HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

Pedagogical Strategies for Enhancing Academic Resilience and Self-Regulated Learning among University Students: Fostering the Capacity to Overcome Academic Challenges

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doi:https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23489022

Abstract: University students must respond to disappointing assessments, complex tasks, and competing demands while sustaining purposeful learning. This conceptual article examines how pedagogy can connect academic resilience with self-regulated learning (SRL). A selective integrative review brings together foundational accounts of resilience and cyclical self-regulation, a university-specific resilience measure, formative-feedback theory, and two higher-education meta-analyses. The synthesis distinguishes recovery under adversity from routine academic buoyancy and from achievement alone. It proposes the original REPAIR framework: Recognize the setback, Establish a feasible goal, Plan a strategy, Act with support, Inspect evidence, and Revise and re-engage. Each phase links a classroom practice to an observable learning artifact and an instructional response. The framework treats recovery as a supported process rather than a fixed student attribute. Its anticipated mechanisms include improved task interpretation, strategy monitoring, help-seeking, and opportunities to use feedback. These are theoretical propositions, not demonstrated effects of the framework. A feasible evaluation would combine repeated task evidence, adversity-sensitive outcomes, and student accounts while monitoring unequal access to support. The article concludes that resilience-oriented teaching requires both explicit regulation instruction and institutional conditions that make adaptive action possible.

Keywords: academic resilience; self-regulated learning; higher education; formative feedback; academic adversity; pedagogical framework.

Introduction

A low examination mark can become a starting point for purposeful revision or a signal to withdraw. Universities often encourage persistence without making the next learning action sufficiently clear. The pedagogical problem is therefore how to help students interpret a setback, select a feasible response, and assess whether that response works. Resilience-oriented teaching should also identify barriers that cannot be resolved through individual effort alone, including inaccessible materials, conflicting assessment demands, and limited opportunities for assistance.

This article asks: how can university teaching connect academic resilience and SRL through a practical cycle of supported recovery? Its contribution is an integrative design argument and an original classroom framework. It does not report an intervention, estimate a new effect, or claim comprehensive coverage of the literature. The central proposition is that recovery becomes more teachable when instructors connect an experienced difficulty to explicit planning, supported action, and a further opportunity to demonstrate learning.

2. Theoretical foundations and literature synthesis

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Academic resilience concerns adaptive responses where adversity threatens educational development. Martin and Marsh (2006) examined its psychological and educational correlates; their work should not be read as proof that any single teaching practice causes resilience. Their later account of academic buoyancy addresses ordinary difficulties such as poor marks and assessment pressure (Martin & Marsh, 2008). Because that study involved school students, transfer to universities requires caution. The distinction matters: successful recovery from one difficult assignment does not establish resilience under sustained financial, social, or educational disadvantage. Cassidy (2016) developed the ARS-30 with university students, distinguishing perseverance, reflection and adaptive help-seeking, and negative affect and emotional response. This provides a useful vocabulary for interpreting responses to difficulty. However, a self-report response to a hypothetical setback is different from demonstrated recovery over a semester. Instructors should avoid treating a questionnaire score as a fixed diagnosis or using it to allocate grades.

Zimmerman (2002) describes self-regulation as a cycle involving forethought, performance, and self-reflection. Panadero (2017) compares six models and shows that SRL encompasses cognitive, motivational, emotional, and contextual processes. These accounts justify teaching students how to interpret tasks, monitor understanding, and revise strategies. They do not imply that learners must regulate everything independently. For the present synthesis, SRL specifies candidate processes through which a student might respond adaptively after a setback; resilience describes the quality of adaptation in relation to adversity.

Theobald (2021) synthesized university SRL training studies and reported positive average effects on achievement, strategy use, and motivation. Jansen et al. (2019) likewise found benefits in higher education, but SRL activity only partly mediated the intervention-achievement relationship. Together, these findings support explicit regulation instruction while leaving room for other mechanisms and contextual differences. Neither review directly validates the recovery framework proposed here. Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) place learners actively within feedback processes, offering a rationale for self-assessment and opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance.

3. Methodology: a selective integrative review

This article uses a conceptual, selective integrative review rather than a systematic review or meta-analysis. On 16 October 2026, targeted web searches combined the terms “academic resilience,” “academic buoyancy,” “self-regulated learning,” “university,” “meta-analysis,” and “formative assessment” with author and title searches. Publisher pages, accessible article texts, and institutional records were used to verify bibliographic details and DOIs. This was not a structured search of Scopus, Web of Science, or all education databases; no claim of exhaustive or latest-evidence coverage is made.

Eight peer-reviewed articles were purposively selected: two resilience/buoyancy papers, one university resilience measurement paper, two SRL theoretical reviews, one feedback model, and two higher-education intervention meta-analyses. Selection required direct conceptual relevance or synthesized intervention evidence. School-based work was retained for construct clarification and marked as indirect for universities. The synthesis mapped construct, proposed mechanism, teaching implication, and evidential boundary across these sources. The REPAIR phases were then developed as design propositions. No formal risk-of-bias instrument, independent dual screening, pooled analysis, participant recruitment, or primary data collection was undertaken.

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4. The REPAIR framework: an original pedagogical proposal

REPAIR organizes a recovery episode around an authentic assessment or demanding task. Its originality lies in connecting each regulatory phase to a visible learning artifact and a contingent instructor response; the component practices themselves draw on established SRL and feedback principles. The phases are recursive: inspection may reveal a need to redefine the goal or obtain different support. The framework is a proposed synthesis and has not been empirically validated. The six phases described below are instructional design propositions rather than findings from an intervention. The first phase, Recognize the setback, establishes a shared understanding of the difficulty before a corrective action is selected. Students prepare a brief account of what happened, how it affected their learning, and which barriers contributed to the problem. The instructor responds through a private, nonjudgmental conversation, distinguishing misunderstanding of the task from difficulties involving access to resources or welfare needs. The purpose is to identify the nature of the setback accurately enough to guide an appropriate response.

The second phase, Establish a feasible goal, translates the identified difficulty into a specific and manageable learning objective. The student formulates one next-task goal connected to an assessment criterion. The instructor helps the student compare this goal with an exemplar and agree on a realistic scope and review date. A goal such as improving the evaluation of evidence in one paragraph provides a clearer basis for action than a broad intention to achieve better results.

The third phase, Plan a strategy, specifies how the goal will be pursued. The student develops a short plan identifying a learning method, an available period of study, relevant support, and an alternative action if the initial approach proves unsuitable. The instructor models the selected method and checks whether the necessary resources are accessible. Planning therefore involves both choosing a strategy and assessing whether the conditions required to use it are present.

The fourth phase, Act with support, moves the learner from intention to observable performance. Evidence of action may take the form of a draft, a worked solution, a rehearsal, or a documented request for assistance. The instructor provides a low-stakes checkpoint, structured peer dialogue, or targeted consultation. These opportunities allow difficulties to become visible while there is still time to respond, rather than only after a final assessment has been completed.

The fifth phase, Inspect evidence, asks the learner to compare the work produced with the assessment criterion and the initial prediction about performance. The instructor provides actionable feedback and invites the student to explain any discrepancy between the intended and observed result. This phase directs attention to the relationship between strategy and outcome. Its purpose is to support an informed judgment about what worked, what remained unclear, and what requires further adjustment.

The final phase, Revise and re-engage, requires the student to use the evidence gathered during inspection. The learner submits a revision accompanied by a concise explanation of what changed and why. The instructor allows a further demonstration of learning and gradually reduces prompts as independence develops. The intended outcome is an increasingly informed capacity to select and adjust learning actions. Where necessary, revision can also involve returning to an earlier phase to reconsider the goal or seek different support.

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An illustrative application concerns a first-year student who receives feedback that an essay summarizes sources without evaluating them. During Recognize, the student identifies uncertainty about what counts as evaluation, while the teacher checks whether language or access barriers also matter. Establish narrows the goal to one paragraph that compares two interpretations against a criterion. Plan specifies a comparison grid, a model paragraph, and a brief consultation. Act produces a draft. Inspect asks the student to locate the claim, evidence, and evaluative judgment and compare these with the rubric. Revise produces a new paragraph and a short account of the change. This example illustrates a possible teaching sequence; no student outcome is being reported. The teacher should respond differently if the student understands the criterion but lacks access to readings or has an unmanageable assessment schedule. In that case, recovery requires accessible resources or coordination of demands alongside strategy instruction. Repeated effort without a feasible opportunity to succeed is not the intended outcome of REPAIR.

5. Implementation, discussion, and research propositions

The recovery cycle should be embedded in ordinary coursework. In a proposed six-week pilot, an instructor could introduce task analysis and exemplars in week one, obtain a low-stakes attempt in week two, and begin a recovery cycle after feedback in week three. Weeks four and five would support strategy enactment and revision; week six would use a comparable task with fewer prompts. These timings are illustrative. Existing seminars, draft submissions, or tutorial slots should carry the activities so that reflection does not become a separate, burdensome assignment. Students should be able to record a short written, spoken, or structured response.

Feedback must also specify a usable learning action. A comment such as “develop your analysis” leaves the action unspecified. A recovery-oriented prompt could ask students to compare two explanations, identify the criterion each satisfies, and justify one revision. The goal is to create evidence of feedback use, consistent with Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006). Instructors should model uncertainty and revision in their own worked examples. Peer dialogue can help students interpret criteria, but peers need guidance and a clear route to staff assistance when advice conflicts.

REPAIR proposes several mechanisms that could be examined empirically. A specific recovery goal is expected to support more targeted strategy selection; supported checkpoints may make help-seeking more timely; and inspection followed by revision may improve the alignment between students’ judgments and task criteria. These are hypotheses. A student may complete every learning artifact without meaningful strategy change, so completion alone is an inadequate indicator of success. The partial mediation reported by Jansen et al. (2019) also cautions against assuming that any achievement gain necessarily operates through measured SRL.

A future study could compare classes using REPAIR with classes receiving ordinary feedback, preferably through cluster randomization with enough classes to address instructor effects. Where randomization is infeasible, matched comparison groups and baseline adjustment would strengthen interpretation while leaving residual confounding. Assessment tasks and marking criteria should be comparable, with assessors unaware of condition where practical. Preregistration should specify the primary outcome, the relevant adversity or setback, follow-up timing, missing-data handling, and plausible harms before recruitment.

Useful outcomes would include performance change after a documented setback, quality of revision, transfer to a subsequent task, and retention where follow-up permits. Process evidence could include plans, draft histories, help-seeking records, and short student interviews. A contextually

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appropriate ARS-30 administration could supplement these measures, subject to local validity checks and permissions, but should not replace observed adaptation (Cassidy, 2016). Analyses should distinguish exposure to adversity from responses to it and examine whether baseline attainment, employment demands, disability, or language background shape access and outcomes. Such subgroup analyses require adequate samples and cautious interpretation. Institutional responsibility remains central to implementation. The framework could become counterproductive if students are held responsible for overcoming poorly designed assessment or inaccessible teaching. Universal access to exemplars, predictable feedback opportunities, and coordinated deadlines should accompany individual coaching. Sensitive disclosures should remain voluntary and separate from grading. Teachers can offer academic support and referral routes without assuming a clinical role. Adaptive recovery may involve revising a goal, requesting an accommodation, or reducing workload; continuous effort is not the only defensible response.

6. Limitations and conclusions

The review is selective, English-language, and anchored in eight sources published between 2002 and 2021. It does not establish the current completeness of the field, formally appraise study quality, or resolve differences in how resilience is measured. Foundational school-based evidence has limited direct transferability to higher education. Intervention reviews support SRL instruction broadly, but cannot establish the effects of REPAIR or show that its phases improve recovery under severe adversity. The framework also requires adaptation to disciplinary tasks, local resources, and cultural expectations around help-seeking.

University pedagogy can make recovery more concrete by linking a setback to a feasible goal, explicit strategy instruction, accessible support, and a new opportunity to use feedback. REPAIR translates this argument into an inspectable teaching cycle. Its value remains a proposition for empirical evaluation, with attention to transfer, equity, workload, and unintended effects. Resilience-oriented teaching is strongest when students gain practical control over learning and institutions make that control possible.

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