

**Report:**  
**“Success at Monash” (SAM) Orientation Week Academic Transition Program**

Glenda Crosling, Nell Kimberley, Glennis Hanley: Faculty of Business and Economics  
Andrew Dixon, David Horne: Library, Caulfield Campus  
Andrew Johnson, Anne Wilson: Language and Learning Services

17 March 2005

**Executive Summary**

*The “Success at Monash” program operated on a large scale for commencing students for the first time in Orientation Week 2005 on the Caulfield and Clayton campuses. Consisting of two 2-hour sessions, the first session prepares students to understand university study, work in groups, give oral presentations; the second session develops students’ library research skills and their academic writing skills, in the context of a typical assignment question. The program brings together faculty, Library, and Language and Learning staff. The student evaluations administered on completion of the program indicate that overall, the students evaluated the program highly, but thought that it could be reduced in time. The major recommendations of this report are that the program be continued in 2006 at Caulfield and Clayton, and that it be made compulsory for all students to attend. However, the length of the program should be reduced to three hours in total. More formal processes for enrolment of students also need to be put in place.*

**1. Background**

The “Success at Monash” program operated for the first time on a large scale at Caulfield and Clayton campuses in Orientation Week, 2005. The program consisted of two sessions of two hours each, presented by faculty, Library, and Language and Learning staff. Two streams of the program were held on each campus. The program complements the faculty’s first week tutorial transition program, and the Orientation Week academic transition programs held on the other Australian campuses of the faculty.

In 2004, a pilot of the program for a small number of students (two groups of 25) operated on the Caulfield campus. Following survey and focus group evaluations, the faculty Education Advisory Group in October 2004 requested investigation as to whether the program could be presented to large numbers of first year students at Caulfield and Clayton campuses.

**2. Implementation Procedure**

Following the Advisory Group’s decision to scale up the program for Orientation Week 2005, meetings were held with faculty, Library, and Language and Learning staff, who agreed to develop the program for larger numbers of students. In following meetings, the library and the LLS essay writing sessions were integrated into one session, reducing the program from six to four hours.

Room bookings and dates were established, flyers developed and advertising arranged through new students' enrolment packages and the Orientation Week Guide at Clayton. (See Appendices for flyer example.) Due to timing, it was not possible to advertise the program in the Caulfield Orientation Guide. Lack of such advertising at Caulfield, as well as the scheduling of the sessions early in Orientation Week, posed some problems in attracting students. This situation needs to be addressed urgently for future iterations of the program.

At Caulfield, due to student demand, an additional Session 2 of the program (library research and academic writing) was held in Week 3 of the semester. About 60 faculty students attended, again indicating the strength of student interest in the program.

Students did not need to enrol in the program, but rather attended on a 'first come first served' basis. As discussed in the final section of this report, such procedure posed some difficulties in planning and preparation.

### 3. "Success at Monash" Program

**Table 1. Student Attendance**

Session	Attendance
Caulfield Session 1	20
Caulfield Session 2: Library Research	95
Caulfield Session 2: Academic Writing	95
Clayton Session 1	340+
Clayton Session 2: Library Research	70+
Clayton Session 2: Academic Writing	70+
<b>TOTAL ATTENDANCES</b>	<b>690+</b>

#### 3.1 Participating Staff

##### At Caulfield:

Session 1: Nell Kimberley (Management Department);

Session 2: Andrew Dixon (Library), Andrew Johnson (Language and Learning).

##### At Clayton:

Session 1, Glennis Hanley (Management Department);

Session 2, David Horne (Library) Anne Wilson (Language and Learning).

#### 3.2 Program Content

The foci of the program's two sessions are as follows:

**Table 2. Sessions in "Success at Monash" Program**

Session 1	Session 2
Making the most of university study, working in groups and spoken communication skills.	Research skills and using the library. Academic writing and assessment tasks.

The content of the program addressed areas with which students are confronted in their first weeks of university life and study. It also begins the process of developing students' abilities with the graduate attributes of oral and written communication, and information literacy skills. Session 2 integrates the library research with the academic writing skills through a team teaching approach, thereby reflecting the academic writing process.

In the context of large numbers of students, the program was interactive and activity based. Responding to the literature on successful transition to university which emphasises the importance of students developing networks and friendships with other students in their courses, this approach provided the opportunity for students to 'break the ice' with other students in their faculty. It also modelled for students the importance of their active engagement in their learning for success in their studies.

#### 4. Student Evaluations

As indicated by the student evaluations summarised in Table 3 below, the program was well appreciated by attending students. (See Appendices for evaluation survey.) Students responded on a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 is 'strongly agree' and 1 is 'strongly disagree', to the following questions:

Session 1. University study, groups and spoken communication:

"The session was useful in preparing me for university study".

Session 2 (a) Research and the library:

"The session was useful in helping prepare me for university study".

Session 2 (b) Academic writing:

"I feel more confident about starting to write assignments at university".

**Table 3. Program Evaluations**

Session	Average Score
Caulfield Session 1	4.0
Caulfield Session 2 (a):Library Research	4.3
Caulfield Session 2:(b) Academic Writing	4.0
Clayton Session 1	4.0
Clayton Session 2: (a) Library Research	4.5
Clayton Session 2: (b) Academic Writing	4.2

#### 4.1 Survey Open-Ended Questions

The open-ended questions in the evaluation indicated that overall, the program helped prepare students for their university studies. For the question of "What was good about the program?", many students on both campuses made comments such as: "Confidence in preparation for uni life" (Local student Caulfield); "... get a feel of uni" (International student Caulfield). The program was also received as informative and well-delivered: "very informative and expertly delivered" (International student Clayton).

Several students commented on the opportunity that the program provided to get to know other students: “Getting to meet some people” (Local student Clayton); “Feel free and comfortable to communicate with others” (International student Caulfield).

The program’s mode of delivery was well received and appreciated: “Interactive and activity based” (International student Caulfield), and it was seen as “Informative and practical” (International student Caulfield). It was “simple and clear”, easy to understand (International student Caulfield), and “energetic and engaging” (Local student Clayton).

The value of the content of the program received many favourable comments, with some typical ones being:

I am much more aware of research resources for assignments, particularly the data bases which was very helpful, and how to analyse a question (Local student Clayton);

Other comments included: “Learning more about the standard expected in academic writing (Local student Clayton), and the program provided an “...idea on how to do essays and assignments and what tutors want (International student Caulfield).

For the question of “What could be improved about the program?”, students’ comments mainly focussed on the program’s length of time, and that students would appreciate a shorter time, with a break. For instance: “No longer than one hour”(Local student Caulfield); “Shorter sessions and a break in lecture” (Local student Clayton).

Some students wanted more information, while one or two students saw the programs as basic. Some students thanked the faculty for offering the program, some would have liked some handouts, examples of past essays, and “a section on referencing, citation and how to avoid plagiarism” (International student Caulfield).

In the “Other Comments” section, some students again expressed their appreciation for the faculty offering the program, and saw it as “very good, worthwhile” (Local student Clayton). The presenters were seen as “excellent” (International student Caulfield), but two students saw the program as “a recap of year 12 English” and MUFY. One student commented that: “The program built on my previous knowledge and skills” (International student Clayton), but another stated that it should “... allow time for general questions and answers” (Local student Clayton). Several students emphasised the importance of advertising the programs in the Orientation Week Guides.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

As indicated overall by the student attendances and the evaluations, attending students valued the program highly. While this report has provided qualitative information about the students’ responses to the program, it may be possible to form focus groups later in Semester 1 which will provide indication of the ongoing value of the program for students’ study. The program aims to assist students to understand academic culture, develop appropriate study skills and adopt appropriate study approaches. From the student evaluations, it can be said that the SAM program clearly added value to these students’ understandings, skills and study approaches.

Improvements to the program, based on presenter and student evaluations, are presented below.

- The program should continue to be offered at both campuses in Orientation Week.
- As attending students have evaluated the program highly, it should be compulsory for all commencing students.
- Planning for the program needs to begin before the end of Semester 1 in the year preceding the presentation of the program, so that attendance at the Caulfield Orientation Week Planning committee can ensure inclusion of the program in the guide, and in timeslots when students are more likely to attend (ie, not the first 2 days of Orientation Week).
- The length of the program should be reduced from four to three hours, with two sessions of one and a half hours. This will require some modification of the content. It will also mean that the program will fit more neatly into half day slots in Orientation Week programs.
- Procedures for enrolment of students in the program need to be put in place, to facilitate planning, and establish the importance of the program in the student body.
- The program needs to be presented in a more formal sense, akin to the Graduate Induction Program. This would include a package with handout materials for students, and refreshments mid-way in the program.



**MONASH** University

Business and Economics

**Faculty of Business and Economics (Caulfield)**

## **Success at Monash (SAM) Program**

---

The 'Success at Monash' program will give you an advantage by helping you understand the academic side of university life – each session covers an aspect of study which may be different at university from other educational settings. We recommend very strongly that you attend.

- You will meet with staff and get to know the other students in your group.
- The program comprises 2 x 2hr. sessions (4hours total) at Monash University, Caulfield Campus:

---

### **Session 1**

Making the most of university study, working in groups and spoken communication skills.

### **Session 2**

Research skills and using the library. Academic writing and assessment tasks.

For either stream, go to the designated room at the time of Session 1. Enrolment is on a 'first come-first served' basis. You can choose to do either:

#### **Stream A**

**Monday 21 February 2005**

3 pm – 5pm

Lecture Theatre K 309, Level 3, K Block

**Tuesday 22 February 2005**

3pm – 5pm

Lecture Theatre K 309, Level 3, K Block

#### **OR**

#### **Stream B**

**Tuesday 22 February 2005**

3 pm – 5pm

Lecture Theatre K 321, Level 3, K Block

**Wednesday 23 February 2005**

2 pm – 4 pm

Lecture Theatre K 309, Level 3, K Block

***We look forward to meeting you in the SAM program.***



# MONASH University

## Business and Economics

### “Success at Monash” Survey

Please provide feedback on your experience of the Success at Monash Program .I Please circle the appropriate indicator. **Your responses to the following questions are confidential.**

Name (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

What is your origin?  Australian or New Zealand citizen/Australian Permanent Resident  
 International student

Did you attend?  Session 1  Session 2

<b>Session 1:</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
<b>University Study, Groups and Spoken communication</b> The session was useful in preparing me for university study	1	2	3	4	5	6

<b>Session 2:</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
<b>Research and the Library</b> The session was useful in helping prepare me for university study	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Academic Writing</b> I feel more confident about starting to write assignments at university.	1	2	3	4	5	6

What was good about the program?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Do you feel the program could be improved? How?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Please make any other comments if you wish

.....  
.....

Thank you for participating in the “Success at Monash” program and this survey.

