

Deakin University

DeakinSync for Students: everything a student needs, in one place.

Challenge:

Starting and progressing through higher education can be very complex and challenging for students of any age and stage, especially in a large university (of over 53,000 students) where a range of degrees is offered on five campuses, including the Cloud Campus (where 15,000 students study completely online). Typically, universities are organized in administrative groups that can send a student from building to building, website to website, to manage enrolment, fees, timetables, learning and achieving, and career aspirations.

Solution:

DeakinSync is a personalized environment that allows students to

- ask questions 24/7/365 about anything at Deakin, including their course of study, and get advice from IBM Watson, a revolutionary cognitive computer that thinks and learns like a human. Watson has ingested the Deakin corpus and can converse with students.
- access information as needed on fees, library, learning and personal support. For new students, the first-time enrolment process is fully tailored: all relevant information, including degree program maps, supplementary materials and available information sessions, is presented to students in a simple step-by-step process within DeakinSync.
- have full access to recorded and live-streamed lectures and classes, as well as virtual classes, within their degree program and subject learning resources
- complete and submit all their assignments, and receive feedback, including recorded oral feedback
- use web-based productivity tools such as Microsoft Office 365 (document collaboration) and OneDrive for Business (file storage and sharing)
- speak face to face online with the Library or teaching or support staff or peers using Skype for Business
- connect with students and staff for social or learning engagement through Communities, powered by Yammer
- evidence and showcase their employability skills, and connect with employers through social media.

Learning impact outcomes:

DeakinSync launched at the start of 2014 and has been highly successful at engaging Deakin students. As of February 2016, 95% of Deakin's student body of over 53,000 had logged into DeakinSync and on average there are 35,140 student logins each day. Students' perceptions of skill development have increased since the introduction of DeakinSync; as evidenced in the Australian Graduate Survey, in which the percentage of Deakin University students who agreed that their generic skills had improved increased from 80% in 2013 to 82% in 2015. Likewise, the University Experience Survey showed an increase in the students who agreed that their skills development had improved, from 79% in 2013 to 82% in 2014. (Latest data available.)

Return on investment:

DeakinSync provides students with comprehensive 24/7 access to their learning experiences, including in a world first, a support service in the form of IBM Watson, the cognitive computer providing answers to students' everyday questions at Deakin. The convenience of DeakinSync has improved organization-wide efficiencies, for example the step-by-step enrolment process for new students within DeakinSync reduces student confusion and enquiries to staff. DeakinSync enables students to connect from anywhere via voice and video directly with learning advisers, teaching and library staff and peers. DeakinSync meshes seamlessly with subject learning experiences and resources, and has improved access to and utilization of information about degree program learning outcomes, accreditation, careers, networks and resources.