

# Introduction for Lecturers New to Teaching in Higher Education

*Before we start...*

Think about someone whom you found to be a good teacher. What made their teaching particularly effective?

## **Session One: Starting Teaching: Hopes and Fears**

Any new undertaking brings with it a range of hopes and fears. In the following tasks we will explore your current feelings about teaching.

In addition to sharing your expectations, we will discuss how you can maximise the opportunity of them being realised. In sharing your fears, you are likely not only to realise you are not alone in having such concerns, but also identify practical steps to minimise them.

### **Task 1. Working by yourself**

- Use the feedback table overleaf to list things:
  - you like or are looking forward to in teaching; and
  - you are apprehensive about in teaching.

You have **5 minutes** to brainstorm your list.

### **Task 2. Working in small groups**

- Share your list with your small group.
- Assemble a composite list.

You will have about **15 minutes** to do this.

### **Task 3. Reporting back**

- Report back to the whole group and discuss the points raised.

## Feedback

	<b>Issues</b>	<b>Notes</b> (include solutions and other issues your group discusses)
<b>Things you like or are looking forward to in teaching</b>		
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
<b>Things you are apprehensive about in teaching</b>		
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

## **Session Two: Perceptions of Teaching**

We all carry with us collections of ideas about personal and social phenomena. With reference to teaching, these ideas are synthesised from our experiences of having been taught, and of being teachers, and are underpinned by general understandings from the societies we have lived in or experienced.

These ideas are so close to us that they often seem to be 'natural' or 'obvious', and thus to some extent un-contestable.

However, these ideas structure the way we approach our teaching. We understand ourselves better by looking at the nature of our own preconceptions, and in so doing we make it possible to enlarge our stock of ideas and see things in different ways.

The exercise below is a chance to look at our preconceptions – both individually and as a group.

Imagine you are going into the first meeting with a group, and you're wearing a T-shirt that has a slogan on the front telling the group what they can expect from your teaching, or what they can expect to get out of the class. What would your slogan be?

Use this space to jot down other slogans you would (or perhaps would not) consider using.

## **Session Three: Teaching in Practice 1: Ingredients of Effective Large-group Teaching**

Lecturing to large groups represents a particularly sharp challenge for many new teachers ... and many quite experienced ones!

The range of matters to be considered in lecturing effectively is very wide.

We tend to think of our command over the material first, but there are other important issues to consider. It is these issues other than content that we are considering today.

Let's start from what you already know about good and bad lecturing.

### **Task 4. Characteristics of a bad lecture**

You have all sat through enough bad lectures.

- What is it that makes them dull and/or ineffective?

Make some notes below, then discuss in small groups.

Notes

- If we're asking how we can plan to deliver good lectures, our first response can be ...
- ... do the opposite to the practices identified above!

However we can go further and look at some ground rules for starting to take control of the lecture.

### 1. Take control of the space

- Establish your 'base', and lay the material out where it is easily to hand.
- Work out what you are going to say to start the proceedings.
- Don't just stand behind the desk: where possible get up into the audience.
- Move around without being hyperactive!

### 2. Organise yourself

- Introduce yourself.
- Say what you're going to cover.
- Say what you want the students to do, both in the lecture and as the result of the lecture.
- Show how the lecture will be structured.
- Prepare activities for the students beforehand.

### 3. See students as individuals as well as a group

- Try to look to all areas of the room – don't get your eyes 'locked' in one position.

You don't need deep eye contact, just a sense that you are looking in their direction.

- Learn some names ... and, if possible, faces too!

An additional tactic is to greet students as they come into the room.

- Involve yourself in the lecture.

For example, say what **you** find interesting or challenging; describe how **you** overcame problems to do with the content; show you recognise how **they** will be struggling with certain elements.

- Avoid seeing the students as a single, undifferentiated 'organism'.

#### **4. Familiarise yourself with AV machinery and teaching aids**

- Consider which AV resources you'll need and ...
- ... book them!
- If necessary, rehearse using the machinery.
- Have video/CD/DVD set up and ready to go.
- Open all files/websites before you start.

## Session Four: Teaching, Academic Practice and Your Career

You have now joined a Higher Education institution on another stage in your academic career.

You have achieved this position as a result of your engagement with your discipline. In professing this subject you will be involved in a number of activities which will together make up what has become known as 'academic practice'.

Our first exercise looks to deconstruct this term, and consider the relationships between its component parts.

### Components of academic practice

The jobs of academic staff are widely understood to have three components. What are these?

- .
- .
- .

### Modes of scholarship

- Scholarship of *discovery* (research).
- Scholarship of *integration*;
  - conducting or interpreting research on margins or interdisciplinary contexts.
- Scholarship of *application*;
  - using learning and research in and for the wider community.
- Scholarship of *teaching*;
  - disseminating, transforming and extending knowledge.

From Boyer, E. (1990) *Scholarship Reconsidered* Princeton, NJ, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

Boyer's case is that all the modes of scholarship are necessary for professional practice, and it rests on the recognition that knowledge is acquired through:

- Research;
  - Synthesis;
    - Practice; and
      - Teaching

## Session Five: Teaching in Practice 2: Ingredients of Effective On-line Teaching

Ten years ago e-learning was almost synonymous with distance learning, and e-learning was definitely contrasted with face-to-face learning and teaching. Since then, however, the two have come together, and on-line tools for teaching and course administration are commonplace right across Higher Education. We (and our students) now access journals on-line, we communicate with our students through e-mail and use web pages in our reference lists.

Among the most important innovations has been the spread of Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) to support the teaching and administration of modules and programmes.

This session is intended to:

- introduce Virtual Learning Environments;
- explore different approaches to the 'blend' of support for learners.

A VLE is:

- a single access point on the web for e-learning resources;
  - easy availability of materials (password protected);
  - communication tools;
  - assessments and surveys using multiple-choice questions;
  - mapping and tracking of student interactions.
- used to support all modules;
- available to support your course.



A VLE provides an integrated environment that enables:

- course materials, such as handbooks, lecture handouts, slides, reading lists and web links to be published in a course site facilitating easy access by students;
- online communications such as;
  - asynchronous online communication between students and tutors using discussion boards;
  - online synchronous classes, such as presentations and tutorials, with students and tutors logged into a virtual classroom;
  - the creation of group areas to support group tasks such as online discussion and file exchange;
- setting and taking of online assessments with automatic marking and feedback facilities.

A VLE can also be used for administrative tasks such as:

- displaying announcements on a course site and sending e-mails to students enrolled on a particular course;
- scheduling tasks and course deadlines in an online calendar;
- tracking students online activities;
- submission and automatic receipting of electronic coursework submission;
- administration of online surveys, such as module questionnaires; and
- facilitating project and knowledge management between groups of staff.

## **Session Six: Teaching in Practice 3: Ingredients of Effective Small-group Teaching**

List and outline the elements that you feel are vital ingredients for successful small-group teaching. Expand on these within your group.

Notes

## Getting things right from (and at) the start

1. Set up rules and routines at the *beginning* of the course/module.
  - Establish an informal 'contract' with the students;
    - agree on what is acceptable behaviour (respect, deadlines, attendance, preparation);
    - set out what your responsibilities are and what *their* responsibilities are.
  - Maintain and review arrangements.
2. Don't leave things to chance.
  - Prepare a session plan;
    - don't just have a list of questions to ask but think how the different elements will fit together;
    - think about how transitions will work and how to start new sections (will *you* always lead new discussions or will you involve the students?);
    - have contingency plans: e.g. if discussion of a question falls flat, what other activity/discussion have you got?
3. Check rooms beforehand.
  - This is especially important before the first session in a room.
4. Have all appropriate resources to hand (handouts, etc.).

## In the session

1. Work at creating and maintaining a good atmosphere.
  - Motivation;
    - you can only be partly responsible for this!
    - at some point the students have to take responsibility for their own conduct and their own learning.
  - Pitching at correct level;
    - look at the sort of exam and assignment questions asked, to gauge the level of task the students will be expected to meet.
  - Good rapport with and amongst students;
    - but remember you are their teacher, not their chum.
2. Monitor, evaluate and review progress and responses.

3. Get everyone involved (not only to motivate students but also to let diversity show itself).
4. Get – and use – feedback from the students.
5. Skills.
  - Listening (without interrupting!).
  - Responding (building on what is said).
  - Explaining (saying things again in different ways).

### **Use beginning and end to frame the learning**

1. Introduction.
  - State content, purpose and outcomes of session.
  - Recap on previous work;
    - get students to do this?
  - Probe for student's existing knowledge of/views on topic.
2. Conclusion.
  - Summarise what should have been learnt in this session.
  - State what you are expecting students to do before next session.
  - Indicate topic for next session.

## Session Seven: Student Learning

### How do students learn?

In order to ensure that your teaching is effective it is first necessary to consider how students learn.

We will show you a number of statements concerned with student learning. You should:

- record your individual views about each statement;
- discuss them in your small groups and see if you can come to a group consensus.

Statement	Your view	Group view
The subject knowledge of the teacher is the pre-eminent factor leading to good student learning.		
A key indicator of educational success is whether students become independent learners.		
The defining characteristic of a good assignment is that it can be used year after year with different groups.		
Students only learn when they are forced to, in order to pass assessments.		
Assessed group work is an essential ingredient of a course to develop the transferable skills a student will need in the workplace.		
A good lecture is that which covers the most ground possible in the time available.		
If students can repeat back to me what I've said in classes it's proof that they have learned it well.		

- |                         |                            |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>A</b> Agree strongly | <b>C</b> Disagree          |
| <b>B</b> Agree          | <b>D</b> Disagree strongly |

## Session Eight: Planning Teaching Sessions

Session planning draws together concern with content and command over the teaching environment.

There is no one way to think about session planning: it must be guided by the contingencies of the teaching situation. For instance:

- you will use a different range of techniques in lectures as opposed to tutorials;
- you will have a different level of formality conducting a doctoral supervision session than in meeting a first-year tutee;
- you will plan to spend more time talking in a lecture than in a lab, and so on and so on.

So, we need to reconsider factors whenever necessary – probably for every session.

However, there's nothing like learning by doing, so the next exercise below and overleaf asks you to undertake a planning session now.

### **Task 5**

Using the box overleaf, plan i) a piece of teaching you have coming up or ii) an example of the sort of teaching you are likely to have to do.

### **Task 6**

Discuss your plans in your small group, and identify i) good ideas that one or more of you utilised and ii) things that you would now avoid doing.

Task 5

Task 6

**Task 7**

In the Teaching Sessions Planning Tool handout you have just been given, you will find a number of criteria that are important to consider in planning teaching.

Use this to reconsider your first session plan (tasks 5 and 6 above), and prepare to report back on the strengths and weaknesses of the tool.

## **Session Nine: The Local Context**

### **Task 8**

Working in groups of 3 or 4, compile a list of things you know about (or expect from) students at your institution.

Notes

### Task 9

Working in the same groups, consider these broad characteristics of the student body and identify 3 ways in which this student profile may influence your teaching practice.

1

2

3

### Aims for undergraduate programmes

At the end of their studies, graduates will have:

- demonstrated scholarship appropriate to the subject;
- demonstrated their ability across a range of transferable skills;
  - problem solving, communication (written and oral), basic numeracy, IT, information handling, emerging learning technologies, lifelong learning and employability;
- acquired the necessary skills to learn effectively and independently in order to support progression throughout their course and into appropriate and rewarding employment, and for a lifetime of independent and effective learning; and
- developed personally in ways that will enrich their lives and facilitate a full contribution to society in the future.

### Aims for postgraduate programmes

At the end of their studies, taught and research postgraduates will have:

- developed their knowledge and understanding in their chosen field of study;

- developed their ability to manage, reflect on, and enhance their own learning; and
- had opportunities to enhance their range of the following transferable skills;
  - research skills and techniques
  - personal effectiveness
  - communication skills
  - networking and team working
  - career management.

## **Implications and challenges**

- Appropriate learning opportunities must be provided.
- Assessment.
- Progression.
- Embedded skills development or stand alone?
- Explicit or implicit?
- Needs of *all* students must be considered.
- Quality assurance mechanisms required.
- Integration with other areas of curriculum development required.

## **Session Ten: Professional Practice: Addressing Diversity**

### **Case Studies exercise**

- In your groups, discuss one of the scenarios on the Case Studies handout provided.
- Discuss the issue amongst yourselves and prepare a response for handling the issue. (N.B. The teaching team will be available for consultation.)
- Prepare a presentation to feed back to the other groups. This should include answers to the questions specified and reference to the support services available in this institution.

Notes on presentation

*Continue overleaf if necessary*

## **Conclusions and evaluation**

Notes

*Continue overleaf if necessary*

## **Further reading**

- Fry, H., Ketteridge, S. & Marshall, S. (eds) (2008) *A Handbook for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: Enhancing Academic Practice* (3<sup>rd</sup> edn.), London, Kogan Page.
- Biggs, J. and Tang C. (2007) *Teaching for Quality Learning at University* (3<sup>rd</sup> edn), Maidenhead, Society for Research into Higher Education/Open University Press
- Trigwell, K. & Prosser, M. (1999) *Understanding Learning and Teaching*, Buckingham, Society for Research into Higher Education/Open University Press