



# Data and Databases Course Results – Semester 1 and Semester 2 vs Summer School

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Having taught both categories of students at Unitec New Zealand over the last three years, I have noticed that the results of the summer school students in the Data and Databases course are much better than those for semester 1 and semester 2 students. Why is this so?

Some of the contributing factors may include the calibre of the students, their motivations and aspirations, and the teaching and learning environment.

Which students choose to attend summer school? Usually a class of summer school students comprises those who could not successfully complete the course in the previous semesters, those who want to complete their programmes of study in less than the minimum time, those that need to pass in just one (or two) courses in order to graduate, full-time employees who may use their leave during the Christmas and New Year period to up-skill/upgrade/enhance their qualifications, or those who want to gain a tertiary qualification and were not able to do so after leaving school (this may even include retired employees).

Apparently, the students who attend summer school have chosen to do so for a definite purpose and therefore their motivation to achieve their objectives is relatively high. Why are the students in the other category attending or not attending classes? Do they have clear goals to achieve? Do they take responsibility for their learning?

Classes of first and second semester students usually comprise school leavers. It is possible that these students are at a tertiary institution as a natural next step in the education system.

As such, the students may not have clear objectives that they would like to achieve. A change from the secondary school environment to a tertiary institution may also be a contributing factor. The students coming into a tertiary institution for the first

time have little experience in managing their freedom and taking responsibility for their learning. In such circumstances it is easy for students to become distracted and less focused on their studies.

The teaching and learning environment is different for the summer school. There is not so much hustle and bustle as in the first two semesters, not so many distractions or competition for resources and facilities. Summer school students are expected to achieve the learning outcomes of the course in four weeks while the semester 1 and semester 2 students are given thirteen weeks to do so. Therefore the former have to work extremely hard (self-directed learning) to keep pace with the timetabled teaching. Only those students who have the motivation and commitment to their learning will survive in a summer school class.

It is worth investigating the extent to which the factors stated above contribute to the results of the two categories of students.

I intend to do this investigation for the Data and Databases course.