



How to train a systematist? A status check of plant and fungal systematics training at Australasian Universities.

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The value of native biodiversity and ecosystems is broadly recognised. However, the capacity to engage and train students in plant and fungal biodiversity at Australasian tertiary institutions remains limited. Teaching of organismal diversity remains a component of first-year biology subjects; yet the breadth of that teaching is uneven. Plants, and to an even greater extent, algae and fungi, typically receive a much smaller allocation of teaching time than other lineages. Engaging students with biodiversity focused coursework is essential to ensure advanced systematics subjects are sought-after by students and maintained in Australasian tertiary education. The “Discovering Diversity” Decadal Plan prepared by Taxonomy Australia identifies the urgent need to increase the capacity of the taxonomy and systematics workforce. To do so, Australasian tertiary institutions must enable students to interact with the Australasian biota, provide field-, lab-, and herbarium-based training, and inform students of career pathways in taxonomy and systematics research. This presentation will provide an overview of the current experiences of staff at Australasian Universities, to assess the status of their biodiversity and systematics focused training at those institutions. Current initiatives towards optimising student engagement in these fields will be discussed.

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