The aim of the project is to investigate the experiences of students’ from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, experiences of transition to studying at Sydney University.

Insights into the experiences of these students will be used to identify where the University might focus initiatives to further support and improve the quality of students’ first year and students’ experiences in general. The project also provides advice first year students have for incoming students to help in their transition. Significantly this project identifies the actual needs students speak of as distinct from imagined or anticipated needs.

First week feelings – student’s sketch

There are certain messages students repeatedly speak of. The 10 most common, in order of student priority are -

1. Students appreciate the social opportunities and sociable lifestyle offered by the University, its clubs, societies and events. The University is a good place to meet friends and making new, more diverse friends is important in 1st Year.
2. Students are not clear about what lecturers’ expect of them in their subjects and in their assessments. Expectations vary between subjects and the Unit of Study Outlines don’t always make them clear or able to be understood by new students.
3. Students feel a need to be able to talk to someone, a supporter who can give academic advice when they are struggling and can advise on subject choices, career paths, degree options etc.
4. Students enjoy the independence and choice associated with studying at University and flexibility in relation to attendance, hours, timetabling etc is helpful when trying to find a balance between study, work and a social life.
5. Students are having difficulty with online enrolment and pre-enrolment, and with lodging online applications and submissions with no person to speak to or give assurance.
6. Students value having access to what they see to be up to date resources and facilities. They appreciate the University's libraries, old buildings and grounds and the many places to hang out with friends.

7. Students find there is often a lack of connection between lecturers and students. The lecturers can be impersonal, they don’t always engage with students and it’s hard to ask questions.

8. Students would like to have mentors, to have the opportunity to connect with someone familiar, someone who has been through it all before.

9. Students find that there is often too much content covered too quickly in lectures. With crammed timetables it is difficult to catch up before assessment. The lecturers seem unaware as to whether students are understanding or keeping up with them.

10. Students appreciate the need to motivate their own learning but also feel there is a lack of incentive to do well, especially if you are an average student.

Recommendations

From the students’ viewpoint, the University should consider to -

**Continue University support for students having active and varied social lives and keep students informed of what is happening across the University throughout the year.**

Upper most in students’ minds is the active and varied social life the University provides and encourages. As the year moves on, the intensity of Orientation Week and the first months fade, students speak of becoming less aware of the events, activities and programs on offer.

**Encourage lecturers to make explicit and talk through their expectations with incoming 1st year students taking University subjects for the first time.**

Students are struggling with moving between and making sense of new subjects, often in different disciplines and each with their own set of expectations. Unit of Study Outlines need to make explicit lecturers’ expectations and assessment criteria. It would help to talk them through and for lecturers to appreciate the extent to which all subjects are new to 1st Years.

**Make available academic staff, advisors and/or mentors to 1st Year students so they can speak with them, get advice and receive personal assurance about their studying.**

Students find it difficult to find someone, a real person to speak to to get advice. More access to mentor programs would be helpful. Students speak about often finding online enrolling, pre-enrolling, applying for, submitting assignments and feedback trying and difficult to know if you are doing it correctly, and don’t have someone to ask.

**Realize the connection between lecturers engaging with their 1st Year students and students motivating their own learning.**

Students understand that their learning at University needs to be self motivated, but feel with little assurance, large class sizes, crammed timetables and impersonal learning experiences, it is easy to lose engagement, get left behind and have to face poor results. Having choice, students too readily see lectures as not being useful, they lose motivation and stop attending. Lecturers can have a key role in turning this around.
Mapping the findings in detail

The first two pages of this report summarize findings from the students. This second part with its associated appendices map in full students’ responses to questions asked in the focus groups, and are intended to give readers opportunity to draw their own insights directly from what students have to say.

The following table maps what students have said about their needs, how they perceive the University as meeting their needs and what they think the University could do to better support them. The earlier recommendations have been informed by these students’ suggestions of support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What students said</th>
<th>How students’ perceive the University as meeting their needs</th>
<th>What students think the University could do to better support them</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>In the first four weeks you...</strong></td>
<td>University is seen as a place full of different people with different backgrounds. More diverse than school, this is good. Students appreciative of the wide range of up to date resources on offer. O Week helpful. Maps are useful but uncool as using them tags you as a 1st Year.</td>
<td>University to keep doing the same.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to come to terms with the bigness of University – the numbers of people, buildings, resources, student services, events etc are daunting.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to find ways, opportunities to make new friends. Important to make new friends not from school.</td>
<td>University seen to be good at providing places, opportunities to make friends, socialize eg cafes, open spaces, events, O Week. Societies, clubs etc particularly helpful. Tutorials are good places to make friends ie familiar faces and groups are constant. Camps good.</td>
<td>University to keep doing the same.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find it hard to maintain new friends because you don’t get to see them often</td>
<td>Students see this difficulty as part of the initial intensity and newness of University.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find it good to know there are others in the same boat ie you’re not on your own. You want to feel as if you belong</td>
<td>Societies, clubs, events etc are good for creating a sense of belonging. Belonging tied to making friends + University is good at setting up opportunities for new friendships. Helpful if you have siblings who already go to University, you can do things with them.</td>
<td>University to keep doing the same. University to keep doing the same. University to keep doing the same.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mentoring programs seen as helping, particularly early on in the year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Want things to become more familiar</td>
<td>Students are needing time to settle in (say 2-3 weeks at least) and become more confident to ask questions. Siblings + friends helpful</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to learn how to not stand out, not be tagged as a first year, you want to blend in</td>
<td>Students need to get used to no uniform, choose clothes so as not to stand out. Need to avoid looking lost on campus.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to work out commuting and timetables</td>
<td>University offers flexibility in relation to attendance, timetabling, subject choices. You have the choice to attend lectures, tutorials. You work out which lectures are useful, worth going to and which ones to miss.</td>
<td>University to keep doing same. University to be aware getting to 8.00 am lectures is hard for some students. University to take initiatives so as lectures considered useful by students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realize University teaching is different, less personal than school</td>
<td>Students see certain but not all lecturers as being knowledgeable, inspiring, experts in field. They see there to be little personal connection between lecturers and students. In contrast tutors are seen as teachers who care about students’ well being. Tutorials are more personal than lectures, and there is opportunity to get to know tut group students, good to be with familiar students.</td>
<td>Students are unsure as to whether University lecturers should connect more personally with students. This could be discussed by the lecturers with their students. Could be helpful if students were explained the differences /relationships / partnerships between lectures and tutorials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have to get used to their being hundreds of students in class</td>
<td>Students are aware that large class sizes seem to be a necessary part of University learning ie they just have to get used to them</td>
<td>Students question whether class sizes could be reduced. They see class sizes linked to impersonal learning experiences, lose of engagement and poor results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to realize it’s ok to ask questions of others</td>
<td>Just need to realize this. It is something students need to do for themselves.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to find things out for yourself, you are not given things like at school, you are independent</td>
<td>You just need to do it. University is perceived as being encouraging of student independence, which is good.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throughout the year you...</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realize that University offers more than just study</td>
<td>Students feel pressed by crammed timetables so limited in taking on other additional programs/initiatives</td>
<td>Look into timetable load in 1st year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn to manage time, be more organized</td>
<td>Time management becomes harder as you become more involved, but it’s good to be more involved. Not expected that University should help in this.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to find a balance between study, work and social life</td>
<td>You lose focus, get poor results and take on too much paid work. Students are unsure who/where/whether to get help.</td>
<td>Make more apparent University support for students needing such help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to find your own incentives/motivation to do well</td>
<td>Students can see they need to motivate their own learning (different from school) but would like some University support to do so.</td>
<td>University could provide more incentives to do well for average students. Scholarships/awards only for the very best.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have to keep up my motivation to be involved, not let it drop off. Not let my motivation to study fade.</td>
<td>Some of the University societies and supports have tapered off. They seem to have lost the motivation to engage with you, you lose your engagement with them. Need to use University breaks to refresh.</td>
<td>University to maintain the engagement of support services with students throughout the whole year, not just at the beginning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would like to know more about lecturer’s expectations, especially with assessments</td>
<td>Students see the University falling short in this area. They see the Unit of Study outlines as the place to make explicit expectations + assessment criteria.</td>
<td>UoS outlines need to be clearer particularly in relation to articulating expectations on students and assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjust to different expectations of different lecturers</td>
<td>Students understand there will be different expectations. Once they know them they can adjust.</td>
<td>Lecturers need to make expectations clear. Realize theirs might be at odds with other lecturers and consider what affect these differing expectations might be having on 1st year students trying to adjust between one subject and the next.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get used to it all changing each semester</td>
<td>Time at University helps you get more used to changes and start to understand the system.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to be able to access someone who can advise about subject choices, degree directions and career paths.</td>
<td>Students feel strongly that the University does not provide this</td>
<td>University to make sure students have access to personal academic advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get help from students who have been through it all before</td>
<td>Students feel this should be easier to do given the numbers of students</td>
<td>Offer more mentoring programs across faculties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get better at knowing what is going on at University</td>
<td>Hard after the initial few weeks for students to know / access what is going on across the University</td>
<td>University needs to keep communicating events, services, support right through the year, not just in the early weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find ways to not have to struggle or be confused about enrolling, pre-enrolling online</td>
<td>Hard to work out the website with no personal advice, enrolling/pre-enrolling is stressful with no help</td>
<td>University could provide people to talk to, to advise on enrolling/pre-enrolling procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Become more confident asking lecturers questions</td>
<td>Students feel they need to get better at it, but also feel lecturers could help as well</td>
<td>Lecturers could be more encouraging of / provide opportunity for questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find ways to better connect with lecturers and tutors</td>
<td>Lecturers interesting but they don’t know us as people like at school. Lectures and lecturers can be boring when you feel anonymous in the crowd.</td>
<td>Lecturers could engage more with students, in particular 1st Years given their background of personal connection with their school teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to find ways to keep pace with the content of lecturers, not fall behind</td>
<td>Students see this being the responsibility of lecturers</td>
<td>Lecturers could ask students whether they are understanding the content being taught</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stop being so worried about struggling in our studies.</td>
<td>In O Week and in our first lectures we were told about some of the learning services available. Now when I need them, I don’t know how and where to find them.</td>
<td>University to make this more evident to students, particularly through the middle and end of year, when students have become aware they need support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to find where to go for support as an average student</td>
<td>Having gone along to some of the Learning Support Services when having difficulties, I’m not eligible because I’m not struggling enough.</td>
<td>Review eligibility requirements, so as learning support services might become more accessible to average students who are struggling.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following reports on what students have said in relation to three issues: how students have changed through their first year at Sydney University, what advice they would offer to incoming students and what they know about the University’s learning support services.

**In relation to how students’ experiences have changed from the beginning to the end of their first year of study** -
- Students at the beginning of the University year felt excited, initially daunted by the size and numbers of people and had an overriding sense of not knowing what to expect nor what is expected of them.
- Feeling strongly that making new friends mattered, students realized University didn’t look after you in the same ways as school and that you were on your own.
- By the end of the year students felt more settled and knew better what to expect, things were becoming familiar.
- With strengthening friendships, students began to learn the rules, to work out their timetables, where to go and which lectures were useful.
- As familiarity grew, students felt support from student and social groups by the end of the year had tapered off. As their initial excitement waned so too did their motivation.

**On the advice students offer to incoming students** -
- Get involved in as much as you can, try new things, be prepared to give everything a go. It’s all about being proactive, being involved in new experiences and meeting new people.
- Join societies, go to events, make the most out of University life and give it your best shot. The power of social networking can truly enrich life at University.
- Be independent, don’t rely on others. Motivate yourselves, no one is going to force or chase you up, what you put in is what you get out.
- Don’t be afraid to ask for help. If you stand back you’ll get left behind and time flies at University.

**On the learning support available to students**
- There is a perceived lack of support for students who see themselves as mainstream, average or coming from a background other than those focused on by support services. They might be struggling but, in the University’s eyes not struggling enough, or in terms of eligibility for scholarships they are good but not great. There is a strong awareness that if you are an average student you probably will not meet the selection criteria so therefore you can’t use the service.
- Students heard a lot about learning support services in O Week but not much beyond, especially later in the semester when they were needed.
- Some lecturers made links to the Writing Hub, the Write Site and the Learning Centre, when they linked directly into the subjects being taught.
- Students were of the view that the learning support services offered limited and general support, as distinct from discipline specific support, which they felt they needed.
- Students generally had a limited knowledge of the learning support services available, few had used or thought they were eligible for support and many expressed the need to make the services and their location more known to students.
Conducting the Project

Students spoke about their 1st Year experiences in a series of relaxed, informal focus groups. All were Broadway access students, students who come into the University from educationally disadvantaged schools. All 2011 1st Year Broadway Access students were invited to participate in the ITL’s Walk a Mile Project. Invitations were sent out by email through Catherine Dernee, the Student Experience Co-ordinator of Student Support Services.

Of the 14 participants, 11 were female, 3 male, and were undertaking a range of degrees. For a full list of participants and their degrees see Appendix 1 (p10.).

Each of the focus groups met for an hour with the groups ranging in size from 1, 7, 3, 2 and 1 students and lunch/morning tea/afternoon tea was shared.

Each participant expressed a keenness to be involved, was comfortable with being contacted again if required for future involvement and was given a voucher in recognition of their participation.

The focus groups were held at the ITL, Rm 391 on the 20th October, well towards the end of second semester but prior to stuvac and exams commencing.

Dr. Sue Rice facilitated the focus groups with Catherine Dernee, Student Experience Co-ordinator of Student Support Services attending one of the sessions.

An important intention behind the ways the groups were conducted was to ask students to communicate their experiences through a range of expressions eg key phrases, drawings, captioned photos, postcards to friends etc., so as to elicit a wide range of response types and not inbuild reliance on more vocal students. Students seemed willing to and obviously comfortable in speaking of their experiences.

On completion one student spoke of enjoying the session, and commented that they felt the facilitator seemed to care for the students and their opinions. Another student returned days later to interview me about the project for an article in Honi Soit.

Each of the sessions were conducted in the same way with participants being asked the same sequence of questions as follows:

1. Reflecting on the beginning of your year, what was it like? How did you feel? What stands out?
Students' responses were written down by the facilitator as they spoke, i.e., key phrases were jotted down using large marker on A1 paper so participants could see what was being written and could check it. Without needing to write, students were free to speak and discussion was lively and fast-paced, with students picking up cues from each other.

2. **Think about where you are now, what is it like? How do you feel? What stands out now?**
   Students' responses were again written down as they spoke, so as to enable comparison with Question 1.

3. **Draw an aspect of University this year that is memorable for you.**
   Students were provided with blank A4 pages, a choice of pencils/pens and 3 examples of students’ sketches. They had no hesitation in giving the drawing a go.

4. **Pick one of the photos you like and write a caption that relates to your own experiences?**
   Students wrote their caption on the bottom of an A4 photo they chose from a series of shots taken by USyd students not involved in the project. Reviewing the captions, responses appeared to be more closely related to the photo content rather than being particular to each participant and as such were limited in their application.

5. **Write down three good things about the University and why?**
   Students wrote responses on A4 pages provided.

6. **Write down three things about the University that could be improved and why?**
   Students wrote responses on A4 pages provided.

7. **Choose a postcard that you like, imagine that you are sending it to a friend in Yr 11/12. What advice would you give them that you think would help?**
   Students wrote on the back of the ITL’s postcard series and were noticeably keen to do this.

8. **Did they use any of the Learning Support Services listed on the sheet, this year? Did they know of the services? How did they know?**
   Students were asked to mark up their responses to the questions on a two-page ITL handout, listing the full range of Learning Support Services available to students.

For a full list of student responses to these questions refer to **Appendix 2** (p 11.) and for their drawings refer to **Appendix 3** (p21.).

The quality of this data lies in the fact that it is essentially comprised of comments which come directly from students. It is the immediacy and the first-hand nature of the data which is particularly powerful. These are real, as distinct from imagined or anticipated needs for students, they are real accounts of how students perceive the University as meeting their needs and meaningful suggestions as to how students believe the University could better meet their needs.

Given the nature of the data, **analysis and interpretation** has remained focused on what matters to students. The relative importance of issues/needs has been attributed in proportion to the numbers of students voicing the same concern i.e. the more a concern has been voiced the more importance it is considered. This order of importance is reflected in the ‘10 key messages’ and ‘Recommendations’ on pages 1. and 2. However all comments are important and as such can be accessed in the relevant Appendix.
Project expenditure has been directed towards reimbursement for the facilitator’s time to initiate, organize and conduct the focus groups, to document, analyse and interpret the data and to compile the completed project report. Minor expenditure was on focus group lunches and student participation vouchers.

APPENDIX 1

Participants (removed for confidentiality)
## APPENDIX 2

### Focus group responses to questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Responses (student quotes in italics)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting on the beginning of your year...</td>
<td>Early days were exciting, University feel, abundance of resources eg libraries, amount of people, so many people is good, need to get used to it, initially a bit daunting. In lectures it’s the most obvious, want some touchstone, some sort of basis or familiar faces. Tutorials – same group is good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was it like?</td>
<td>Older sister – less unknown. Open days helped to meet people. Evangelical society did tour – helped. Twin sister – helped in so far as doing it together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did you feel?</td>
<td>Lonely, by myself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What stands out?</td>
<td>Enrolling – paperwork!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asking questions, not knowing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Big, physically big, people, distance moving between venues. Too embarrassed to use maps, tagged as First Years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No knowing where and what is daunting. Expected it to be scary, good to know you’re in the same boat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What to wear – no uniform, told before that you are judged by what you wear, your dress standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lecturers interesting – lack of knowing you as a person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hard to maintain friends – don’t get to see them often. Camps are good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Making friends mattered. Important to make new friends not from school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching style is different.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not knowing what is expected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hundreds in class.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Thinking about where you are now.... | Unknown is scary, exciting.  
|                                          | Started out excited – stressful  
|                                          | By myself is scary / lonely.  
| What is it like now?                    | More used to it – stable, got a rhythm / pattern, more sure. Familiarity comes to mind.  
|                                          | Friendships strengthened. Time management harder – more involved. Understand that the Uni offers more than just study.  
|                                          | Nonchalant.  
| How do you feel?                       | Want S2 to end, not refreshed, break too short.  
|                                          | Loosing focus, its showing in my results – taken on more paid work and social life. Need to try to find a balance.  
|                                          | Some of the support groups (student + University groups) have tapered off. They have lost motivation to engage with you. You lose motivation. Not desirable, want the motivation.  
|                                          | 8.00am lectures no good.  
|                                          | Learn the rules – push boundaries. You learn you won’t fail if you hand it in late.  
|                                          | Motivation – more discerning.  
|                                          | Learning to deal with commuting.  
|                                          | Worked out the website – less stressed.  
|                                          | Worked out travel / timetable / useful lectures.  
|                                          | Getting used to it – takes 2-3 weeks.  
|                                          | Tuts are the place to make friends.  
|                                          | You have to start again each semester.  
|                                          | You get used to it and it changes all again next semester.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Draw an aspect of University this year that is memorable for you.</th>
<th>See Appendix 3 (p21) Students’ sketches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Look at the photos provided, pick one you like and write a caption that relates to your experiences.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. ‘Having the opportunity to access a wide range of resources to further our studies within the University campus. However further studies are done solo.’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. ‘After every storm there is a rainbow’.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. ‘Balancing Uni work and a job and maintaining a social life is hard. BUT through planning, allowing time for a bit of anything and everything it’ll be okay.’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. ‘For the first time ever I have to motivate myself to study’.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. ‘Sitting in a group, frantically trying to figure out our math assignment hours before its due…’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. ‘Its (diary) full in the first week and dies down the weeks after, until its just sitting there empty’.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. ‘Going from a lecture to room of 300 to reading my reader in solitude’.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. ‘wow I know how to use a microscope now’.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. ‘Bask in my brightness but do come prepared’.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. ‘Desperately trying to finish my reading before a tute because I was out way too late last night partying with my new found Uni friends!’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K. (of the open diary....) ‘...And that was the end of the story. PS. They lived happily (disorganized) ever after.’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. ‘...just sitting under the sun with my bird pal’.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. ‘Sometimes you feel like the alien. Do you fit anywhere?’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Write down 3 good things about Uni and why?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
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</table>
| A. | ‘Great resources.  
  So many social opportunities.  
  Beautiful buildings and greenlands, opportunity to socialize’. |
| B. | ‘Flexibility – relaxed hours, attendance requirements and timetable adjustments.  
  Beautiful grounds – buildings, open grass space, cafes etc.  
  Great resources’. |
| C. | ‘Society and clubs – SRC as well.  
  Tutors who care about students well being.  
  Resources the Uni has; library, student services’. |
| D. | ‘Social life.  
  Independence.  
  Self motivated learning’ |
| E. | ‘Independence.  
  Social life (ability to make life long friends).  
  Credentials of University, I know if I graduate I’ll have good job prospects because of my University’. |
| F. | ‘Social life – friends.  
  Choice – attending lectures, tutorials.  
  Self motivated learning’ |
| G. | ‘Resources.  
  Space to hang out with friends.  
  SULS organizes really good events which I didn’t find with other societies.  
  Amazing lecturers’. |
| H. | ‘Support from lecturers / tutors’ |

N. ‘Trying to draw a balance between life and studying.’
| Courses taught by leading researcher in their field  
Up to date modern facilities’. |
|---|
| I. ‘Being able to connect with inspirational people  
Night-life (on and off campus)  
Diversity of opinions’. |
| J. ‘Events/parties subsidized by the Uni.  
Nightlife.  
Space/places to see friends/get food etc.  
Quiet places to study.  
Law Library has great air conditioning/central heating’. |
| K. ‘New friends/new people, school people very similar.  
New ways of thinking.  
Vibes are different’. |
| L. ‘Better social life.  
Flexibility.  
Many events’. |
| M. ‘Freedom to be yourself.  
Facebook groups for MECO – helpful for assessments!, learning from each other – utilize it!’ |
| N. ‘Societies and clubs.  
Flexible.  
Events, museums etc’. |

**Write down 3 things about Uni that could be improved and why?**

| A. ‘If you struggle and do not have anyone to talk to you will really slip through the system.  
Different subjects expect different things. For example one subject I am doing noticeably worse with my essay writing than others without changing. It is unclear how to adjust.  
Struggle and fear with re-enrolment over the internet.  
A mentor or buddy system for first years coming to Uni so that someone who knows about the Uni can help them” |
B. ‘Lack of clarity and succinct description in unit outlines.
   Limited awareness of what’s on.
   Online applications/submissions – lack of personal reassurance’.

C. ‘Student admin aren’t really a coherent unit – one person says something another person says something different.
   Don’t know the stuff going on at Uni.
   Unit outline is quite broad and vague. Not too sure what they expect of you’.

D. ‘More people to talk to/advise.
   Prices.
   Lack of incentives to do well’.

E. ‘Incentive to do well?
   Distance between classes.
   Improvements – more access to assistance in direction of my degree eg need someone to talk to about path of my degree.
   More computer access, wi fi’.

F. ‘Someone to advise.
   Prices.
   More areas of study in the library.
   Getting around Uni’.

G. ‘Lectures can be boring when you feel anonymous in the crowd.
   Not knowing how to write essays for different subjects eg Psych essays are so different to Arts/Law essays.
   Harder to maintain friends.
   How to pre-enrol?’

H. ‘Too much content being taught, unable to catch up before assessments
   Crammed timetable – unable to do extra-curricula subjects.
   Not knowing what you need to do.’
| Minimal academic advice.  
| (Need) a mentor.‘ |

I. ‘Confusion about course structure when starting out. 
   Needing to understand better of what is expected of me for assessments. 
   Accessibility to information’. 

J. ‘More specific assessment criteria. 
   Needs more notification of events. 
   Often too much to be able to fit in the word count but then one loses marks for being ‘too succinct’. 
   Enrolment process is very confusing! 
   More mentor/buddy systems.’ 

K. ‘Lectures need improving – mostly impersonal aspect. 
   Hard to ask questions within lectures: different to High School – content too fast / impersonal. 
   All things organized are around a culture of drinkin – for some it’s a bit off putting, want to go but not get wasted.’ 

L. ‘Need to offer more opportunities for students to get involved. 
   Build better ways to connect with lecturers or/and tutors. 
   Advice on pathways and career ways. 
   Lecturers need to be more engaging’. 

M. ‘Tutorials – need training in teaching and structured tutorials. 
   None of my lectures are recorded – I write slowly, and I want to review my notes.’ 

N. ‘Need to improve connections with tutors + lecturers – lecturers in particular. 
   Need for all around supporter. 
   Lecturers should get feedback on whether students understand’. 

Choose a postcard that you like, imagine you are sending a postcard to a |

A. ‘Do not be afraid! Although it is a big place do not be scared to ask questions. Some institutions have buddy systems and this is a great way to learn about the Uni from someone who has recently been in your position.’
| school friend in Yr 11/12. What advice would you give them that you think would help? | B. ‘Get involved in as much as you can – if you stand back, you’ll just get left behind. Try new things, join groups, go to events – whatever you’re interested in – just make friends and give everything a go!’

C. ‘Although it might be daunting know that communication is the key to a less stressful Uni life. Take hold of all the resources at Uni including your tutors and lecturers. There are services that can be accessed too. Don’t be afraid to ask.’

D. ‘Prepare to meet all different types of people and be more independent. You are going to interact with all types of people from society, not like in school.’

E. ‘I know you’re studying real hard now thinking that Uni will be a walk in the park, but don’t come to University with that attitude; you’ll be in for a nasty surprise :’)’

F. ‘Being independent and not relying on others is the key. There is no one chasing you up to make sure you are doing stuff. What you put in is what you get out in the end’.

G. ‘Uni life is all about being involved as nobody is going to force you to do anything. Join clubs, go to events, meet new friends, but make sure you do your readings!!’

H. ‘Time flies at Uni, week 1 turns to week 13 so quickly. Get support, learn the content as quick as and hopefully succeed’.

I. ‘Be proactive in seeking new experiences, whether curricular or otherwise. Do not underestimate the power of social networking – it can truly enrich life at University.’

J. ‘Make sure you join societies and go to the events from the very start of semester!’

K. ‘Study hard, play hard and above all exercise 3 a lot because there’s a heck of a lot of walking to be done in Uni.’

L. ‘Give it your best shot...and even if things don’t go your way...there are many pathways to get into Uni. Most importantly do what YOU want to do.’

M. ‘Don’t be afraid to ask for help – there are people willing to assist you. Seek to make the most out of University life –
N. ‘Get ready for the unexpected, but don’t stress out too much, everything falls into place.’

| After giving students 2 x pages from the ITL website listing students support services, and asking them to skim over them..... | A. ‘These groups (support services) are very specific to a certain type of people/groups eg disabled or Indigenous, however not necessarily for mainstream students. I have been here (Scholarships Office) however I did not meet the criteria. If you are good but not great or have a specific need or background you miss out. So much support (for Indigenous students) but it doesn’t reach out to me because I am a different background.’

| Did they use any of the services this year? | B. ‘Lack of support for the mainstream / average students. Referencing support needed! Heard of the Learning Centre and the Writing Hub, used the Write Site’.

| Did they know of them? | C. ‘Experience with Learning Centre – very broad and vague. Writing Hub – teachers who assist have different disciplines – hard to help with certain essays. Scholarships office – hard to get information from the website’.

| How did they know? | D. ‘Knew about the Maths Learning Centre though didn’t apply to a lot of students’.

| | E. ‘Heard lots about them (Learning Support Services) in Open Day, not much beyond then, when they’re actually needed. I knew about the Maths Learning Centre well, and heard about the Learning Centre not the others. Heard about it (Financial support ) early on in the year, haven’t used it.’

| | F. ‘I have used the Writing Hub and the Write Site due to my subjects.’

| | G. ‘Didn’t know about then (Learning support ) really. I heard about the Writing Hub 2 weeks ago AFTER I handed my essays in.’

| | H. ‘(Learning support and Counseling Service) heard of through Broadway scheme introduction, 6 week lectures. Rep from Maths Learning Centre gave intro but can’t help if you don’t meet criteria eg lack math background. Heard of the Writing Hub and of financial support for students.’
I. ‘Need referencing help. Used the Writing Hub, the Write Site, counseling, financial support + scholarships office. Heard of the Koori Centre + support for students with disabilities.’

J. ‘Heard of some of the services but have not used any. Perhaps more help with referencing needed.’

K. ‘Didn’t know about learning support for students. Knew about support for Indigenous students.’

L. ‘No experience with any of these support services.’

M. ‘Not knowing location (of learning support services) in head – need map. First year need a booklet or website made by students. Need to know how to use (Learning Support Services) from first year. Friends are important for learning support. Knew about the Learning Centre. Recommend the Writing Hub. Media and Communications lecturer introduced the Write Site. Aware – planning to go to counseling support. Heard of the support for Indigenous students, international students, students with disabilities. I do note taking for Disabilities services. Been to the Multifaith Chaplaincy Centre.’

N. ‘Make them (Learning Support Services) more known to student body. Heard of the Maths Learning Centre.’
“At the start lost in the crowd. Lots of single faces. Now finding groups and societies that include people similar to me. Greater sense of belonging.”
"Little fish, big pond"

Captioned student’s sketch
“Me”

Student’s sketch
“Pool table”

Student’s sketch
“being alone at the beginning.
Now with friends!!”

Captioned student’s sketch
“Hmmmm...we could go to that lecture or we could go get lunch in Newtown!”

Captioned student’s sketch
Student’s sketch
Student’s sketch
Student’s sketch
Student’s sketch