



First year students' perceptions of an online academic skills intervention designed to assist transition to university

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More than 3,000 students from 100+ nationalities.

Two Liaison Librarians across the 60+ programs offered by MDX Dubai.



RATIONALE

The first-year transition is crucial to success (Gale and Parker, 2012) and it can be difficult especially for international students navigating the new diverse educational setting and culture of the host-institute (Rienties *et al.*, 2012).

Transition is exacerbated when new students can have unrealistic expectations regarding student workload (Bowles *et al.*, 2013) and misjudge the academic skills that are required within the university environment (Head, 2013).



What do you think 1st year students think about their own academic study skills?



**All I Know Is
I Know Nothing**



What students think of their academic skills when they join higher education?



New students can overestimate their academic skills (Michalak, Rysavy and Wessel, 2017; Akbari and Sahibzada, 2020; Ashton-Hay and Doncaster, 2021).

What students think of their academic skills when they join higher education?

Students unaware of academic skill deficits will not seek help as they inaccurately believe that they have the necessary skills (Michalak, Rysavy and Wessel, 2017).



What students think of their academic skills when they join higher education?



**All I Know Is
I Know Nothing**

Those who are less competent not only overestimate their abilities but also fail to recognize the skill levels of others (Kruger and Dunning, 1999) and could seek or provide guidance from flawed advice.

RATIONALE

Self-reflection and assessment of performance are an important part of learning as this impact how the student attempts tasks in later performances (Panadero, 2017).

The development of metacognition supports students' accurate evaluation, how well they have learnt and understood, leading them to set goals and identify current capabilities compared to future needs (Dunlosky and Rawson, 2012).



ACADEMIC APTITUDES ASSESSMENT

◆ Designed to assist new student with transition

◆ Assess confidence versus actual academic skills - six areas:

- Discovering Information
- Understanding Information
- Questioning
- Referencing
- Creating
- Communicating

◆ Online – Access via Library web page.

◆ Three parts:

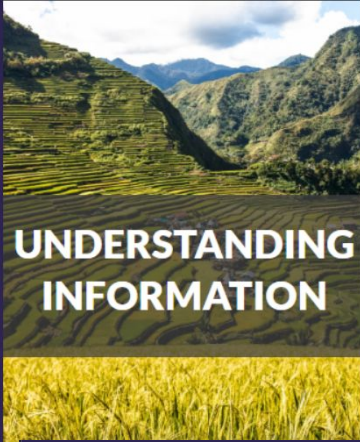
- Assessment





Thoughtfully handling information to find meaning and apply context is key to producing your best work. Building a solid foundation for assignments is easier if you can effectively understand knowledge and adapt future searches.

The next five questions will explore your skills in understanding information.



UNDERSTANDING INFORMATION

UNDERSTANDING INFORMATION

RESULTS

Click the icons to display results



Discovering Information



Self-Assessed Skills Score



Actual Skills Score



Click to access instructional materials:



Results

Learning materials

For each question, read the statement and decide if you agree with it.

1 I analyse my information needs before I start looking for information.

Before the search, I define keywords and phrases, use mind mapping techniques, talk to friends, and find background information.



2

I can understand the information I find, analysing and synthesising appropriately.

I am able to summarise, reword information, and collate material from several sources. I know not to cut and paste!



Agree

Assessment

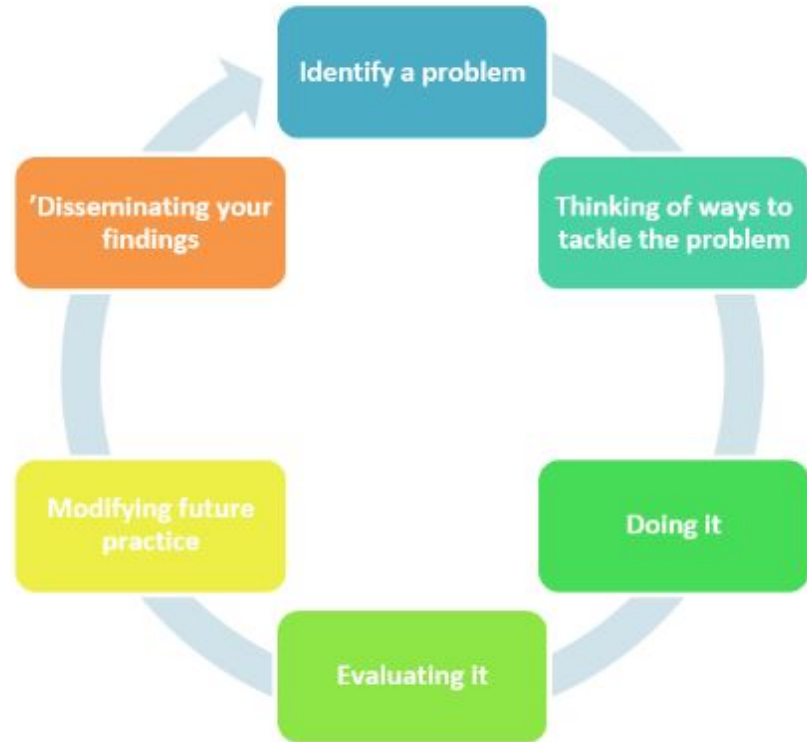


Triple A allows students to:

- ❖ explore independently
- ❖ enhance their skills at their own pace
- ❖ seek assistance from academic support departments

DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING THE INTERVENTION

Pedagogical action research, a systematic and reflective approach to pedagogical issues and problems which creates new knowledge around their complexity (McAteer, 2013), is being used to plan and implement the Triple A.



Norton's ITDEM'D model (2019)

EVALUATION OF THE INTERVENTION

Research Aims:

To explore the student perceptions of academic skills and to evaluate the Triple A

Research Method:

Qualitative Research

- 💡 15 participants – varied disciplines; UG first year at MDX
- 💡 semi-structured interviews
- 💡 thematic analysis

Emerging Themes

- ◎ Holistic nature of academic study skills
- ◎ Metacognition – increased by Triple A
- ◎ The complex nexus of emotions, confidence and learning

Holistic nature of academic study skills

I wouldn't say that there is one specific academic skill that's important. I would say that it's an **amalgamation of everything**...

I think that it's a **process and it goes through many different stages** in that process. So I wouldn't say that there is just one sure way to do it, but if you **have all of those skills** with you, it would make it a lot easier...

All of them combined have helped me, you know, feel good about myself and my academic range in university...

Holistic nature of academic skills – time management and organisation

It's important to have **skills that help you organize your work, organize your thoughts, organize your resources** that you will be using.

I do find **time management's a little tricky**, because I do live far away and I live alone, so I have to manage taking care of myself at home and then my schoolwork, I **have to find a balance for that.**

I need to **distinguish the time we need to keep for certain things...** I can keep going on forever with the research. And I should move on to the next step or move on to something else.

If I end up doing it last minute, a day before the deadline, I don't end up like properly putting it in a proper structure or make it academically nice ... **when the deadline is close, you end up rushing and you don't have it organized.**

Metacognition – increased by Triple A

It gave me **awareness...my areas of development**. I knew that I had to improve. So that's helped me. So I even went to Ms Laura [the librarian] and **I asked her well I need to improve this**.

I figured out **what I had to work on** a lot better and I was also surprised with what I had been doing well and I didn't notice it until **after I kind of reflected** on it.

I didn't realise there were some things I didn't know. But I thought I knew them. So it was interesting to see which ones I needed to improve on and which ones were okay.



Metacognition – increased by Triple A

At first **I was very hesitant**. I was like, I don't wanna know them because sometimes we're **just afraid to know what we need to focus** on or not. But after I read the results, it was actually **an eye opener for me**. They were not the highest. That's what I can say. But in terms of things I need to focus on, **I definitely took that into consideration further along in my journey.**



The complex nexus of emotions, confidence and learning

If I compared to my peers, **I would say that I'm far exceeding** what they are aware of. **I never doubt on myself.** But I believe in what skills I have.

I think there **wasn't really confidence** back then. I was **actually nervous, but right now I find myself quite confident.** It's a big transition. The first year was kind of on and off but now... it's easier for me to get into more of how to use and my time how to find the information.

I am not like very fully confident...**I still always have doubt** because that's just how the personality is. I've learned to somehow go easy on myself a little ... That kind of doubt sort of helps with the time management.

I think **it's a big change and it's difficult.** I was scared ... it's such a big jump but I've been okay because I was able to find the right resources and the amount of help that I've been getting from the library...

The complex nexus of emotions, confidence and learning - emotional literacies

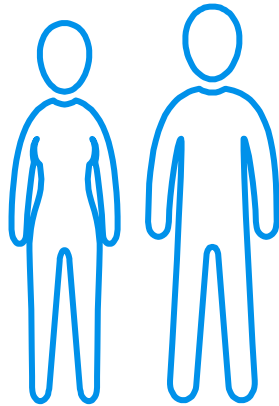
Maybe like in the beginning you could like add a section which would like you know, maybe **just check in with the students**. Hi. **How are you doing on a scale of 1 to 10**, how would you rate your mood right now? Something like that. And then you could start up with the test.

Triple A
A simple
reflective space.



Limitations

- I. Gender ratio of sample (Fink, 2003)



- II. Self-selection sample (Lavrakas, 2008)



Future improvements

- ◎ Include materials on **time management and organizational skills**;
- ◎ Incorporate '**emotions check**' at the before diagnostic questions;
- ◎ Encourage faculty to establish Triple A as a compulsory **Week of Welcome activity**;
- ◎ Frame diagnostic tool within the learning materials to promote **usage of learning resources**;
- ◎ Adapt resource considering student **attention span**, use of graphics, and language;
- ◎ **Bug fixes** to improve functionality and usability.

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