

# INNOVATIONS IN TEACHING GO VIRAL: EFFECTIVE, BETTER WAYS TO TEACH VIROLOGY

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## ABSTRACT

A new second year level topic called "Virology" was launched in 2007. While conventional methods of teaching such as lectures, student presentations of journal papers, an exam, an essay are included, innovative approaches to this stimulating subject are also used. To encourage engagement short "minitests", with a few multiple choice questions, occur in every tutorial session, and students gain marks for participation in discussion. This led to an unexpectedly high turn-out at tutorials, with over 50% of students attending extra sessions. In another innovation used to show the daily relevance of virology, students present media reports about viruses. To foster independent research, students are encouraged to develop their own essay topic and have opportunity in the exam to write answers to questions of their own choosing, such as about viruses, or areas of virology, not covered in the lecture material. Measures of learning outcome show the topic is highly successful. For example, in 2011, the week 1 initial knowledge test, on general concepts in virology, returned an average mark of 29% which rose to 92% on repeating the quiz in week 13. The proportion of students gaining Distinction or High Distinction grades (e.g. 41% in 2010) is high. Measures of student satisfaction also show overwhelmingly positive views towards the topic. For example, the mean of all Student Evaluation of Teaching scores in 2009 was 6.74 out of a possible 7, and the lowest score, 6.51. Enrolments, 20 in 2007, rising to 172 in 2011, increased by 860% in 4 years showing a widespread interest in the field of study and in the course in particular.

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