

**ZMATH 2016b.00155**

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**What counts for students studying statistics.**

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Summary: Statistics is taught in many different disciplines. This study explores the orientations to studying statistics of over 100 students of the University of Sydney. Fifty two students entering second year Psychology and 59 Arts students starting a first year general statistics course were surveyed. Three open ended questions asked students to report on their reasons for studying statistics, their expectations of their courses and their usual approaches to studying mathematics. Categories of description for students' responses were identified. The results showed that those who chose to study statistics were motivated primarily by perceptions of the relevance of the knowledge. In contrast, personal and negative evaluations of mathematics dominated the responses of those unwillingly studying a compulsory course in statistics. About half the students surveyed expected their statistics course to provide a tool; most of the others focussed on statistical processes. Disturbingly, almost 80

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