



Empowered For Success: An Intensive Academic Skills Transition Program in Australia

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Abstract

The EmpowerED University Preparation Program (Griffith University, Australia) launched in 2024 as an innovative pathway to university for students who were unable to access undergraduate degrees through traditional pathways. A free, comprehensive, preparatory program, EmpowerED is underpinned by two key frameworks: Transition Pedagogy (Kift, 2009) and Five Senses of Success (Lizzio, 2006). Recognising the diverse backgrounds and aspirations of students, the curriculum is designed to scaffold academic and professional literacies, ensuring that learning activities are authentic, inclusive, and aligned with students' future goals. Additionally, support is embedded within the curriculum to foster student belonging, engagement, and success. EmpowerED comprises 4 core courses (subjects) and 2 elective courses. The Core courses are: University Preparation; Learning Strategies for Success; Academic Communication; and Maths Essentials. Students then choose two electives: Science Fundamentals; Innovation, Creativity, and Leadership; or Career Pathways. On successful completion of the program, students are granted guaranteed entry into their preferred undergraduate degree program at Griffith University, plus they may gain credit towards their degree. In 2024, the initial program attracted 65 students of whom 51% were 'first in family'; 25% were from low socio-economic backgrounds; 19% were students with a disability; and 5% were First People/Indigenous students. Forty percent successfully completed EmpowerED and transitioned into undergraduate programs including Education, Business, Social Work and Psychology. In 2025, the program has increased to over 600 students of whom 50% are 'first in family'; 28% come from low socio-economic backgrounds; and 15% are students with disabilities. Recommendations from the Program for learning and teaching practices are outlined.

Keywords: Transition pedagogy; five senses of success; learning support