‘Is there an app for StudyWISE?’
Exploring student expectations and use of online academic literacy tools

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Outline

• Introducing StudyWISE
• Considerations and tensions around the online learning space
• Data about StudyWISE:
  Student use
  Student experience
  Student preferences
  Student satisfaction and suggestions for improvement
• Implications for future development
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<td>Working in groups</td>
<td>Research</td>
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<td>Example assignments</td>
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Our question:

What do students want from an academic literacy learning space?

• Topics
• Type of learning objects
• Sequence of learning objects
• Organisation (navigation, aesthetics)
Concepts: pedagogy

Pedagogy

What teaching/learning theories best support our goals?

Andragagy (adult learning) (Knowles)

Constructivist theory (Piaget)
Active learning techniques

Academic literacy (Lea & Street)
Communities of Practice (Lave & Wenger)
Concepts: online learning

 Freedoms of learning: time, place, pace, topics
 Opportunities
 - learning objects (Mayer & Moreno, Laurillard)
 - organisation of content (Gordon, Bennett)

 Disruptions
 - SAMR model (Puenteura)
 - new learning communities (Gee, Dede)
Concepts: users/ students

User experience
- navigation, processing information, aesthetics
  (Lynch & Horton)

Digital practices
- prior experience
- skills
  (Beetham et al.)

Student experience
What skills and expectations do students bring?
## SW: Types of data collected

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<th>S2 2014</th>
<th>S1 2015</th>
<th>S2 2015</th>
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<td>iLearn activity logs</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveys</td>
<td>✓ n=38</td>
<td>✓ n=122</td>
<td>✓ n=108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group: staff</td>
<td>✓ n=6</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus group: student</td>
<td>✓ n=6</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓ n=3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usability report</td>
<td>✓ n=8</td>
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</table>
The student experience of StudyWISE

- How well it works
- What I use it for
- When I use it
- How I use it
- How I like to get information
- How much it helped
WHEN STUDENTS USE STUDYWISE
When do students use StudyWISE?
When do students use StudyWISE?

“as an exchange student..” (S2 2014)

“to brush up on various assignment [and] essay tips” (S2 2014)

“...once assignments start to kick in, no time...” (S2 2015)
WHAT DO STUDENTS USE STUDYWISE FOR?
What did you do with StudyWISE materials?

- I read most sections.
- I printed out pages or saved content for future reference.
- I watched the videos/multimedia.
- I read the sections that I felt were specifically relevant.
- I completed some/all of the activities (e.g. quizzes).
- I read one or more of the example assignments.

S1 2015 n=122
S2 2015 n=107
HOW STUDENTS USE STUDYWISE

- Behaviours
- Preferences
Students are **MOTIVATED** by:  
**HAVING EXPECTATIONS SET OUT FOR THEM**

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**How learning at university differs from learning at high school:**

**Student 4:** “I think that kind of, may be, like, ‘this is what you do in high school and this is what you’re doing in uni … there are overlaps and there are points that are completely different’.”

**Student 5:** “I can see how [StudyWISE] is really useful, [in terms of information such as] how to prepare for a tutorial and a lecture and stuff. Cos I remember when I started I was like, ‘what’s a tutorial’?, ‘what’s in a tutorial?’”

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**Adapting to education in Australia:**

“I think it’s very useful for international students but they don’t know it exists. Like me in the first two years of university, I was struggling; If I had access to this [StudyWISE] from the very beginning, it would have helped a lot.”

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**Building self-efficacious habits:**

**Student 1:** “I went to StudyWISE, kind of, curious to try what was in there, and then I found interesting information about to speak to lecturers, and I had to speak to a lecturer, so it was like, ‘oh, this is interesting, I have to read this’.”

**Student 6:** “[I]t wasn’t until my second semester that I started going and talking to lecturers during their consultation hours … And I can honestly say that I’ve learnt more outside of lectures, talking to my academics, even if it’s just clarifying what was said in the lecturers.”
Students are MOTIVATED by:
ACCESS TO DIRECTIVE CONTENT

Students want templates and structuring devices:
“Y’know when you make a literature review, and you sort of make an Excel spreadsheet and you have the different headings and stuff, maybe [it would be good to have] templates or stuff that you can download, like that, so that every time you do a literature review, you can like bring out that template and start plugging away.”

Students want a variety of model texts and answers
Student 2: “If there were, like, example answers as well, that would really help ... [S]ometimes you need to see it to understand how to approach it.”
Student 3: “You have some samples there where you have the comment, ‘why this is good’. [I need] something like that ... in our level and subject.”

Students seek out genre-specific assignment advice:
Student: So when I went to StudyWISE, I was really looking for like, particular advice on, like, particular writing styles, just for that particular [Literature Review] assignment.
Facilitator: So it was a very strategic visit to StudyWISE?
Student: Yeah, like ’help me, help me!’”
Students are **MOTIVATED** by:

**ACCESS TO DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC RESOURCES**

*On the largely generic nature of StudyWISE:*
“Maybe it’s too basic … maybe we … need more specific information.”

*Making resources more relevant to students:*
“The content would possibly seem deeper if there was discipline specific information incorporated or in a different section for some things.”

*Students prefer a high degree of specificity:*
“And another thing, just even in this semester I have found that … essay styles don’t just differ between Philosophy and English, they differ from person to person, y’know, and I’m a little bit bummed that I missed it on one of my essays. I clearly overshot or … [did] something wrong.”
Students are **MOTIVATED** by:
**CONNECTION, SHARING & REMIXING**

“I do get reminded—well, I forget that [StudyWISE is] there. And I get reminded that it’s there because .... I like the Facebook page.”

“To see a Twitter feed on the side, at least for me, it backs up the relevancy, the updated-ness of it all ... It’s more reassuring if it’s current via Twitter—even if I don’t click on the links or view the hash tags every time.”

**Student 1:** [I] can see, like, how you could share [a game] on Facebook or something and then all your friends would want to play it ... I can see how ... it’s something that’s really shareable and [that] you can chat about.”

**Student 2:** If you can gain points in a game, it becomes competitive, so you can get involved.

“But, like, in a peer mentoring context, I’ve done some work with ... other students, and I’ve found that the [StudyWISE] English Grammar Quiz actually was really helpful[.] [Grammar] is very difficult for me to explain”
Students are **AMBIVALENT** about: **ACTIVITIES**

“And I like how there are more interactive parts of StudyWISE, like, um, the quizzes and things ... I like the quizzes because ...they’re interactive.”

“Because if it’s something unrelated to my subject, then I just don’t feel like doing it.”

“Three of my first year units had similar ‘Welcome to Uni’ or basic academic skills assignments ... by the third assignment, which we’d already done, most students were put off and blindly tanked it. If you’re forced to do it in the course and [then] you have an opportunity to do it in StudyWISE you might resent it further.”
Students are AMBIVALENT about:
VIDEO & AUDIO RECORDINGS

“I go for the activity first ... plus the videos.”

“[F]or me, like, using StudyWISE is, sort of like, a time investment as well—so if I do watch a video, I’ll probably just watch a bit and if I’m really into it, then I’ll continue watching.”

“I also prefer visuals ... because you can skip parts and look around and if you are interested in a video, you have to wait and see. If you like some part [of a video], you have to write it down or something. [If you’re using static visuals], you can create a copy it and keep it.”
HOW STUDYWISE HELPS STUDENTS

• Satisfaction levels
• Suggested improvements
Usefulness/ value of StudyWISE

- I learned something new from using StudyWISE.
- The information I needed was explained clearly and concisely.
- Using StudyWISE increased my academic confidence.
- My performance in assessment tasks has improved since using StudyWISE.
Usefulness/value of StudyWISE

“I really liked the range of content!” (S2 2015)

“Good for assignments, straightforward” (S2 2014)
Level of writing skills (sliding scale)

Self assessment of writing skills

Prior to using StudyWISE, my writing skills were:

Since using StudyWISE, my writing skills are:
How could we improve StudyWISE?
Comparison with previous studies

<table>
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<th>What’s similar</th>
<th>Our findings</th>
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<tr>
<td>-Lack of awareness about our resources.</td>
<td>-Students conceptualise what we offer in terms of content, not skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>-When students use website during session.</td>
<td>-Students don’t necessarily want ‘bells and whistles’.</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Digital expectations/strategies developed through informal web use.</td>
<td>-Students repeatedly requested discipline-specific materials.</td>
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Implications

Messages to students:
• Learning is about developing skills, not just acquiring content
• It may take persistence to develop skills (not one-off ‘grab’)

Messages to developers:
• Continue to track and understand user behaviour
• Organise materials based on types of user need/ purposes (through navigation, sequencing and visual hierarchy)
• Select medium with care