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Supporting First Generation Students with Discord

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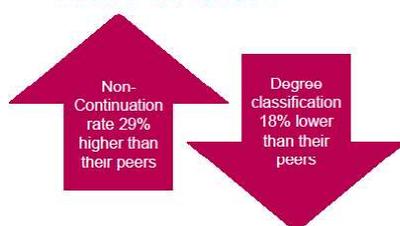
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Who Are First Generation Students (FGS)?

The first in their family to attend university and account for almost half of all new student enrolments.

What's the Issue?



Aims and Objectives

- Review of existing support mechanisms for FGS.
- Identification of factors affecting FGS progression and outcomes.
- Investigation of learning technologies to support student progression.
- Design of technology intervention.
- Qualitative analysis of FGS satisfaction and social presence.
- Quantitative analysis of FGS attendance and assessment outcomes.

The Literature

What does the literature say the issues are?



What is Discord?

A voice, video and text app used to create invite-only communities. Automated bots enable integration with VLE's such as Blackboard to build a single point of contact for social and educational content.



Methodology

A practitioner-led design research methodology. The research participants for whom the intervention is intended to support have been central to the design, implementation and subsequent evolution of each iteration.



Over the course of several focus groups the participants selected Discord as the platform whose technological affordances closest matched the issues identified in the literature. This was then used to create a community where staff and students could upload files, live stream and post questions using both a web and mobile app interface. The automated bot features of Discord aided with removing some of the mundane repetitive tasks.

Results

After a slow start filled with technical problems but a great deal of perseverance from all parties concerned, when compared to their continuing generation peers, the first iteration concluded:



The initial results have demonstrated a higher than anticipated level of student engagement with the technology platform. Regular communication between peers for both on and off-topic subjects has been evidenced with minimal academic staff involvement.

References

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Webb, A. (2019). Getting there and staying in: First-generation indigenous students' educational pathways into Chilean higher education. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 32(5), 529-546

References

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Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.