

# FYiMaths Newsletter No. 2, September 2013

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## First Year in Maths

**Project** is a joint project by the University of Melbourne, University of Adelaide, University of Sydney and Curtin University.

<http://fyimaths.org.au>

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**Our website has moved to a new location. We are in the process of developing resources and an online space for sharing information. Please visit and send us your feedback and suggestions. <http://fyimaths.org.au>**

## Update

The project team have been reviewing the first batch of interviews and identifying the key issues facing coordinators of first year subjects and maths support programs.

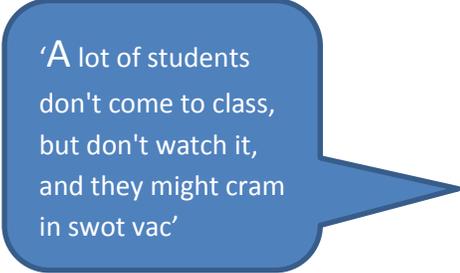
A number of interviewees talked about the impact on their workload of the high volume of student enquiries and range of assistance needed in Semester 1. They find that the majority of requests from students concern administrative and logistical issues, rather than requests for specific assistance with content or teaching.

A number find that students seem to be looking for a contact person in their course to connect with, who can not only provide course specific information, but often simple reassurance, a friendly face and general advice. This was an aspect of the role that many felt was undervalued within their department, given the potential impact it can have on student retention and success. This issue highlights the importance of sufficient resourcing and support for academics teaching in first year to manage these demands.

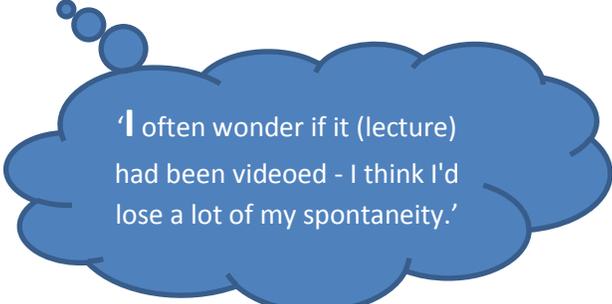
We have found that many first year coordinators and lecturers are interested in investigating online teaching technologies. Recording lectures and providing online content in the form of video explanations, online text books, quizzes and discussion forums are used by a small number of programs to provide a range of options

'You need good communication skills because you do need to spell things out...You've got to have a sense of humour.... You need to have empathy for the realisation that these people are trying to improve their lives and ... they may not have circumstances that are really going to be optimum for them to get there.'

for students on and off campus. Some interviewees expressed concern that online resources are under-utilised by students and need to be better integrated into the course delivery. Institutions with experience in providing distance education have provided valuable insights on the successes and pitfalls of online resources.



'A lot of students don't come to class, but don't watch it, and they might cram in swot vac'



'I often wonder if it (lecture) had been videoed - I think I'd lose a lot of my spontaneity.'

## Upcoming Presentations

The project team will be presenting preliminary findings at the following conferences.

**Australian Conference on Science and Mathematics Education** (The 19th UniServe Science Conference)  
Canberra, 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> September, 2013.

Attending Discipline Day on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> September, Project Presentation on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> September.

<http://sydney.edu.au/iisme/conference/2013/index.shtml>

**Australian Maths Society** - 57th Annual Meeting,  
Sydney, 30<sup>th</sup> Sept - 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2013.

Presentation is yet to be scheduled.

<http://www.maths.usyd.edu.au/u/austms2013/index.html>

**Lighthouse Delta** – The ninth Delta conference on the teaching and learning of undergraduate mathematics and statistics.

Kiama, 24<sup>th</sup> -29<sup>th</sup> November, 2013. <http://delta2013.net/>

Presentation is yet to be scheduled.

## Workshops

We are planning further workshops for early 2014. If we have sufficient interest we hope to run them in several different cities.



**Australian Government**



Office for  
**Learning & Teaching**

The project's formal title is "Building leadership capacity in University first-year learning and teaching in the mathematical sciences".

*Support for this publication/activity has been provided by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching. The views expressed in this publication/activity do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching.*

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