



Embedding Mental Wellbeing: Methods and Benefits Collaborative Enhancement Project 2021

Student academic engagement monitoring to support wellbeing

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Introduction

The Student Academic Engagement Process (SAEP) was developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to be able to understand student engagement with their studies when regular face-to-face contact on campus was impacted by lockdowns.

Rationale

We needed a way to understand student engagement with their studies that would work in an online/hybrid teaching situation. We also needed a way to identify students who might be at risk of becoming disengaged or in need of help. This was a serious risk during the first phase of the pandemic with uncertainty and isolation potentially compromising student wellbeing.

The challenge to the team working on this was building the new process at speed in the first few weeks of the pandemic, when our own working patterns and home lives were subject to significant change and stress.

Method

The process built on a data set that had already been developed as part of our ongoing work in learner analytics. During the first few weeks of the pandemic we worked with student services, our data team and academics to build a process around the data we collected that enabled us to understand student engagement. We also developed a new approach to teaching attendance monitoring using QR codes that could be used both online and in any remaining face-to-face sessions.

This process supported the combined engagement and fitness-to-study procedure and encouraged a more wellbeing-focused approach to students not adequately engaging with their studies. It also brought in a more joined-up and holistic approach towards managing engagement issues with the students, academic advisors, the learning and teaching service, and student services working collaboratively. The SAEP is designed to identify students at an early stage when they are experiencing difficulties in engaging with their studies and university life. The aim is to ensure that students are actively engaging with their studies as expected, and that any hurdles they have are discussed with the appropriate people, with the intention of helping students' wellbeing and success on their courses.

The set of measures developed and built into a dashboard accessible through Tableau to academic teams and students services were as follows:

- % Attended (take-up of all scheduled opportunities with register)

- % On-Campus Attended (take-up of all scheduled on-campus opportunities with register)
- % Online Teaching Attended (take-up of all online scheduled opportunities with register)
- % On Time Formative Submissions (based on number of total submissions)
- % On Time Summative Submissions (based on number of total submissions)
- Average Weekly Blackboard VLE Sessions (updated weekly on Sun)
- Average number of times visiting the library
- % Advisor Meetings Attended
- Average extenuating circumstances requests for extensions or delayed exam sittings.

The data aspect of this work [won an award from HESPA](#) (The Higher Education Strategic Planners Association)

Evaluation

Overall, the Engagement Process proved to work better than the previous arrangements because:

- The QR codes meant that more data about student synchronous engagement with taught sessions was collected.
- A wider range of data was collected giving a better picture of student engagement overall.
- Students can be contacted when early signs of disengagement show in the data, heading off most problems.
- There is better understanding and engagement from all stakeholders in the process.
- Retention of students, including those from underrepresented or disadvantaged groups was high during the pandemic. Many factors, including the SAEP, contributed to this success.

Take-away message

Monitoring and supporting student engagement is best undertaken by an interdisciplinary team, including student services, academics, professional services and data scientists. A range of measures of engagement and good availability of data contribute to early interventions and better outcomes for students.

This document was produced as part of the [Collaborative Enhancement Project - Embedding Mental Wellbeing](#).