

**Designing First Year Curriculum for Student Engagement, Success and Retention.  
Using the FY Curriculum Principles as a guide for good practice.**

<p><b>Session Objectives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To share understandings about the importance of the first year experience and first year curriculum design.</li> <li>To provide advice for enacting a transition pedagogy within the classroom and for strategising with teaching teams.</li> </ul>
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Six key principles have been identified to guide the design of First Year Curriculum under the ALTC Senior Fellowship and embedded in policy at QUT. The principles are briefly described in the table below. Use the column provided to think about and identify how you can activate these principles in your institution and classroom practices.

FYC Principles	Principles into Action	Practical things I do / can do
<p><b>1. Transition</b> The curriculum and its delivery should be designed to be consistent and explicit in assisting students' transition <i>from</i> their previous educational experience to the nature of learning in higher education and lifelong learning. The first year curriculum should be designed to mediate and support transition as a process that occurs over time. In this way, the first year curriculum will enable successful student transition into first year, through first year, into later years and ultimately out into the world of work, professional practice and career attainment.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activities in the subject that help students get to know and interact with a wide range of other students in their class (and with staff associated with the subject/class)</li> <li>Making sure that students are familiar with processes important to the subject, e.g. computer access, using email accounts, orientation to the subject Learning Management System (LMS, eg Blackboard) or other on-line site and resources.</li> <li>Making sure that students are familiar with / understand key academic procedures important to the subject. E.g. participation in tutorials, attendance at lectures, completing homework activities, reading academic articles, understanding assignment criteria.</li> </ol>	

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<p><b>2. Diversity</b> The first year curriculum should be attuned to student diversity and must be accessible by, and inclusive of, all students. First year curriculum design should recognise that students have special learning needs by reason of their social, cultural and academic transition. Diversity is often a factor that further exacerbates transition difficulties. The first year curriculum should take into account students' backgrounds, needs, experiences and patterns of study and few if any assumptions should be made about existing skills and knowledge.</p> <p>Diversity' in this context includes, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• membership of at-risk or equity groups;</li> <li>• widening participation (e.g. new cohorts);</li> <li>• students' existing skills and knowledge and previous educational experiences</li> <li>• patterns and timing of engagement with the first year curriculum (e.g. mid-year entry).</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Activities that help students connect their previous education/life experiences to the subject content and outcomes.</li> <li>5. Appropriate use of language and terminology.</li> <li>6. Embedding strategies or activities that help identify differences between different students' entering knowledge and skills</li> </ol>	

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<p><b>3. Design</b> First year curriculum design and delivery should be student-focussed, explicit and relevant in providing the foundation and scaffolding necessary for first year learning success. This requires that the curriculum must be designed to assist student development and to support their engagement with learning environments through the intentional integration and sequencing of knowledge, skills, and attitudes.</p>	<p>7. Explaining / demonstrating to students the role of this subject within the whole-of-FY or whole of program design (what comes before, what comes after).</p> <p>8. Providing examples of the discipline knowledge that students should acquire by the end of this subject.</p> <p>9. Being clear about the non-discipline knowledge /skills/experiences should students will acquire by the end of this subject.</p>	
<p><b>4. Engagement</b> Learning, teaching, and assessment approaches in the first year curriculum should enact an engaging and involving curriculum pedagogy and should enable active and collaborative learning. Learning communities should be promoted through the embedding in first year curriculum of active and interactive learning opportunities and other opportunities for peer-to-peer collaboration and teacher-student interaction.</p>	<p>10. Activities for students to work collaboratively (in pairs, informal groups, on other activities) in order for them to get to know each other and develop their sense of belonging.</p> <p>11. Strategies for monitoring and responding to students who might be at-risk of not acquiring the basic academic and discipline related skills being taught.</p> <p>12. Which aspects of professional life in the discipline will be showcased in this subject so that students can begin to identify with possible career paths.</p>	

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<p><b>5. Assessment</b> The first year curriculum should assist students to make a successful transition to assessment in higher education, while assessment should increase in complexity from the first to later years of curriculum design. Critically, students should receive regular, formative evaluations of their work early in their program of study to aid their learning and to provide feedback to both students and staff on student progress and achievement.</p>	<p>13. Ensuring that students have the opportunity to learn the skills required to complete each subject assessment.</p> <p>14. Making students aware of how feedback will be provided, how else to get it and what to do with it.</p> <p>15. Providing early feedback to students about their progress with academic and discipline skills.</p> <p>16. Being clear about the expectations of learning outcomes related to assessment.</p> <p>17. Designing assessment that is scaffolded, sequenced (e.g. in complexity) and/or cumulative in aid of independent learning.</p>	
<p><b>6. Evaluation and monitoring</b> Good first year curriculum design is evidence-based and enhanced by regular evaluation that leads to curriculum development and renewal designed to improve student learning. The first year curriculum should also have strategies embedded to monitor all students' engagement in their learning and to identify and intervene in a timely way with students at risk of not succeeding or fully achieving desired learning outcomes.</p>	<p>18. Have an assessment related activity in the first four weeks of the semester that gives students feedback on how they are progressing in the subject and helps you identify students that need extra support.</p> <p>19. Finding out what is known about how students engage with / think of this subject from recent Corporate Surveys and other evaluation data that might inform your teaching in this subject.</p>	