

Academic Support
and Development
&
THE FIRST YEAR MODEL



GROUNDING IN RESEARCH

Vincent Tinto - researcher in student retention and learning communities. He is well known through his works for describing the reasons why students leave higher education – largely due to a lack of sense of belonging on the part of the student. In this speech from 2009, *Taking Student Retention Seriously: Rethinking the First Year of University*, he concludes with,

... simple observations; first that student success does not arise by chance. It is the result of an intentional, structured, and proactive set of strategies that are coherent and systematic in nature and carefully aligned to the same goal; second that at no time is a coherent systematic structure more important than in the first year of university studies.

DEFINED BY CORE PRINCIPLES

Based on 50 years of research, **Arthur Chickering** and **Zelda Gamson** have proven that best practice in undergraduate education is achieved when 7 core principles are activated:

1. Encourage contact between students and staff
2. Develop reciprocity and cooperation among students
3. Encourage active learning
4. Give prompt feedback
5. Emphasise time on task
6. Communicate high expectations
7. Respect diverse talents and ways of learning

FOCUSED ON THE STUDENT



- Focus on students enables them to succeed and excel
- A wrap around experience: knowledge; skills; community; and flexibility
- Builds capabilities, competencies and experiences necessary to succeed at university and work

KNOWLEDGE ♦ SKILLS ♦ FLEXIBILITY ♦ COMMUNITY ♦ TOGETHER

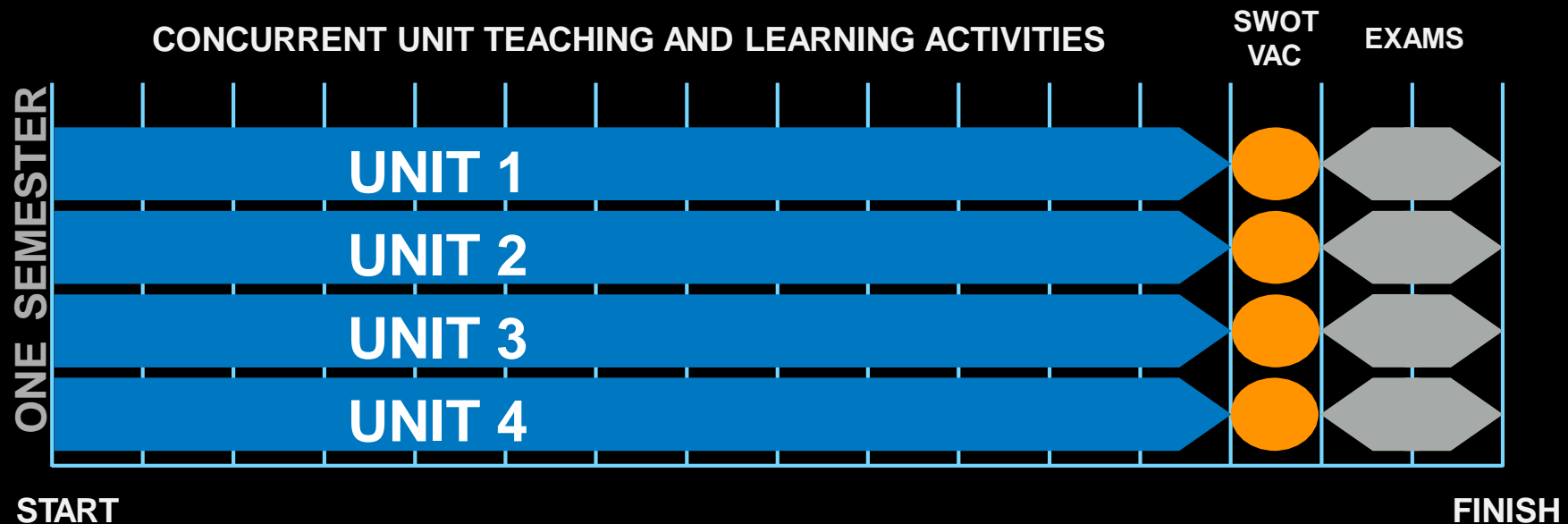
THE TRADITIONAL FIRST YEAR

EXPERIENCE: high stakes, confusing, many demands and tasks

LOCK STEPPED: passive, industrial model of education that is hard to change

STUDENT WORKLOAD: content, lectures, seminars, tutorials, assignments, exams

All of this makes it hard for students to transition to university



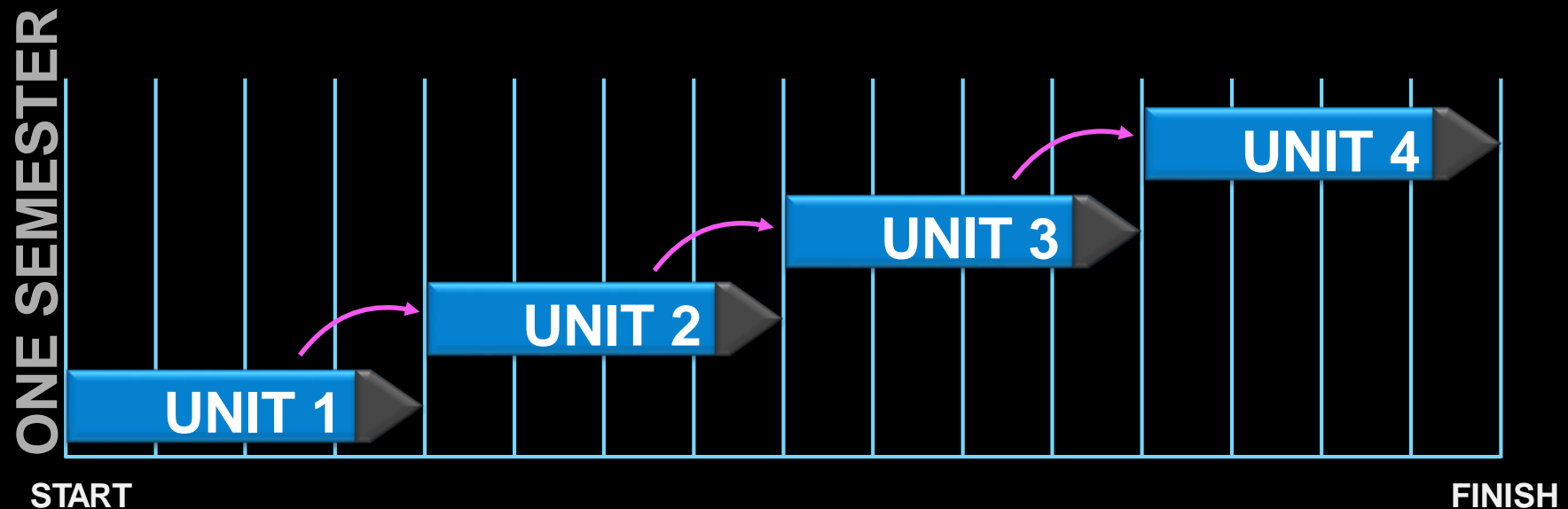
THE VU FIRST YEAR MODEL

INTEGRATED: one unit at a time, focused approach to learning and assessment

IMMERSIVE: interactive, engaging, discursive, inquisitive and problem based

INCLUSIVE: meaningful, relevant, accessible, connected, creative

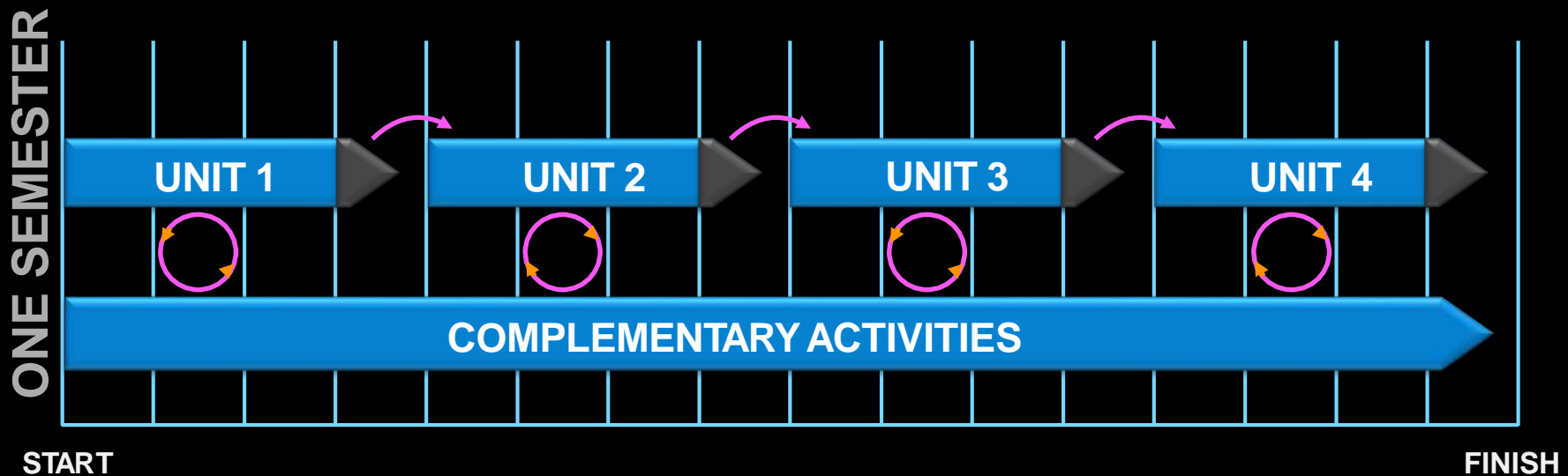
4 units over 4 week long blocks makes the transition smooth



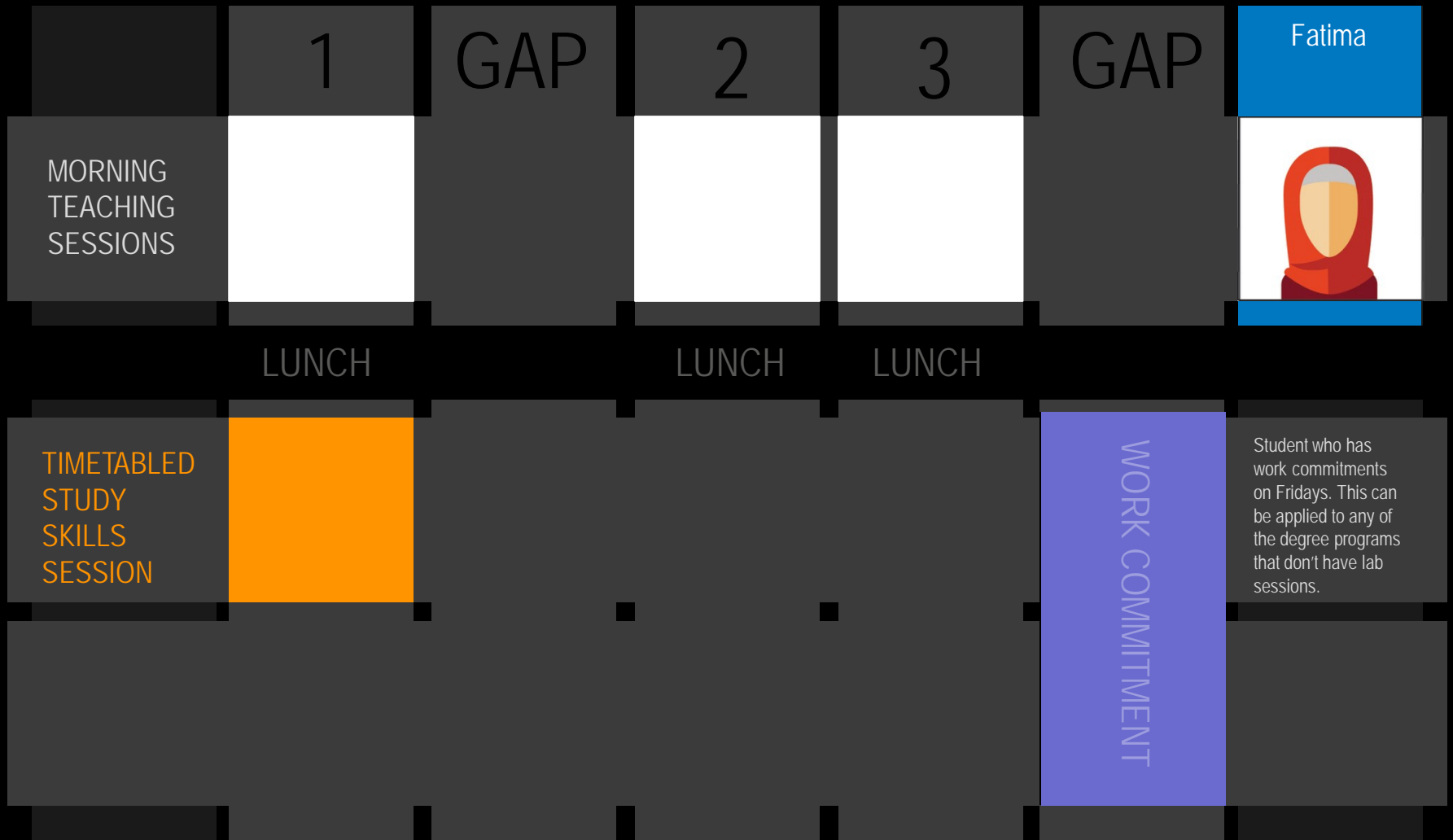
A STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH

Sequenced blocks with integrated workshops and activities. Complementary activities designed to enhance student skills and knowledge to enable them to succeed and excel:

- Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) and peer mentoring
- Academic development, services and programs
- Pathways and transition mentoring
- Careers and employability
- The VU Academy



SAMPLE: EDUCATION



FYM encourages new approaches: ASSESSMENT EXAMPLES

Minimal exams

In class writing

Interviews (recorded or noted)

Podcasts

Vodcasts

Blog interactions

Readiness (comprehension) tests

Elevator pitches

Quizzes

Capstone assessment

Patchwork assessment (not really but potentially)

Interdisciplinary (not yet)

SO STUDENTS CAN SUCCEED AND EXCEL

- Having a single focus, rather than juggling multiple demands and deadlines
- Immersing themselves in each unit
- Learning through interactive activities
- Forming strong and lasting peer connections through close contact with one group
- Getting to know and be known by educators
- Providing complementary activities and skills workshops
- Receiving timely feedback and experiencing success early
- Providing flexible study options and set session times each semester
- Building confidence and motivation (success breeds success)

...and accessing carefully selected educators who are experts in learning and teaching

- **Designed to engage** students in their course from Day One through study in small classes, where staff know names, encourage students to take risks, and respect students' ideas and opinions.
- **Less stress; more success** – through a study program of one unit at a time for 4 weeks giving regular success of having completed another unit towards degree.
- **A vibrant learning community** – a community of students and staff eager to engage, collaborate and flourish. The student experience is designed to bring together people who share a passion, interests and career goals.
- **A wrap around experience that fosters curiosity, application, and imagination** – to build the knowledge, skills and practical learning experiences that will help students launch their career and take advantage of complementary activities and programs designed to stimulate their thinking, imagination and curiosity.
- **Put student's knowledge to work in real world situations**
 - practical / clinical placements / integrated learning opportunities
 - field trips, community engagement and volunteering
 - student-as-staff programs / leadership programs

Academic Support & Development

30 years of embedding and integrating academic literacies

30 years of academic learning via student peer mentors

Communication, maths, literacy, learning skills

Some "central" ie "whole of university" strategies

"College facing teams" which focus on the language of the discipline

International onshore & offshore students

Local students

Face to face and online classrooms

Diploma to Research students

Also teach as discipline academics eg into M TESOL

**CENTRE FOR
STUDENT
SUCCESS**

**CAREERS &
EMPLOYABILITY**

**ACADEMIC
SUPPORT**

- ASD Lecturers
- Peer Mentoring
- Maths Lecturers

**TRANSITION &
RETENTION**



COLLEGES

LEARNING HUB

targeted support

CURRICULUM EMBEDDED

- Unit-based Workshops
- Unit-based Support Tutorials
- Curriculum Development
- Peer Assisted Tutorials
- Peer Assisted Study Sessions
- Targeted Drop-in Sessions
- Online Support Sessions
- Study Spaces for Peer Collaborative Learning



Flexible, personalised and
accessible

CENTRALLY DELIVERED

- Lunchtime Assignment Skills Workshops
- Individual Appointments
- Student Writing Mentors
- Walk-up Drop-in Sessions
- Online Support Sessions (We-Chat, WebEx, Facebook)
- Online Resources

CURRICULUM EMBEDDED

ASD LECTURERS taught into
142 UNITS OF STUDY,
during **18,920 SESSIONS**.

STUDENT MENTORS supported
750 STUDENTS
during **49 UNITS OF STUDY**.

MATHS SUPPORT LECTURERS
taught into **25 UNITS OF STUDY**
supporting **772 STUDENTS**
during **2,261 SESSIONS**.



CENTRALLY DELIVERED

ASD LECTURERS

supported **720 STUDENTS** in
during **2,245 SESSIONS**.

STUDENT MENTORS supported
more than **941 STUDENTS**
during **15,899 SESSIONS**.

MATHS SUPPORT LECTURERS
supported **509 STUDENTS**
during **1,722 SESSIONS**.

2017 1:1 appointments

Course Level/Type	No. of appointments
POSTGRADUATE	687
DOCTORATE BY RESEARCH	261
GRAD DIP/ POST GRAD DIP (PASS OR HONOURS) - ACAD, PROF, VOC	25
GRADUATE CERTIFICATE	21
MASTERS BY COURSEWORK	374
MASTERS BY RESEARCH	6
UNDERGRADUATE	2487
ADVANCED DIPLOMA	30
BACHELORS GRADUATE ENTRY	23
BACHELORS HONOURS	26
BACHELORS PASS	2093
CERTIFICATE I	1
CERTIFICATE II	8
CERTIFICATE III	36
CERTIFICATE IV	108
CROSS PROVIDER PROGRAM - UNDER GRAD AT HOME HEP	4
DIPLOMA	57
DIPLOMA (AQF) / ASSOCIATE DIPLOMA (PRE-AQF)	42
NON AWARD UNDERGRADUATE	22
OTHER NON AWARD	37
Grand Total	3174

2017 what students say

The assistance I received:		
n=247	Strongly agree/agree	
has helped to improve my marks in an assignment.	81.7%	
has increased my knowledge and skills.	87.9%	
has increased my confidence in my ability.	87.9%	
has helped me to stay in my subject/course.	78.5%	
has added to my sense of belonging to VU.	79.3%	
has contributed to my positive experience as a student.	87.7%	
I would recommend this assistance to others.	93.5%	

2018

Reduction in ASD specialised staffing

Increased number of student peer mentors

Reduction in embedded discipline specific curriculum activity

Increased “outside of classroom” academic language and learning strategies

Timetabling for classroom bookings not a problem as more online options

Timetabling online options still tricky to achieve “just in time” and “when I’m ready”