The Journeys of Fourth Year Undergraduate Research Students: Trialling a Quantifiable Measure

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There is a growing body of literature on fourth year degrees which focuses on the provision of a positive research experience for graduates in a range of professional fields. Programs differ across faculties depending on the structure of the undergraduate programs, particularly in professional fields such as Education, Engineering and Health Sciences. Some of the perceived benefits of this initial research experience lies in preparing students for the workplace, giving students an opportunity to study an area they have a specific interest in, and ultimately in grooming potential students for entry into a research higher degree. The notion of the journey is one which is emerging in current research practice. Simple visual representations are being used as tools for students to identify the highs and lows of their research experience. Drawing on quantitative analysis, the paper identifies different paths and factors which positively influence the students’ journeys. A method is trialled to quantify the journey across the different terrains, exploring research understandings and feelings towards research. The authors report research that suggests that students in different disciplines do typically experience different trajectories in completing a fourth year research thesis.