

Investigating motivations of female students choosing a open versus named qualification

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Aim
This project hopes to understand why the Combined STEM degree (R28) appears to be more attractive to female students than some named STEM degrees. It is hoped that insights gained might be useful to improve gender balance further across STEM.

Project impetus

As part of the 2019 Open Board of Studies annual quality review, work was undertaken to review the gender balance of students on the Combined STEM degree (R28). The initial analysis suggested that the Combined STEM degree was appealing to female students in greater percentages than some of the named STEM qualifications, especially where female student numbers were low (e.g. engineering). The reasons for this were unclear.

Module	% female of all students on module	No. of students linked to R28 on the module	% female of R28 students on module
MU123	31.3%	63	42%
MST124	32.9%	96	50%
T192	16.4%	64	33%
TM111	26.6%	77	42%
S111	45.4%	107	46%
U116	59.4%	62	67%
SDK100	81.8%	47	82%

Project Phases

Phase 1

- Carry out a survey of L1 STEM Key introductory students to explore their qualifications intentions and why they are making those choices. Inform responders of likelihood of further study. Identify candidates for further study.
- Carry out a survey of STEM Access students to explore their qualification intentions and the reasons for their choices. Inform responders of likelihood of further study. Identify candidates for further study.
- Review and collate quantitative and qualitative inputs before moving forward.

Phase 2

- Follow up female students who completed the survey with semi-structured interviews to better understand drivers identified in survey responses.

Phase 3

- Interview with SRSC staff including SST advisors, SRF team leaders and disabled student support teams to surface drivers to qualification choice that are mentioned in student support conversations.

Phase 4

- Collate the outputs of the surveys and interviews and review the trends. Sharing outcomes.

Desired outcomes

- A better understanding of the why female students choose to register on the Combined STEM degree (R28) versus a named qualification (or vice versa).
- An improved understanding of how advice given by staff may impact qualification choice by students.
- Suggestions for approaches to improve recruitment of women within both named and open qualifications

