

# The upward cycle: Learner progress through critical reflection and strategic response

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## Our context

The central theme of our action research (AR) project in 2021 was learner progress, so the context of our research is essential in explaining the specific needs of our learners, the decisions that shaped our questions and methods, and the subsequent analysis of our findings. All such factors were closely linked to supporting, sustaining and measuring the progress of our students.

Our workplace is UNSW Global, which provides multiple course options for achieving entry to undergraduate and postgraduate degree programs at the University of New South Wales (UNSW). One such option for entry into UNSW undergraduate degrees is provided by a range of Foundation Studies programs in which students acquire and demonstrate academic skills in a number of subject areas, including Academic English. Entry to undergraduate degrees at UNSW is achieved by the successful completion of these Foundation Studies programs.

The course in which we conducted this project is called the Foundation English Entry Course (FEEC). This is a 10-week Academic English course which provides an opportunity for entry into the various UNSW Foundation Studies programs. As such, FEEC is described 'an academic pathway course', as it presents an early and crucial step in this pathway of successive courses leading to university entry. Successful completion of FEEC is essential in ensuring progression at the beginning of that pathway. Originally classroom-based, the course moved to online delivery in early

2020, using a learning management system called OpenLearning ([www.openlearning.com](http://www.openlearning.com)), which includes a student profile with a designated blog space and offers features for administrators and teachers to track progress, such as completion of activities and commenting. It was after the transition to online delivery of FEEC that we identified the specific issues relating to student progress that form the basis of our project.

In order to justify the aims, interventions and implementation processes on which the project was based, it is worth noting that we have both taught on FEEC classes for many years while it was a classroom-based course and have been closely connected to the transition to online delivery and subsequent cohorts since that point. We have both been involved in developing course content and assessment processes, so we felt that we had a level of understanding to make assumptions regarding the needs of our learners and the types of interventions that could have positive impacts on their progress.

## Research focus

Ensuring and measuring learner progress is a current challenge facing the online delivery of Academic English pathway courses that prepare learners for university entry. This is especially crucial in the context of these short pathway courses for young learners, who may exhibit characteristics and behaviours that negatively affect their learning progress.

Prior to our AR project, successive cohorts were overwhelmingly *focused on the destination rather than the journey*, with a strong emphasis on grade achievement rather than learning processes. A large proportion of our students lacked the levels of engagement, motivation, self-awareness and agency needed to achieve their course outcomes. There was also a tendency among these learners to be highly dependent on teachers and competitive, rather than supportive, of their classmates. As a result, we observed limited interaction among students, low rates of completion of online activities, and even cases of cheating and plagiarism. These young learners had consistently demonstrated such characteristics in both the classroom and online, which was the initial motivation for our research.

## Research questions

The over-arching aim of our AR was to improve outcomes for our students by increasing engagement with the course. To ensure student progress, we aimed to transform their attitudes, moving beyond simple grade achievement to engagement with learning processes and self-awareness through a personalised and reflective approach to course content and outcomes. We also planned to build a learning community with shared goals and intersecting experiences, founded on a strong sense of learner agency and accountability.

Our project aimed to address two questions:

1. What impact do weekly blogging and critical self-reflection and strategic response have on student engagement?
2. What impact do these series of activities have on student progress against established course outcomes?

## Our project interventions

Central to our aim was promoting students' engagement with their own progress throughout the 10-week course using 'the upward cycle', which consists of two weekly series of activities embedded within the course in the OpenLearning platform. Very early in our planning, we determined that our interventions must result in the empowering of students through the development of strong study habits and learning processes which reinforce course principles. We hoped that students would absorb the idea that they are capable of developing and improving their own abilities. In other words, what if students believed that they could do better? We were further encouraged to pursue this aim after consulting studies on:

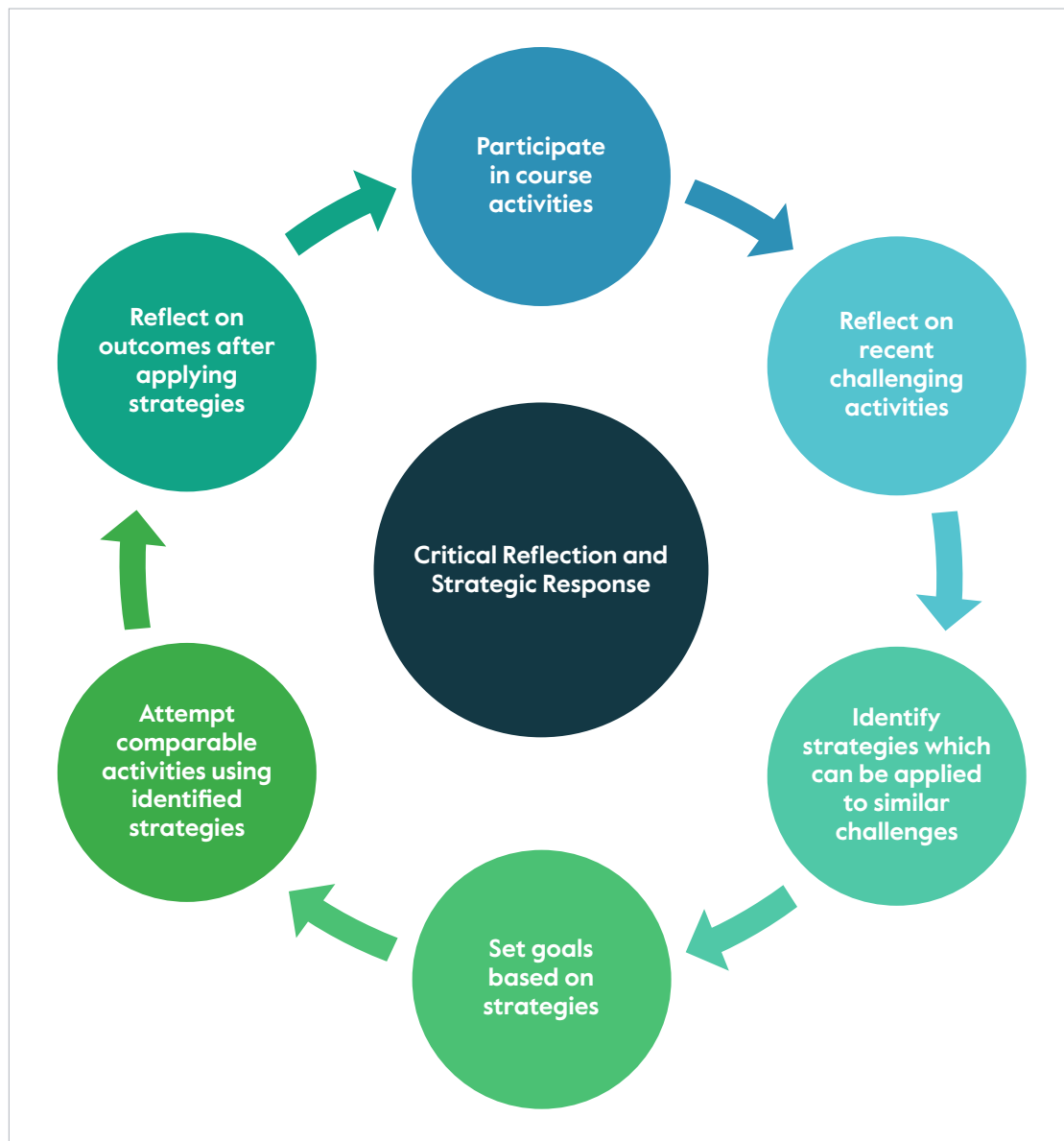
- normalising failure (Robinson 2017) by responding with strategic goal-setting
- active learning methods (Brown, Roediger and McDaniel 2014)
- critical reflection and self-analysis (Yang 2009)
- growth mindset (Bai and Wang 2020, Dweck 2006).

We decided that one of the weekly series of activities within 'the upward cycle' would be blogging. We assumed there was a link between learner progress and regular productive activities in which the theme-based lexis of each weekly unit could be recycled. Therefore, we felt a series of weekly embedded blogging tasks would provide for this reinforcement of vocabulary, but from a personalised perspective (see Appendix 1). In addition, we hoped that further writing practice and language production, unconstrained by academic conventions, would increase learner engagement with course content, as well as promote valuable connections with other learners through sharing experiences and opinions.

After considering our assumptions, we developed and implemented a weekly blogging series of 10 guided entries. Learners completed a series of scaffolded activities leading to the production of blog posts in their OpenLearning profile. They blogged about themselves and their lives, reinforcing language features from the course. They shared posts, pictures, videos and voice recordings in the blog section of their online course profile and interacted with each other by commenting on each other's posts.

Our other weekly series of activities would be one of critical reflection and strategic response (see Figure 1). This intervention was based on the assumption that our students needed to consider how they learn and make connections between their own progress and the strategies introduced throughout the course. Therefore, it would encourage students to reassess their experience of challenges and failure and to see them as opportunities to learn.

As a result, each week, students were required to critically reflect on their previous performance and experiences in course activities and assessments (see Appendix 2). They used this reflection to respond by identifying and applying appropriate strategies and setting learning goals for similar learning and assessment tasks in the near future.



**Figure 1:** Tasks completed by students in the weekly 'Critical Reflection and Strategic Response'

## Participants

The focus of our research was two successive FEEC cohorts, whose characteristics were a typical representation of FEEC learners in terms of age range, nationality and level of English. There were 16 students from China in the first cohort, and there were 11 students from China and one from Turkey in the second cohort. Their ages ranged between 17 and 21 years.

## Data collection

For each cohort, we collected data throughout the 10 weeks of the course. All tasks and tools were created in OpenLearning, where the data can be stored.

Data for Research Question 1 was based on the following tasks:

- the percentage of course activity completion compared with previous equivalent cohorts
- average number of comments per student compared with previous equivalent cohorts
- textual analysis of final exam essay (topic: blogging)
- textual analysis of Unit 9 'My Learning' reflection (blogging and reflecting on progress)
- student engagement survey in Week 10 (see Appendix 3).

Data for Research Question 2 was based on the following tasks:

- assessment results
- meeting their entry requirements for Foundation Studies.

## Impact of the action research project on students

Two notable findings were in relation to learner engagement and the impact on students' results.

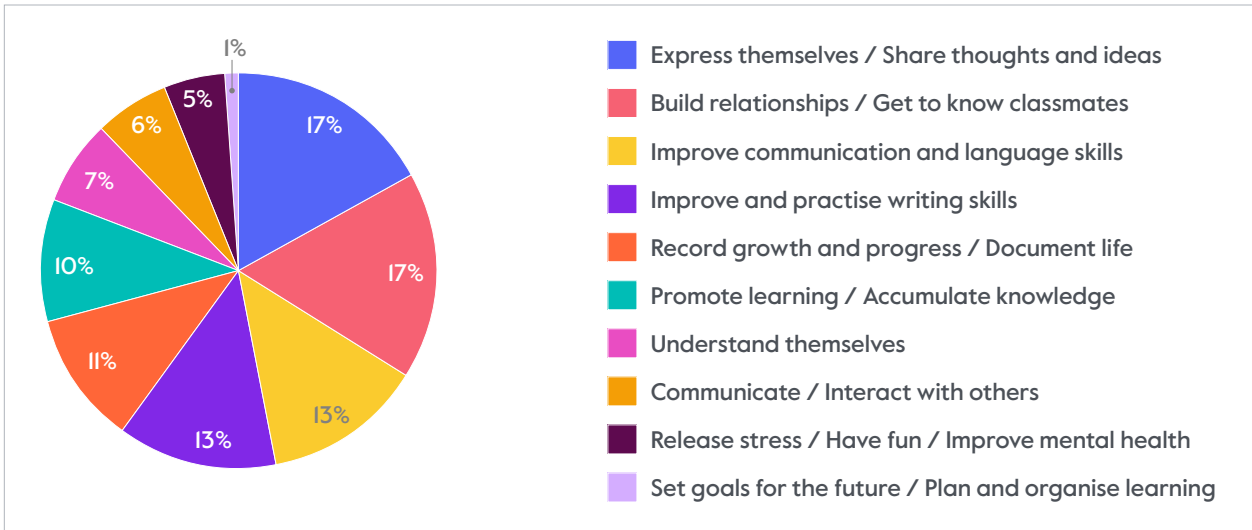
### Learner engagement

Having taught the five previous online cohorts, we had observed a lack of engagement evidenced by a limited average number of online comments made by students throughout their course, as well as a low average percentage of course completion.

Over the period of our AR, we saw an increase in student engagement in terms of the average number of online student comments on course activities over 10 weeks. These rose from an average of 139 comments for previous equivalent cohorts to 268 in Cycle 1 and 409 in Cycle 2.

The average percentage of course completion rose from 87.27% to 94.41% in Cycle 1 (including eight students with 100%) to 98.23% in Cycle 2 (including six students with 100%). In both research cycles, half of each class achieved 100% completion, demonstrating an unprecedented level of course engagement.

The significance of learner engagement is highlighted in students' own responses in the final essay and course reflection activities (see Figures 2 and 3). Regarding blogging and critical reflection and strategic response, students consistently placed value on improving language and communication skills, as well as learning, self-expression, and building relationships. This indicates that students valued the 'experience' as more than tasks to complete.



**Figure 2:** The importance of blogging

These comments from the students illustrate their views about blogging and the impact it had on their learning (comments are unedited to maintain authenticity):

*I learned to express myself by giving some information about myself. At the same time, I did research on some topics and shared them with my classmates and teacher and read their comments. (Ella)*

*International students can improve their writing and logical thinking skills through the process of posting blogs. (Diana)*



**Figure 3:** The importance of reflecting

These comments illustrate students' views about the processes involved in reflecting and responding strategically:

*Thinking about my progress is important because I need to know where I've improved. And how I've improved. (LaVine)*

*I set personal learning goals because if there is no goal, there is no motivation to learn. It is the belief that supports me to study hard. (Aiden)*

Appendix 4 consists of a variety of responses regarding learner progress, engagement, attitudes, blogging, and reflection-response processes from the student engagement survey (Appendix 3), in which students were prompted to comment on their rankings, along with responses from the final reflection task about the students' learning journeys. The survey was conducted on the final day of the course and confirmed our other findings, in that students themselves saw their own progress in terms of academic performance as well as their attitudes towards learning and building a community.

### **Positive impact on students' academic results**

The average course results were demonstrably higher than previous cohorts. Most students achieved well above the minimum requirement to an extent that had not previously occurred. The percentage of students from both Cycle 1 and 2 who achieved the results required for entry into Foundation Studies was very high, at 100%, compared with previous cohorts, ranging between 86% and 95%.

## **Project findings and applications**

Our motivation for our AR project was to increase the engagement of our young, online learners in course activities, and to provide a series of activities for them to monitor and enhance their own progress focusing on personal and academic development. The outcomes of our research demonstrate that the amount and quality of engagement increased along with improvements in course assessment results. After conducting our AR project with two separate cohorts, we have observed a number of positive outcomes.

Our major project findings are listed below:

*Blogging topics* – Topics that are personal, familiar and simple, and shared are immediately accessible to young learners. These also allow for comparison and commenting.

Our young learners, regardless of language level or maturity, wrote in a style similar to social media, a familiar and safe context. The topics, for example, hobbies, travel, friendships and dreams, were clearly less daunting compared to more demanding, academic writing tasks. In contrast to essay writing, our students needed little encouragement to write about what was familiar and personal. Writing became a tool for communicating ideas, sometimes pleasant and undemanding, and sometimes challenging, but not intimidating.

*Core activities* – Starting the blogs and reflection processes early in the course meant that these learning experiences felt integral to the course, as important as assessments, and deserving of attention.

Early in the implementation of the blogging and reflection-response processes, we observed that students were moving away from simply completing tasks with little consideration. Students very quickly responded creatively with their organisation of information and the integration of visual materials, in ways that clearly attempted to engage the attention of both teachers and classmates. Additionally, learners' reflections on assessments and other tasks showed greater insight and critical thinking than we had previously encountered.

*Expect more, get more* – The blogging and reflection-response activities increased the 'size' of the course by 15% in terms of the total number of online activities and the time required to complete them. This addition may seem counter-intuitive as a solution to engagement for a previously under-engaged learner cohort. However, our findings showed a greater response to course content in terms of completion rates as well as the quality of responses in terms of depth and personal commitment (cf Gibbons 2009). In demanding more of our young students, we actually received much more in response, and this specific observation deserves further analysis. We discovered that young learners can be surprisingly prolific if given the right combination of targeted tasks, scaffolding, and challenge. In doing so, we raised expectations and the learners' motivation to meet them. The combination of blogging and reflection-response activities gave the necessary support, but also the freedom and opportunity to be productive and personally responsible.

*Blog entries by stealth* – We scaffolded the production of blog entries with target language revision exercises, such as simple vocabulary and grammar revision exercises. Topic-based survey questions, organised from general to increasingly specific and personalised, also integrated opportunities to illustrate meaning or show examples through photos or diagrams. Eventually, without explicit instruction, learners generated the content of the blog entry in their various answers. All that was required was a process of compiling, editing, and inserting transition and cohesion signals to produce a blog entry, as the example below illustrates.

**An example: The blog entry on hobbies**

1. An activity differentiating the meaning of various adverbs of frequency.
2. A personalisation exercise in which students express how often they engage in a number of common hobbies and leisure activities.
3. Greater personalisation as students describe how often they engage in their own hobbies using targeted adverbs.
4. Further information elicited; for example, reasons for interest in these activities.
5. Compilation of all information generated so far, edited using cohesive devices.
6. Publication of the completed blog, with pictures to add interest. Await responses and comments from teachers and classmates.



*Blog writing to academic writing* – Blog entry production provided students with the experience of producing a cohesive text involving a number of steps: creating content by compiling facts and information relevant to the topic; organising these into a logical sequence with examples; and then linking them appropriately with cohesive devices. This systematic approach to text creation is also applied to the production and development of more academic texts such as body paragraphs in academic essays.

*Exploit technology* – Incorporating both a blogging series and a reflection-response series was partly a desire to take full advantage of existing functions within the OpenLearning platform. Moving to online delivery offered a tremendous opportunity to use these tools in this exciting new environment. The OpenLearning student profile already included a blog section, and the capacity to post information as text, pictures, and audio or video files further enhanced these activities. In addition, by providing a repository of all posts, blog entries, comments, and communication threads throughout the course, the platform was well-suited for reflecting on previous experiences and planning ahead with strategies for new challenges. This growing bank of blog entries and reflections was also useful to boost the confidence of learners by acknowledging the amount of English text they produced, particularly encouraging at this point in their academic pathways.

*Comment early and comment often* – We, as teachers, were committed to commenting quickly on blog entries and reflection posts. Our contributions provided the equivalent of teacher feedback to learners, albeit more personalised. As such, our quick response time gave these comments a level of significance that students generally give to teacher feedback. The teacher comments also served as a model for peer-to-peer interaction.

The social media-style of the blogs and the reflection-response activities also allowed for immediate commenting by classmates. They provided opportunities for comments, suggestions, and requests for clarification or examples. These responses from peers often generated online ‘discussions’ in the form of replies and further personalisation. Students clearly appreciated the immediate reaction to their posts by their learning community and this provided a dynamic aspect to the ongoing process.

*Reflect on blogging* – By the end of the course, we linked the two seemingly separate series of blogging and reflection-response. Students were able to consider their own recent experiences and reflect on the significance to their personal growth and achievement as well as possible future academic and professional applications.

## Conclusion and broader application of project findings

Since the shift to online delivery in March 2020, student engagement and progress while studying online have rightly been an area of focus for all Australian providers, particularly when students are still immersed in their own contexts and not onshore. Teaching a range of domestic and international students online, both postgraduate and undergraduate, remains a challenge. The online delivery of English courses is set to continue well after Australian borders open. Ensuring high levels of engagement and progress is crucial in addressing the needs of international students as they achieve their learning outcomes.

The success of this AR project was largely due to the nature of the tasks and processes within the parallel weekly series of blogging, and critical reflection and strategic response. They engaged the learners in particular ways because they were personalised, scaffolded, familiar, immediate, specific and, of course, meaningful.

The key findings from this project can easily be transferred to a range of other online contexts in which international students are learning English. The principles of reflection and critical thinking can be adapted and embedded within the curriculum, as exemplified by this project, allowing for systematic implementation. These principles can also be scaled up regardless of the number of learners and the type of learning management system or platform used for delivery. In successfully achieving our research aims, we can recommend applying the principles and processes of 'the upward cycle' in order to develop learner agency, promote supportive peer-to-peer interaction, build a learning community, and meaningfully engage students in taking responsibility for their own progress.

## References

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Please click the following link to view the authors' presentation at the 2021 English Australia Action Research in ELICOS Colloquium: <https://youtu.be/YFRymDUBESA>

## Appendix I: Blogging tasks incorporated into the course

Course location and title	General topic	Vocabulary and grammar revision	Visual and audio component/s	Link to course content and structure
Unit 1 Blogging – About me	Personal introductions Introduction to blogging	Personal details		Course beginning Essay introductions
Unit 1 Blogging – Looking to the future	Personal goals – this course, future studies, careers Reasons for blogging	Blog vocabulary Verbs/nouns used with ‘the future’	Vision board – ‘illustrate your future’	Course introduction – goal setting Reasons for choosing the course Outcome of the course – studying abroad
Unit 2 Blogging – My hobbies	Personal interests, hobbies, free-time activities	Common free time activities Adverbs of frequency	Pictures of hobby	Unit themes: Life challenges, ways of life, motivation - intrinsic/ extrinsic
Unit 3 Blogging – Travel	Travel, tourism, transport and holidays	Verb/noun collocations, travel and transport lexis, place names/ proper nouns Past tense verbs for a recount Cause and effect	Illustrating a travel experience	Unit themes: Tourism and transport issues Cause and effect
Unit 4 Blogging – My family	Family, relationships, personal descriptions, informal learning	Family members and relationships Possessive pronouns Plurals	Family tree diagram, family photo	Unit themes: Sources of learning Parenting styles
Unit 5 Blogging – My hometown	Issues related to urban living	Describing places, giving directions, recommending places Adverbs of place	Hometown photos	Linked to first presentation assignment – Introducing a town or city to your study group
Unit 6 Blogging – My routine	Routines, habits, leisure, time management	Daily activities Present tenses for repeated actions	Diagram – Illustrating daily routines Video – the effects of daily routines on physical and mental health	Unit themes: Work-life balance Destructive habits and addiction
Unit 7 Blogging – Animals	Environmental issues, animal conservation, extinction	Environmental terminology Making suggestions, cause and effect, predictions	Conservation plan for a threatened species – in diagrammatical/ visual form	Unit themes: Treatment of animals Conservation and extinction of species Natural wonders
Unit 8 Blogging – friends	Friendship	Describing people: character, personality Word forms – adjective/ nouns	Photos of friends and socialising Audio – Interviewing classmates on friend	Unit themes: The human world, social issues
Unit 9 Blogging – My Classmates	Learning about and learning from classmates	Revisiting all blog entries Comparisons Personal pronouns	Course closure	Approaching course completion, revisiting blog entries prior to final reflection on blogging

## Appendix 2: Critical reflection and strategic response tasks incorporated into the course

Course location	Skill focus (Secondary focus)	Specific course experience/s	Critical reflection	Additional purpose	Strategic response	Future course application
Unit 1	Reading and speaking (Vocabulary to talk about goals)	Past learning experiences	Reflecting on the purpose of learning English and priorities in this course	Introducing goal-setting and study groups	Identifying priorities and setting SMART goals	(Dependent on individual responses)
Unit 2 Reflection 1	Reading skills (Vocabulary of success and achievement)	Unit 1 Reading test	Identifying correct and incorrect answers, reflecting on successful and unsuccessful processes	Introducing learning process – critical reflection and strategic response	Choosing reading strategies for future exams	Academic reading tasks in subsequent units; mid-course and final reading exams
Unit 3 Reflection 2	Topical discussions (Vocabulary related to studying abroad)	Units 1 and 2 Topical discussion practice	Reasons for discussion practice, significance of preparation and research, uses of functional language, importance of collaboration	Reflecting on and responding to teacher feedback, building confidence	Individual responsibilities in topic research and revising target language, strategic planning and practicing in groups	Subsequent group discussion preparation and practice; Unit 5 group discussion assessment
Unit 4 Reflection 3	Essay writing (Essay structure terminology)	Units 1, 2 and 3 Essay writing lessons, including production tasks and teacher feedback	Self-assessment on aspects of essay-writing conventions – structure, academic style, vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and argument	Focusing on using teacher feedback from previous writing tasks – identifying areas of improvement	Identifying actions in response to areas of improvement, recognising strengths and weaknesses in essay writing, and committing to specific responses for improvement	Applying actions to subsequent writing tasks, building greater awareness of the significance of teacher consultations and feedback in ongoing improvement
Unit 5 Reflection 4.1	Exam reading strategies (Terminology for learning strategies)	Units 1, 2, 3 and 4 Reading skills lessons	Focusing on experiences with exam-based reading tasks from previous units, revising question types and appropriate strategies	Revision of reading exam format, building confidence, goal-setting	Reflection immediately prior to mid-course reading exam for immediate opportunity to apply strategies in an assessed context	Reflection and response to mid-course experience can then be applied to final exams in Week 10

Unit 5 Reflection 4.2	Exam listening strategies (Terminology for learning strategies)	Units 2, 3 and 4 Listening skills lessons	Focusing on experiences with exam-based listening tasks from previous units, revise exam structure, different text types, question types and appropriate strategies for each	Revision of listening exam format, building confidence, goal-setting	Highlighting previous experiences to focus on the range of strategies appropriate for various text types and questions types; reflection immediately prior to mid-course listening exam for immediate opportunity to apply strategies in an assessed context	Reflection and response to mid-course experience can then be applied to final exams in Week 10
Unit 5 Reflection 4.3	Exam essay writing (Terminology for writing assessment criteria)	Units 1, 2, 3 and 4 Essay writing lessons	Revision of academic essay conventions and previous experiences with these; focus on previous teacher feedback and student responses to this	Significance of planning in essay exams; revision of strategies for organising essay content	Highlight previous experiences to provide confidence immediately prior to mid-course writing exam; immediate opportunity to apply revised knowledge of conventions in an assessed context	Reflection and response to mid-course experience can then be applied to subsequent assessed writing tasks in Weeks 6 and 8, and the final exams in Week 10
Unit 5 Reflection 4.4	Topical discussions (Functional language for discussions)	Units 1, 2, 3 and 4 Topical discussion lessons – preparation and practice	Focusing on the significance of topical discussions as part of academic development, revision of functional language for discussions and appropriate patterns of interaction	Revisiting previous discussion practice lessons to build confidence by focusing on prior achievements, reminder of class discussion format	Immediate opportunity to apply previous experiences and revised knowledge of topical discussions in an assessed context	Providing opinions incidentally throughout the remaining units, subsequent group presentation assessment building on confidence developed in discussion lessons, appreciation of group dynamics and individual responsibilities
Unit 6 Reflection 5	Mid-course exams (Revisiting learning strategies)	Unit 5 Mid-course exams	An opportunity to consider exam performance and the impact of the strategies identified and applied in the reflections throughout Unit 5 prior to the mid-course exams	A reminder of the need to revisit and re-set goals as part of ongoing learning	Looking ahead to the final exams and evaluating and revising their choices of strategies in the various assessments of the previous week	Unit 10 final exams follow the same formats and question types as the mid-course exams – providing another opportunity to consider the range of strategies available to them, practising them in subsequent skills-based lessons as they prepare to apply these in the final exams

Unit 7 Reflection 6	Essay writing (Essay writing criteria and maximising feedback)	Unit 5 Mid-course writing essay; Unit 6 in-class writing assessment	After two assessed essay writing tasks – focusing on teacher feedback, linking errors (or areas for improvement) to specific items of feedback, considering what responses would be required to improve or avoid repeated errors	Highlighting the significance of teacher feedback as a source of critical reflection and strategic response in all learning and assessment contexts	Planning responses to their errors or area of weakness prior to the second in-class assessed writing task scheduled for Unit 8	Students will receive further feedback after the Unit 8 writing task (and subsequent practice tasks) – further opportunities to apply strategic responses to this feedback in the final writing exam in Unit 10
Unit 8 Reflection 7	Speaking (Group discussions and group presentation)	Units 1 to 5 – Discussions, Unit 6 onwards group presentation assessment	An opportunity to reflect on improvements in speaking skills in the context of the two main speaking assessments (discussion tasks and group presentation), reflection on the application of skills developed in this course to future academic contexts	Highlighting the significance of individual responsibilities in group-based tasks, further reinforce the importance of critically reflecting on teacher feedback	Looking ahead to the Unit 9 group presentation assessment, focusing on individual responsibilities and accountability within group-based tasks	Providing opportunities for students to recognise that the skills they have developed have greater application to both future academic contexts and beyond, a valuable opportunity to highlight the often significant improvements in both skills and confidence
Unit 9 Reflection 8	Learning process – reflection and response (Future applications of the process to future learning contexts)	Units 2 to 8 – All the previous reflection and response processes	Revisiting initial goals set in Unit 1, reflecting on their 'learning journey' in the course, their achievements and overall development, reflecting on the role of blogging in this 'journey'	Highlighting the significance of goal-setting, an opportunity to recognise and celebrate personal achievements	Looking back to initial beliefs about personal abilities and reflecting on achievements, looking forward to the immediate course assessments with greater confidence and beyond to future academic contexts	Reinforcing the central principle of the critical reflection and strategic response process; by following this process, students have tremendous agency in their own learning journeys to achieve and excel in their academic endeavours
Unit 10 Survey reflection and feedback	Course reflection – All skills – course completion and focus on applying skills to future studies	All units and course assessments	A final opportunity for students to reflect on the depth and breadth of their achievements in the previous 10 weeks	An opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate their classmates and teachers	Looking ahead to the future academic pathways with a sense of empowerment and agency	Student reflections and feedback at this point provide valuable insights and form the basis of future course development



## Appendix 3: Student engagement survey

### Learning tasks

In this Foundation English course, how often have you done each of the following?	Never		Very often	
a. Thought about your own learning progress	1	2	3	4
b. Set personal learning goals	1	2	3	4
c. Used feedback to improve	1	2	3	4
d. Kept up to date with your studies	1	2	3	4
e. Worked your hardest to achieve goals	1	2	3	4
<b>Comments:</b>				

### Focus of the course

In your view, how often has this Foundation English course emphasised the activities below?	Never		Very often	
a. Using skills and strategies to improve your understanding of reading and listening texts	1	2	3	4
b. Thinking about and sharing ideas or experiences	1	2	3	4
c. Making decisions about the value of information, ideas or strategies	1	2	3	4
d. Reflecting on your own progress to develop skills and ability	1	2	3	4
<b>Comments:</b>				

### Preparing for the future

How often have you done each of the following during this Foundation English course?	Never		Very often	
a. Thought carefully about the strengths and weaknesses of your own opinions and ideas	1	2	3	4
b. Learned knowledge and skills that will contribute to your future studies	1	2	3	4
c. Developed communication skills	1	2	3	4
d. Set study goals and made plans	1	2	3	4
<b>Comments:</b>				

## Learning community

Think about the other people in your course. How often did you experience the following?	Never		Very often	
a. My classmates were friendly	1	2	3	4
b. My classmates supported me	1	2	3	4
<b>Comments:</b>				

## Academic development

How much has your experience in this English course improved your knowledge, skills and development in these areas?	Never		Very often	
a. Gaining useful knowledge and skills	1	2	3	4
b. Writing clearly and effectively	1	2	3	4
c. Speaking clearly and effectively	1	2	3	4
d. Working effectively with classmates	1	2	3	4
e. Learning independently	1	2	3	4
f. Understanding yourself better	1	2	3	4
g. Solving problems	1	2	3	4
h. Setting goals and making plans	1	2	3	4
<b>Comments:</b>				



#### Appendix 4: Responses from the student engagement survey and final reflection (learning journeys)

<p><b>Engagement survey: Progress, engagement and changing attitudes</b></p>	<p><i>My learning goal has changed from passing this course to improving my language ability. (Gina)</i></p> <p><i>I think it is the most important to find interest in study. I think we should not just do one thing for the purpose of achieving a goal, but follow my own idea. I like it, so I want to do it well. (Heath)</i></p> <p><i>I learnt how to express my opinion and how to work with my classmate.</i></p> <p><i>I learnt cooperation is the most and valuable thing from my classmate. I got so much improvement from my teacher's feedback, especially on my writing and speaking. (Shane)</i></p> <p><i>From 0% in the beginning to 99% now, I have commented on many students and completed many assignments and tasks. At the beginning, I thought it was very far away and difficult, but I found that it was worth it until today, because it helped me grow up. (Aiden)</i></p> <p><i>I look back on my essays written in ten weeks and have made significant progress, and I'm not afraid of speaking in front of people. (Suzy)</i></p>
<p><b>Engagement survey: Blogging</b></p>	<p><i>I learned to express myself by giving some information about myself. At the same time, I did research on some topics and shared them with my classmates and teacher and read their comments. (Ella)</i></p> <p><i>I have learnt a lot from blogging about how to learn and what to have fun with. Everyone shared where they were from. And it was all very interesting. (Lisa)</i></p> <p><i>International students can improve their writing and logical thinking skills through the process of posting blogs. (Diana)</i></p> <p><i>Blogs can exercise writing, and thinking about progress to learn more knowledge. (Wang)</i></p> <p><i>Other benefit for university students of writing a blog is that students can express themselves freely. (Morgan)</i></p> <p><i>I can know everyone's opinion and I also can learn from other's tasks. (Shane)</i></p>
<p><b>Engagement survey: Critical Reflection and Strategic Response</b></p>	<p><i>I completed Reflection Activities. What I learnt from this is that its more effective to stop and think than just keep going. (Heath)</i></p> <p><i>Thinking about my progress is important to reflect on my own shortcomings and improvements. (LaVine)</i></p> <p><i>I set personal learning goals because if there is no goal, there is no motivation to learn. It is the belief that supports me to study hard. (Aiden)</i></p> <p><i>I did reflect on my own progress to develop skills and ability a lot, because I need to reflect my improvement and think about my learn methods. (Frank)</i></p> <p><i>Thinking about my progress is important because I need to know where I've improved. And how I've improved. (Lisa)</i></p> <p><i>Understanding my mistakes, I tried to correct them and improved myself over time. I worked hard to reach my goal and I improved myself in the subjects that I was not good at before. (Ella)</i></p> <p><i>What I learned from this is self-examination which helps me improve myself. (Jerry)</i></p>

**Unit 9**  
**reflective task:**  
**Learning**  
**journeys**

*After studying in the language class at the University of New South Wales for nine weeks, I feel very fulfilled. I have learned a lot of new knowledge, which is very helpful to my English. I have mastered English better than before. This photo shows a person running in the sunshine, which means that I have been studying hard in the language class, encouraging myself and keeping a positive attitude to learn new knowledge. (Claire)*

*Meeting a new classmate is like just entering the sea, full of curiosity about everything. Halfway through the class, I thought everyone was tired and happy. In the end, when we all went through the course together, it was like finding beautiful coral at the bottom of the sea. (LaVine)*

*My learning journey is very challenging. I want to improve myself through continuous learning. Just like upgrading in the game, refresh myself through continuous accumulation. In this process, there will be many difficulties, such as health problems or learning disabilities. But I will reach the peak step by step like climbing a mountain. Overcome difficulties. (Vincent)*

*Climbing up step by step, although the road is not difficult to climb and also it is not easy. Even if you are tired, as long as you continue to support each other with your companions, you will definitely reach the end. So, the point is not to give up and help each other with the companions along the way. (Shane)*

*It will be very difficult at first because you are not familiar with the journey. The road ahead is full of obstacles and challenges, but as you gradually master the skills, you can solve most of the challenges. There are partners on the journey, and cooperation can make progress easier. Although the journey was very difficult, it was very fulfilling to reach the summit in the end. (Chris)*

*My learning journey is like sowing seeds. Although it has not yet grown completely, it will eventually grow into a towering tree through my efforts. (Jacob)*

*Learning is like a travel, give me some excited things and some challenges. It is not a boring thing in my life, because i am not a only one traveller, so friend is the important part in studying. Just look forward, maybe i will saw some new scenic in this journey. (Jin)*

*At the beginning of the course, I felt nervous, because it was a challenge, not only in study, but also in how to get along with my classmates. But in the two months together, I became more confident and I believe I will make progress. At last! (Tilly)*

*This learning process is very hard, but I insist on it. With the help of teachers and classmates, I learned a lot and improved my English. Let me know, insist to the end, the result can make oneself satisfied. (Jason)*

*My learning journey is full of unknown. I will have a lot of dangers and opportunities. I need through this experience, maybe I will defeat by some problems, but I will pass these challenges. I will clear the fog and go for what I really want and make my future bright. (Allen)*