

# **Facilitating transitions to self-directed learning: Embedding learning skills development in a first year content unit**

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Many students find the transition from teacher-guided secondary school to more autonomous tertiary learning challenging and the first year of university study is a critical period of transition for most students. A capacity for active, self-directed, and self-regulated learning is a key determinant of academic success at university. As curriculum designers, academics develop many resources (lecture summaries, slide presentations, learning objectives, key words) to enhance student learning; however, providing learning resources without instruction on how to use them may negate their value as learning tools. This study investigates the efficacy of a novel group assessment task designed to enhance learning skills important for more self-directed forms of learning: capacity to ask appropriate questions, identify appropriate resources, and draw links between different resources. Quantitative and qualitative data collected via questionnaire and written reflections by students revealed the extent to which students utilised and evaluated the usefulness of available resources, and highlighted emerging awareness of learning behaviours. This study highlights how the development of learning skills via strategic learning activity design embedded within content units has the potential to help first-year students transition to more self-directed forms of learning, and represents a innovative approach to the integration of academic and learning support.