A key element of the University’s new Unit of Study Survey (USS) is the move to fully on-line surveys. This brings with it a real concern that response rates will suffer. There is now a lot of research on this issue, and the design of the new USS has drawn on that work to maximize response rates. It is also clear that there are things Unit of Study coordinators can do in their classes to achieve excellent response rates. Recently we emailed a few senior colleagues who have already used the new USS this year, and achieved more than 50% response rates in their surveys. Here are some of their top tips:

- ‘My top tip is to allow students to do the survey on their own devices in class BUT then to spend a few minutes afterwards unpacking what they took from the experience. Asking them to come up with their own additional questions really seemed to empower them’
- ‘We were getting only 10% responses so we allocated time in small group tutorials and asked the tutors to encourage them to complete the USS’
- ‘I followed the guidelines: (i) reminded the students; (ii) allowed time in the tutorial; (iii) stated that I took notice of comments and improved the unit of study as a result of comments.’
- ‘Many students had completed their response before the tutorial’
- ‘I think they felt their voices would be heard and that I would respond’

Through Student News the University is explaining to students how important their feedback is, and the USS uses automatic reminder emails to students who haven’t yet filled in the survey. The USS is intentionally short, and the survey interface is designed to be accessible and easy to use on a range of devices. If you are interested to read more about the design features that have been incorporated into the University’s new USS, Berk (2012) provides a helpful review of what the research has shown improves response rates to online surveys. If you have other ideas for how to improve the response rates in your faculty please get in touch with your Associate Dean Learning & Teaching.
