



Evolution of the FYE Course at Yamagata University

Takao Hashizume
Katsumi Senyo
Shigeru Asano
Koji Fujiwara

February 17, 2019

38th Annual Conference on The First-Year Experience

Agenda

- | | | |
|---|---|-----------------|
| 1. Yamagata University (YU) & Higher Education in Japan | } | Koji Fujiwara |
| 2. FYE Program at YU in the Past | | |
| 3. Redesigning the FYE in 2017 | | |
| 4. New FYE in 2018 | | |
| 5. Assessment Results | | |
| 6. Conclusion and Future Plans | } | Takao Hashizume |

Yamagata University & Higher Education in Japan

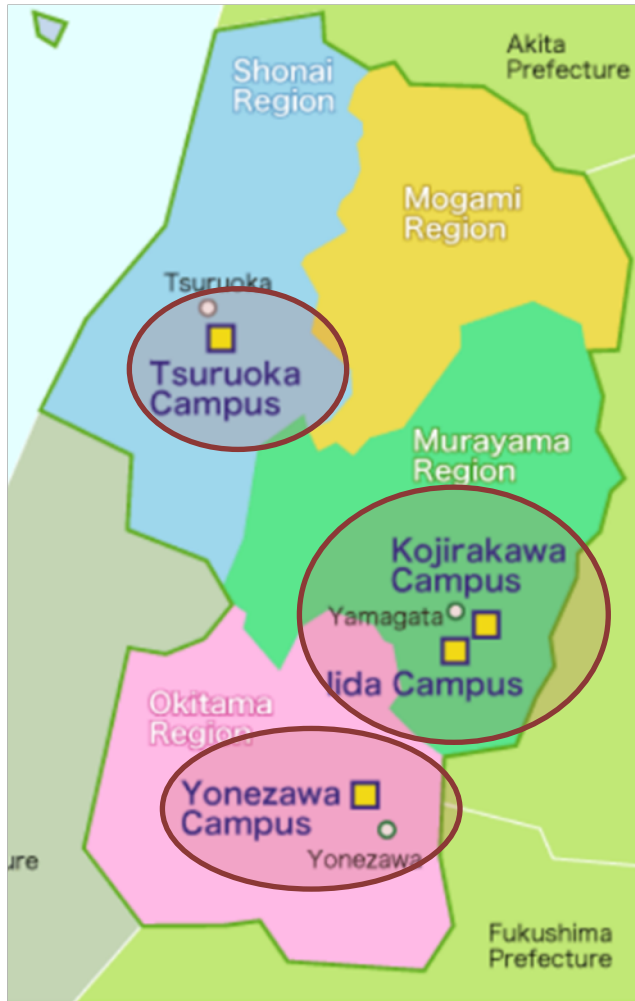


Where is Yamagata, Japan?



- Direct Distance from Tokyo: 190 miles
 - 3 hours by bullet train
 - 45 minutes by airplane

Yamagata University (YU)



■ Type: National University

- Year Founded: 1878
- Multi-Campus (4 campuses)
 - Kojirakawa Campus (K)
 - Iida Campus (I)
 - Yonezawa Campus (Y)
 - Tsuruoka Campus (T)

■ Six Colleges:

- Agriculture (T)
- Education, Arts and Science (K)
- Engineering (Y)
- Literature and Social Science (K)
- Medicine (I)
- Sciences (K)

- Kojirakawa Campus – Tsuruoka Campus: 60 miles
- Kojirakawa Campus – Yonezawa Campus: 30 miles

Yamagata University (YU)

■ Degree Programs

- Undergraduate: 22
 - Master: 19
 - Doctorate: 10
- } Same Tuition
\$4,800/year

■ 2018-2019 FT Enrollment & FT Faculty/Staff

- Degree-seeking UG: 7,532
 - Male: 63%
- Degree-seeking, freshmen: 1,731
 - Male: 65%; In-state: 24%
- Degree-seeking Grad: 1,289
 - Male: 76%
- Faculty & Staff: 800+ & 300+, respectively

Key Characteristic of H.E. in Japan

- The academic year begins in **April** and ends the **following March**.

- Students **must decide on their major** when they apply for **admission**.
 - **Can't change the major** after enrollment
 - No double or more majors
 - No pre- program (e.g., Pre-Med, Pre-Vet, etc.)
 - Almost **impossible** to
 - **Transfer** to another university
 - Have **flexible study plan**

- **High expectation to graduate in four years**

FYE Program at Yamagata University

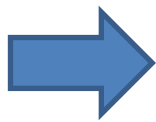
2010-2016



FYE Program at YU: 2010-2016

■ Characteristics

- Began in 2010
- **2** semester credits (meet **15** times, **90** min./class)
- **Mandatory** for ALL new first-year students
- University's original textbook
- Each department/faculty offered **"their own FYE course"** to the students.



Course objective was different among the faculty.

Problems Need to be Improved

■ Within the same “FYE” course,

① Wide Variation in Class Size

- Smallest: 13 per class
- Largest: 125 per class

② Different Learning Outcomes

- It depended on the “person” who taught the course.

③ Different Evaluation Criteria

- Absolute vs. Relative
- Hard vs. Easy-A:
Range of FYE Section Ave. GPA: **2.2 – 4.0**

Redesigning the FYE



Redesigning the FYE in 2017

■ Mission

- Same course goals
- Same credits
- Same mandatory requirement
- Same **teaching materials**
- Offered by the “**university**”, not individual dept.
- Target Course Grade: **B or above**

■ New Course Goals

1. To promote further development of **student success skills**
2. To help students gain **confidence** at new environment (**learn from experience**)

How We Fix the Problems

Problem ①: Wide Variation in Class Size

➤ What we did?

- **35** students/class (FYE 2017*)
 - Original Plan: 25 students/class
- Randomly assigned by the university
(**Mixed-gender and Mixed-major**)

of FYE Sections and Instructors

	Sections	Instructors
FYE 2016 (old)	54	54
FYE 2017 (new)	48	43

* FYE 2017: April 2017 – August 2017 (2017 1st Semester)

How We Fix the Problems (contd.)

Problem ②: Different Learning Outcomes

➤ What we did?

- **Common** Course Outlines (see next slide)
- **Shared** Learning Outcomes & Objectives
 - **Students will develop four core learning skills:**
 1. Basic Research Skills
 2. Group Work & Collaborative Learning Skills
 3. Presentation Skills
 4. Report Writing Skills
- Providing the detailed **teaching manuals and slides**
 - Completely full description of what to do

Course Outlines (1st Half, Weeks 1-7)

- Students learned and experienced the **four core basic learning skills** through the class activities.
- Students were assigned to each **working group** (5-7/group), and tackled the topic for discussion.
 - Topic: A cashier gave you an **extra 30 cents** back in change. What do you do?
i.e., **Pocket the change vs. Return the change**
- Each group drew a conclusion and spent **6 weeks** to prepare the presentation.

Course Calendar (1st Half, Weeks 1-7)

Week	Agenda/Topic
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introductions• Syllabus Review
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Group Work• Basic Research
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Group Discussion• Logical/Critical Thinking
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presentation Part 1
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presentation Part 2
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Group Presentation
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Report Writing

Reinforcement: 2nd Half (Weeks 8-15)

The group worked on another topic.

- i.e., What is your future occupation?

How We Fix the Problems (contd.)

Problem ③: Different Evaluation Criteria

➤ What we did?

- **Same homework** across all sections and same homework **grading rubric**

➤ Use of a LMS

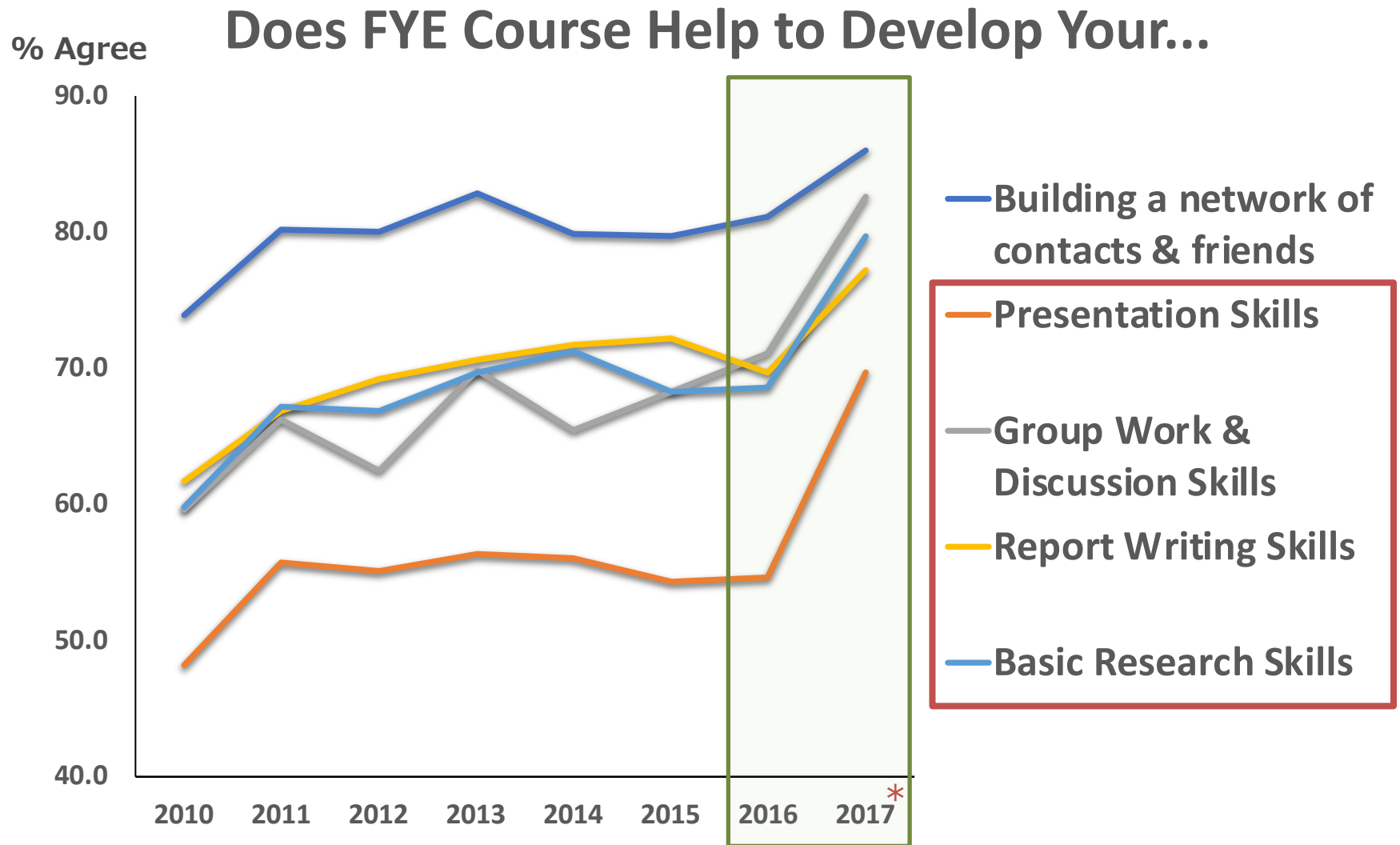
- Require **ALL** FYE faculty to use a LMS
 - Reasons:
 - Organize FYE course materials in one location
 - Keep FYE course up-to-date
 - Consistency of learning
 - Easy tracking & reporting
- } **For Assessment**

Redesigning the FYE: Biggest Changes

■ Biggest Changes

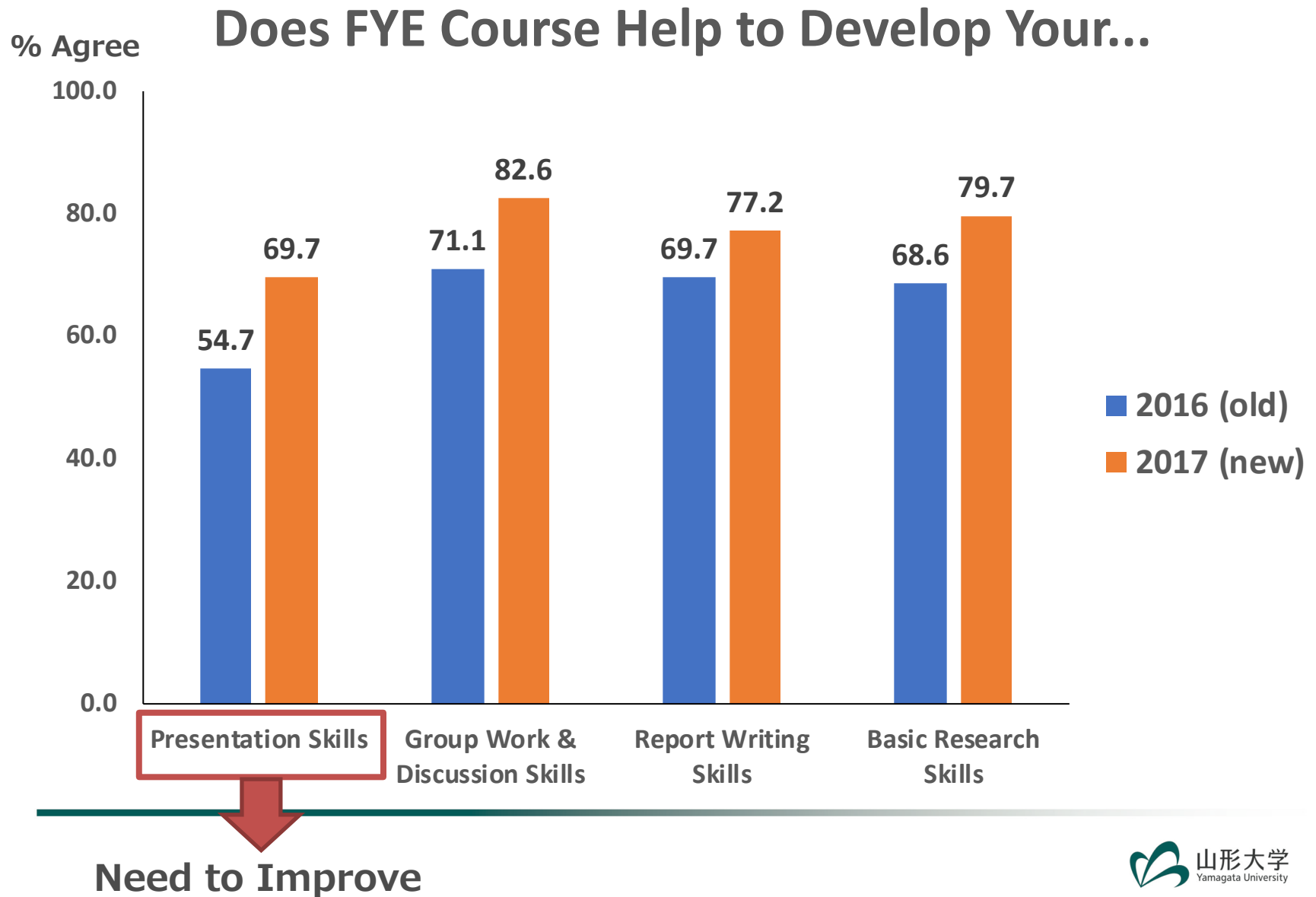
1. No course differentiation between instructors
2. Class is now **not** lecture-based.
3. Requires students' **active participation**:
 - Self-Study Realization Skills Improvement
 - Group work (Peer-Review / Peer-Learning)
4. 30-min. minimum assignment given **every class**
 - **Assignment must be completed that day.**

FYE Student Survey: Previous vs. New



* FYE 2017: April 2017 – August 2017 (2017 1st Semester)

Survey Results: Four Core Learning Skills



New FYE in 2018

FYE 2018: April 2018 – August 2018 (2018 1st Semester)



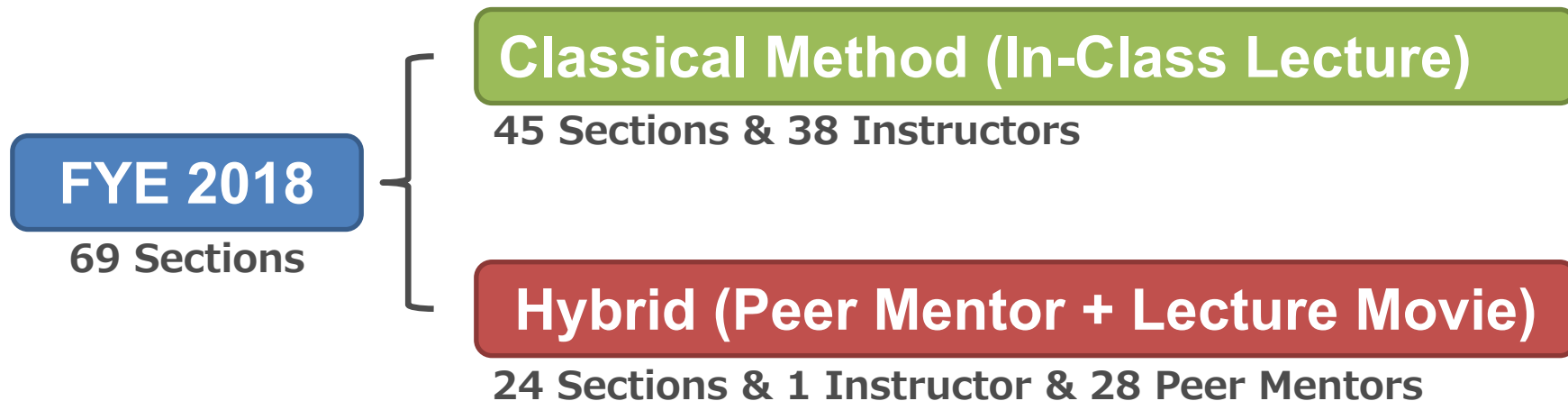
Biggest Changes for FYE 2018*

① Class Size: **25** students/class

- Building renovation was completed in March 2018.
- Provide more presentation opportunities
- However, **need more FYE sections**

② Additional Course Delivery Method

- **Hybrid (or Blended)**



* FYE 2018: April 2018 – August 2018 (2018 1st Semester)

What is a Peer Mentor?

- Served as a mentor to new students
- Helped Takao to teach multiple FYE sections
- Required about 3 hours per week for the 1st semester

Two Expectations

1. **Facilitate Learning**
(i.e., leading class discussions)
2. **Approachable Resource**
(i.e., helping new students in transitioning to the university life)

Peer Mentor Qualifications

- Successfully completed a FYE class in 2017
 - Must be available for **ALL** peer mentor time commitments
 - Must display a high level of professionalism
-
- No GPA requirements at this time, but...
 - Takao offered a course (Peer Mentor Training) in the 2017 2nd semester.

 # Applicants = 40
Accepted = 28

Peer Mentor in a Class Room



Hybrid Course Delivery

■ Typical Time Schedule (8:50 – 10:20)

Time	Contents
8:50 – 9:00	Homeroom
9:00 – 9:20	Lecture Movie
9:20 – 9:30	Q & A
9:30 – 10:10	Classroom Activities
10:10 – 10:20	Wrap Up

Takao went round every hybrid section for Q & A.

■ Peer Mentor's Meeting: 8:20 – 8:45

Lecture Movie

The Building for the FYE Hybrid Sections



This building was used for the FYE Hybrid Sections on MTHF, 8:50-10:20.



Inside GE Building #3



Assessment Results



Quality Assurance in FYE

- We expected to have the following questions regarding to the **quality assurance** in FYE.

Question #1

Do students learn & achieve the **same** things if they take an classic or hybrid version of the **same** FYE course?

Question #2

What kind of faculty credentials guidelines do you have?

Quality Assurance in FYE (contd.)

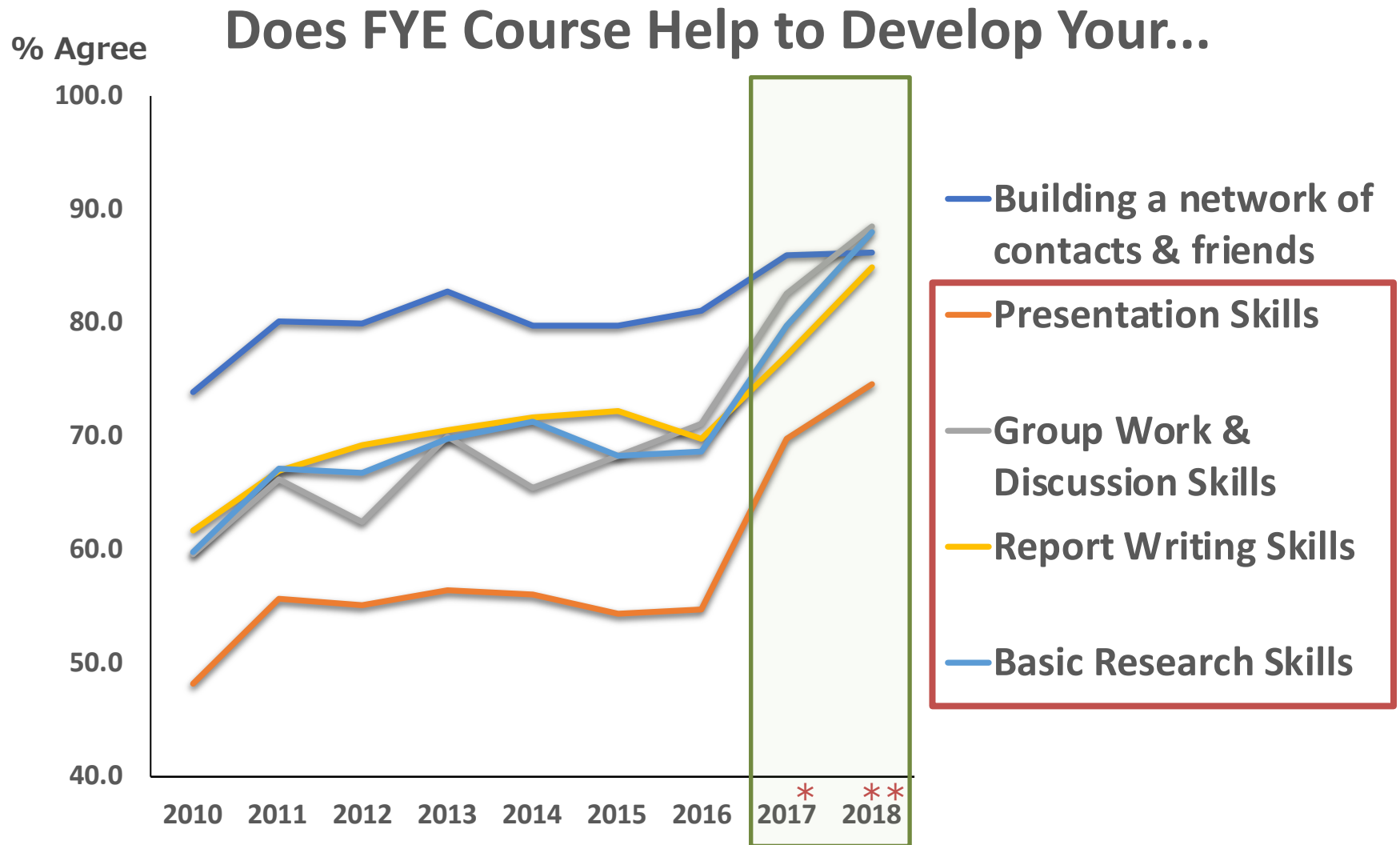
Answer #1

The learning outcomes for the **same** FYE should be the **same** regardless of which delivery format students are assigned.

Answer #2

In the U.S., a faculty needs to have an academic degree at least **one level above** the level at which they teach except for terminal degree programs.

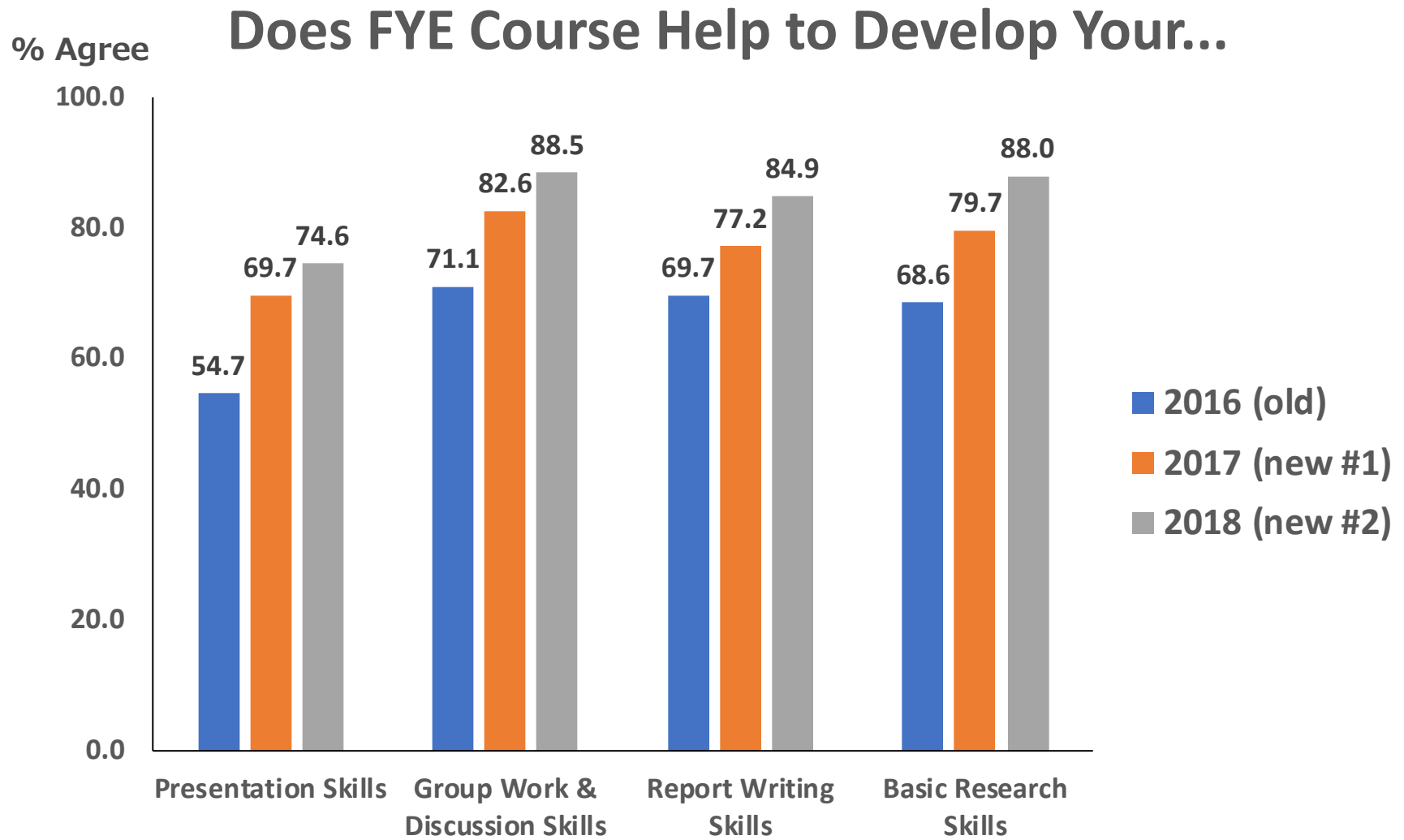
FYE Student Survey



* FYE 2017: new #1 (April 2017 – August 2017)

** FYE 2018: new #2 (April 2018 – August 2018)

Survey Results: Four Core Learning Skills



Comparison: Classic vs. Hybrid

Does FYE Course Help to Develop Your... (% Agree)

Four Core Learning Skills	Course Delivery Method		Total
	Classic	Hybrid	
Presentation Skills	75.2%	73.9%	74.6%
Group Work & Discussion Skills*	90.2%	85.9%	88.5%
Report Writing Skills	85.8%	83.4%	84.9%
Basic Research Skills**	89.7%	85.2%	88.0%

* $p = 0.012$; ** $p = 0.009$

- ✓ For "Presentations Skills" and "Report Writing Skills," there are **no significant differences** between the two delivery methods.
- ✓ For "Group Work & Discussion Skills" and "Basic Research Skills," students who were assigned in the **classical delivery method showed higher agreement rate.**

Peer Mentor's Responses ($N = 28$)

■ Positive Responses

1. By teaching, I learned more about those "Four Core Learning Skills."
2. I learned the importance of conceptual understanding for teaching someone something.
3. It was easier than I thought.

■ Negative Responses

1. Poor Internal Communications
2. The course content was too difficult for the new students.
3. It was especially difficult to teach "Report Writing Skills."

Students' Responses for the Hybrid Course

■ Positive Responses

1. Peer mentors were friendly and approachable.
2. Mentor's explanation was very easy to understand.
3. Lecture movies were very funny.

■ Negative Responses

1. Quality Assurance in Teaching
2. I oppose the hybrid course delivery.
3. Mentor's explanation was difficult to understand.

Discussion and Conclusion

by Takao Hashizume



Discussion: FYE Student Survey

1. Overall (2018 > 2017)
 - a. Getting used to teaching the FYE
 - b. Those hybrid sections **worked better than expected.**

2. Group Work & Basic Research Skills (Classic > Hybrid)
 - a. A faculty has **more teaching experience.**

3. Presentation & Report Writing Skills (Classic \cong Hybrid)
 - a. FYE class **did not provide enough opportunities** to develop those two skills.
 - b. **Need further investigation**

How Far We've Come (2018)

1. Class Size : 100%

- 25 students/class

2. Teaching of Common Course Contents : 90%

- Need to improve internal communications among FYE faculty and peer mentors

3. Common Evaluation Criteria : 97%

- Almost completed but there were some exceptions...

Conclusion

1. The new FYE program began in 2017:
now includes **hybrid-type** of classes
2. Need Improvement:
Presentation / Report Writing Skills
 - a. More opportunities
 - b. Course Contents
3. Inter-faculty and Peer Mentor Awareness and Understanding

Acknowledgements



This project is supported by MEXT※, Japan.

Special Thanks (in alphabetical order) to:

- Douglas Gloag
- Nobuhiro Matsuzaka
- Tatsuya Suzuki
- Tadashi Takizawa

&

All Students, FYE Faculty,
Peer Mentors, Staff
at Yamagata University

Please remember to submit your
evaluation on Guidebook!

<https://guidebook.com/g/fye19/>

#FYE19