If you were asked to run a workshop called “Teaching First Year Students”, what would it look like?

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Current discussion about the student experience, particularly for first year students, is focused on transition from high school to university and on their subsequent retention into second year. Elements of a successful transition can be broken down into the three broad categories of student engagement, adjustment to independent learning and adjustment to independent living. Issues of “transition” are often seen as the domain of the student services providers on campus who run, for example, First Year Experience programs, transition support and counselling services.

Although academic staff generally manage their students’ academic adjustment to university, what of their role in the social and administrative aspects of students’ adjustment in transition? How do we engage academic staff who teach first years students in a dialogue about these issues?

Aim of the Roundtable

The aim of this roundtable is to engage in a discussion about appropriate forms of professional development that engage academic staff who teach first year students in a dialogue about the issues of engagement, transition and retention and their role in the first year experience.

Rationale for the Roundtable

The idea for this roundtable arose as a result of a request to an academic development unit to conduct a workshop called “Teaching First Year Students”. The aim of such a workshop would be to assist teachers to better understand the issues of transition and to design teaching and learning strategies that meet the challenges presented by teaching first year students. This raised many questions, some of which will be used to prompt discussion and information sharing.

Outcomes of the Roundtable

A list of ideas, current practices and resources focused on professional development for “Teaching First Year Students” that can be shared by participants and others.

Questions to prompt discussion

What role do academic staff have in the social and administrative aspects of students’ adjustment in transition?  
Is a workshop the most appropriate format to address this topic?  
What content would be included?  
How do we engage academic staff?  
How do we get the student voice heard?  
What resources are available?  
What examples of practice currently exist?