

Supporting Student Transition through Social Media

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The use of social media and, specifically, Facebook has grown exponentially in all facets of the education sector. Facebook is yet another medium through which universities can offer students support, information and a place to interact with each other, university support staff and resources. Students in transition have been identified as a particular cohort that can benefit from the creative use of social media.

Despite considerable concerns about Facebook, this medium provides an efficient and cost effective *additional* interactive point of engagement to support student transition to university which provides some students without a social network, who are more likely to abandon university or feel isolated at university, with “a sense of belonging to a group and [as well as] relationships with peers” (Adams et al. 2010: 7).

The Faculty of Business and Law at Victoria University (VU) in Melbourne has had a Facebook site since 2008. This site has doubled in Friends in the last year and international students, both in Melbourne and offshore, are overrepresented as Faculty Facebook Friends. This paper examines the Faculty's site and offers a general analysis of Facebook usage. Student perspectives on the faculty site are also provided which suggest the frequency and constancy with which some students access Facebook. The discussion explores ethical and educational qualms about using Facebook in a university context as well as some more technical and cultural concerns about using Facebook to support students offshore.