Riverside Academy: A Holistic Student Learning Programme

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Domain: Student Engagement & Support
Challenge Area: Wellbeing and Holistic Development
Status: Established Best Practice (validated and replicable practices)
Implementation Complexity: High

Launched in Academic Year 2024–25 as one of UNNC Library's new initiatives, Riverside Academy (RA) has quickly established itself as an innovative platform supporting students at all levels in developing capabilities for learning, research, and employability. The programme delivers targeted training in AI literacy, information literacy, research literacy, data literacy, digital literacy, and employability through a carefully designed curriculum. By incorporating interactive learning formats, cross-disciplinary content, and practical application approaches, Riverside Academy addresses contemporary educational needs while serving as a dynamic professional development hub.

Practical Implementation

The Riverside Academy programme consists of six strands, developed through careful research into student needs across different academic levels and aligned with the expertise of UNNC librarians.

1. AI Literacy: This strand supports students in understanding and using artificial intelligence responsibly and effectively in their studies and future careers. It includes courses and workshops on foundational AI concepts, prompt engineering, and ethical use of generative AI. Delivery follows a hybrid online and offline model, ensuring broad access while enabling deeper engagement through in-person workshops.
2. Information Literacy: Librarians deliver embedded, in-class sessions that help students understand when information is needed, where to find it, and how to evaluate and use it ethically. 'Deep Dive in Databases' training supports discipline-specific database selection, search strategies, and access to high-quality scholarly resources.
3. Research Literacy: Delivered in collaboration with the Graduate School, this strand includes 'Essential Research Literacy' sessions covering the research lifecycle, alongside 'Enhancing Research Skills' workshops focused on tools such as UNNC's Research Information System (RIS), Scopus AI, visualisation platforms, and research productivity tools.
4. Data Literacy: Specialised workshops develop students' abilities to manage, visualise, and analyse data for research and learning. One-on-one consultations support advanced projects, strengthening both classroom-based and independent scholarly work.
5. Digital Literacy: A self-paced online course, Digital Student, ensures all participants develop essential digital skills. Advanced training includes hands-on experiences with virtual reality and specialised digital systems that support coursework and career readiness.
6. Employability Edge: This strand includes project-based modules where students collaborate with librarians on data scholarship projects using digital collections and datasets. Additional modules leverage facilities such as the WonderLab and XR Studio to develop technology use, sustainability awareness, project management, and design skills.

To promote RA programme effectively at the UNNC, a multi-channel strategy raises awareness and drives participation among students. Key measures include integrating programme overviews into new student induction sessions to reach freshmen early, setting up onsite promotion booths in high-traffic areas on

campus for direct engagement and Q&A, and leveraging WeChat posts for broad introductions alongside targeted announcements for each individual workshop to build anticipation and registrations.

Digital signages throughout the library display rotating highlights of upcoming events, capturing spontaneous interest from daily visitors, while an online library event calendar provides a centralised, searchable platform for students to browse, book, and track sessions seamlessly. This integrated approach fosters a culture of lifelong learning, aligning with evidence-based tactics for boosting programme uptake in higher education settings.

Impact Indicator	Enablers
The impact of the Riverside Academy programme is strengthened through two key institutional integrations. First, all programme resources are hosted in an online Moodle repository, providing open access to workshop materials, self-paced modules, and training content for students and staff. This enables sustained, on-demand learning while allowing the library to track participation and usage analytics. Second, Riverside Academy forms a mandatory component of an extra-curricular, credit-bearing programme required for all domestic undergraduate students to obtain their Ministry of Education (MoE)-issued diploma, ensuring broad participation and completion. In addition, the programme is integrated with the Nottingham Advantage Award (NAA), a tri-campus employability initiative across the UK, Malaysia, and China. Four courses within the Employability Edge strand have been formally accredited as NAA modules, enabling students to earn transferable credits recorded on transcripts and digital badges recognised by employers. Together, these mechanisms ensure measurable outcomes in student skill development, employability, and holistic growth, aligned with UNNC's whole-person education goals.	• Student–faculty partnership model (Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felton, 2014) • Graduate student hiring and supervision structures • Weekly coordination and mentoring by CATLR staff • Responsive professional development for IAs • Institutional access to Anthropic Claude • Strong central support from the Center for Advancing Teaching and Learning Through Research