

Bridging the Distance: Enhancing the Success of Distance Learners

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Abstract: This paper demonstrates the outcomes of a major project entitled ‘Bridging the Distance’ aimed to support the needs of distance learners. The aims of this project were twofold: (i) to establish an institutional framework for student success and (ii) to develop a suite of tools, resources and support strategies for the improvement of distance learner achievement and retention. In particular, the project sought to avoid what Simpson (2009) refers to as the ‘retention goulash’ through a conceptual framework that helps to inform the selection, design and development of specific on-line tools that are cost-effective, theoretically grounded, add real value to the student experience, and ultimately improve student success through early, just-in-time, personalised support. The paper provides an overview of the conceptual framework along with several examples of the online tools and resources developed to support distance learners.