Feeling stressed before an exam? Tune in to some directed relaxation audio from ACU National’s intranet.

Preparing your resume for graduate positions? Listen to resume tips online from ACU National career experts.

Worried about how to approach a fellow student about an awkward topic? Watch some suggestions online.

Creative, interactive online resources to empower ACU National students in their personal lives, in their relationships and in their future careers are harnessing the skills of a range of staff and students and attracting interest from other universities.

Self-awareness resources, which help students “to know themselves better and keep healthy and happy”, are being developed for ACU National’s Blackboard site, following a successful pilot project on stress and relaxation in 2007 which attracted 13,000 hits in the first six months.

**Live Smart resource**

The project, called the Live Smart resource, has been funded by the University Core Planning Group and is being overseen by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs), Professor Gabrielle McMullen.

The Live Smart resource falls into three sections.

- Self Smart covers self-talk, health and happiness building.
- Talk Smart nurtures skills in listening, assertiveness, negotiation and emotional control.
- Plan Smart includes problem-solving skills such as decision making and budgeting, as well as careers advice on resumes, interviews, job searching and workplace culture.

“All university services are adapting to the online world of their clients,” Ms Toonen said.

**Drama students assist**

Video resources on communication skills have been developed with drama lecturer Dr Tracey Sanders and first-year drama students at the Brisbane Campus, and will shortly be accessible online.

**Careers in focus**

Plan Smart has been prepared in consultation with Career Education and Development Professorial Fellow Professor Jim Bright, whose popular column appears weekly in the Careers section of *The Sydney Morning Herald*, and with Adjunct Professor Robert Pryor.

The project, developed by National Counselling Services Manager Carolyn Toonen, attracted wide interest at a recent Australian and New Zealand Student Services Conference in New Zealand. The project has since involved the recently established ACU National Careers Service, with support from North Sydney Campus careers advisor Caroline Spurway. It provides tools which help students self-manage complex career decisions in an interactive way.

“Preventing problems

“The Counselling Service sees about 10 per cent of students face to face, who are needing support for complex personal or relationship issues, but there’s a whole 90 per cent out there who can benefit from some psychosocial resources, to offer preventative ideas about how they might be able to talk to their friend or lecturer about an issue, or how to find out if they are drinking too much, for example.

“This online service, in the familiar Blackboard format, broadens access to support, particularly for students who are not in crisis, very busy and off campus.”

Ms Toonen’s research has revealed that these days the internet is the first source of assistance and knowledge most young people will tap.

“It makes sense to go with the flow,” she said. “These resources can help prevent problems, and help qualify our students for life.”
ASSISTANCE MADE EASY

ACU National was among the first universities in Australia to adopt an online booking system, improving all students’ access to support for Academic Skills, Careers, Counselling and Equity and Disability services.

“We’ve had really positive feedback from almost all of our students on the use of this system,” said North Sydney Campus academic skills adviser Leighana Thornton, who presented to colleagues at other Australian universities at a conference in Canberra in 2005.

“It has really freed up my time from administrative tasks, allowing me to focus on students’ needs,” she said, explaining that previously students often had to turn up in person to try to make an appointment, and then return if they needed to reschedule or cancel their appointment.

The new system allows students to easily book in for face-to-face assistance. Students can also post their questions online via the Ask an Adviser site and receive an answer from Academic Skills staff on their campus.

This year, more than 700 ACU National students are “external”, studying via distance education, and many more students are off campus when on placements and volunteering.

“It’s been a big help in the kinds of services we can provide for all students, as well as our efficiency,” Ms Thornton said.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Visit the Ask an Adviser site at:
  http://my.acu.edu.au/student/support/academic_skills/study_tips/ask_an_adviser/