One size does not fit all. How do we cater for all research students?

Key Words

research students, thesis study groups, collaboration,

Abstract

Deakin University Academic and Peer Support Services (APS) offers a number of Study Support services to all research students: · A dedicated online site with self-access resources and links to external resources which includes a discussion board offering opportunities to connect with peers and ask support ·   Individual consultations ·   Workshop on demand ·   Regular Thesis Study Groups online and on campus   In order to cater for all research students, these offerings are reviewed and updated to ensure they meet demands, increase uptake and ensure alignment with other stakeholders who also provide services for this cohort.   Therefore, the problem arises of how do we, as Language and Learning Advisers, offer Study Support to all research students with the knowledge that 'one size does not fit all'.   Consequently, one way of better understanding the needs of research students is to establish collaborations with both supervisors and students within Faculties. This has the advantage of being able to support students who need assistance and tailor programs that are less generic and more specific to student needs.   The paper will outline the development of a pilot program provided to research students in the School of Architecture and Built Environment in 2016-17 with the aim of implementing more discipline specific writing workshops. In its second iteration, this series of workshops attempted to combine explicit instruction of academic writing whilst also providing rich opportunities for students to develop their academic writing and connect with peers. We were guided by research in the area that shows that writing groups support doctoral students to develop as academic writers as well as becoming peer reviewers (Maher et al. 2008) as students learn to receive multiple levels of feedback in addition to the supervisor feedback (Aitchison 2014). Additionally, the groups provide the chance for students to develop a sense of confidence and research identity in a community of practice (Guerin 2014; Maher et al. 2008).   Using reflections and notes on our teaching and collaboration process, this presentation will outline the pilot program, discuss the successes and challenges encountered along the way and consider how it will inform future implementation in other discipline areas. This paper will therefore examine how we aim to support research students with the ambition to fit 'all sizes'.

References

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