

Environmental Scan

1. **Institution:**

Murdoch University

2. **Contact Person (and contact details):**

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3. **Name of Program/Initiative**

3.1 URL:

<http://our.murdoch.edu.au/Student-life/Life-at-uni/Help-For-First-Years/First-Year-Advisors/>

3.2 Start Date/Duration:

Semester 1 2011 - ongoing

4. **Brief outline of program**

Murdoch University has developed a network of 14 First Year Advisors (FYAs) operating throughout the University. The Network is managed by a Senior Lecturer in First Year Experience. There is also a full time Student Support Officer. The entire first year program is located within the Student Learning Centre. Students in each school have their own FYA who can assist with questions and issues directly, or refer students to the appropriate person or service for help. The FYA network runs a variety of outreach campaigns throughout the semester, contacting students for a number of reasons from not having enrolled in units at the beginning of semester to missing consecutive tutorials. The aim is to let students know that the advisors are there to support them through transition.

In addition, the FYAs work on a number of programs:

- UniEdge is aimed at fostering a sense of community among first year students. A series of one hour sessions are offered to all first years during the first four weeks of semester. Sessions include tips for studying successfully, visits from support services at Murdoch, a student panel and an interactive student passport activity.
- The Murdoch Mentors program matches a group of first year students with volunteer peer mentors in their second year or above. The mentor groups meet weekly and engage in semi-formal activities such as chatting about study or informal activities. Mentors must apply for

the role and they receive extensive training prior to beginning as well as ongoing support from the FYAs.

- The Firstyear Murdoch Facebook page offers students an easy way to keep up to date with student events and make contact with each other. It is also used to pass on useful information such as exam preparation tips, advice on finding help or resources and generally raising awareness of the first year programs.
- Student events. These are run jointly with the Student Guild and include social or fun events such as Stamp Out Stress day and multicultural Day.

Purpose/Aims

The FYA network and programs are intended to provide multi-layered support to student during their first year on campus. The combination of academic and social support is intended to engage students at different levels of campus life and the ‘just in time’ approach enables us to reach the students when they are most receptive to provide information and support that will avoid problems or ameliorate them and before the students have lost confidence.

5. **Breadth of program** (is it in a particular subject, program, school, faculty, across the institution, campus, with a particular cohort, etc)

The FYA network is a university-wide program.

6. **Category (please select all that apply and provide explanation where necessary)**

Category	Y?	Explanation
Policy	Y	Policy establishing the FYA Network was created in 2011 with the support of the Vice-Chancellery.
Curriculum	N	
Program	Y	The network covers the entire university and includes several sub-programs.
Other (please specify)	Y	FYAN works in conjunction with the first year foundation units, but is not responsible for those units.

7. **Resources** (optional – we are trying to determine what sort of resourcing is necessary to make the initiative work)

7.1 **Start up budget:**

Indicative budget is \$4.5 million over 3 years

8. **Outcomes**

8.1 **Uptake:**

Data is not yet available.

8.2 Evaluation(s) conducted to date - Informal or formal) – and details of findings:

in progress.

8.3 Evidence of success:

evidence to data indicates that student contact with FYAs is increasing, but data is still being collected.

8.4 Evaluation(s) planned (and dates for this/these):

Evaluation of Semester 1 results will begin in Semester 2.

8.5 Major challenges:

Effective staff training & co-ordination to ensure data is collected according to procedure.

8.6 Other (Please specify):

9. Publications/Reports (including links to those publically available)

Callan, N., Kemp, H. & Wojcieszek, J. (2012, June). *RightNow*: Modifying software to systematise and collate data from First Year Advisor-student interactions. Accepted for presentation at the First Year in Higher Education Conference, Brisbane.

Box, G., Callan, N., Geddes, T., Kemp, H., and Wojcieszek, J. M. (2011). University first year advisors: A network approach for first year student transition and retention. A practice report. *The International Journal of First Year in Higher Education*. 3(1). 91-100. doi: [10.5204/intjfyhe.v3i1.107](https://doi.org/10.5204/intjfyhe.v3i1.107)