

## Academic Skills Enhancement in Secondary School Students Undertaking Tertiary Studies

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**Abstract :** The University of the Sunshine Coast (USC) offers secondary school students in the final two years of school (Years 11 and 12, 16 - 18 years of age) an opportunity to participate in a program which provides an accelerated pathway to tertiary studies. Whilst still at secondary school, the students undertake two first year university subjects that are required subjects in USC undergraduate degree programs. The program is called Integrated Learning Pathway (ILP) and offers a range of disciplines, including business, design, drama, education, and engineering. Between 2010 and 2014, 38% of secondary students who participated in an ILP program commenced undergraduate studies at USC following completion of secondary school studies. The research reported here considers "before and after" literacy and numeracy competencies of students to determine what impact participation in the ILP program has had on their academic skills. Qualitative and quantitative data has been gathered via numeracy and literacy testing of the students, and a survey asking the students to self-evaluate their numeracy and literacy skills, and reflect on their views of these academic skills. The research will enable improved targeting of teaching strategies so that students will acquire not only course-specific learning outcomes but also collateral academic skills. This enhancement of academic skills will improve undergraduate experience and improve student retention.

**Keywords :** academic skills enhancement, accelerated pathways, improved teaching, student retention

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