There are a number of examples of curriculum design practices that may be considered when developing the first year curriculum. Australian Learning and Teaching Council Senior Fellow, Professor Sally Kift conducted a comprehensive study and developed a Transition Pedagogy which includes six principles that underpin support for first year students. Details of each principle and some ideas regarding how they could be implemented follow.

**First Year Curriculum Principle - Transition**

A well-designed first year curriculum can support a student's transition into university, regardless of their previous experience. Helping students understand what is required of them at university and within their discipline can also support the development of their approaches to lifelong learning.

Strategies that may support transition include:

- asking students to assess the knowledge, aptitudes and attitudes they have when they commence your topic against discipline and / or topic expectations;
- devoting class time to discussing the particular approaches that are in use and what expectations these approaches place on the student and staff; and
- developing a Work Integrated Learning (WIL) topic within the course at first year so that students may gain an appreciation of what the discipline requires.


**First Year Curriculum Principle - Diversity**

It is possible that student diversity (which covers a great range of differences including socio-economic, culture, experience, age, nationality) may intensify issues experienced by students as they transition into university. It is therefore important to recognise that within each cohort students’ entering knowledge, aptitudes and attitudes are varied and to ensure that your teaching is as inclusive of all student cohorts as possible.

Strategies that may support diversity include:

- allowing students to participate in self-reflective exercises so they may become aware of how they differ from others as well as gain insight into their own learning preferences, personality types, preferred team roles;
• development of online quizzes (that students can complete in their own time and at their own pace) to reinforce important points in the topic;
• including a range of different learning, teaching and assessment approaches and providing students with options to choose which they feel suit them best;
• providing opportunities for students to reflect on their own cultural background; and
• scaffolding academic skills, learning processes and assessments e.g.:
  o developing an assessment piece that allows students to produce an annotated bibliography;
  o providing students with feedback on the bibliography and the relevance of the resources they have chosen;
  o developing a second assessment piece that builds on the first and requires students to write an essay plan which includes well-written topic sentences; identifies key ideas and is based on the feedback they received in relation to the annotated bibliography;
  o provide detailed feedback on the essay plan that will help the student write their final assignment; and
  o develop a final assessment piece that requires the students to write an essay based on the annotated bibliography and the essay plan which incorporates all the feedback they have received.

See also: www.fyecd2009.qut.edu.au/resources/diversity.jsp

First Year Curriculum Principle – Design
When designing the first year curriculum attention needs to be paid to ensuring the curriculum is student-focused and provides a foundation so that further learning may be scaffolded. It should be explicit and relevant - forming a coherent, integrated basis for all future learning.

Strategies that may support design include:
• introducing students to an ePortfolio and encouraging its use across the entire degree program with activities built into the curriculum that promote reflection on the program's relevance to career, employability and to the discipline under study;
• enabling presentations from relevant industry representatives, the discipline's researchers and alumni to take place and discuss these presentations in class time; and
• identifying and promoting linkages across first year topics so that students are aware of their integration and relevance to each other.

See also: www.fyecd2009.qut.edu.au/resources/design.jsp

First Year Curriculum Principle - Engagement
Activities that engage students in innovative and collaborative ways have been shown to produce quality learning experiences.

Strategies that may support engagement include:
• utilising team-based learning approaches in first year topics. Effective team-based approaches require that:
  o teams are carefully formed and managed;
  o students understand that they are accountable for their own and the team’s success;
  o team assignments are designed to promote learning and team development; and
  o feedback provided to all students is frequent and timely.
the modelling or role-playing of "professional conversations" by academic staff;
building mentoring activities or formally including mentors in the curriculum;
the provision of dedicated physical and/or virtual spaces for first year students; and
providing commencing students with opportunities to test their knowledge and skills as well as demonstrate they have acquired the relevant skills and proficiencies.

See also: www.fyecd2009.qut.edu.au/resources/engagement.jsp

First Year Curriculum Principle - Assessment

A well-designed first year curriculum can support a student's appreciation and understanding of higher education assessment. Effective assessment introduces students to a range of appropriate assessment practices and provides timely, well-articulated and constructive feedback on student progress to both students and other staff. The complexity of assessment may be increased as the student progresses through the program.

Strategies that may support assessment include:

- developing a Feedback Strategy and communicating it to students. The strategy should support the students' growth by:
  - occurring in a timely fashion so that they may utilise comments in future work;
  - providing insight into errors and misunderstandings;
  - guiding students on how they can improve;
  - including examples to demonstrate good and bad work;
  - being tailored to the individual;
- providing students with examples of the standard of work that is required to pass and excel in the topic; and
- demonstrating how work is assessed by correcting a piece of writing or mathematical problem in a large class using the track changes function in MS Word.

See also: www.fyecd2009.qut.edu.au/resources/assessment.jsp

First Year Curriculum Principle - Evaluation and Monitoring

Mechanisms that monitor student engagement and performance and allow timely intervention in aid of students at risk of not succeeding need to be present in first year curriculum design.

Strategies that may support evaluation and monitoring include:

- using attendance sheets so that absent students may be identified and followed up;
- academic staff learning students’ names;
- requiring students to participate in peer mentoring programs;
- utilizing FLO analytics to determine student online activity and follow up with those who have not completed required tasks;
- requiring all students enrolled in a course to participate in online tests that identify competence in math, English grammar or other prerequisite knowledge which is followed by face-to-face support in acquiring proficiency (rather than providing remedial support only after a problem is identified);
- noting non-submission of assessment and following up with the student; and
- noting poor performance on early assessment and addressing this, in private, with the student
- allowing students to take low stakes or non-graded assessment activities so they can assess their learning.

See also: www.fyecd2009.qut.edu.au/resources/eval-monitor.jsp

Please feel free to contact the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching to discuss your first year curriculum.