



University of New England drives growth in conversion rate of offers to enrolments

The Challenge

According to the Regional Universities Network, students at universities in regional areas face unique challenges compared to their metropolitan counterparts. People from regional and remote areas are:



Less than half as likely to gain a bachelor and above qualification by the time they are 35 years old



40 per cent less likely to gain a higher-level tertiary education qualification

Therefore, the distinct challenge for the **University of New England (UNE)** is to provide a higher level of engagement and support pre-arrival for students given that they are more likely to have additional barriers to learning than metro students.

Project Goals

The Schools of Science and Technology, and Environmental and Rural Science enroll approximately one third of the offers that are made for **UNE** each year. It was identified that an opportunity exists to increase this conversion rate through early engagement of prospective students. **UNE** partnered with OpenLearning to develop the **Boosting Science Pathways** program in an effort to achieve three main goals:

- To increase the conversion rate from offers to commencement;
- To better prepare future students for their studies at **UNE**; and
- To encourage the development of a supportive, social network of future students entering the School of Science and Technology, and Environment and Rural Science program at **UNE**.



Australia

openlearning.com/une

The University of New England (UNE) is a public university in Australia with approximately 22,500 higher education students. Its original and main campus is located in the city of Armidale in northern central New South Wales. **UNE** was the first Australian university established outside a state capital city.

Solution

- Portal subscription

Results

- Drive learner engagement
- Drive conversion from offers to commencement
- Reach potential learners
- Access in-house learning design services

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Solution

In collaboration with OpenLearning, **UNE** developed the **Boosting Science Pathways** course. The **Boosting Science Pathways** course targets students seeking STEM qualification that have limited discipline background or a lower than required ATAR score for desired course enrolment.

It is not assumed that they have any science background from their previous studies.

This includes:

- School leavers and students from a wide variety of backgrounds who have recently completed their Year 12 studies;
- Those who have come from other disciplines of study; or,
- Those been in the workforce in a wide diversity of employment and experiences.

The **Boosting Science Pathways** program has been developed to further enhance future students' understanding of what university learning in the sciences entails. The intention of this **Boosting Science Pathways** program is to employ a social constructivist approach to learning design, which builds a community of practice among learners.

This community would work together to share experiences and ideas, co-constructing knowledge while developing a social network that will exist even before they arrive on their first day of study.

The goal is for students to:

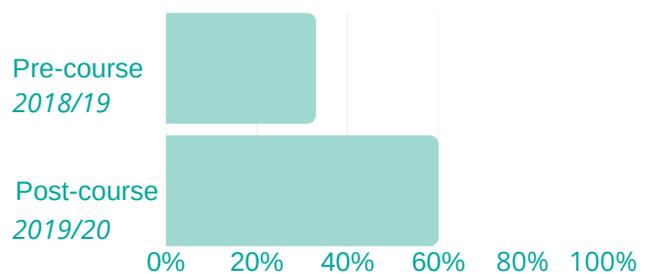
- Develop an appreciation of scientific phenomena, and build skills related to the collection and interpretation of scientific knowledge; and,
- Enhance their capacity to evaluate the quality of scientific information and develop skills in critically evaluating alternative conceptions of scientific phenomena.

Result

As a result of the **Boosting Science Pathway** program, participation increased substantially from 30% (2018/19) to 61% rate of acceptance, a 103% YoY growth in conversion rates of offers to enrollments. A significant number of these students had completed >90% of the course.

Among this group, there were 223 personal interactions in the form of comments between students. These comments coincided with activities where students were expected to share an artifact of learning and seek feedback.

The social constructivist pedagogy used in the development of this course encourages these interactions, where students have an opportunity to co-construct knowledge in a community of practice.



Conversion rate of offers to enrolments

Source: OpenLearning Course Analytics of University of New England Boosting Science Pathways course

OpenLearning identified **UNE's** need for a socially oriented course that would use the rich content already available at **UNE**. Our social constructivist approach enabled the development of a thriving social network among the prospective students, thus helping to break down the concerns they may have when choosing to attend a regional university without necessarily having a friendship base for support. The goal was that the learners could expect to arrive on Day 1 already connected with other students in their course.

Learning Community

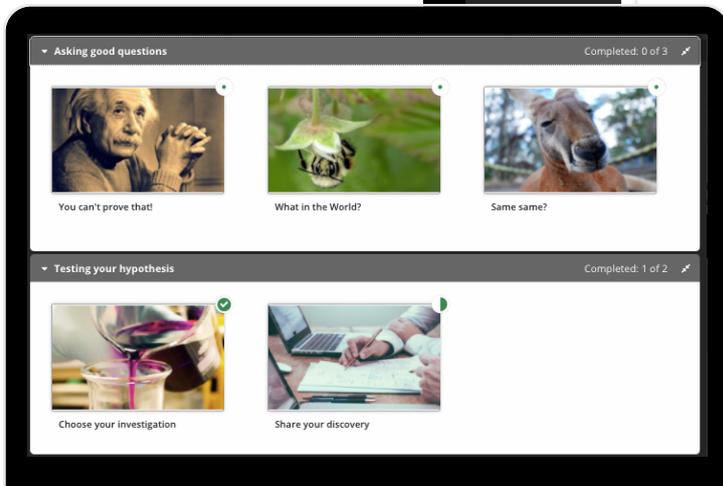
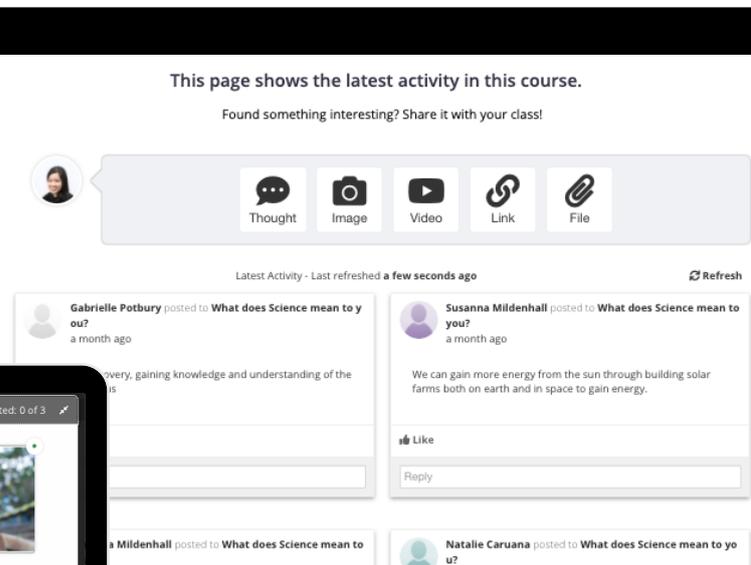
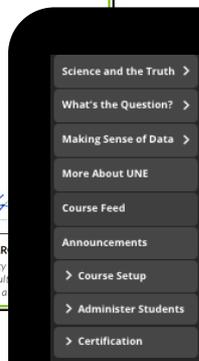
113
Enrolments

223
Comments



"The budget for this project was made relatively low in order to support the UNE funding limitations. The project came in slightly under budget, but the extra time available has been used in ongoing support of the UNE team and the course. This included the creation of a short, abridged version of the course that was used to help attract students."

Lecturer in Biology - School of Environmental and Rural Science, University of New England



Moving Forward

Realising the possibilities of scalable and on-demand online learning:

UNE are determining target schools for 2020, as a potential audience for the course in HSC (and equivalent) STEM and Agriculture subjects. As there is significant value in that each of the 6 lessons designed from this course can stand alone, these courses will be piloted as support foundational skills modules in first year units in 2020.



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