

Student Success in a Global Pandemic

2021 Special Issue Editors: Professor Marcia Devlin and Dr Jade McKay

The catastrophic disruption to higher education from the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about significant and rapid changes to the delivery of mainstream teaching and learning in higher education institutions around the globe, in particular through the use of online learning. The many examples of innovation and novelty demonstrated by institutions and individuals in their support of students and their learning provides a timely opportunity for the sharing of exemplary activities and outcomes in the *Student Success Journal*. We are pleased to announce that *Student Success in a Global Pandemic* has been chosen as the topic for the 2021 Special Issue to enable academics, practitioners, leaders and policy makers to share their stories and outcomes and have ongoing learning from a time of extraordinary innovation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has borne witness to many higher education institutions moving to remote teaching, learning and student support, in most cases with very little notice. The rapid moves to adopt online learning and support approaches through necessity have implications for pedagogical and support theory, practice, research and student success, impacting all stakeholders within the higher education environment including staff, students and institutional policy makers and leaders. The changes have underscored a multitude of challenges that institutions may face in relation to staff development, technology infrastructure, changes to approaches to teaching and support, and student persistence, retention and success.

The sudden and unplanned shift to remote teaching and learning, with many teaching staff and students having limited knowledge of online pedagogy, and in a context in which significant numbers of students may have limited access to technology and the internet, has potentially created new and/or bigger gaps between learners. Despite the efforts of institutions to maintain quality in their provision of online teaching and learning during the conditions of a pandemic, this unprecedented shift will likely have impacted on students' learning, experience, satisfaction and success. How institutions have maintained academic and broader quality while working to embrace the opportunities, and mitigate the negative effects, of this shift on student success, are questions the special issue is interested in exploring.

Current research-based and empirical evidence on the effects of the rapid responses are, not surprisingly, limited at the time of this call for papers (June 2020). Anecdotal evidence, however, has pointed to key issues relating to potential risks such as: students from disadvantaged backgrounds having accessibility and connectivity issues; failure rates increasing; many students needing to withdraw for non-academic-related issues pertaining to the virus (e.g. health, finances, caring responsibilities); the importance of additional support (financial, academic, personal/pastoral) at this time; and the ability of support services to operate effectively in a virtual capacity, among many others. Potential opportunities in terms of: upskilling of teaching staff in digital education; improving uptake of digital tools that may assist learning; personalised learning; more flexible support models, among others, have also been identified. There may be others issues and matters to come, including those related to what might happen when restrictions are partially and fully lifted, and then by necessity in some cases, reimposed.

This special issue is seeking empirical studies on pedagogical and support innovations and applications of evidence-based practices to online and remote teaching and learning and student support during a time of national and international crisis.

Themes

Topics of interest for this issue on student success include, but are not limited to:

- **Effective teaching and learning, including:**
 - Assuring academic integrity
 - Supporting student engagement
 - Supporting students from disadvantaged backgrounds
 - Maximising retention
 - Facilitating high quality learning
 - Lessons learned to guide successful online and remote teaching and learning
 - Innovative uses of learning technologies

- **Effective support. For example:**
 - Using online resources and approaches to provide academic support
 - Using online approaches to financial and/or pastoral/personal support
 - Using online learning to support learning communities
 - Online communities of practice
 - Identifying and supporting student hardship in online settings

Perspectives

Submissions will draw from the following perspectives:

- **Students.** For example: How do students view the quality of their online or remote learning experience? How do they experience quality? What are the implications of quality for students from low SES backgrounds and other equity groups? How has online or remote provision affected student learning experiences and/or outcomes?
- **Staff.** For example: What are the issues identified by academic and teaching staff related to the move to online/remote teaching, learning and support? What challenges have been encountered? How have issues been successfully addressed? What has worked well or better than in face-to-face mode?
- **Policy and governance.** For example: What has changed in terms of policy and governance? What changes have had to be implemented to the role of the Academic Board in assuring quality? How have regulatory bodies dealt with the pandemic? How have institutions managed fail grades? How have policies and procedures been changed to support students?
- **Leaders.** For example: What has changed in leadership? What has become more or less important? What lessons have been learned?

Submissions will contain evidence drawn from robust empirical studies using quantitative and/or qualitative methodologies. Studies of this kind can also include those employing data and analytics-based initiatives. These types of submissions would normally have a focus on strategies and interventions that have been implemented at a whole of course, cohort or institutional or macro-level to address the factors involved. While studies of impacts within single units of study will be considered, the scope, design and sample sizes need to be large enough that findings are applicable beyond the local context and there are useful lessons for others. Collaboration between colleagues within and outside one's local context are strongly encouraged.

Submissions may also consider the broader challenges impacting student retention and success in the time of a global pandemic. In particular, the Journal is interested in receiving submissions about initiatives that involve institutions and extend beyond the boundaries of the institution to involve public policy, infrastructure (places or technologies), structural measures (such as financial or other resources), and communities.

All submissions should contain findings or reach conclusions that can be taken up by educators or institutions, or applied more broadly to improve understanding, practice and student outcomes.

Submission Information

In terms of format, each submission should include a 150-word abstract and be no more than 12 pages in length (including references). Submissions that do not comply with SSJ author guidelines and formatting requirements will be returned to authors for correction prior to being sent for review.

Student Success Author Guidelines:

https://studentsuccessjournal.org/public/journals/3/SSJ_AuthorGuidelines_Special%20Issue.pdf

Timelines

Full papers due: 1st December 2020

Peer review: February/March 2021

Final selection of papers: June 2021

Special Issue published: November 2021

All submissions are to be made electronically via the Journal [website](#). Please register your details to submit the manuscript, or login via: <https://studentsuccessjournal.org/index>.

Please indicate the submission is for the 2021 Special Issue: *Student Success in a Global Pandemic* in a subheading on the first page (i.e. under the title).

Professor Marcia Devlin is Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and a Professor of Learning Enhancement at Victoria University, Melbourne. Previous roles include Associate Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) at RMIT University, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Quality) at Federation University Australia and Executive Director of Academic Programs and Services at Open Universities Australia. Professor Devlin is recognised internationally for her expertise in tertiary education, including the contemporary tertiary student experience, effectively supporting non-traditional students, teaching and learning quality, leading change, digital education, education policy and educational leadership. She has won over \$6 million in competitive research and other funds and has more than 320 publications, comprising refereed, academic, professional and media outputs. Professor Devlin has given over 100 keynote and invited addresses in nine countries. Her research is widely read and highly cited. In recognition of her body of work, she is an elected Lifelong Fellow of the UK-based Society for Research in Higher Education (SRHE) and writes regularly for SRHE and for the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA).



Dr Jade McKay has over a decade of higher education experience working as an interdisciplinary researcher and academic. She has been involved in national and international research projects relating to teaching & learning with a targeted focus on the success of students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Jade has published extensively in the field, her co-edited collection, *Achieving Equity and Quality in Higher Education* (Shah & McKay, 2018) in the top 25% of downloaded books published by Palgrave Macmillan. She has also published extensively in peer reviewed journals addressing contemporary issues of retention, student success, teaching with technology, and effective teaching and learning strategies.



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