Passport to study: Flipped library orientation for international students

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Abstract

This paper presents a flipped learning approach to library orientation for international university students. The approach was trialled through the project Passport to Study with 98 new international students at a Queensland University in 2015 to support the university's First Year Experience (FYE) program. Drawing upon contemporary flipped learning pedagogy, it aimed to raise international students' awareness of the library as a supportive social learning space and develop foundational information and academic literacies. Although a relatively small-scale project, it provides an authentic model of cross-divisional student-focused collaboration between librarians, academic skills advisers and lecturers.

After a brief literature review, the paper explains how the project team developed and implemented the flipped library orientation that involved international students in a self-guiding library quest and follow-up briefing. Evaluation findings of the flipped library orientation highlight its strengths and limitations and support a set of recommendations for further developing this innovative approach. The final discussion suggests opportunities for further pedagogical development and research. The insights gained through this project will be of potential interest to library managers, librarians and information literacy educators. They could inform innovative initiatives to support the successful transition to university of first year students across culturally diverse university populations.

Key words: International students, Information literacy, Library orientation, Academic libraries, Flipped learning, Collaboration

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Introduction

Libraries can play a vital role in easing new students of all backgrounds into their first year at university. The various orientation and information literacy programs that libraries offer are particularly important for easing international students' transition to life and study in their host country. However, the start of academic year 'orientation season' is a notoriously busy time for most library staff. Consequently, library tours are often hurried and introductory classes generally focus on generic information skills and referencing conventions disconnected from the students' course requirements. This can be confusing, even alienating, for new international students who are crossing culturally unfamiliar learning boundaries.

This paper presents an alternative *flipped library orientation* program entitled *Passport to Study*. This novel approach was trialled with 98 new international students at Queensland University of Technology (QUT) in 2015. Its flipped learning design aimed to raise international students' awareness of the library as a supportive social learning space and enable their development of foundational information and academic literacies. Although the flipped library orientation was a relatively small-scale project, it provides an authentic model of cross-university student-focused collaboration.

The *Passport to Study* project was enabled by a small QUT First Year Experience (FYE) learning and teaching grant. It addressed QUT's goals to further internationalisation and excellence in learning and teaching (QUT, 2014)) and to provide a 'positive and involving First Year Experience' (QUT, 2012, C6.2.1).

After a brief literature review to contextualise the project, the paper outlines the development, implementation and evaluation of the *Passport to Study* orientation program by a team of 2 librarians, 2 academic skills advisers, an international student counsellor and an Education lecturer. The program involved international students in a self-guiding library quiz and follow-up briefing with team members who acted as *learning guides*. Evaluation of the program outlines its strengths and limitations. The findings support a set of recommendations for further developing this flipped approach to library orientation. The final discussion suggests opportunities for further pedagogical development and research. The insights gained through this project will be of potential interest to library managers, librarians and information literacy educators. They could inform innovative initiatives to support the successful transition to university of first year students across culturally diverse university populations.

Literature review

First year student transition

The first year of university study has been identified as being perhaps "the most crucial time for engaging students in their learning community and equipping them with the requisite skills…to be successful and independent in their new learning" (Kift, 2009). While students bring with them a number of attributes that influence engagement, such as finances and personal commitment (Kift, Nelson, & Clarke, 2010) universities have a responsibility to provide students with a learning environment that is conducive to engagement (Penn-Edwards & Donnison, 2011) and ongoing success.

Transitioning into university can be challenging for students of all backgrounds as they navigate new academic practices and expectations along with "personal, social and lifestyle transitions" (Maunder, Cunliffe, Galvin, Mjali & Rogers, 2013). First year students need to adjust to being more independent, self-directed learners (Kift et al., 2010) and improve their academic skills in areas such as writing, research and critical thinking (Bovill, Bulley, & Morss, 2011). They also need to begin to develop their professional identity (Wilson, Devereux & Tranter, 2015) and master the threshold concepts of their discipline (Zepke, 2013).

International student transition

While the first year at university is a challenging time of transition for all students, international students face the added complexities of coming to live and study in an often unfamiliar educational and social environment. International students bring richly varied knowledge and capabilities to study at their host university. They may also encounter unfamiliar social and educational practices, whilst often negotiating life and study using English as an additional language (Karim, 2010; Montgomery, 2010). Libraries, whose core business supports learning across the university, are vital to international students' transition (Witt, Kutner, & Cooper, 2015). However, libraries can also be sites of challenge and anxiety for international students due to unfamiliarity with the host library's services and spaces, as well as the prevailing academic and information using conventions (Hughes, 2010, 2013; Liu, 2013; Peters, 2010). For example, differing cultural attitudes toward formality, authority and autonomy may cause international students to avoid seeking help at library service points because they fear losing face or misunderstand the role and expertise of librarians (Peters, 2010). In addition, many international students are anxious about correctly communicating their needs in English, with

"Library-related jargon pos[ing] particular problems for international students…for example, 'citation'…'abstract'…'article'" (Amsberry, 2008).

Enhancing students' first year experience

Supporting the transition and retention of first year students has become an increasingly important focus in higher education for the past four decades, with formal programs, policy and pedagogy around first year experience steadily evolving (Nelson, 2014). Many universities have developed programs and policies for achievement, retention and success (Nelson, Quinn, Marrington, & Clarke, 2012). These include development of academic, information literacy, communication, and teamwork skills (Penn-Edwards & Donnison, 2011). However, their benefits are limited if they constitute a "piecemeal approach of discrete first year initiatives" (Krause, Hartley, James & McInnis, 2005, ¶8.8.6). Rather, these efforts need to be coherent and directly relevant to students' needs during this critical new stage of their education.

Transition pedagogy represents a holistic approach that not only provides orientation to key services and course content in the first few weeks of semester, but continues to support students' leaning and social wellbeing throughout the whole first year at university. Aligning with the first year curriculum, transition pedagogy "scaffolds, mediates and supports first year learning for contemporary heterogeneous cohorts" (Kift, Nelson & Clarke, 2010, p.11) and enables the development of academic and information literacy. Its strength derives from collaborative partnerships between academics, librarians and other student support professionals across the university as students are more likely to persevere and achieve success in their studies when they feel engaged and empowered (Bovill et al., 2011).

University libraries supporting 1st year student transition

University libraries play an important role in supporting first year student transition through orientation tours and generic information literacy skills sessions, as well as online, self-help resources (Dobozy & Gross, 2010). Libraries increasingly integrate library instruction and resources within course-specific events or lectures (Dobozy & Gross, 2010). Librarians collaborate with academic faculty and learning support professionals to co-create a learning experience specifically suited to their cohort, often closely linked to an early research assignment (Holderied, 2013; Miller & Debose, 2015).

Some academic libraries have experimented with more innovative, interactive methods of introducing their services, resources and spaces to first year students, such as through

gamification, scavenger hunts and QR codes (Collins & Dodsworth, 2011). For example, at the University of South Carolina, librarians developed an MP3 library tour and interactive quiz for use within first-year courses (Kearns, 2010), while the University of Technology Sydney Library created a treasure hunt game to help students "familiarise themselves with the space and its resources" (Tiffen & England, 2011). These approaches allow students to learn how best to use the library to support their studies, but also demonstrate to students that university librarians are friendly and approachable (Engle, 2011).

While most of these library programs are aimed at all first year students, some are adapted or designed specifically for international students (Jackson & Sullivan, 2011). For example, at the Waterford Institute of Technology in Ireland, librarians modified an existing first year information and research skills module for use within a university-bridging course for international students (Hurley, Hegarty, & Bolger, 2006). To ensure the training was useful and relevant for international students, a number of practical activities and discussions were incorporated, instructional language simplified, and additional materials prepared such as glossaries and library guides (Hurley et al., 2006). At the State University of New York, a welcome event and library tour has been offered to new international students for a number of years (Chen & Van Ullen, 2011). More recently, in response to observations at these events, librarians have developed additional workshops specifically for this cohort on the topics of locating and evaluating sources and correctly using and acknowledging sources (Chen & Van Ullen, 2011). While at Sheffield Hallam University in the UK, the Library collaborated with academics and skills tutors in the international college to embed information and academic literacy activities and assessment into a three-month business unit undertaken by visiting Malaysian students (Lahlafi & Rushton, 2015). The program outlined and evaluated in this paper is a further example of an innovative approach to easing the transition of first year international students.

Flipped learning

The flipped learning approach is being rapidly adopted in higher education as a way to promote active self-directed student learning. It enables a "shift in priorities from merely covering material to working toward mastery of it" (Educause, 2012, n.p.) This innovative pedagogical model reverses the common academic pattern of teacher-driven delivery of course content (often via lecture) followed by student reading and tutorial activity. In flipped learning,

students explore new subject content in their own time prior to class via short videos, podcasts and readings. Then the entire class time becomes an opportunity for student interaction and inquiry, and engagement in practical learning. In this way, students are able to apply the knowledge they have already encountered and develop associated skills in meaningful 'real life' ways. The educator's role shifts from content presenter or instructor, to learning coach and subject advisor.

Various models of flipped learning and flipped classrooms are in use and while some disadvantages have been noted, there is increasing evidence of their efficacy when appropriately implemented by educators familiar with the concept (Yarbro, Arfstrom, McKnight & McKnight, 2014). Some university libraries are also finding a flipped approach can revitalise information literacy education by fostering greater student engagement through practical fun searching activities, which students tend to prefer to more passive demonstrations of search strategies (Brooks, 2014; Datig & Ruswick, 2013).

Overview of the *Passport to Study* flipped library orientation

Aims of the Passport to Study program

Enabled by a QUT First Year Experience learning and teaching grant, the *Passport to Study* orientation program was devised and implemented by an interdisciplinary team that comprised 2 librarians, 2 academic skills advisers, an international student counsellor and an Education lecturer. This make-up emphasises the collaborative nature of the project and the variety of expertise that is needed to address the complex transition and learning needs of international students. While the librarians and academic skills advisers contributed essential information literacy practice and experience in providing library orientation, the counsellor advised on international student transition needs and assisted in promoting the program to new students and their tutors. The lecturer brought research insights about international students' information literacy learning needs to the design and evaluation of the program.

This flipped library orientation program aimed to support international students' transition to study at QUT by:

- raising their awareness of the library as a welcoming, inclusive, social learning hub
- developing familiarity with contemporary higher education learning approaches

- enabling them to develop foundational information and academic literacies necessary for successful learning and academic outcomes.

In line with QUT First Year Experience goals, the orientation was timely in addressing identified learning needs (library and information use and academic literacy) of international students at the critical beginning stage of their study at QUT. It also aimed to foster a sense of belonging within a community of international student peers and welcome them into the QUT community. It intentionally provided an opportunity for international students to develop social bonds with each other and relaxed supportive relationships with key QUT staff (Library, International Student Services and academics).

The project sought to improve support to first year international students by:

(i) providing a library orientation program specially designed to assist their transition to study at QUT in Semester 1, 2015

(ii) contributing an evidence-base (from analysis of student evaluation and team members' reflections) to guide the development of future library orientation and information literacy programs for first year international students

The *Passport to Study* orientation sessions responded to educational and equity imperatives, recognising the strengths and challenges that international students experience in their transition to life and study at a host university (as discussed in the literature review). At QUT, international students represent a significant proportion of the student population, approximately 15%, of total student enrolments (QUT, 2013). QUT Library, International Students Services and Faculties have a shared commitment to enabling international students' successful transition and learning outcomes. Therefore, the project team included representatives from each of these organisational areas. The initiative's contextual grounding at QUT Library was particularly relevant because: (i) as a significant proportion of the wider QUT population, international students are also a significant QUT Library user group; and (ii) QUT Library is designated core responsibility for advancing academic and information literacy learning across the university (QUT Library, 2013).

Development of the Passport to Study orientation

For many years, QUT Library has offered physical and virtual orientation tours for new students during the first few weeks of semester. The tours cater for large groups of both domestic and international students and therefore involve a quite didactic teaching approach and passive

learning for students (Lujan & DiCarlo, 2006). Recognising the need to trial a more active orientation experience that responds to the needs of contemporary, culturally diverse university students, the project team members collaboratively designed the *Passport to Study* program. To keep the trial manageable we focused on incoming international students, a definable culturally diverse cohort within the whole first year cohort.

Drawing on our collective research and practical experience in information literacy and previous work with international students, the project team set out to enhance familiarity with the Library and learning approaches practised at QUT. Informed by the flipped learning model (Educause, 2012) the team developed an innovative orientation approach that would *reverse* the long established librarian-led tour. On arrival at the Library, the students were all given a specially created *Passport to Study* with a set of quiz questions. This replaced the videos or readings that students commonly access before class in a formal flipped learning context. Instead of librarians delivering information about the library or leading an orientation tour, the *Passport to Study* activity enabled international students to independently explore QUT Library, find answers for themselves, understand new concepts, and seek assistance from Library staff. Importantly also, the informal nature of this orientation and leisurely pace of the self-guided tour offered a social learning opportunity for international students to connect with peers.

The *Passport to Study* activity was suggested by scavenger hunts which are often used in primary and high school libraries as a fun way for developing students' information literacy (Mccain, 2007). The passport theme resonated with first year international students' transition to life and study at QUT, where they were crossing educational and cultural boundaries.

Passport to Study resource
To support this orientation activity, the project team produced a self-guiding quiz resource as a passport for international students to carry around the Library and complete alone or in pairs. The passport was designed to prompt new students' curiosity to explore the Library and discover key spaces, services and resources for themselves. Shown in Figure 1 below, the passport included 12 quiz questions that required students to explore both the physical and virtual library spaces and learn important information skills, such as searching for resources by topic and locating them on the shelves. To simultaneously encourage students to approach library staff for help and raise their awareness of referencing, quiz question 12 required them to: 'Go to the Library Desk on level 2, say hello to the friendly librarian and collect your copy of the QUT

Cite/ Write Guide'.

Figure 1: The Passport to Study resource (excerpt)

5. Stairway to study heaven

Take a selfie under the 'Ceiling of Books'.

6. Searching for study information

Use one of the Library's Quick Search Public Access computers to search for a book about "academic writing".

What is the title? _____
_____
_____

Is it available for loan?   Yes / No

7. Finding resources for study

In the Library, informational (non-fiction) books are organised by

540
SMI

subject and given a Call Number. Find a book with the Call Number 540. What is the title?

_____
_____
_____

8. Gaming in the library

Check out the games room on Level 4. Who can use the games room? _____

When can it be used? _____
_____

9. Need a comfort stop?

The most common question we get asked in the Library is, "Where are the bathrooms?"
Find a toilet in the Library.
What floor is it on? _____
What is it near to? _____
_____

10. Study space with a view

Find a quiet place to study in the Library that has a great view (hint: the higher you go, the better the view, the quieter the space). Which floor is this on? _____
What can you see from the window?
_____
What do you like about this space?
_____

11. Escape from study for a while

Do you know that QUT Library has movies and TV shows on DVD? Find them on Level 4 and choose a movie or TV show you'd like to watch.   What is the title?

_____
Why would you like to watch it?
_____
_____

12. Helping you study

Go to the Library Desk on level 2, say hello to the friendly librarian and collect your copy of the **QUT cite write guide**. It's free!

Hughes, Hall, Pozzi, Howard & Jaquet (2016) Passport to study: Flipped library orientation for international students. *AARL*.
http://dx.doi.org.ezp01.library.qut.edu.au/10.1080/00048623.2016.1225552

To foster a sense of personal comfort and belonging in the Library, some quiz questions featured leisure resources like feature films and the games room that are available. In addition, one quiz question asked students to take a *selfie* photo on the 'stairway to study heaven' as a souvenir of their visit to the Library. (See Figure 2 below for a selfie example). To help students locate themselves in the wider QUT -Brisbane context, quiz question 10 invited students to find a study space with a view on one of the higher floors. To overcome any embarrassment about asking a common Help Desk enquiry, quiz question 9 asked: 'Where are the bathrooms? Find a toilet in the Library. What floor is it on? What is it near to?'

Figure 2: Poster prepared for Support for Learning Forum, 2 April 2015
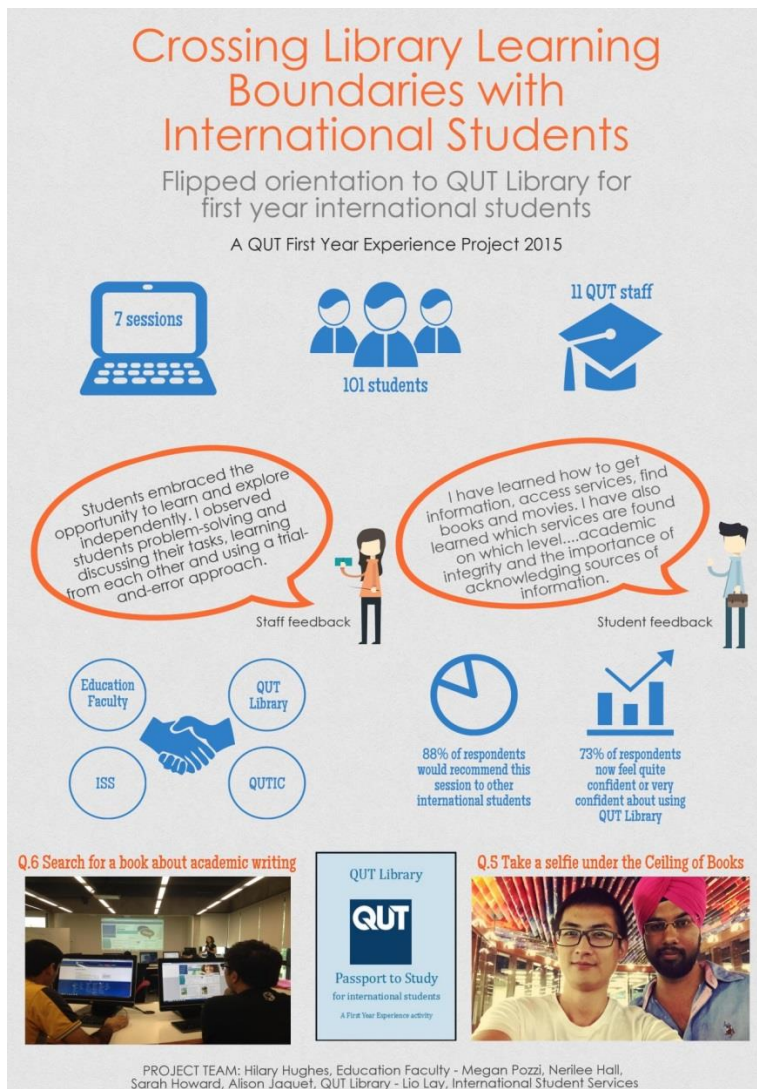
Implementation of the Passport to Study program

Seven *Passport to Study* orientation sessions, for a total of 98 new international students, took place in Weeks 3 to 4 of Semester 1, 2015. The project team decided that would be the most appropriate time, once international students were settled into study at QUT and starting to need resources for assignments. Initially five orientation sessions were planned and advertised by QUT International Student Services via an email newsletter sent to all international students. The sessions were also listed on QUT Library's workshops and tours website. Although the orientations were intended primarily for individual international students in undergraduate courses, three sessions were run for English for Academic Purposes (EAP) classes upon request from QUT International College tutors.

The sessions lasted 90 minutes, longer than most Library orientations, to allow students an extended active learning experience. Four project team members (2 librarians and two academic skills advisers) acted as *learning guides* during the program. They shared the running of the sessions, with two of them present each time. In line with flipped pedagogy (Educause, 2012) the sessions were designed so that the students would first engage in a self-directed learning activity before participating in a more formal 'class' with their learning guides.

Each group of international students gathered in a Library training room. After welcoming the students and introducing the purpose of the session, the learning guides provided students with basic organising information and the *Passport to Study* resource, but they held back from giving detailed instruction about the library. Given the cultural and linguistic diversity of each group, the learning guides slowly talked students through the questions, encouraging individuals to read the questions aloud and share their initial ideas with the group. After this brief preparation, the students dispersed through the library.

The students then spent 45 minutes exploring the library and completing the passport quiz. By the time they returned to the training room, the students had absorbed considerable information about the QUT Library and were then ready to work with the learning guides to extend their knowledge and skills related to the quiz question topics through discussion and hands-on practice. At the end of each session the students had the opportunity to share questions and answers and complete a brief online evaluation of the session (using GoSoapbox software).

Evaluation of Passport to Study orientation

The project team evaluated the *Passport to Study* orientation using three data sources to gain multiple perspectives: Formal online questionnaire completed by international students; Reflections by the learning guides (four project team members); and Anecdotal comments of three QUT International College tutors who brought their classes to a *Passport to Study* session. The evaluation data were analysed descriptively and thematically (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2013). The following Table 1 summarises key themes arising from the evaluation of data combined from all three sources. They characterise the nature and outcomes of the *Passport to Study* orientation program.

Learning design	Key themes
International student focused	Responsive to real needs (identified by students & tutors)
Awareness raising	Library is welcoming / friendly Library staff are friendly / helpful Library
Scaffolded / Guided	Helpful Well balanced (information and practice)
Passport activity	Practical / hands-on Innovative/ Original Fun
Passport resource	Innovative/Original
Problem-based learning	Student-led discovery (of library) Solving quiz questions
Active learning	Engaging / Interactive
Peer-to-peer learning	Making social connections (with other students)
Outcomes for students	Developed familiarity with Library facilities Developed basic information / academic literacies Greater confidence Sense of belonging in Library
Outcomes for tutors	Developed greater familiarity with Library services & facilities for international students Extended their own information / academic literacies
Outcomes for learning guides (academic advisors and librarians)	Extended information literacy teaching expertise in cross-cultural environment Developed new orientation tool for future use Confirmed the continuing efficacy of 'low tech' approaches for some contexts (i.e. importance of fit for purpose resource design)

Table 1: Summary of evaluation findings

Findings for each data source are presented below, with key themes shown in italics.

Students' feedback

The online evaluation questionnaire asked students to identify their faculty and answer the following seven questions:

1. How confident did you feel in using the Library BEFORE this workshop?
2. How confident do you feel in using the Library AFTER this workshop?
3. What was the most useful information covered today?
4. Was there anything else about the Library that you hoped we would cover but we did not?
5. Would you recommend this workshop to other international students? Why/why not?
6. Do you have any other comments about today's workshop?
7. What other workshops could the Library provide to help you as an international student?

Questions 1 and 2 asked students to select one of five responses: Very confident – Quite confident – Neutral – A little confident – Not confident at all. Questions 3 to 7 provided a text box for open-ended comments.

Completion of the evaluation questionnaire was voluntary and anonymous. It gained a very high response rate: of the 98 students who attended a Passport to Study workshop, 90 students (92% of the whole group) completed questionnaires. However, not all respondents answered every question, as shown in Table 2 below.

Questions	Number of respondents n = 90	Percentage of total respondents
Question 1 How confident BEFORE the workshop?	90	100%
Question 2 How confident AFTER this workshop?	85	94%
Question 3 Most useful information covered today?	90	100%
Question 4 Anything else that you hoped we would cover but did not	70	78%
Question 5 Recommend to other international students? Why/why not?	80	89%
Question 6 Other comments about today's workshop	30	
Question 7 Other workshops to help you as an international student	50	56%

Table 2: Number and percentage of respondents per evaluation question

Overall, the evaluation results suggest that the flipped *Passport to Study* sessions were highly successful in meeting the library orientation needs of first year international students. The students' responses to each question are summarised below.

Confidence: 90% of all respondents (ie. 81 students) reported feeling *quite confident* or *very confident* about using the Library after participating in a Passport to Study workshop (see Table 3 below). In most cases, those who did not report an increase in confidence indicated they already felt very confident or quite confident before the session. Only 4% indicated a continuing lack of confidence from before to after the session.

Content: In their responses to questions 3 and 4 about the content of the session, the students most commonly focused on information searching skills. However, many also mentioned library services and spaces. As reported, the most *useful* information covered in the session related to:

- How to search for and locate resources, particularly online (50 students)
- Learning about library facilities and services, including the help desk and study spaces (34 students)
- Exploring referencing and writing advice in QUT *Cite/Write* guide (16 students)
- How to borrow books (14 students)

Other things that students hoped would be covered but were not included:

- more information about booking and using rooms (7 students)
- more detailed information on borrowing (5 students)

Four students used this question to suggest physical improvements:

- more tables, chairs and computers for students (2 students)
- a coffee shop in the Library (2 students)

Recommend to others: To Question 5, 79 students (88%) said that they would recommend the Passport to Study workshop to other international students. None indicated that they would not recommend it. Many students included additional comments indicating that they found the session *helpful*. For example one student appreciated the "helpful tips given" while another commented that "it helps them in academic study". Highlighting the

value of the session to international students in particular, one participant responded: "I do recommend it to other international students because it is new for them to use and they dont know how to use it". Another pointed out that it was useful because "this library is different from other libraries".

Other library workshops: In response to Question 7, 30 students (33%) gave suggestions for other workshops the Library could provide to help international students. General topics related to:

- Researching and referencing (8 students)
- Academic writing skills (5 students)
- English language skills (4 students)
- Time management and study strategies (4 students)

From these responses, it is apparent that the international students were unaware of the workshops that QUT Library offers in Week 1 on all of the suggested topics, except for English language skills workshops which are offered by Academic Language and Learning Services. Although the Passport's quiz question 1 directed students to a Library web page outlining these introductory workshops, they were no longer being offered in Week 3 when the *Passport to Study* orientation occurred.

Other Comments: Twenty-three students (26%) provided additional comments in Question 6. These were almost entirely positive and indicated that students found the orientation activities *fun* and *helpful* and the staff friendly and helpful. They seemed to particularly enjoy the selfie activity with one commenting that it was *innovative*. Only 2 students provided suggestions for improving the orientation sessions: to provide a map for the Library's entry floor; and to shorten the length of the *Passport to Study* workshop.

Learning guides' reflections

Reflections of the four learning guides (ie. workshop presenters) were similarly positive about the process and outcomes of the *Passport to Study* orientation program. Key themes emerging through their reflections relate to the quality of the learning design (content and format), the effectiveness of its implementation, and associated staffing implications.

Learning design: The learning guides' reflections suggest that for international students the learning design (content and format) was: *interesting*; academically *worthwhile* yet *fun; well*

balanced in terms of enabling active independent learning by students and provision of informative content and support by learning guides. Importantly also, the design was *responsive to the needs of international students,* as indicated by this learning guide's description of the *Passport to Study* program: 'A genuinely learning-centred approach to orienting international students to the physical and online spaces of an academic library'. As intended, the design enabled international students to *confidently engage* with the library space, staff and resources.

From a pedagogical perspective, the design successfully promoted *social interaction* and *peer-to-peer learning* through a *problem based approach.* Thus it enabled 'a real departure from our usual 'chalk and talk' method in the classroom' and normal library orientation tours and introductory instruction. As one learning guide concluded: 'Generally students do need to use initiative/problem solving when using the Library so the design was a good fit given the way students need to use the library'.

Learning activity: Overall, the learning guides' reflections indicate that the *Passport to Study* workshops were *effective* in supporting an engaging flipped learning experience that was social and student-led. Their unobtrusive observations of the students exploring the Library revealed that some students worked independently, while most carried out the activity in pairs or small groups. They were principally *guided* by the passport resource as intended. The students occasionally sought assistance from the learning advisers, but more often they gained information from each other. Thus, as one learning guide noted, the passport 'empowered them [students] to move freely through the space with a sense of purpose and confidence'.

In seeking answers to the passport quiz questions, the students engaged in *problem-solving* and collaborative *peer-to-peer learning.* This was evident in the way that they discussed the tasks with each other and often used a trial-and-error approach to answer particular passport questions. Accordingly, 'students embraced the opportunity to learn and explore independently'.

The learning guides admitted some initial *concerns* regarding the paper based passport format and whether an online one would be more effective or appealing to the students. However, they came to realise that the printed copies helped the sessions to run smoothly as they were easy to distribute and explain. Importantly, they avoided the need to manage students' varying digital skills in a relatively short session that was more focused on developing familiarity with the physical library than learning how to use technology.

The learning guides were reassured that the students seemed to enjoy the activities and not find them too juvenile or basic. They concluded that the print passports were beneficial in not only providing an *original* thematic focus for Library orientation sessions but also they gave students something to write notes on and take away with them. One learning guide considered that the passport quiz was particularly successful in encouraging the students to ask questions and therefore normalising help-seeking behaviours. She related: 'I had to go and find two students who had been so caught up with asking questions to the Peer Adviser on the help desk that they'd forgotten the time'. This led her to realise that: 'This kind of enthusiastic curiosity is what university experience is all about'.

Learning outcomes: The learning guides considered that through answering the passport quiz questions, the students gained a *holistic* view of the Library's services and facilities. They developed *basic academic and information literacies* in a *practical*, 'hands-on' way. Perhaps most importantly, the learning guides noted that the international students appeared to develop *confidence* and a *sense of belonging* in the Library. They became aware of the Library as a *friendly, helpful* place that welcomes international students, where the resources and services are 'theirs to use'.

Staffing implications: As evidenced by the learning guides' reflections, the most challenging *concern* about the *Passport to Study* orientation was staffing. Tying up two staff to run a 90-minute session would normally be considered unsustainable. However, in this case having two educators enabled the provision of a seamless, *scaffolded learning experience personalised for international students*. The longer time and relaxed pace allowed the learning guides to respond personally to English language limitations or academic uncertainties that international students might be experiencing.

Tutors' evaluative comments

The three International College tutors who brought their classes to the Library all expressed strong support for *Passport to Study* orientation program which they considered to be *helpful* in developing international students' *confidence* in using the Library for study. One commented 'I highly recommend the library visit' because the students found it 'highly informative and felt much more confident about using the library and its services afterward'. This tutor found it beneficial in introducing the students to electronic resources, the Dewey system and referencing in a novel way. Another thought that the session was thorough and

'supportive to international students in particular'. Moreover, she considered that it contributed to her learning and was *helpful* 'to students and staff alike'.

Recommendations

The evaluation findings support a set of recommendations, as outline in this section.

Continue to develop and implement innovative Library orientations: Informal, interactive orientations like the *Passport to Study* workshops are worth providing, despite the resource challenges they might present. In particular, as this project's findings show, they are beneficial in developing international students' confidence in using the Library as a welcoming learning space where their strengths are valued and their learning needs are supported. Thus they further the goals of many universities including QUT (2014) with regard to enhancing cross cultural competence, international student transition and first year student experience and retention (Nelson, 2014).

Address international students' information literacy needs in a personalised way: Evaluation of this project and other research (Hughes, 2010, 2013; Liu, 2013; Peters, 2010) shows that many international students benefit from opportunities to learn basic information searching and library using skills, including online databases, to support their study at the host library. However, learning content and approach need to be relevant to the students' academic program and transition to study in a less familiar educational environment. So for example, in quiz question 7 it might be more appropriate to ask international students to find an academic writing or research skills resource instead of 'locate a book with a 540 (Chemistry) call number'.

Make library orientations fun: Library orientations do not need to be routine, rushed and dull for students and library staff alike! This project shows that international students find hands-on, informal Library orientation useful and enjoyable. However, to ensure full learning benefit, all activities need to have a productive outcome. For example, the social learning value of the selfie activity (quiz question 5) could be increased by displaying the photos on digital signage in the Library or on the Library web site. This would convey a sense of welcome and belonging to other international students and could be used to promote the Library and information literacy learning activities.

Encourage (more) library staff to be involved in running interactive orientation sessions with international students: This would raise the library's cross-cultural capacity, an essential requirement for contemporary universities in Australia and elsewhere with increasingly

diverse student populations. It would also enable the students to connect on a personal level with a wider range of library services and points of help. On a practical level, spreading the load more widely across the staff might allow more sessions to be offered.

Promote library orientations enticingly: It is vital to promote library orientations in student-friendly and timely ways, to entice participation rather than simply add it to a hit-and-miss list of orientation week events. This is particularly important for international students who are often unfamiliar with the library and its services when they arrive at their host university. It would be beneficial to extend introductory workshops and tours well into the semester, as new international students are often still settling in to their new home and social environment in Week 1. Social media and pizza are two proven ways of arousing students' initial interest. Then a fun library orientation experience is likely to generate further interest and library use, and word of mouth promotion.

Develop librarian-educator collaboration through library orientations: A key success factor in this project was the inter-disciplinary collaboration of the team which included librarians, academic skills advisers, an international student counsellor and an Education Faculty member. Collectively, the team members contributed a varied range of expertise to supporting the transition, learning, information use and academic literacies of international students. Orientation programs offer a means for librarians to establish collaborative working relationships with academic staff. The start of an academic program is a strategically valuable time to demonstrate the contribution librarians can make to learning and teaching. By way of illustration, the *Passport to Study* orientation proved an unexpected opportunity to raise awareness of QUT Library's services and support for international students' learning among QUT International College educators. As a result, in following semesters, International College has requested the Library to provide similar orientation for all their new students. A collaborative pattern has been set but there is still ample scope to extend this program to other Faculties with international student enrolments.

Project limitations and further opportunities

The scope of the *Passport for Study* project was intentionally narrow. It was designed to allow a timely trial of an innovative approach that could be effectively undertaken by a small cross-divisional team with a very limited budget. The team's aim to support the transition of

international students required attention to quality learning experience rather than mass participation.

Despite these limitations, this paper offers real life insights about participants' experience of an original orientation approach that was purposefully planned and critically evaluated. The collaborative nature of the project led to the significant outcomes for students, their tutors, academic advisors and librarians, as summarised in Table 1. The informal, even playful *Passport* quiz proved effective in engaging students in a social learning activity. The delayed timing of the flipped orientation program in Weeks 3 and 4 proved beneficial for international students who in the pre-semester period and earlier weeks of semester are often more concerned with everyday concerns of settling into life in a new country (such as banking, housing and transport).

The project team acknowledge that unfamiliarity with the university library and academic practices is also challenging for many new domestic students. Therefore we propose that there are opportunities to further expand the focus and reach of this project, as the flipped library orientation model and the *Passport* resource offer a foundation for enhancing transition support for the wider first year student population. The *Passport for Study* approach could be customised for different student groups, across disciplines. It supports an inclusive approach that would be well suited to all new students (not only internationals) in universities with increasingly diverse student populations.

The program's evaluation findings presented here would usefully inform similar Library initiatives at QUT and elsewhere. Already, this project has contributed to a concurrent international pilot study by the authors and librarian-researchers at QUT, two US and one Chinese university entitled *Understanding international students' library use and information literacy learning needs.*

The *Passport* questions intentionally focused on more general aspects of library and information use to ease new international students' initial contact with the Library. However, the quiz process could be further developed for follow-up sessions where students address questions on discipline-related topics. In addition, while the paper-based passport successfully engaged relatively small groups of students, it would be worth developing a web presence or digital app to extend participation. This kind of virtual orientation would be beneficial in developing students' familiarity with contemporary learning tools and approaches. If it were freely available online, it could also help international students prepare for their new study environment pre-

arrival and support their ongoing development throughout their first semester and the rest of their course.

From a pedagogical perspective, this project signals the potential of the recently developed *flipped learning* approach (Educause, 2012; Yarbro, Arfstrom, McKnight & McKnight, 2014) to enhance information literacy education (Brooks, 2014; Datig & Ruswick, 2013). Flipped learning is gaining traction in higher education. By successfully applying this contemporary approach, librarians contribute to their university's learning and teaching agenda. Their flipped learning practice could provide a model for academic colleagues' professional development. Flipped learning also provides a focus for building the collaborative relationships that academic librarians often strive to develop with other educators.

Various aspects of this project also warrant rigorous research, for example with regard to: innovative orientation for culturally diverse cohorts; library contributions to successful first year transition; and theory and practice of flipped learning for information literacy education. There is a need in these areas for larger scale quantitative studies as well as qualitative exploration.

Conclusion

The *Passport to Study* orientation program innovatively addressed higher education priorities to enhance the transition experience and learning outcomes of first year international students. Whilst providing library orientation to 98 first year international students, the project team pioneered a novel approach that draws upon the contemporary flipped learning. The strategies and materials developed in Semester 1, 2015, and the evaluation findings presented in this article, provide a proven model for developing future library orientation programs at QUT and elsewhere. In addition, they will inform research that seeks to identify and address the library and information literacy learning needs of first year international students. The flipped library orientation approach is of potential interest to university library leaders, educators and counsellors who seek to support international students during the critical beginning stages of their study at a host university. In addition, it could support the wider, increasingly diverse population of first year students who are also crossing library learning boundaries as they enter university.

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