

## Identifying students at risk: strategies used for a large class



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## Problems

- Large first year biology classes
  - 1700 students
  - lecture classes of 500; lab size 60
- Varied academic background
  - very heterogeneous; some without biology
  - some with little interest in biology
- Student approaches to learning
  - tendency to employ rote learning and to like spoon feeding – particularly with respect to exams

## *First Year on Campus*

National review of Australian Universities

- Status of teaching in first year
- Unpack the curriculum
- Build a sense of student identity
- Monitor student attitudes and experiences
- **Give early systematic feedback**
- Engineer opportunities for collaborative study

## Identification of 'at risk'

- Quiz marks
- WebCT
- Report writing
- Staff feedback to unit coordinator
- What else? ---
- Mock exam

## Practice Exam

- Hard copy given to students
- Delivery procedure as an exam
- Marking of paper online
- <http://fybio.bio.usyd.edu.au/VLE/L1/1001/ExamsTests1001.html>
- [example](#)

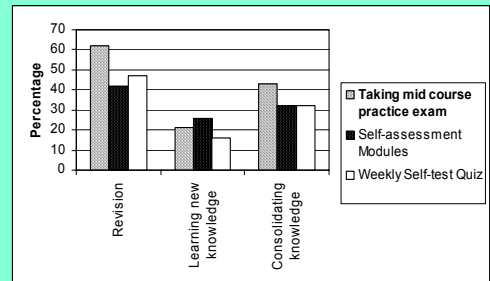
## Directions for those "at risk"

- Students identify their risk level
- Originally a set of face-to-face tutorials (not sustainable)
- Now provision of a set of revision modules for students to access for help
  - sustainable
  - multifunctional

## Use and perceptions of usefulness

	Percentage of responses from students who completed/attempted the exam			
	Did not use/ Did not do (%)	Not useful	Useful	Extremely useful
Taking mid course practice exam	3	4	52	44
Marking mid course practice exam	72	n/a	n/a	n/a

## Perceived usefulness of mid course exam for supporting learning and understanding



## Reflections

- Student access problems & solutions
  - Internet/software conflicts with picking up the answers
  - From 2004, exam marking template will be on the CD complete with software etc
  - Answers will be available for uploading at appropriate time
- Transferability of the mock exam concept

## Have we made a difference?

- Hard to know who is at risk in Semester 1
  - We know those who use the marking scheme find it supportive of learning
  - We do not know if the poorer students gain appreciably from using the marking scheme
- However:
- The process does raise awareness about exams
  - The exam generates much discussion about questions and their answers