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Systematics education and training at the tertiary level: a case for an integrated approach

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Systematics education and training in universities has often, but not always, been separated along taxonomic lines (plant systematics, insect systematics, etc). Consequently, low numbers of students enrolling in seemingly specialist courses has led to the demise of specialised systematics education in Australian universities. However, the fundamentals of systematics (phylogenetics, classification and taxonomy) are probably components of courses at most universities and are hidden to external scrutiny because course names do not specifically mention systematics—that is, "dark systematics". Here I will describe an integrated approach at UQ that has led to systematics training as part of the high school science curriculum, and systematics training at university that begins with modules in the compulsory first-year course, and follows up with systematics incorporated in second-year plant science, zoology and entomology, and five third-level courses (Biodiversity and Systematics, Marine Invertebrates, Plant Identification, Fungal Biology, and Insect Identification and Taxonomy) that each have enrolments of over 50 students.

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