Faculty of Arts Student Workload Balance App (Mary Immaculate College)

Key Features

1. Was the initiative established specifically to promote progression and retention and/or to address non-progression rates?

   Yes.

2. Please state the institutional commitments or national priorities with which this initiative is aligned — for example, an institutional policy or strategic plan, an indicator in the institution's Performance Agreement under the System Performance Framework, and/or the National Access Plan?

   MIC's Strategic Plan to 2030 *Pathway 2: Student Journeys, Transformation & Flourishing* commits the College to strengthening early-alert, peer-mentoring, and transition supports that foster continuity, confidence, and belonging. Expected outcomes include early-alert systems and supportive interventions to reduce disparities in progression and retention.

3. Title of lead or section responsible for the initiative/measure

Dean, Faculty of Arts

4. Focus

- Targeted initiative (specific student cohort/faculty)

5. Theme

- Assessment & examination

Overview of Initiative

6. Briefly describe the initiative, with reference to

- Why, and when introduced
- Overview of activities/intervention
- Success to date & next steps.

A pilot initiative was introduced in AY 2022/23 and fully implemented in AY 2023/24 to support student progression on the Bachelor of Arts in the Faculty of Arts following feedback from the staff–student forum on the bunching of assessment loads at specific times of the semester.

In phase 1, a browser-based application was developed to support faculty to manage and balance student workloads by tracking assessment workload per week/module across subjects, facilitating Heads of Department to view, model, and plan assessment load across all subjects of the Bachelor of Arts.

In phase 2, a student view was added to the app to enable students to effectively track and manage their own assessment workloads, helping to build their self-regulation skills. The student view was initially piloted with Year 2 cohorts in Semester 1 AY 2025/26, with full rollout in Semester 2 AY 2025/26.

Aims and Objectives

7. Aim of the initiative

To support the effective planning and management of academic assessments to reduce stress experienced by students and to facilitate the completion of assessments and to support student progression.

8. Objective 1

To ensure a balanced subject and module assessment workload across the academic year to facilitate student completion of assessment requirements.

Actions

- Engaging with faculty and students to clarify key requirements to enable effective management of assessment load
- Assistant Dean & Programme Developer define user and technical requirements for the app based on engagement with faculty and students
- Development and implementation of app
- Support for faculty with using the app
- Refinement of app based on feedback and analysis from faculty

Expected Outcome

- Application supports balancing of assessment workload across subjects, modules, and weeks on the BA programme
- Provides faculty with modelling and visualisation tool for planning assessment load

9. Objective 2

To promote effective course workload/assessment planning by academic staff and students to alleviate stress associated with fulfilling academic course requirements.

Actions

- Embed app fully within faculty assessment planning process
- Development and implementation of student view within the app
- Promotion of app with students
- Embed mechanism within the student view to gather feedback

Expected Outcome

- Facilitates faculty assessment workload planning
- Alleviates bunching of assessments
- Promotes better workload planning for students

Resourcing

10. How is the initiative resourced?

Included in the workplan for the Data Analytics Manager (DAM) in AY 2021/22. Maintenance of the App included in DAM annual workplan.

Monitoring & Oversight

11. How is the initiative monitored — is there a reporting structure in place or a committee where there is a monitoring of and reporting on progress and the achievement of objectives (e.g. academic council, university executive team)?

The initiative is monitored by the Faculty of Arts Management Committee to ensure the application continues to meet its objectives and the requirements of the Faculty of Arts and its students.

Data & Evidence of Impact

12. How do you know that the initiative is working as planned, i.e.
    - Are data gathered (ongoing monitoring and evaluation of achievement of objectives)?
    - Have the objectives been achieved? What data and evidence are there to support this?

The app was initially developed for staff and has been firmly embedded in the semester assessment processes, evidencing its usefulness. The Student App activity trends are monitored.

They show that 80% of the cohort accessed the App when launched, with App activity continuing over the course of the semester. The App includes a feedback survey; those who have responded have said the App is useful to them and they would use the App to plan their assessments during the semester.

13. Has impact been established, and how? If not at present, how do you plan to gather data and evidence to establish impact?

Progression trends will be analysed to see if there is a correlation between App usage and progression, acknowledging that the App is only one of a suite of supports to aid with student progression. Changes to assessment timing/load by faculty following initial review of assessment load visualisation/release to students is monitored, providing additional evidence of the impact of the App.

Future Plans

14. How do you intend to further develop or expand the initiative?

The objective of this initiative is to support workload balance on the Bachelor of Arts programme specifically, based on student feedback. The Bachelor of Arts, with 14 subject choices leading to several dual honours permutations, presents a challenge not currently encountered on other programmes. However, the design of the app allows for it to be rolled out on other programmes if the need arises.

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