



CBS International

The First Year Experience in Second Year :
Pathway College v University Direct Entry



Background

- There are a growing number of international and local students entering university programs in the second year of the degree program after transitioning through a pathway provider.
- In Australia the term “pathway provider” is used to refer to partnerships between universities and (generally) private, for-profit higher education colleges providing Diploma programs as a “pathway” for students to enter the second year of a university program



Background

- A high proportion of international students enter university via pathway colleges and lately a growing proportion of domestic students.
- The growth of pathway colleges has been exponential in recent years.

Background

- Australian Education International ([AEI 2012](#)) found that 60 per cent of international students in higher education in 2011 had studied in another sector previously, either a pathway college including VET, a higher education pathway college or an ELICOS centre.

The Growth of Pathway Colleges

- The literature indicates that there are large numbers of student cohorts enrolled in private provider “for profit” pathway colleges.
- For example, Navitas a pathway provider based in Australia, had over 21,000 international and domestic students enrolled in its University Programs Division in 2011, 80% of whom are enrolled in a pathway program and with a suggested average 90% transition rate into second year courses at partner universities ([Baker 2011](#)).

The Growth of Pathway Colleges

- Study Group, another global pathway provider with 28 International Study Centres in 6 countries including Australia, also claims a 90% transition rate into its university partners programs ([SGA 2013](#)).

Purpose of Pathway Colleges

- There has been some discussion on the purpose of pathway colleges and Fiocco and Dunworth ([Fiocco 2006](#); [Dunworth 2012](#)) suggest that the primary purpose of pathway colleges is to increase international student recruitment for the university partner.



Purpose of Pathway Colleges

- Other aspects of pathway college and university partnerships also serve to meet the commitment from many universities to increase student participation more broadly.
- In this sense pathway colleges are ideally positioned as “second chance” institutions.



Purpose of Pathway Colleges

- Importantly, such second chance institutions must ensure rigor in the preparation of their students to ensure that they are well prepared for second year study at the partner university.

Transition of pathway students

- The reported transition rates of pathway students into second year degree programs appear high indicating that the partnerships are of value to the university partner ([Baker 2011](#); [SGA 2013](#)).
- However, there is a lack of literature on the comparative outcomes of pathway students in Diplomas and first year direct entry degree students on campus and in further stages of their degree program.



Transition of pathway students

- Much of the current research on pathway colleges focuses on English language proficiency and the student experience, ([Fiocco 2006](#); [Dunworth 2012](#); [Maros 2012](#); [Mendan 2012](#); [Pearce 2012](#)) and very little has been written on the outcomes of students in pathway colleges once they reach .

Research Purpose

- While research has examined the first year experience of University students in some depth, differences between the experiences of pathway students to direct entry first year university students requires further investigation.
- The purpose of this investigation is to determine the extent of difference between students entering second year of the degree program after completing the equivalent of first year as a Diploma at a pathway provider compared to direct entry students at a University.

Second Year as First Year experience

- Pathway students face their genuine “first year experience” as second year students.
- Generally, universities offer orientation and transition programs for direct entry first year students and there is an expectation that second year students have adapted to university life.
- For pathway students second year may be the first time they have encountered large lecture environments and university policies on how to request an extension for an assessment, how to defer an exam and how to qualify for a supplementary assessment.



Second Year as First Year experience

- There is scant research on this type of student experience and research that does consider the “second year” experience is mainly from the US.
- Anecdotal evidence from ex pathway students indicates that many pathway students experience feelings of “abandonment” when moving from the smaller, more nurturing pathway college to the larger, more impersonal university environment.
- This is particularly relevant given that most universities do not offer transition programs to pathway entry students in second year.



Second Year as First Year experience

- This phenomenon is interesting given that for some universities more than 50% of their students enter from pathway or articulation partners in second and sometimes third year of the degree program.

Research question & data analysis

- Do students entering the second year of a degree program from a pathway college achieve the same pass rates and retention rates as students entering from first year of a degree program?
- Pass rates and retention rates were compared over a three year period – 2010-2012
- Direct entry to second year vs pathway entry to second year

Results

- Data was analysed using analysis of variance (ANOVA)
- Findings were that pathway students pass rates and retention rates were lower overall when compared to direct entry to second year students

Conclusion

- It is evident from the data that students from pathway colleges do not achieve similar pass rates or retention rates to their direct entry counterparts.
- There may be a number of reasons for the difference including that pathway students initially start their studies at a lower academic, English or both academic and English level.

Conclusion

- It could also indicate that pathway students require additional support in their transition to second year study at university.
- Pathway Colleges and their students are an important and integral part of the higher education landscape that we need further research into this phenomenon and to develop programs to enhance the outcomes of these students.