

RETENTION, RESULTS AND STUDENT FEEDBACK; LESSONS LEARNT FROM A COVID-IMPOSED UNIT RESTRUCTURE

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KEYWORDS: retention, first-year, chemistry, transition, pedagogy

Even prior to the pandemic, introductory chemistry units were traditionally challenging for students, particularly those without background science or mathematics knowledge. Ongoing COVID-19 constraints (pedagogical, logistical and budgetary) add further complexity to supporting students.

At the University of Canberra, COVID-19 necessitated a 2021 restructure of the first-year undergraduate, 'no assumed knowledge' unit Chemistry1a. Changes were made to the teaching format, content sequence, resources, assessment, and student communication. These were informed by cognitive load theory and practices commonly used in the secondary school environment in the hope of better transitioning students. However, it was also important to retain 50% of assessment 'under test conditions' for unit integrity.

These changes resulted in an increase in retention, the completion rate and positive student feedback over previous years. This presentation provides a reflection on the lessons learnt from this process. It will showcase some of the findings of the subsequent full unit review. This will include analysis of student outcomes, formal feedback and online engagement.

Proceedings of the Australian Conference on Science and Mathematics Education, 29 September - 1 October 2021, page 14, ISSN 2653-0481