

Creating new spaces for the integrated acquisition of academic literacies for undergraduate nursing and health sciences students

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The need to address the academic literacies development of undergraduate Nursing and Health Sciences students is increasingly being recognised. As the shortcomings of study skills based approaches become more evident there is a growing emphasis on the embedding of academic literacies development within curricula. This presents particular challenges for Nursing and Health Sciences courses with crowded curricula and a need to meet standards set by external professional bodies. By the same token, it presents opportunities to better prepare students both for the academic and professional communications which may be required of them after graduation. This presentation reports on an initiative at one Melbourne university to introduce academic literacies learning early into the foundation units of Nursing and Health Sciences courses, as a means of scaffolding the writing development of first year students. It explores issues around the development of contextualised learning materials and development of appropriate curricula, and outlines the process of collaboration between literacy specialists and discipline lecturers. The concept of a shared curriculum space, inhabited simultaneously by students, discipline lecturers and literacy specialists, is examined. Initial evaluation of these programmes is discussed, based on both student and staff feedback. The presentation considers not only the potential impact of this approach in the short term, but how it can be extended into a more coordinated and comprehensive means of addressing academic literacies development across a whole curriculum, spanning all year levels.