

**WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY**



SCHOOL OF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY:

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY, PROFESSIONAL CAPABILITIES AND STUDENT RETENTION: ACHIEVING THE SYNERGY

The post presents a game-changing academic integrity initiative at the School of Nursing and Midwifery that have had research proven evidence of successful impact on students' academic performance, retention and professional capabilities.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY EMBEDDED IN COMMENCING UNDERGRADUATE UNITS AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION ACADEMIC LITERACY (PCAL) SUPPORT

Professional integrity is fundamental to nursing and midwifery practice and aligns with teaching and learning on academic integrity in the School of Nursing and Midwifery. In their commencing year, nursing students complete the 'core' units 401205 Professional Communication in Nursing in Autumn

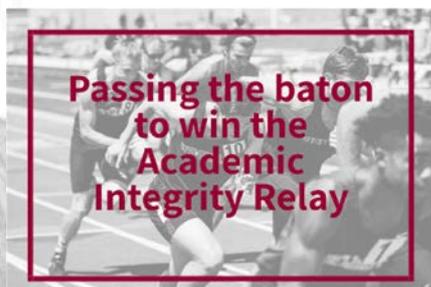
semester and 401007 Approaches to Professional Nursing Practice in Spring semester. These units are part of their first year 'transition' to university studies and include "scaffolded" assessments.

Professional Communication Academic Literacy (PCAL) support is integral to these units in building student capacities in academic literacy through improving paraphrasing skills, written expression for essays, reflective writing for nursing assessments, understanding the use of referencing, and student knowledge of academic integrity. The embedded PCAL support improves the understanding and skills of students in studying with academic integrity.

WHAT IS PCAL?

The PCAL support vUWS site and on campus support are available to all students in the School. For more information on PCAL support, please see [here](#).

The outcomes of the PCAL support strategy for the 17-month period from January 2016 to May 2017 were presented at the recent Western 2018 Professional Staff Conference, the 2018 NETNEP Conference in Canada, and the 2017 TEQSA





Conference on Students, Quality and Success in Melbourne. The research findings on PCAL support showed a total student uptake of 11,290 PCAL support school-based workshops, consultations and webinars. It highlighted the relationships between student uptake of PCAL support, retention in the nursing program and improved academic performance. Of significance was how the support strategies impacted student retention, with students who took up PCAL Support being over 7 times more likely to successfully continue with their nursing studies. Through participation in PCAL support students also achieved identifiable improvements in academic performance.

For further information on these findings, please see the [research poster](#) on PCAL support.

PCAL staff work collaboratively with Unit Coordinators in first year core units, in second and third year undergraduate units, and the School's postgraduate and higher degree research programs. PCAL advisors collaborate with the Academic Literacy Coordinator and with unit academics in designing, developing and implementing timely support resources focused on academic literacy and language skills, which are pivotal to acting with academic integrity in university studies. These

resources are made available on vUWS, and are delivered through support webinars, workshops and consultations.

TAKING PCAL SUPPORT ONLINE

In 2017, a Collaborative Online Space (COS) was developed for the PCAL support vUWS site to further assist students using Technology Enhanced Literacy Support (TELS). In August 2018, Suzanne D'Souza, a PCAL Support Literacy Advisor, at the School and Dr. Mais Fatayer, a Blended Learning Designer from the Digital Futures Team, received the Blackboard Catalyst Award for Student Success for this innovative learning design of the COS on the PCAL support vUWS site.

For further information on the TELS project for the Blackboard Catalyst Award for Student Success, please see the [project overview](#).

In the Professional Communication in Nursing unit a module on academic integrity was piloted in 2016 and implemented as core unit content in 2017 to assist students in preparing for their written assessments. In 2018, this unit and the Approaches to Professional Practice unit accounted for 1,500 first year students located across five campuses.



Implementation of these units has involved strategic use of PCAL support, and substantial unit teaching resources to ensure all commencing students, and particularly those who are first in the family to attend university, and students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are well-supported in developing their academic literacy and academic integrity skills for their studies in the School.

**WHY THE SCHOOL HAS A WINNING
APPROACH TO ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

The School's innovative approach to strategically embedding PCAL support into commencing first year core units and ensuring this support is available to all students in the nursing and midwifery programs has facilitated learning about acting with academic integrity in assessments. Students are also supported in their classes with learning resources and discussions with tutors on professional and academic integrity. This educative approach to developing critical thinking, academic literacy and academic integrity skills empowers our students, as soon to be health care professionals, to develop and demonstrate these skills from the commencement of their studies.

The approach is further supported using remediation for any academic integrity related matters through a referral process to PCAL support. This remediation involves student completion of an Academic Integrity Quiz on vUWS and targeted instruction and assistance in understanding feedback from Turnitin, and in accessing educational and referencing support at Western. Students in the School of Nursing and Midwifery are provided with opportunities to develop knowledge of academic integrity and related academic literacy skills throughout their studies in a supported learning environment. This approach prepares them for success in units and assessments, and as future health care professionals.

Please contact Dr Paul Glew, the School of Nursing and Midwifery, for any further information at p.glew@westernsydney.edu.au