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Support for an undergraduate physics program: A first year mainstream module

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First year students entering the mainstream undergraduate physics program are at different levels of preparedness which have impact on their learning at the university, in particular, their learning of physics which influence their retention, performance and success in the subject. In a survey done most students reported that they find the physics interesting but difficult and that they needed more guidance and support in their learning of physics inside and outside the lecture periods and tutorial. In response to this, the lecturer in the first year mainstream undergraduate physics align the curriculum, i.e. the teaching and learning activities to guide students learning as well as to provide a collaborative and supportive learning environment inside and outside the lecture periods and tutorial. This paper describes the initiatives implemented in the mainstream undergraduate physics program to enhance guidance and support of students learning of physics inside and outside the lecture periods and tutorial. The paper examines the role of tutors in the initiatives implemented as well as successes achieved and challenges encountered with the implementation of the initiatives. Tutors as well as students' experiences of the initiatives were surveyed and are presented and discussed. The paper concludes that tutors have an important role to play in providing the mainstream undergraduate physics students a collaborative and supportive learning environment inside and outside the lecture periods and tutorials to enhance the learning of physics.

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