' and the 'reality' are important considerations. The wider the gaps, the more likely students will be unable to make 'sense' of the transition in which they are involved.*

**Meaningfulness** illustrates the ability to identify the components of the challenge as worthy of engagement.

Those that thrive can recognise the significance of parts of the challenge as opposed to a bewildering whole, and a rational strategy for engagement. They are inclined towards a 'goal-learn' orientation (Porath & Bateman, 2006) where they are able to attach meaning to their efforts to negotiate the transition and devote the appropriate resources to the task. They can identify the significance of parts of the challenge as opposed to a bewildering whole, and a rational strategy for engagement.

Those surviving are less able to identify the reasons for the engagement other than an amorphous expectation of the organisation, but one they were keen to fulfil. They are inclined towards a 'goal-prove' orientation (Porath & Bateman, 2006), but have difficulty in finding meaning in the efforts and attribute the dedication of resources as an external requirement. They require programs that enable students to identify and understand the value and reasons of undertaking a particular task instead of the students doing the task only because they have to do it (eg. last minute assignments). Programs should emphasise the richness of learning from the experience, instead of it being just an activity done and out of the way. Programs should endeavour to help the student realise the meaningfulness of every activity they undertake.

Those that languish are inclined to a 'goal-avoid' orientation (Porath & Bateman, 2006) and find it difficult to attach meaning to any aspect of the transition. They are absorbed by the risk of error and disabled by the process. In the most part they regard the transition as a series of important, albeit meaningless, activities. They need a more considered approach to enable them to be more involved in what they need to do. Emphasis is needed not only on the significance of the challenge (e.g. an examination result) but on the meaningfulness of the activity that needs to be done, Programs that are enabling will move away from avoiding the goal and instead work towards achieving the goal in incremental steps (often associated with success at each step). Keep the goals simple for these students and award due praise when the goal is achieved.

Strategies that may contribute to better outcomes may include (but not limited to):

- Those programs that challenge that student to consider "why" they are investing time and energy into the task.
- A better understanding of the worthiness of the challenge will enable them to be selective and able to prioritise among the many demands. This can lead to programs that address failure at tasks, handling setbacks etc. While all students think they see the challenge as

significant not all of them were able to attach meaning to the suite of tasks required in the process.

- *Students need to be conscious of the components and the (relative) importance of tasks. Insight and clarity are key considerations. Sometimes it is a struggle between unlearning the learned and being critical and reflective in practice.*

**Engagement** explores the commitment to the transition, particularly the ability to be meaningfully engaged in the adjustment tasks.

Those that thrive are able to make the transition to the new environment with an open and receptive 'mindset'. They are optimistic about their ability to negotiate the dislocating challenge and able to calculate what is required of them to succeed. They are able to make the transition to the new environment with an open and receptive 'mindset'. They are optimistic about their ability to negotiate the dislocating challenge and are able to calculate what was required of them to succeed. In this sense they are able to make sense of the need to engage and identify the salient aspects of the challenge where engagement is to serve them well. The worthiness of the engagement is a reflection of the participants' ability to see meaning in the dedication of resources, and thrivers do this openly. Programs that deliver these goals will succeed.

Those surviving are more likely to be overwhelmed by the transition and wrestle with the competing emotions of leaving the past behind and engaging with the new environment. They will benefit from programs that explain the transition step by step and not throw the whole package of the transition to the students in one go. Students need time management skills to enable them plan their transition. They will be more comfortable taking one step at a time and need time and resources to adjust and commit to the new environment.

Those that languish struggle to break with the old environment and are beleaguered by the apparent volume of tasks. They keep their old life 'on hold' and make tentative and weak overtures to engage with others in the new environment. They need to understand that commitment to the transition does not mean them giving up their past. The challenge for support programs will be to give the support that provides ways forward. Programs should aim at providing the confidence and support that they are ready to embrace the transition without giving up their past and teach them to strike a balance between the old and new.

Strategies that may contribute to better outcomes may include (but not limited to):

- Programs that assist with prioritising tasks and gathering the resources required. Competing demands are the enemy of engagement and a balanced approach to the challenge is the goal.
- *Some student struggle to become genuinely engaged in the new environment. Linking with others (to enhance the experience), linking with resources (to be empowered), and having the confidence to embrace change are the most challenging components.*

### Stage 3

Data concepts	Processes of thriving	Processes of surviving	Processes of languishing
<b>Role development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness of transition</li> <li>Connectedness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trouble selecting strategies</li> <li>Keen to conform</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resigned to external influences</li> <li>Disconnected</li> </ul>
<b>Manageability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responsive to challenge</li> <li>Attentive to tasks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trouble seeing components</li> <li>Using old skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Besieged</li> <li>Instinctive</li> </ul>
<b>Support systems</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify support systems</li> <li>Access support systems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unable to access support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unable to identify support</li> </ul>
<b>Personal development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify transition pathways</li> <li>Learn from the experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lacking satisfaction</li> <li>Unable to gather understanding from experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stagnating</li> <li>Disabled by criticism</li> </ul>

**Role development** - is a reflection of altruism and competitiveness in the context of the evolving role-fit relationship.

Those that thrive are able to select strategies that are 'stage appropriate' and likely to advance their adjustment without compromise. They understand that within the university framework there is nominal autonomy and while the transition is facilitated by the organisation, the adjustment is highly individualised. Those that thrive are able to select strategies that are likely to advance their adjustment with minimal compromise.

Those surviving have less insight into their opportunity to select strategies and are more likely to conform to group expectations irrespective of their suitability. . They will be assisted by providing guided access to support programs. Most survivors lack the insight to adapt to the new environment and expend a lot of energy railing against the 'system'. It will help to get them to be more involved in their personal work instead of just conforming to group expectations.

Those that languish are often confused mimicked others. They resign themselves to the outcomes that flow from their efforts, rather than reflecting on the transition, their emerging role, and what has or has not worked for them. They need time to develop confidence. Confusion lies in the numerous instructions they have attempted to absorb (this confusion leads to meaningless feedback and pointless instruction). These students need to develop their self-confidence; spend time with these students in explaining the strategies and structures to reduce their confusion.

Strategies that may contribute to better outcomes may include (but not limited to):

- Those activities that build a stronger understanding of the university "systems" and their negotiation (i.e. understanding the best ways to achieve the best outcomes?).

- Programs might include the strategies in identifying good role models and a better understanding of the requirements of adjusting to change... how the "system" gives and takes.
- *Strategic planning (rather than conformity) and 'clever' planning (rather than resignation) are important components.*

**Personal development** is an indication of an ability to process the experience of the transition in a meaningful way and to learn from the experience.

Those that thrive are able to identify development pathways and the learning experiences that characterised the process. They can see the personal development pathways that have been effective and have learned from the experience, e.g. seeking feedback to allay concerns. They are comfortable with the demands made of them and get substantial personal satisfaction from the progress they make.

Those that survive are prepared to work hard towards their goals, but are less able to glean understanding from the experience. They need to build self-confidence to be actively involved in their progression (i.e. things don't just happen to them). Strengthening their understanding of action/consequence will help them build more self-reliance. Every activity has a learning consequence, but they can be selective and astute. Deal with these students as patiently and clearly as possible.

Those that languish are more likely to feel a sense of personal stagnation; they are unable to identify particulars from general praise, and are disabled by criticism. They need to build confidence (often from a very low base) and the "experience of success" will be an effective tool. These students should be encouraged to ask questions even if the information asked for is repeated. Be very specific in praising them and very gentle in pointing out their mistakes.

Strategies that may contribute to better outcomes may include (but not limited to):

- Programs that encourage reflection (particularly on the things that have worked).
- Reinforcement of the benefit of feedback and the strategies to get the help they need.
- Recognising markers that indicate personal growth (e.g. what personal changes have been facilitative?).
- Programs that build on the idea of personal growth and development will be most effective here (e.g. How would you deal with disappointment of an assignment grading if you get less than what you feel you deserve because you worked hard on it?).
- *Students need to review their awareness of connections and the ability to 'let go' of old patterns that are not serving them well.*



**Manageability** describes the ability to meet the demands of the challenge, particularly the balance of competing interests.

Those that thrive have an acute awareness of the component parts of the challenge and are able to allocate resources accordingly. They are able to accommodate the pressure of dislocation with a balanced approach and a sense of the manageability of the requisite tasks. They are able to accommodate the pressure of the transition with a balanced approach and a sense of the manageability of the requisite tasks.

Those that survive are more likely to see the transition as a 'whole' rather than the component parts and are less able to access the resources or strategies to assist them. They are more likely to have the ability to manage tasks if given the right information and help in balancing their competing interests. These students need management skills. Breaking the transition demands into component parts, and showing the connections will help (e.g. "this task well resolved will enable you to do X") ... rather than a formless goal towards which they must struggle.

Those that languish struggle to manage the transition and are often overwhelmed by the apparent magnitude of the experience. They are confused and inclined to embark on strategies that are instinctive rather than connected to a frame of reference. They are often overwhelmed by the whole transition experience and find support and feedback difficult to interpret. Their strategies are often the product of misunderstanding and desperate efforts to make sense of the challenge. In these students "old habits" are often the problem and it is important to provide the right kind of support to make the "leap of faith" to new strategies. Small incremental steps are required.

Strategies that may contribute to better outcomes may include (but not limited to):

- Programs that build on stages 1 and 2 "well resolved", particularly in regard to the link between the transition being comprehensible (stage 1) meaningful (stage 2) and now manageable, i.e. students understand what is involved and why it's important and what remains to be mastered is how they are going to do it.
- Valuable information might centre around the balance between study, home life and outside interests.
- *The 'old' skills students bring to the challenge might not be sufficient to function effectively and they need to be actively sourcing the new skills/tools for the tasks.*

**Support systems** are an indication of the nature and availability of information, social companionship, tangible resources and emotional support.

Those that thrive can identify and access support systems (including their immediate friends, family and supporters); and new systems in the form of structures and routines. They can identify and access traditional support systems (including their immediate friends, family and supporters); and new systems in the form of structures and routines. Thrivers are aware of the support

programs/systems and how they add value to their particular circumstance. The thrivers are able to identify and use support systems from a variety of sources and select those of most value.

Those surviving can identify support systems around them, but find it more difficult to access them in a timely fashion. They are often aware of the help available but are not organised enough to make use of them "in a timely fashion". There may also be unresolved issues around homesickness (see Stage 2) and programs should address these on an individual basis. Programs that provide alternative support systems and pro-active support will have success. Knowing that concerns and struggles are shared (i.e. they are not alone) is important. The best strategies impress the advantages of accessing the support systems.

Those that languish have difficulty identifying sources of support and are troubled investing trust in them. They are often consumed by the challenge and cling to the dislocated support systems in an effort to survive. They do not have a help-seeking routine and often fall into two groups (1) those that associate the need for support with "weakness" and (2) those that need help all the time (need to be rescued rather than empowered). The homesick languisher will be vulnerable and find it difficult to initiate contact. It is important to check the mindset of those that languish and to build an understanding of support systems that is productive and accessible. Regular checks and information sessions are important. Be patient!

Strategies that may contribute to better outcomes may include (but not limited to):

- Stronger links to support programs and systems.
- Information that addresses particular problems/processes (i.e. those things that might have been available through orientation but forgotten) is beneficial.
- Encourage help-seeking behaviour by normalising the processes for support; and providing easy access to resources that work.
- *Students need to actively review their support systems; especially in regard to how well they are working, whether they are adequate for the challenge, what's missing and how can it be accessed.*

## Stage 4

Data concepts	Processes of thriving	Processes of surviving	Processes of languishing
<b>Relationship building</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Independent</li> <li>Capable of intimacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unsure of lessons learned</li> <li>Unsure of connections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disturbed by transitions</li> <li>Reluctant to move from old to new</li> </ul>
<b>Environmental mastery</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Competent in new environment</li> <li>Controls complex activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lacked self-confidence</li> <li>Unable to balance competing concerns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lacked strategies to cope</li> <li>Remained as outsiders</li> </ul>
<b>Trust and commitment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Willingness to be vulnerable</li> <li>Receptive to future challenges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less assured</li> <li>Hesitation to commit to the next phase</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unable to discriminate between what did and didn't work</li> <li>No vision for the future</li> </ul>
<b>Discretion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Autonomous planning</li> <li>Strategic insight</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Constrained</li> <li>Longing for approval</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dependent on structure</li> <li>Requiring direction</li> </ul>

**Relationship building** provides an indication of the ability to form meaningful and sustained relationships after the transition.

Those that thrive show genuine warmth towards others and are active in their search to engage with others. They have both the team and personal well-being in mind and are not anxious about the hierarchical nature of the new environment. They are willing to build on a simple framework from a new beginning, and those relationships are especially important where they promote independence rather than dependence. Programs that will assist will be those that involve a reflective discussion of *what worked and what didn't* and commitment to plan for the future.

By contrast, survivors are able to appreciate the camaraderie that exists but less sure of the lessons learned from the experience that might allow them to thrive. They are aware of the challenging nature of the transition but their goal orientation is often about obtaining the approval of others (rather than developing a mutually beneficial relationship). The risk is that the transition will be asymmetrical and that they will not reach full stability. Programs need to encourage relationships that are not offered as part of the mentoring process (e.g. who is positioned to help them? who shares their concerns). Study groups and tutorial groups are a good idea and can be informal.

Those that languish struggle with relationships and are disturbed by the transient nature of the friendships that are formed. They find it difficult to invest their trust and learn from the experience, and are reluctant to sever the relationships from before the transition in case their need for them reappears. They tend to form friendships slowly and struggle with the transient nature of university life. Those homesick individuals will be a particular risk of a poor outcome. There is significant risk of an asymmetrical transition and no stability at this stage. A "buddy / mentor" may build confidence and trust. Non-threatening team work will help (as often the social skills necessary for a 'free-wheeling' friendship are not well developed).

The Stability Stage (Stage 4) becomes problematic for survivors and languishers. For Thrivers it is a consequence of the other stages 'well resolved' and provides a consolidation point. For others it is an opportunity to reflect on the cycle and identify future opportunities (i.e. the next cycle).

**Environmental mastery** describes the ability to control and influence the environment. In particular it involves the mastery of strategies to account for the disparity between expectations and experience.

Those that thrive have a comprehensive and detailed understanding of the new environment and are able to access the necessary resources to establish a satisfactory level of mastery. They are not concerned with the separation from the old environment and are more likely to attribute their success to clarity of direction, rather than luck. They have a high level of control and competence. They can identify the trajectory of their transition and the signposts along the way. In particular they are able to learn from the range of experiences and apply that understanding to a more positive approach to the transition challenge.

Survivors have a blurred sense of the new environment and lack the self-confidence to attribute their competence to anything except luck. They lack a sense of direction and are inclined to resign themselves to the requirements of the new environment, rather than to take stock of what is required to thrive and develop mastery. They understand that change has occurred but find it difficult to identify the particulars of the transition. The challenge of the transition at this stage is to be more aware of the differences of their past environment as compared to the new environment (e.g. their school system, teaching methods, curriculum, etc. Give them more information relating to their new environment and encourage them to ask questions and seek clarifications.

Those who languish struggle with the new environment and have few strategies to deal with the new challenges. They cling to old habits and lack the confidence to depart from patterns that have become familiar. They articulate consistent concerns that they 'feel outside' of the new environment despite being part of it, and struggle to find a place where they feel included and in control. They often resort to strategies of mimicry and blind obedience to try to immerse themselves in the new environment, but lack the subtle insights. They need to reflect on the things that have helped them so far and what has been a waste of time. Sharing the journey with others will help this process. Support staff should approach these students regularly, check on their progress, and encourage them.

The Stability Stage becomes a reflective point for the other stages 'well resolved'. It is an opportunity to reflect on the experience and the disparity between expectations and experience. Addressing outstanding concerns will help this confidence (e.g. things they still don't understand). Sharing the journey experience with others can be an enriching process and strategies that bring students together for a session (e.g. what really works!) can build confidence.

**Trust and commitment** is an indication of levels of assurance in the negotiation of the transition and confidence in the future. In particular it is the ability to navigate the time-bounded aspects of the transition in a meaningful way.

Those that thrive have a vivid impression of their journey since the dislocating moment and a clear agenda for the next stage. They are able to 'let go' of their concerns and are receptive to the challenge of embracing the new environment. They are not overwhelmed and they have 'embraced' the university with confidence. They feel reassured by the 'solidarity' of membership of the group and do not feel susceptible to the pressures that surround them.

The survivors are less assured and the dislocation is still a poignant reference point for them as they contemplate the next stage of the transition. There is significant hesitation in their willingness to commit to the next phase of the transition; a legacy of their uncertainty. They do not have the complete assurance (trust and commitment) to tackle the next cycle effectively. These students need to make the 'leap of faith' to disengage from dysfunctional coping and be more receptive to advice and support. Build their trust in approaching support staff that has a strong commitment in helping these students move forward. Be empathic (not sympathetic) and understanding towards the students who feel homesick, miss their parents and friends.

Those languishing experience difficulty in balancing the experience of the transition with a future agenda, and they cannot discriminate between strategies that have been useful and those that have not served them well. They lack the trust and commitment to fully engage and cling to dysfunctional strategies. Their progress will be limited and new strategies need to be put in place. Programs that build a level of trust where the students feel that they have made the right decision in the transition (e.g. where success has been experienced, however small) will be helpful.. Monitor their progress carefully.

Trust and Commitment at the Stability Stage is a factor of the previous stages well resolved and confidence in the future. Programs that assist this confident assurance will reflect on questions like "what would you have done differently in your transition to university?" (I.e. where possible, exploring those reservations as goals for the future). Similarly, reflecting on what has worked well and how this learning might be applied to the next phase of the transition.

**Discretion** is a reflection of the scope to determine the content and scheduling of the transition, i.e. to plan personal pathways.

Those that thrive are aware of the dominant structure of the environment, but are able to act autonomously and appear to have the freedom to make decisions and choices. They choose carefully from limited options and learn quickly about the benefits of independent thinking. They are also able to set goals and self-regulate behaviour.

Those surviving are more constrained and lack the confidence to exercise their independence. They struggle to interpret advice and feedback and are more inclined to follow the lead of others than to exercise discretion. They may be able to exercise limited discretion, but lack the confidence to exercise their independence. It is important to build confidence and show interest in their work and provide meaningful feedback. Make them aware that the more independent they get, easier will be the transition for them.

Those languishing are unable to make important decisions, and are limited by the perceived constraints of the new environment. They are dependent on the structure around them and

resigned to the pathways outlined for them. Those that LANGUISH are unlikely to exercise discretion. They are more likely to slavish to guidelines or copy those around them who appear to do well. These students need programs that help them make decisions and encourage them to think independently. Give them the skills they need to have confidence in themselves

At the Stability Stage, Discretion is the student's perception of their ability to determine aspects of the transition. A transition to a structured and low discretion environment may still require discretionary thinking and planning to navigate it successfully. It is an opportunity to review those things that have encouraged independent thinking and encouraged engagement (e.g. recognition of effort). It is a time to review information that describes opportunity for discretionary thinking and behaviour will assist confidence (e.g. elective programs that provide benefit; reward programs for mentoring and the like).

## Appendix 3

### Thriving in Transition

#### An invitation to participate

This project is designed to provide practical support strategies for transition counsellors through the application of the “Thriving in Transition” model. It is designed for students facing challenging transitions. The Student Centre has received training in the model that allows transition counsellors to identify individual transition pathways and help students by providing early assistance.

A limited number of student positions are available to participate in this research (the details are explained in more detail in the student Information Sheet, available through the Student Centre).

It will not require any extra work on the part of the student, but will involve a short survey of their student experiences at the end of the year. The program is free and does not affect any Centrelink or Austudy payments.

It is confidential and you can withdraw at any time without penalty. However, it is an opportunity to participate in a program that will assist transition and provide more opportunities to succeed.

We warmly invite you to participate, and appreciate your involvement.

**CONSENT FORM****Title of Project: Thriving in Transition**

---

I have read and understood the 'Information Sheet' for this project and the nature and possible effects of the study have been explained to me. I understand that the study involves data collection to contribute to the understanding of the characteristics and processes of thriving in periods of transition, and the pathways for intervention.

I understand that my involvement will include the contextual scoping of the project for a better understanding of existing student support services in Phase 1 of the project. Further I will be involved in program training to facilitate interventions in Phases 2 and 3 of the project. And I will be involved in a workshop, and through in-depth interview, to draft guidelines for the Thriving in Transition project in Phase 4 of the project. I understand that my participation involves a review of my current practice and the introduction of new practices that are designed to augment the transition programs.

I understand that the aims of the project are based around an understanding of wellbeing in periods of transition. I understand that I am free to withdraw, and to seek further counselling support if needed at no cost to myself.

I understand that all research data will be securely stored on the University of Tasmania premises for five years, and will then be destroyed using a secure destruction process. Any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree that research data gathered from me for the study may be published provided that I cannot be identified as a participant. I understand that the researchers will maintain my identity confidential and that any information I supply to the researchers will be used only for the purposes of the research.

I agree to participate in this investigation and understand that I may withdraw at any time without any effect, and if I so wish may request that any data I have supplied to date be withdrawn from the research without prejudice.

Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_



---

Signature:

Date:

---

**Statement by Investigator**

☐ I have explained the project & the implications of participation in it to this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation

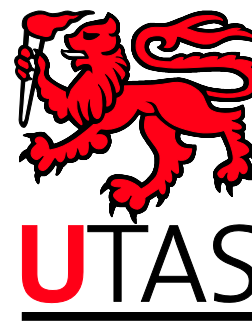
If the Investigator has not had an opportunity to talk to participants prior to them participating, the following must be ticked.

☐ The participant has received the Information Sheet where my details have been provided so participants have the opportunity to contact me prior to consenting to participate in this project.

Name of investigator \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of investigator \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Locked Bag 1372 Launceston  
Crn Howick & Mulgrave Streets Launceston  
Tasmania Australia 7250  
Telephone (03) 6324 4000  
Facsimile (03) 6324 4040  
Email [rural.health@utas.edu.au](mailto:rural.health@utas.edu.au)



**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET  
SOCIAL SCIENCE/ HUMANITIES  
RESEARCH**

**Thriving in Transition**

You are invited to participate in a research study into the positive aspects of moving from familiar to unfamiliar surroundings.

The study is being conducted by the University of Tasmania, Department of Rural Health (UDRH):

- Dr Martin Harris, Lecturer in Rural Health
  - Professor Tony Barnett, Director of the University Department of Rural Health
1. The purpose of the study is to investigate whether a new model of transition will assist institutions implement strategies that provide the best opportunity to enable rural students, relocating to take up educational opportunities, to succeed. More particularly, this project will provide strategies and planning that will contribute to the retention of students in challenging circumstances.
  2. You are eligible to participate in this study because you provide support to students in your institution as part of the transition to university program.
  3. This study involves transition coordinators (student support staff, however called) in a suite of universities who will help develop and implement a transition ("thriving") program suited to their needs. This will provide:
    - An understanding of the transition to university;
    - A greater opportunity to provide a more supportive educational environment for those entering the systems that are at risk.
    - Guidelines for training the transition coordination and student support staff within universities and higher education organisations.

4. Your involvement will be in four keys areas. Firstly to assist with the contextual scoping of the project for a better understanding of existing student support services. This will involve sourcing institutional guidelines and transition program information, and providing information through interview in Phase 1 of the project. Participate in, and apply Thriving in Transition program training to facilitate interventions in Phases 2 and 3 of the project. Participate in a workshop, and through in-depth interview, to draft guidelines for the Thriving in Transition project in Phase 4 of the project.

Phases	Time commitment	Timeframes
1. Project planning, recruitment and scoping	60 minutes	March – May 2011
2. Model adaptation and training	60 minutes	June – December 2011
3. Implementation	N/A	January – July 2012
4. Evaluation and dissemination	½ day workshop	August 2012 – January 2013

Participants in the workshops will be asked to think about, and give their views from all perspectives on wellbeing and the Thriving in Transition program, and this may include specific or broad issues, priorities, assets or concerns.

5. It is important that you understand that your involvement in this study is voluntary. While we would be pleased to have you participate, a decision not to participate will not affect your ongoing employment and we respect your right to decline. If you decide to discontinue participation at any time, you may do so without providing an explanation and you may elect to withdraw your data without prejudice. All information will be treated in a confidential manner, and your name will not be used in any publication arising out of the research. All of the research will be securely stored in a locked cabinet in the office of the University Department of Rural Health for a period of five years, and will then be destroyed using a secure destruction process.
6. It is possible that you will notice a more comprehensive understanding of student needs and the value of early intervention after a certain period of time. This may lead to a more personalised program of student support. It may also result in higher rates of student retention. We will be interested to see if you experience any other benefits from the application of the Thriving in Transition concepts across a wider group of students. If we are able to take the findings of this small study and link

them with a wider study, the result may be valuable information for others and it may lead to more robust and focussed strategies of support.

7. There are no specific risks anticipated with participation in this study. However, if you find that you are becoming distressed we will arrange for you to see a counsellor at no expense to you. The researchers will keep confidential all information provided by participants unless there is a risk to the safety of themselves or others; or where there is provision in state legislature for mandatory reporting.
8. If you would like to discuss any aspect of this study please feel free to contact either Dr Martin Harris on 03 63264029 or Prof Tony Barnett on 03 6326 4011. Either of us would be happy to discuss any aspect of the research with you. Once we have analysed the information we will be mailing/emailing you a summary of our findings. You are welcome to contact us at that time to discuss any issue related to the research study

This study has been approved by the Tasmanian Social Science Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have concerns or complaints about the conduct of this study should contact the Executive Officer of the HREC (Tasmania) Network on (03) 6226 7479 or email [human.ethics@utas.edu.au](mailto:human.ethics@utas.edu.au). The Executive Officer is the person nominated to receive complaints from research participants. You will need to quote H11668  
Thank you for taking the time to consider this study. If you wish to take part in it, please sign the attached consent form. This information sheet is for you to keep.

## Appendix 6

# Thriving in Transition

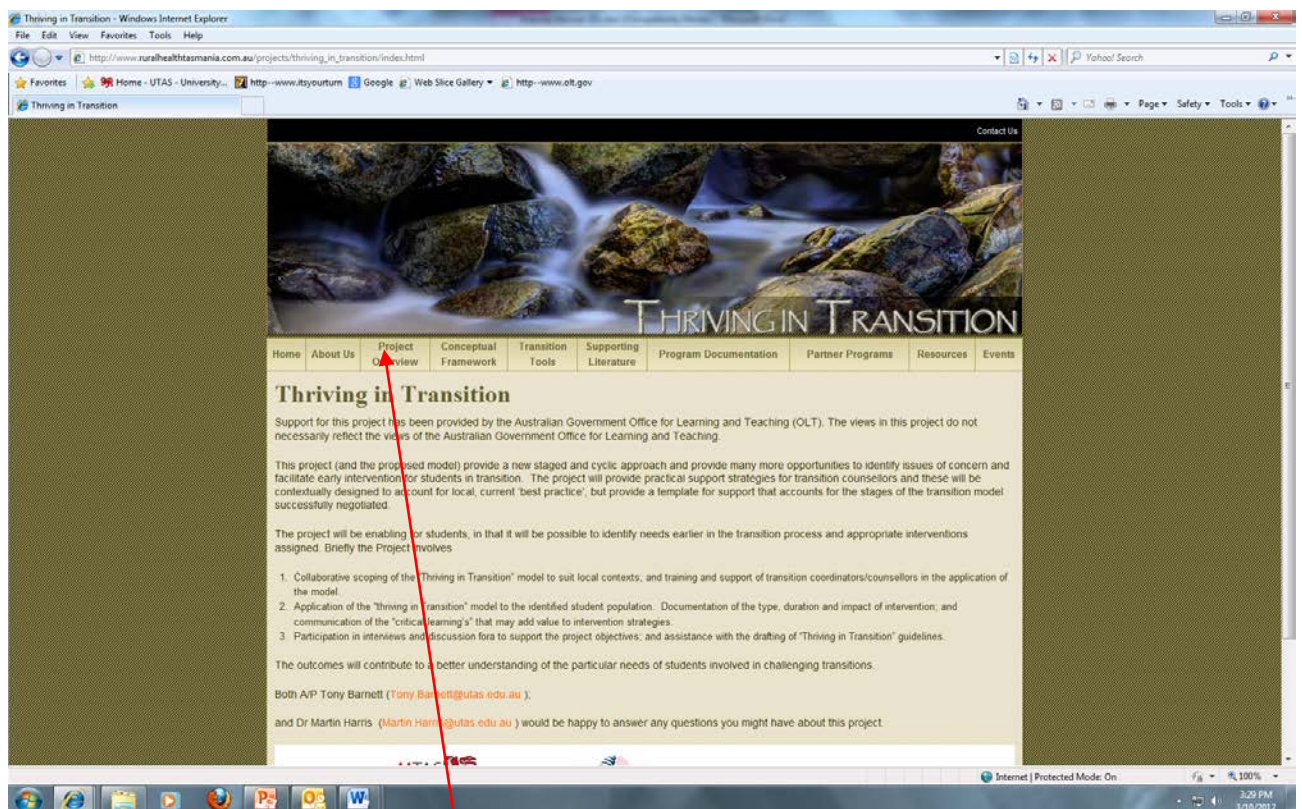
---

### Website User Guide

Welcome to the Thriving in Transition website guide. The guide is designed to lead you through a series of Screen Shots and descriptors to assist you to use the website Conceptual Framework. Other parts of the website will be populated with material as they are developed and exploration of that documentation is encouraged.

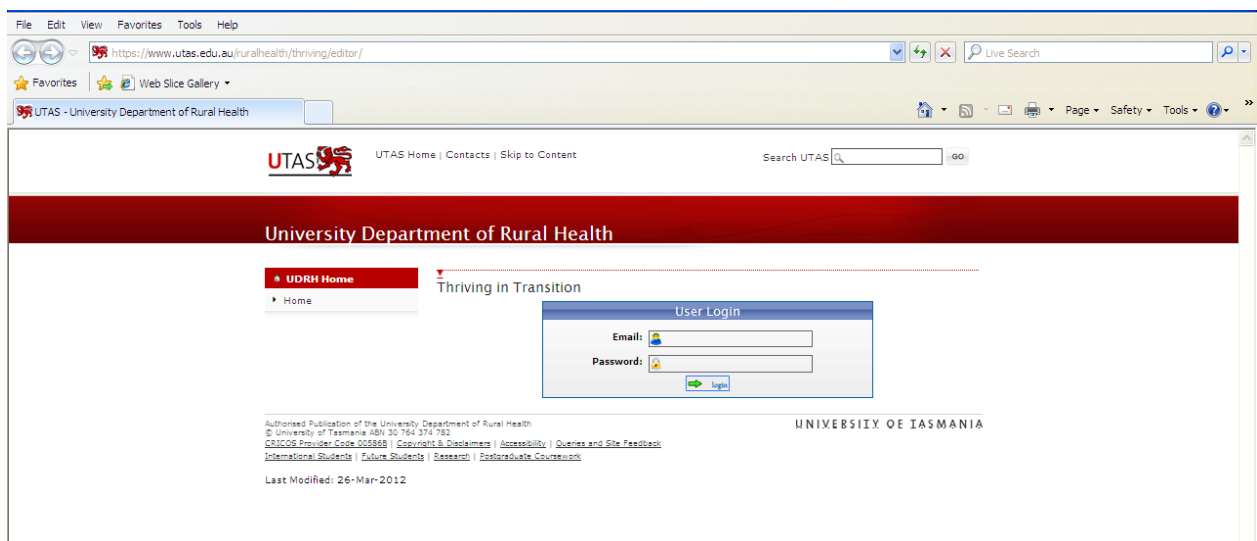
Logging on to the website:

[http://www.ruralhealthtasmania.com.au/projects/thriving\\_in\\_transition/index.html#](http://www.ruralhealthtasmania.com.au/projects/thriving_in_transition/index.html#)

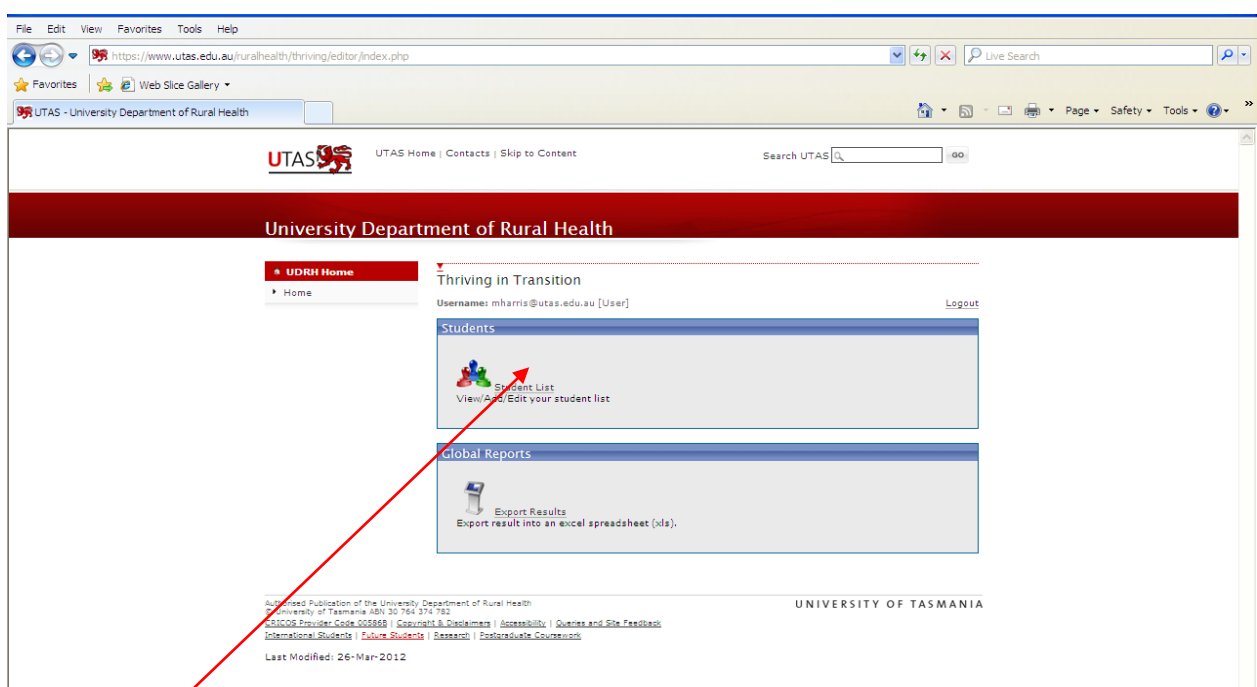


Click the button entitled “Conceptual Framework” to be taken to a sign-in page.

The log in page (see below) requires signing in with your email address and a password. Passwords can be arranged by contacting the project administrator.



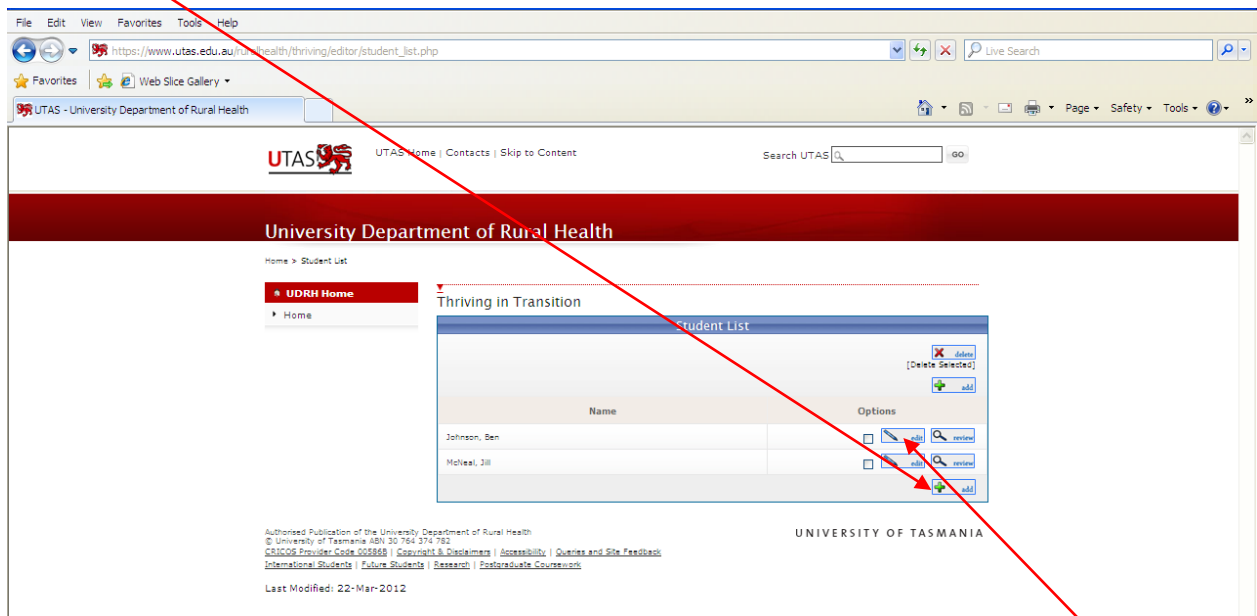
After signing in you will be linked to page that offer two pathways. The first is the student list portal and the second is the Global Reporting (summary reporting) portal to convert entries into an Excel spread-sheet.



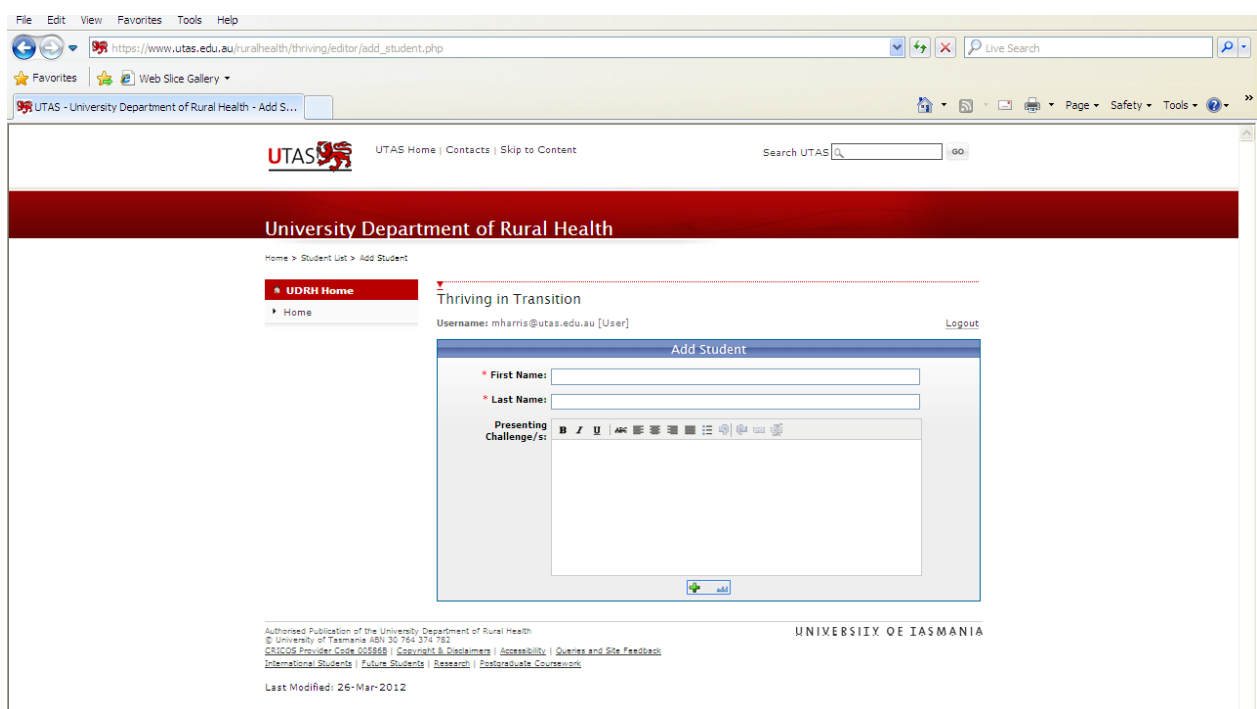
To go to the Student List “click” the first link button; this is where you can View/Add/Edit your student list. We will describe the Global Reporting later in the manual.

You will be taken to a student list page (see below) where you can enter your participating students. This is a pivotal page as it allows you to navigate in different directions.

The Add student button enables additional students to be added to the list together with comments (currently titled “presenting challenges”).



The Add button will take you to the screen below where student details can be entered together with “presenting challenges” – a space to record issues of concern. This page is also accessed by the Edit button.



The Review button takes you to a page where the student counsellor must make some subjective judgements about the student's progress against the stage components. This is best managed one stage at a time.

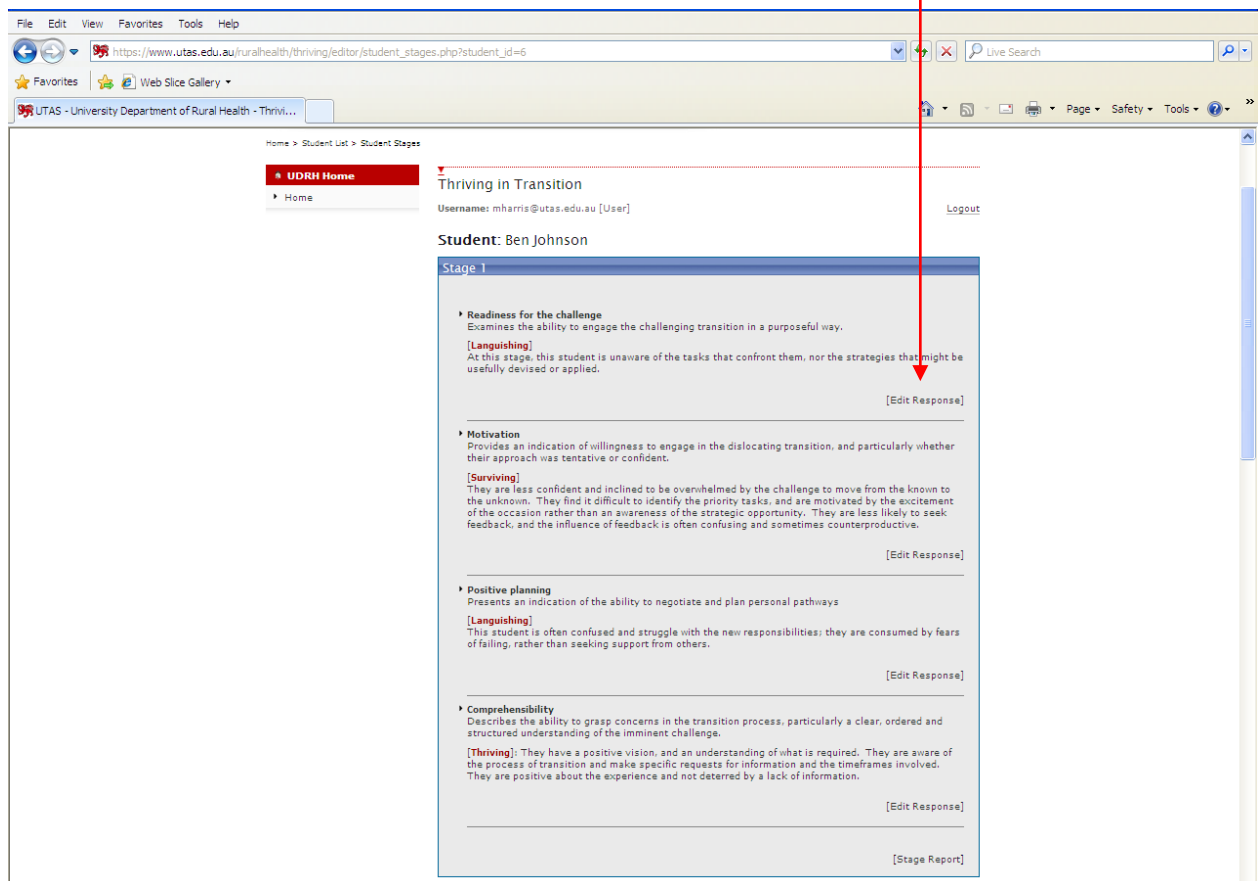
The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL [https://www.utas.edu.au/ruralhealth/thriving/editor/student\\_list.php?res=updated](https://www.utas.edu.au/ruralhealth/thriving/editor/student_list.php?res=updated). The page header includes the UTAS logo and navigation links. The main content area is titled 'Thriving in Transition' and contains a 'Student List' table. The table has two columns: 'Name' and 'Options'. The 'Options' column contains checkboxes, 'add' buttons, and 'review' buttons. A red arrow points to the 'review' button for the student 'Johnson, Ben'. Below the table, there is a footer with contact information and a 'Last Modified' date of 22-Mar-2012.

Name	Options
Johnson, Ben	<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">add</a> <a href="#">review</a>
Mollesal, Jill	<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">add</a> <a href="#">review</a>



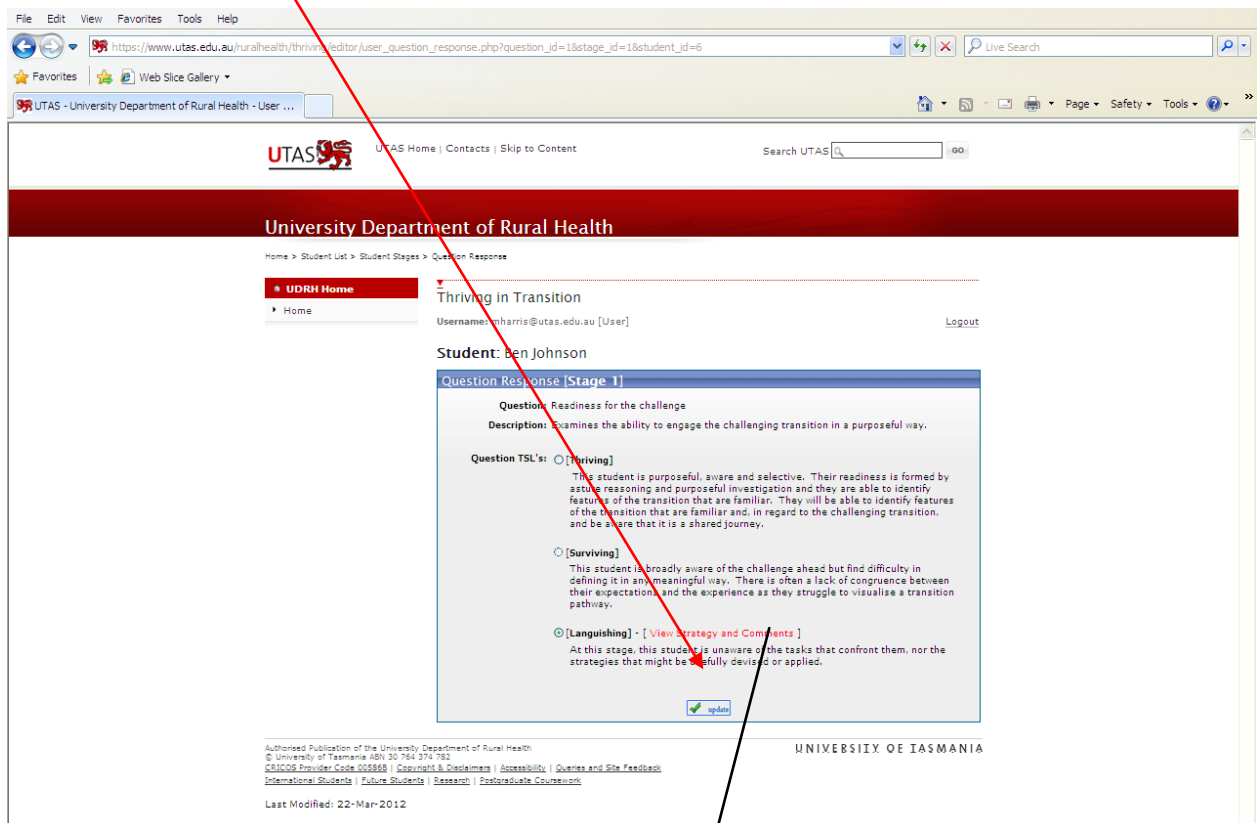
The Review button takes you to the Students individual page where the student counsellor can select from three (3) options for each stage component (i.e. Languishing, Surviving or Thriving).

These **responses selections** are summarised on this page but counsellors must drill down one more page to make the initial selection or to edit their selection. This is the Edit Response button.

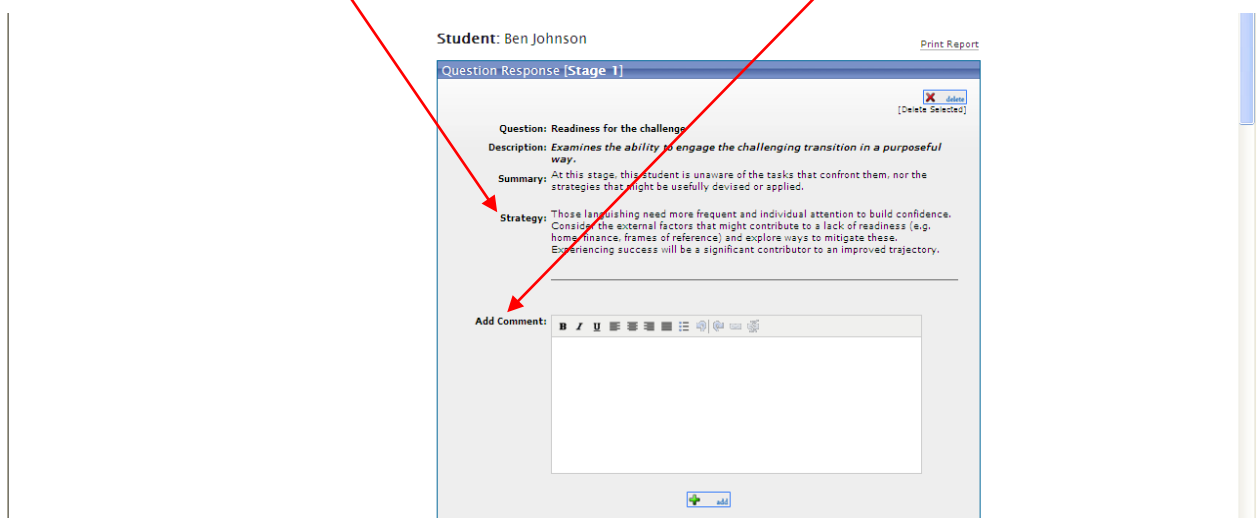


Any historical selections will be captured in the summary page, so graduation from one level to the other will be observable as historical information. We are currently exploring a graph version of this movement over time.

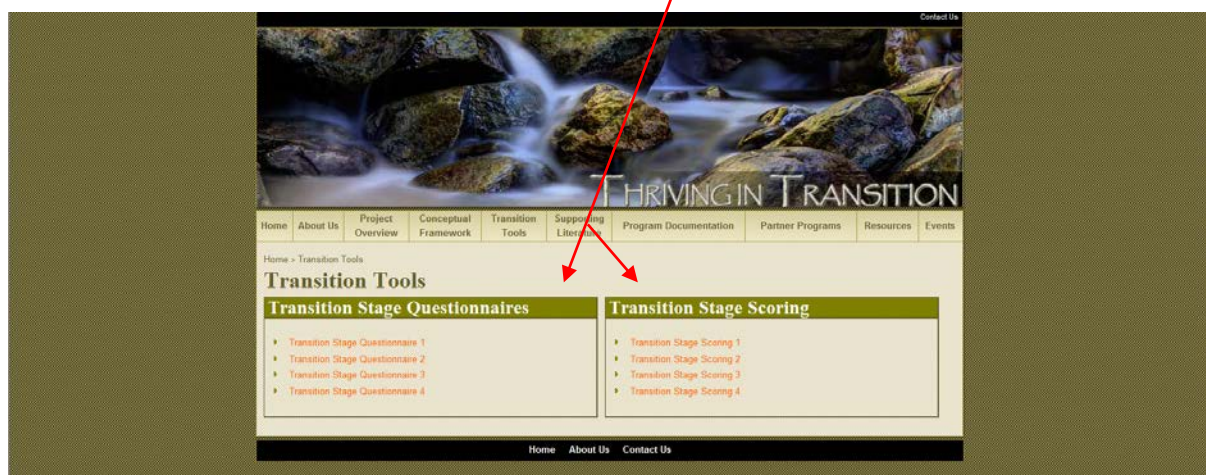
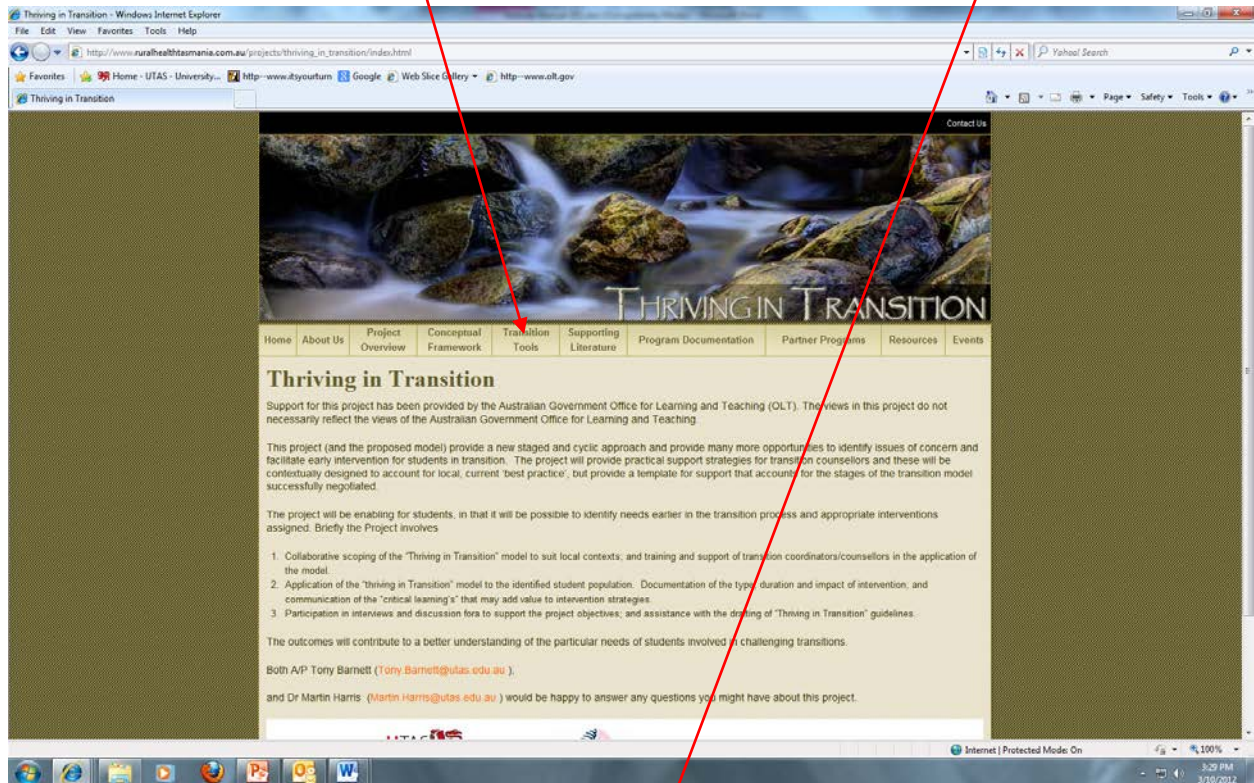
The Edit Response button is accessed at each of the stage components and viewed one at a time. The characteristics of the component are described and, once selected, it is possible to view suggested strategies and to record comments in regard to particular responses that might be effective for that student (this builds an early intervention strategy for the individual student and also contributes to a database of effective strategies that might be applied to someone at that level of transition (stage and subjective judgement of progress)).



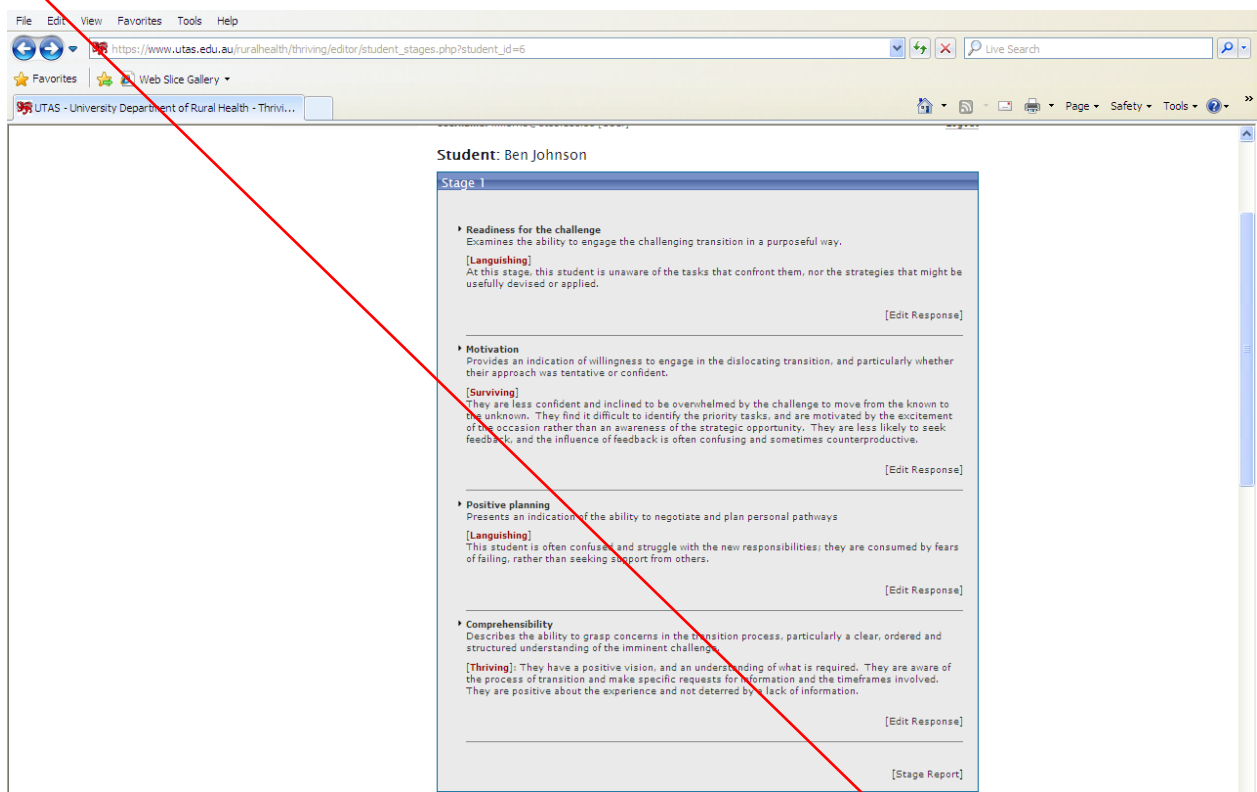
Here suggested Strategies are described and space is made to contribute comments to the student's profile (and the database of suggested strategies)



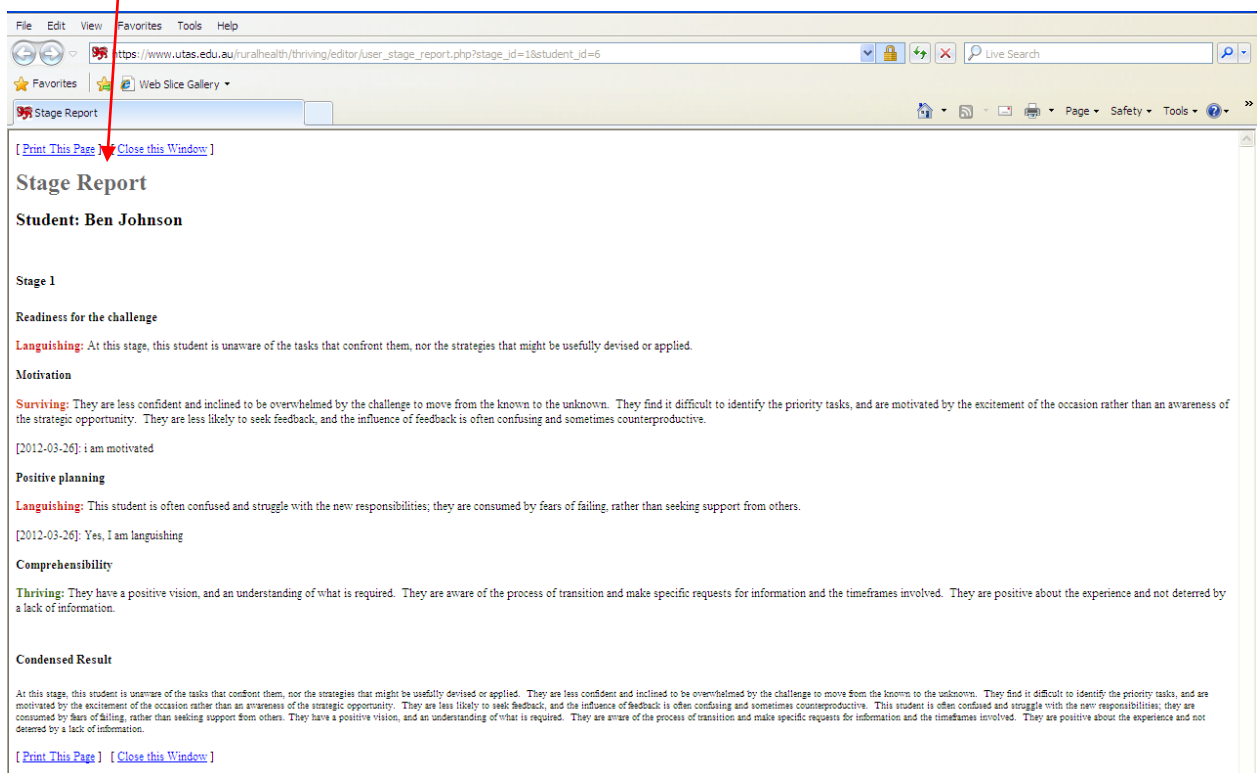
To complement the subjective judgement of the student counsellor the Thriving in Transition project offers a Stage Questionnaire. This questionnaire has reasonable levels of face validity, but still requires stronger psychometric analysis to be relied upon. It is offered here to assist student counsellors in their assessment of student progress through the stages and provide a level of objectivity to the assessment process. The project is also interested in collecting comments and suggestions in regard to the instrument. Each Stage Questionnaire and Scoring Sheets are available in PDF documents through the Transition Tools portal.



Once the student counsellor has created a student list and has entered their levels and comments, it is possible to view the students profile and to print a Stage Report documents for a “paper based” record. This is done at the Review page:



The Stage Report opens in a separate window and provides a condensed, printable summary.



This User Manual is a 'work in progress' and your suggestions are valued.

Please direct your questions, concerns, suggestions to the administrator/project leader:

*Dr Martin Harris*

*Lecturer in Rural Health*

*University Department of Rural Health, Tasmania,*

*University of Tasmania*

*Locked Bag 1372*

*Launceston Tasmania 7250*

*Ph: +61 (0)3 6324 4029*

*Fax: (03) 6324 4040*

*Mobile: 0438 319 021*

*Email: [Martin.Harris@utas.edu.au](mailto:Martin.Harris@utas.edu.au)*

*Web site: [www.utas.edu.au/ruralhealth](http://www.utas.edu.au/ruralhealth)*

*Support for this project has been provided by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching. The views in this project do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching.*