

DON'T DUMB IT DOWN – MIX IT UP! ENGAGING AND ENHANCING METABOLISM STUDENT LEARNING CAPACITY WITHOUT DUMBING DOWN CONTENT OR ASSESSMENT STANDARDS

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ABSTRACT

Metabolism is a content heavy second year course with which students traditionally struggle and historically suffered from an unacceptably high failure rate (>20%, 2004-2006) in our school. Student perceptions of the difficulty of the course lead to disengagement prior to starting with students not having acquired appropriate study techniques that would enhance their capacity to succeed.

Remodelling of the course in the sequence of information presented (2007) and in presentation style (2009) occurred. Content sequence ensured an understanding of key metabolic pathways followed by regulatory influences and disease states. The new format has a three week cycle that begins with traditional lectures but follows with workshops designed to cement core concepts and develop global cognitive comprehension. The cycle was designed to enable students to approach the study of this subject in a scaffolded manner that promotes engagement with materials and facilitates their overall capacity to learn in a deep manner.

This strategy resulted in consistent reduction in the fail rate of approximately 10% (2008-2011) without compromising standards of assessment. Students were guided to develop better self-efficacy and independent learning skills. Evidence of subject mastery is demonstrated by higher pass rates and also a shift to higher numbers of distinction and high distinctions.

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