



# DRIVING OUTCOMES AND REDUCING ATTRITION AMONGST INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS THROUGH 1-1 ACADEMIC SUPPORT

A case study by LINC Education Services

International students, accounting for over a quarter<sup>1</sup> of higher education enrolments, have posed a unique challenge to outcomes and attrition for Australian institutions. LINC Education partnered with a large Sydney-based college to implement a 1-1 personal academic support program leading to 25% higher grades and 15% reduction in failure rates.

## Premise

The Australian education sector has sustained an international student growth rate of 12% p.a. over the last 5 years. Intake reached ~540,000 students in 2018 across study levels with higher education institutions enrolling 302,513 students<sup>2</sup>. It is no surprise that at many institutions international students account for more than a third of enrolments, and many private colleges are dedicated to international students.

Despite best efforts of our institutions, many international students struggle in a new learning environment, leading to early setbacks, poor performance and stress. TEQSA validates this assessment – a 2017 study<sup>3</sup> suggests institutions<sup>4</sup> largely focused on international students tend to have high first-year attrition (average 27%; high of 51%). The HES Framework encourages education providers to include specific consideration for international students and recommends specific strategies such as timely referral to academic and other support. However, as attested by TEQSA, institutions have struggled to implement strategies that have yielded tangible results.

## CASE STUDY: IMPROVING OUTCOMES ONE STUDENT AT A TIME

To address outcomes and attrition related challenges posed by international students, a Sydney-based college partnered with LINC Education. The college offers on-campus undergraduate programs in management to international students coming from diverse academic and work backgrounds. Committed to delivering quality education, it had made significant investments in facilities, teaching resources and online on-demand tutoring support for students. Despite these efforts, the institution identified a tremendous scope to improve outcomes.

### The Challenge - Introductory Accounting

The "Introductory Accounting" unit typically had failure rates between 26%-30%. The unit was run in an intensive 6-week summer term to allow late commencing students and probationers to catch up with the rest of the batch.

### Support Design & Implementation

The student cohort was divided into two, one group of students continued to use the existing student support, while the other group (~30 students) was provided LINC support, in addition to the existing services. Each student was assigned one LINC Fellow, an experienced accounting academic, who they could reach via email or SMS and hold telephonic conversations. LINC Fellows were most active post 5 pm and available all seven days.

LINC's support incorporated three unique differentiators when compared to other support services:

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1. uCube, Department of Education and Training, Australia  
2. Department of Education and Training, Australia  
3. TEQSA Attrition Report 2017  
4. Cluster 3 institutions are characterized as medium sized institutions with a significant casual academic workforce and focused on international students' education in the field of management studies.

1. Proactive Support: Emphasis on 1-1 proactive support with no limit on how much time is spent with students.

2. Use of Technology: LINC's proprietary "intelligent" student engagement system used analytics to customise, automate, monitor, control and report all interactions.

3. Alignment to Class Content: LINC Fellows operated as an extension of the teaching team and had access to all unit content. They had on-going consultations with the teaching team to make the support relevant to students.

## OUTCOMES, INSIGHTS AND LEARNINGS

The program delivered very strong outcomes, across key dimensions:

### Student Engagement:

Weekly engagement ranged between 30-60% of students assigned to LINC. Of the 100+ student engagements, ~65% were academic conversations and the remaining were progress check-ins. 55% engagements were a direct result of the proactive approach of LINC Fellows.

### Academic Outcomes:

Unit fail rate fell down to 23%. And while students who used LINC support scored on average 61% (vs 49% for other students), the most frequent users of LINC "just passed<sup>5</sup>" indicating that the support helped these students cross the critical hurdle.

In addition, LINC's support generated invaluable data on academic questions, student sentiment and behaviour that the institution is incorporating for future improvements.

The key takeaways and pre-requisites for success are:

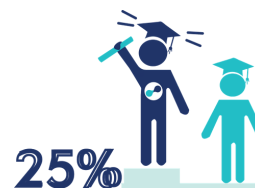
1. Proactive 1:1 approach is a must especially with UG students who tend to have other distractions.
2. Support needs to be aligned to unit content and assessments to make it relevant for students.
3. Need to leverage technology to manage, monitor and smartly customise the support for each student.

LINC is now working with a larger group of students in the autumn term, 2018 across accounting and marketing units.

5. Students with scores of 50%-59%



Overall improvement  
in unit pass  
performance



Higher scores of  
LINC supported  
students



Higher probability of  
borderline students  
passing the unit with  
LINC's support

## LINC's Approach:

"1-1 proactive support, aligned to unit content and customised to student needs"