First year curriculum principles:
Briefing for institutional learning and teaching leaders

First year curriculum principle	What the principle entails …
1. Transition The curriculum should support academic and social transition *from* a student's previous educational experience *to* the nature of learning in higher education and the new discipline as part of lifelong learning.	The first year curriculum should support transition by: · incorporating a range of strategies that orient students and aid transition both prior to and during their first year, to provide the foundation for positive transitions to later years' learning success, career attainment, and lifelong learning · facilitating a sense of academic and social belonging · providing clear pathways and timely access to support services · consistently communicating realistic and explicit expectations.
2. Diversity The curriculum should acknowledge the diversity and reality of students' backgrounds, previous experiences, and preparedness for higher education because diversity may exacerbate transition issues and few assumptions can be made about students' entering knowledge, skills, and attitudes.	The first year curriculum should embrace diversity by: · valuing and respecting diversity and ensuring this has high visibility with student cohorts · devoting curriculum time to the learning and teaching of academic skills required for learning success in higher education and the discipline · scaffolding learning · providing flexibility in terms of allowing students some critical choices in order that the curriculum better meets their individual needs and circumstances.
3. Design The curriculum design should be student focused, explicit and relevant and provide foundation and scaffolding for first year learning success.	The first year curriculum should structure design by: · ensuring that it is at a foundational level in aid of future learning · explicitly identifying end of first year objectives and organising the first year curriculum as a coherent, integrated whole · establishing relevance and alignment to students' vocational aspirations and course choice by incorporating career planning and development components · allocating curriculum time to the special transition needs of first year students.
4. Engagement The curriculum should enact engaging and involving pedagogies.	The first year curriculum should foster engagement by: · taking a student-centred approach to facilitating learning · providing opportunities for peer-to-peer and staff-to-students interactions and collaborative learning · providing ongoing support and guidance when, where and how it is most needed · incorporating, whenever possible, co-curricular activities that support aspects of the formal curriculum.

5. Assessment The curriculum should aid transition to higher education assessment, be clear about assessment expectations, and provide early feedback.	The first year curriculum should integrate assessment by: · ensuring that assessment is manageable for both students and staff in terms of workload, and fair for students in terms of equity · providing clear, consistent and explicit assessment information about individual subjects and whole programs of study · providing criteria sheets that set out clear criteria and standards for assessment tasks that are realistic for first year and are supported by resources to aid student understanding of assessment expectations in the discipline · implementing a repertoire of feedback tactics (for communicating to staff, students and to quality bodies), and that include an early piece of formative assessment within the first four weeks.
6. Evaluation and monitoring The curriculum itself should be evaluated and should monitor for student (dis)engagement.	The first year curriculum design should embed systems and processes whereby academic and professional staff evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of the first year curriculum by seeking evidence regarding: · the effectiveness of the curriculum itself · the effectiveness of students' engagement with the curriculum, especially over the first semester and year of enrolment (in case timely interventions are needed to support student success).

QUT
Queensland University of Technology

AUSTRALIAN LEARNING &TEACHING COUNCIL