Describe how you felt as a first-year student in the classroom...

Student Focus Group (10-Nov-2015)
Some of the phrases used to describe the first-year experience in the classroom....

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fear of the unknown</th>
<th>Questioning why I am here</th>
<th>Feeling like I didn’t know anything</th>
<th>Rebellion – I am here but this wasn't my choice</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eager and ready to succeed</td>
<td>Fear of failure (high expectations)</td>
<td>Challenged – I see my potential and ability</td>
<td>I am gaining knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overwhelmed with deadlines – everything is due at the same time</td>
<td>Condensed due dates</td>
<td>Not knowing what to do and where to get resources</td>
<td>I missed my family</td>
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<td>Big classes make it hard to ask questions</td>
<td>Not wanting to disappoint my parents</td>
<td>Getting lost on your first day of class</td>
<td>Scared to talk to my professor</td>
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<td>It is a huge campus that is packed with people in the middle of day</td>
<td>Intimidated – I didn't know how the class was going</td>
<td>Lack of confidence</td>
<td>On my own</td>
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<td>Intimidated by the size of classes – if I was running late I didn’t want to walk into the class</td>
<td>Meeting someone face-to-face helps you get over your anxiety (someone who knows more than you)</td>
<td>Finding out about resources almost too late</td>
<td>There is so much information online it is hard to navigate</td>
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<td>Overwhelmed – it is difficult to make friends and find out what is going on</td>
<td>Peer mentoring helps so you know you are not alone</td>
<td>Hard to learn from your peers</td>
<td>Technology helps when you are too shy to ask questions</td>
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What have you found has helped you most in the classroom?

- Professors knowing and understanding the importance of resources available
- Allowing other clubs to make announcements
- Open office hours
- Group work – helps students to learn and retain information
- Expanding on ideas and not just reading slides
- PASS programs offered for some courses
- Professor and TA side notes

In addition, tutorials...

- are a place to learn about resources
- are a lifeline to help me understand and ask questions
- help build connections – find friends, hear about extra-curricular opportunities
- help when I am trying to absorb so much information (break down information)
- are a good opportunity to share what I am experiencing
What approaches in the classroom have you found inspiring?

- Showing photos of research and using it as an example to explain something
- Showing studio and works of art (more relevant with career options)
- Bringing in someone from outside world (helps to connect with material)
- Demonstrating their passion for their discipline
- Showing news clips

How have your instructors helped you to stay motivated?

- Seminar classes – reading, discussing and relating content to current events
- Understanding from professors when students are experiencing difficulties (i.e. deadlines)
- Providing opportunities to observe and gain practical experience and insight
- Allowing students to develop and teach the class their own theory and create a concept film
- Using clear and comprehensive language
- Teaching in a way that recognizes that students are coming from a variety of backgrounds (content and context)
- Openness to answer questions for students seeking clarification
If you could recommend one investment or change to help students deal with the challenges of first year at university, what would that be?

**Use technology to make lecture material accessible**

- Professors wear audio packs and record all classes

**Make it less intimidating for students to seek clarification, ask a question or request assistance**

- Conversation format at the beginning of class, open door policy, time set aside at the end of class to ask questions

**Gather reflections and feedback from students**

- Use the idea of a "1 minute paper" to ask students what was the one thing they learned in the lecture and what was unclear
- Survey students on the first day of the course to gain an understanding of their knowledge and background

**Structure forums for group learning**

- Create groups in Facebook for each course/program to enable student to post questions to class peers (Facebook is used more frequently than Moodle, notifications are pushed to mobile devices and the dialogue is less structured/censored)

**Create opportunities for students to work with professors**

- Ask for volunteers to be the classroom ombudsperson or to monitor class facebook groups
- Provide openings to observe research or work in the field