

David Bond | david.bond@uts.edu.au
University of Technology
Sydney, Australia

Student Disengagement and its Impact on Performance

The aim of this session is to provide further evidence as to what drives student performance. Research into tutorial attendance and performance implicitly assumes that it is beneficial for students to attend tutorials. However, with students becoming increasingly time poor and a rise in flexible learning options, it is possible for students to be engaged with a subject without necessarily attending tutorials on a regular basis.

Using data collected from the performance of over 5000 students over a three and half year period in a first year undergraduate business subject at a major Australian university, the impact of attendance and engagement on performance is analysed.

The results of this study show that student performance is much better for those students that engage earlier and more consistently with the subject as opposed to those that don't. Once engagement is controlled, tutorial attendance does seem to have a positive impact on performance. The relative impact on performance of the tutorial attendance factor however is much less than the impact of student engagement.

The objectives of this session will be to a) provide practitioners with empirical evidence of the impact of student engagement on performance; and b) to provide a forum in which attendees can voice their opinions as how best to solve the issue of student disengagement. This will help provide direction for a way in which to improve course design to facilitate improved student engagement, and also enable a comparison study to be conducted.

As this is a conference for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, it is assumed that all attendees will be currently active in teaching at their institutions. As such, attendees will have a variety of personal experience of teaching at an undergraduate. In line with the secondary objective of the session, I will be seeking to create a discussion involving the audience around their teaching experiences, more specifically what factors they feel help to drive student engagement.

The audience will be able to walk away from this session with a greater understanding of the drivers of student performance, and that tutorial attendance is not the critical component that many assume it is. The session will also provide an insight into the decision making abilities of undergraduate students and that whilst we may see them as adults, they have still a long way to come.