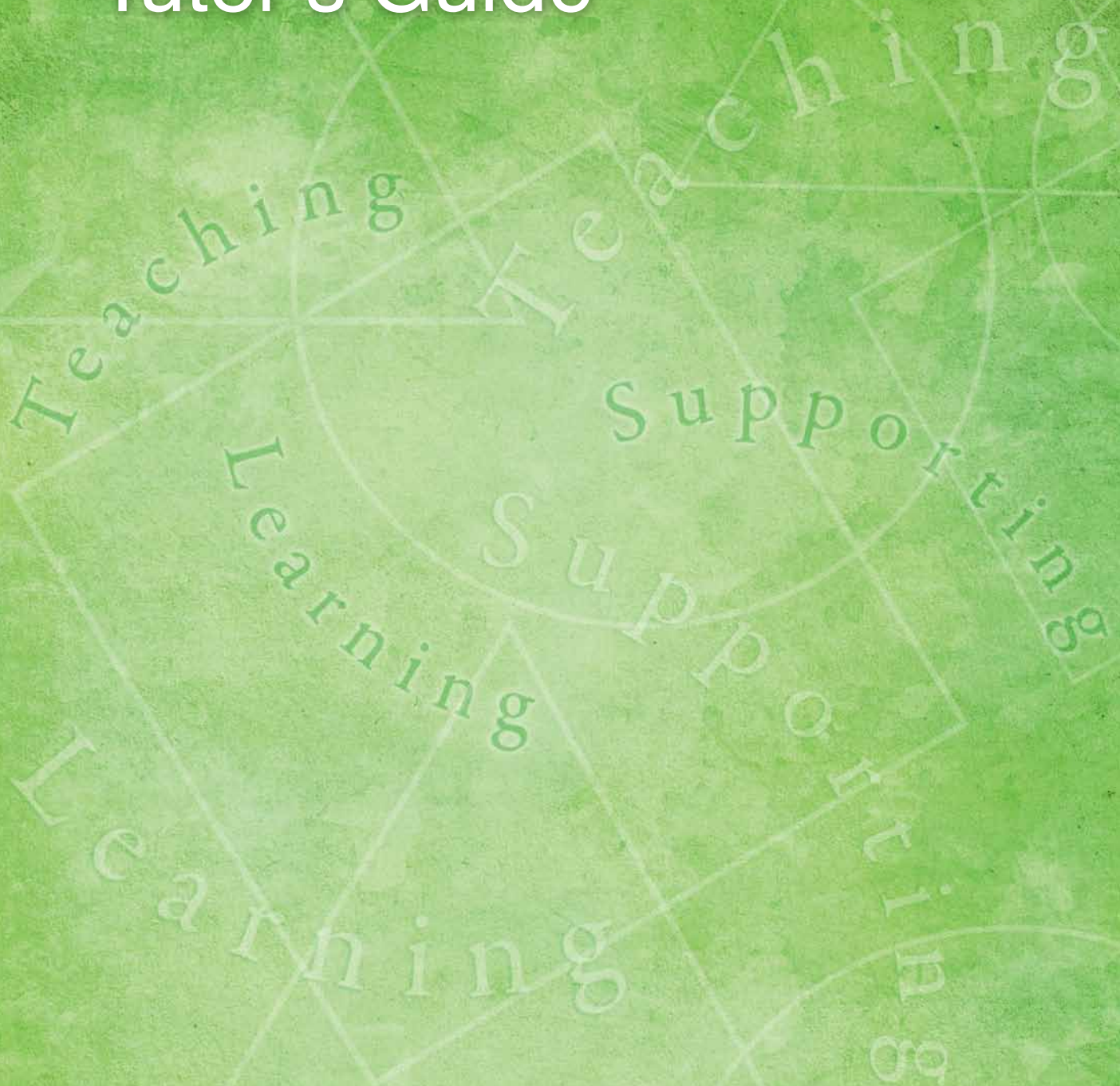




University of
Western Sydney
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Teaching Development Unit

Tutor's Guide



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Feedback

We welcome feedback on any aspect of this booklet that will help us improve future editions. Please email your comments or suggestions to Rosemary Thomson r.thomson@uws.edu.au or telephone 9852 5173, extension 5173.

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Table of Contents

Introduction to the Tutor's Guide

SECTION 1 Getting Started

Your role and responsibilities as a tutor	1
Meeting with the Unit Coordinator	1
"Good tutor" attributes	3
Concerns about teaching your first class	4
Preparation and planning	5
Checklist for new tutors – Surviving your first class!	5
Introductory activities – Ice-breakers	6
Learning students' names	8
Establishing expectations or ground rules	9

SECTION 2 Understanding Student Learning

What do students learn?	11
How do students approach their learning?	11
Theories and principles of learning	14
Some notes about adult learners	16

SECTION 3 Effective Small Group Teaching and Learning

Introduction to small classes	19
Role of small classes in student learning	19
Essential elements of small classes	21
Working with small groups	23
A model of group formation and processes	23
Getting students to form groups	24
Techniques for group facilitation	25
Ensuring equal participation	25
Using questions	26
Helping students make effective presentations	27
Methods for group-work during class	28
Dealing with difficult situations	30
Problems with student participation	31
Managing student behaviour	32
Helping students find support	34

SECTION 4 E-Learning

Introduction to e-learning	37
vUWS (Virtual UWS)	37
What can e-learning offer?	39
Managing e-learning effectively	40
Preparing for the role of online tutor	40
How to manage student expectations online	41
Your expectations of students	41
Students' expectations of you	41
'Netiquette'	42
Online communication mechanisms	43
Discussion boards	43
How to facilitate discussion online	43
Chat rooms	44
Messages.....	44
Blogs	45
Assessment and evaluation online	45
Some survival tips and tricks	45
Student training	46
Useful e-learning resources	46

SECTION 5 Marking and Giving Feedback

UWS Principles for assessment	47
Guidelines for marking	48
Giving feedback	49
Tips for giving feedback to students	50
Plagiarism	51

SECTION 6 Evaluating and Improving Your Teaching

Evaluation as reflective practice	53
Evaluation methods	54
Self-evaluation	54
Peer feedback	56
Student experiences	57
Student learning	58
Some general principles	59

REFERENCES

LIBRARY RESOURCES AT UWS

EVALUATION RESOURCES

Approaches to Study Inventory	63
Self-evaluation tool	66

Introduction to the Tutor's Guide

Dear Colleague,

UWS is known as a university where teaching staff are effective not only for their subject expertise but for their accessibility and friendliness. This combination is especially important at UWS with its high numbers of first-in-family students and entrants from TAFE and other pathways. As those teachers with the closest contact with students, our tutors carry a great responsibility for creating learning environments that will engage and retain the diverse range of young and older people who come to learn at UWS.

Subject expertise and friendliness are not the only requisites for good tutoring. There is a wealth of scholarship on student learning, and we have distilled some of that knowledge in this *Tutor's Guide*. The Guide is designed to support you to develop your understanding of how students learn and what you, as a tutor, can do to promote effective student learning. The Guide will assist you to prepare for and teach your first class, and to continue improving your tutoring skills and practices as you gain more experience.

The *Tutor's Guide* complements the booklet *Teaching@UWS*. As a new tutor, you will be given a copy of *Teaching@UWS* as well as this *Tutor's Guide*. Please refer to *Teaching@UWS* for information about the learning and teaching environment at UWS (student profile, graduate attributes, relevant codes and policies, etc.), support services for learning and teaching at the University, and developing your academic career.

We use the word 'tutor' as a collective term to describe the role of teaching small(er) classes in a range of learning contexts, which of course vary from discipline to discipline. 'Tutor' indicates academic staff members teaching and facilitating learning in classes such as discussion-based tutorials, example or problem-solving tutorials, laboratory classes, practical classes, clinical classes, and seminars. More specific information about tutoring and assessing practices in your School will be provided at the school-based Induction to Learning and Teaching for New Sessional Staff, and by your Unit Coordinator.

I and my colleagues in the Teaching Development Unit wish you the best of success as a tutor over the coming year, and hope that with the assistance of the *Tutor's Guide* you will help us to maintain the high standard of teaching at UWS.

Professor Stuart Campbell
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching)

SECTION 1 – Getting Started

Your role and responsibilities as a tutor

Knowing your role and duties *before* you start teaching is a very important step in preparing yourself to teach. Make sure you clarify with the unit coordinator what they expect of you, and ask them where and how you will be given your contract or statement of duties.

- Common duties for a sessional teacher or tutor include:
- Leading tutorial classes
- Conducting laboratory classes
- Marking assignments and exams, or other student activities (e.g. lab reports, quizzes, journals, in-class activities).



Meeting your unit coordinator before the session (i.e. semester) begins, and then regularly throughout the session helps to establish and maintain good communication channels between yourself and your coordinator, enabling you to keep abreast of current tasks and issues in the unit.

Also, **get to know other tutors**, either those working on the same unit/s as you or other tutors in your school. Giving and getting support from your peers can be the most beneficial way to survive and thrive as a new teacher! Apart from giving and getting social support, you can share teaching tips, experiences, and broaden your knowledge base.

Meeting with the Unit Coordinator

At your initial meeting with the unit coordinator, make sure that you ask about the following things:

- What skills and knowledge will you need to tutor on this particular unit? When is the Introduction to Learning and Teaching for New Sessional Staff held? Who is the School's contact person for this?
- The tutorial program – ask for a copy of the unit learning guide which contains a schedule of learning and teaching activities. If the learning guide doesn't

provide information about what each tutorial will focus on, check this with the unit coordinator.

- The tutorial program – how are tutorials conducted? Are you required to develop tutorial plans and materials? You might ask for past examples of tutorial activities so that you can familiarise yourself with your role.
- Ask for copies of other teaching materials, such as textbook/s, lecture notes (if produced for students), references/readings, lab manuals etc, so that you can prepare in advance of class
- What is the assessment for the unit, and are you required to mark students' work? Criteria and standards for each assessment task will be detailed in the unit learning guide. What is the expected turn-around time for marking, and the expected number of hours associated with marking? How should you record marks, and who should you submit these to?
- Ask the unit coordinator whether/when a meeting will be held to brief tutors about assessment tasks, as you will be responding to at least some student queries about assessment tasks.
- Are you expected to attend lectures? Is this part of your paid work or expected as part of your own preparation?
- What are the expectations in terms of your availability for contact with students out of class hours?
- What resources are you allocated as a staff member – office, phone, photocopying/printing allocations, stationery, library card, parking permit, etc?
- Can you have a list and contact details of other tutors teaching in the unit so that you can create or participate in a supportive peer network? → →
- What should you do if you become sick and can't take a tutorial? Who should you notify, how, and by when?
- Have previous students in the unit identified aspects of their tutorial experience as amongst the 'best aspects of the unit', in the University's Student Feedback on Unit (SFU) process? If so, what aspects did they find particularly useful?
- Will you be required to undertake, or be subject to, an evaluation of your performance? If so, when, and how?

It is also a good idea at this initial meeting to ask your unit coordinator if they would be willing to set a number of meeting times with you throughout the session. Having this regular contact with them serves several purposes, for example:

- You can keep the unit coordinator up-to-date with how students are going in the unit, as you are most often the first 'port of call' for students;
- You can keep the unit coordinator informed about your work, and you have an opportunity to discuss any difficulties you may be experiencing;
- You have an opportunity to clarify your understanding of particular aspects of the unit such as the assessment, before any problems arise or become worse.



If face-to-face meetings become difficult to schedule, keep contact via email or a brief written report on how you are going. It's OK to take the initiative to contact the unit coordinator; they will usually appreciate the effort that you make.

“Good tutor” attributes

Student feedback indicates that a good tutor is someone who:

- Is enthusiastic
- Is approachable, and accessible for consultation
- Acknowledges students as individuals, values students and creates a welcoming environment
- Is confident, organised and prepared
- Is positive about students and student learning, and not critical
- Is knowledgeable about relevant unit topics, unit details, organisational issues (e.g. policies, resources and services)
- Gives clear explanations (of learning material and assessment criteria and standards, and is willing to discuss them with individual students)
- Uses a variety of teaching and learning methods
- Generates purposeful activity on the part of students (for learning that is important for the class)
- Demonstrates the relevance of the content
- Utilises the knowledge and experiences of individuals in the group
- Spends time in class listening
- Manages group dynamics well
- Treats students equitably and fairly
- Facilitates student interaction (and has appropriate resources/facilities prepared, such as the set up of the room)
- Asks questions and is able to generate but not dominate discussion – leads the group through the material, not ‘lecturing’ but gives students opportunities to answer questions and ask other questions, and checks whether students have an understanding of the material

- Doesn't assume prior knowledge, and encourages people to ask even "stupid" questions without fear of ridicule
- Is supportive, takes some interest in each student's progress, and gives constructive feedback to individuals not just the whole class
- Reflects on their own performance as a teacher and seeks to continually improve.

Even though you cannot be expected to demonstrate all of the above attributes as a new tutor, having an idea of the above skills and abilities can help you in preparing and planning for your first time as a tutor.

Being a good teacher is something that develops over time. In the section on "Evaluating and Improving Your Teaching" you will be introduced to a variety of strategies for getting information about how you are going as a tutor, and what to do with this information in terms of your own professional development.

Concerns about teaching your first class



New tutors often have a variety of fears and concerns about their first tutoring experience, and most of these fears and concerns are common worries for all new tutors.

For example:

"I'm really nervous, and worried that the students will see how nervous I am"

"I feel so overwhelmed, that I don't know where to start"

"What if I don't know something? I'll be so embarrassed"

"I'm worried that there will be some problem students who I won't be able to handle"

"How will I last a whole hour? It will be embarrassing if I haven't got much to say"

"What if the class doesn't want to do the things I've planned... what if they don't want to participate?"

"I don't really know what they are going to expect of me... and what if I don't give them what they want?"

These comments are valid concerns for new tutors who have never dealt with a classroom environment, or if you are tutoring in a new environment. However, there are some things that you can do in the first tutorial (and beyond) to start addressing these concerns. That's why careful preparation and planning before the first tutorial is so important.

Preparation and planning

Remember, first impressions often do count, so it is important that you make the kind of impression that you want on the group. This might seem a bit intimidating, but remember as the tutor, you have the opportunity in the first tutorial to 'set the scene' and establish the kind of classroom environment that suits YOU. If you can make a strong start, many of your fears and concerns will be easy to handle if they arise. The following list contains key tasks for you to consider in preparing for your first tutorial class.

Checklist for new tutors – Surviving your first class!

- **Get organised** (find out where the room is, make sure it has the things you need in it, organise materials such as overheads or documents for the document camera, whiteboard pens, eraser etc.).
- **Prepare material thoroughly** (read the material and think about it – what do I understand, what do I not understand, what will students find difficult to understand, what questions will I ask about it, etc.).
- **Dress and behave appropriately** (dress to assert authority and credibility, and behave in a professional manner at all times).
- **Arrive before or on time.** This is very important modelling behaviour.
- **Prepare an icebreaker activity** (get to know the students, and allow them to get to know you – see below for ideas).
- **Make a strong start** (be aware that nerves will be worst at the beginning – have some strategies to cope with these – overheads/documents with information on them such as your name and contact details, an outline of the tutorial class and objectives, what's going to happen, etc – take a deep breath, it won't be as bad as you think!). Wear a name tag in the first few weeks.
- Talk to the group about your **expectations** of them, and ask what expectations they have of you. Consider getting the group to **establish a set of ground rules** for their class (see below for ideas).
- **Facilitate** the tutorial, don't dominate (see section in Effective Small Group Teaching and Learning for ideas).
- **Question skilfully** (see section in Effective Small Group Teaching and Learning for ideas).

- **Be aware of diversity and inclusiveness issues** (see sections in Understanding Student Learning and Effective Small Group Teaching and Learning for ideas)
- Be prepared with **some strategies for dealing with challenging students** (see section in Effective Small Group Teaching and Learning)

And, don't forget to reflect on your first tutorial class – how did it go? Did you achieve all your objectives and get through all the necessary material? What went well? What did you enjoy and what did the students seem to enjoy? What could be improved for next time?



It's a good idea to write down your reflections. At this stage, commit to continuing the things that worked and changing the things that didn't (before these become your habits and the group's expectations).

Celebrate... you'll never be a new tutor again!

Introductory activities – Ice-breakers



Introductory activities are designed to help people to get to know one another when they come together as a group for the first time. They are sometimes known as 'ice-breakers' or 'warm-ups'. Just as you, the tutor, will feel nervous about meeting the students for the first time, often the students also have anxieties about who will be in the group and how they will be seen. They may feel reluctant to take any risks in participating until they feel more comfortable.

Introductory activities are a good way of setting the 'tone' for the classes: showing your students that you wish to establish a relaxed atmosphere and engender a spirit of fun as people talk to one another, and learn from each other. Introductory activities also convey a strong message that being in the class involves actively participating.

In planning introductory activities, it's important to take into account students' expectations and past experiences (and your own! You may have had negative experiences with these kinds of activities as a student yourself). Select activities that you think your group will be comfortable with. If in doubt, select an activity that isn't too risk-taking, and doesn't require a great deal of self-disclosure or for participants to have the whole group's attention on them specifically.

Introducing your neighbour

When people are sitting in a circle, ask them to form into pairs. Each person in the pair tells their partner something about themselves; where they work, their family, etc. Once this is done, each person then introduces their neighbour to the large group.

I like ...

Have people sitting in a circle. One person begins by saying his or her name and favourite food. For example, "I'm Sasha and I like bananas". The next person repeats what has been said and then adds their name and food. The third person then has to remember the previous two people's name and their favourite food before adding their name and favourite food. And so it goes on until the last person (the tutor) has to recall everyone's name and favourite food.

Soul-mates

Have people think of three things, for example their favourite food; favourite name for a girl/boy; favourite song. They then have to get up and talk with other students, trying to find someone who likes the same three things as they do.

Name bingo

This is a great game to get people up and moving around, talking to each other. Give everyone a sheet of paper and pen on which are drawn nine squares (three by three). People have to collect the autographs of nine people in the room (one per square) and as they do, find out a little about them. When everyone has filled their squares; the tutor then calls out the names of people in the group. If people have that name in one of their squares, they mark it off. The winner is the first person who has the names of three people in a row or column. They have to introduce the three people to the rest of the group.

Person bingo

This is a variation of Name Bingo and works on the same principles of bingo with numbers, so the instructions are easy, for example "Find a person in the group to match each one of the squares below, and then yell bingo! Use only one name per square, and try and use each name only once".

You can change the characteristics written in the squares to anything that you think will suit your group, or even the course they are studying. Below are some examples;

...has an unusual interest or hobby	...wears the same shoe size as you	...has sung in a choir
...can speak more than one language	...knows how to cook "paella"	...doesn't like chocolate
...knows how to waltz	...can play a musical instrument	...has learnt yoga

Article in my bag

Ask people to choose an item in their bag or backpack and to introduce themselves to the person next to them, using the item: why they carry it with them, when they got it, how they use it, why they keep it, etc. This activity works well in pairs or groups of three to four people.

Tell me the gossip about this unit

This is a good way to find out what students have heard about the unit. It works well in 2nd or 3rd level units, where students may have been conferring about the unit prior to the first class. The activity will allow you to clarify expectations, deal with any misconceptions people may have, and work towards a common understanding of the unit. Ask people to chat to the person next to them, telling them the gossip they've heard about the unit, ask them to find out what the other person has heard. Ask pairs to join with another pair of students: what have they heard? Then ask for feedback from the group. Discuss!

Learning students' names

One of the greatest challenges at the beginning of a new session is coping with new students' names. No matter how large the class, it is worth persevering so students have a sense that you care about them as individuals, and this can help create the kind of atmosphere that facilitates learning. Here are some suggestions to assist in coping with the challenge of learning names (or at least some names):

- Name Badges – get some mailing labels (used in printers) from the School office and hand these out in the first class, or first couple of classes. Ask students to write their first name in large letters and attach the label to their shirt or jacket.

- Have students sit in the same seats for the first few weeks until you are able to match names with faces. Pass around a seating chart for students to fill in.
- Have students give their name before they speak. This can be continued until everyone (both teacher and students) feels they know each other.
- Use students' names as often as possible.
- Have students make place cards on the first day of class that can sit on the desk in front of them.
- Take a class photograph of students and cut them up and put their photograph beside their name on the class list.

Establishing expectations or ground rules



Often problems arise with students because of unclear expectations about your role as a tutor and about their role as a student and a member of the class. Establishing expectations or ground rules at the beginning of semester can help clarify these expectations and help in maintaining a good working relationship between you and the group, individual students, and among the students themselves.

If you feel uncomfortable using the term 'ground rules' with university students, as sometimes this may seem to be perceived as juvenile, then use the term 'expectations'. Getting the students to generate the ground rules themselves (with input from you as the tutor, of course) can also help to establish rules that will be more likely to be kept by the group, as students will feel like you trusted and valued their perspectives.

A set of ground rules can be a helpful tool when having to deal with difficult situations at a later date – for example, if some students are dominating discussion or behaving inappropriately, being able to refer back to the ground rules that the students themselves negotiated can be quite powerful in getting back control of the class. It's also quite useful to review the ground rules during the session, to get feedback from students on how they think things are going, if there are any rules that aren't working or any rules that should be added.

Here are some possible ground rules (for the tutor and the students). Everyone will:

- arrive on time
- respect each other's point of view (okay to critique a fellow student's point of view, but not okay to criticise or 'put down' the person)

- listen to each other, and not interrupt when another person is speaking
- come prepared for each class
- acknowledge that it's okay to make mistakes – mistakes are an opportunity for learning
- agree to not make sexist or racist comments
- turn off mobile phones or turn them to 'silent'

Some possible ways to generate a set of ground rules with the class include the following:

- (1) Use pyramiding to get students thinking about their expectations and what they would like as ground rules. First, ask students to think about (and write down) what kind of expectations they would like set for the group on their own, then after a couple of minutes, they turn to their partner and share their ideas. Then each pair joins with another pair and this group of four shares ideas and negotiates a common set of ideas. After a few minutes (say 5 – 10 minutes), ask one member of each group to report back to the whole class and you write each idea on the board. Once a set of expectations/rules has been generated, discuss the list with the class, clarifying if needed and making changes (if appropriate).
- (2) Start with a short list of rules and expectations that you have created, project this on an overhead projector/ document camera or write on the board, and ask the class to form small groups (around four students) and discuss the list – do they agree, is anything missing, etc? Then ask each group to feed back to whole class their comments. This then works in a similar way to the last part of pyramiding.

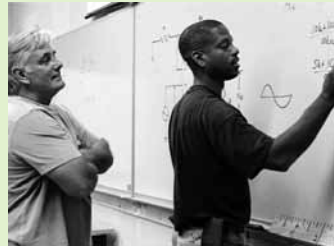


SECTION 2 - Understanding Student Learning

What do students learn?

According to research (e.g. Arnold et al, 1991; Laird, 1985) generally students retain:

- 20% of what they hear
- 30% of what they see
- 50% of what they see and hear
- 70% of what they see, hear and say
- 90% of what they see, hear, say and do



As *Confucius* says, “I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand”.

Consequently, effective learning is most likely to occur if students have the opportunity to hear a lecture or discussion, see a demonstration or visual display, discuss the material, and have an opportunity to do something with this material. ‘Doing’ something is what we call ‘active learning’: engaging with the learning material through activities by themselves and with other students.

Therefore, in universities where the common structure for a unit of study comprises lectures, tutorials, lab sessions and increasingly, e-learning, the role of the tutor and the tutorial becomes vital for the learning process. It is the small group environment of the tutorial that can provide most opportunities for students to ‘say’ and ‘do’ what they have seen and heard in the lecture.

However, not all students learn in the same way. The next section will discuss some key ideas relating to the ways in which students approach their learning.

How do students approach their learning?

There are a variety of models that explain the different ways in which students approach their learning, most reflecting different activities or strategies that students use and the motivations behind using them. The following is an example of one framework developed by Richardson (1990) based on work by Ramsden and Entwistle (1981), which includes a questionnaire called the Approaches to Study Inventory.

Approach	Examples
Meaning Orientation	
Deep approach	Active questioning in learning – <i>“I usually set out to understand thoroughly the meaning of what I am asked to read”.</i>
Comprehension learning	Readiness to map out the subject and think divergently – <i>“In trying to understand an idea, I let my imagination wander freely to begin with, even if I don’t seem to be much nearer a solution”.</i>
Relating ideas	Relating information to other parts of the unit or beyond – <i>“I try to relate ideas in one subject to those in others, or to real life situations”.</i>
Use of evidence and logic	Relating evidence to conclusion – <i>“Puzzles or problems fascinate me, particularly when you have to work through the material to reach a logical conclusion”.</i>
Reproducing Orientation	
Surface approach	Preoccupation with memorising – <i>“The best way for me to understand what technical terms mean is to remember the text-book definition”.</i>
Improvidence	Over-cautious reliance on details – <i>“Tutors seem to want me to be more adventurous in making use of my own ideas”.</i>
Fear of failure	Pessimism and anxiety about academic outcomes – <i>“The continual pressure of study and assignments, deadlines and competition often makes me tense and depressed”.</i>
Syllabus-boundness	Relying on staff to define learning tasks – <i>“I like to be told precisely what to do in essays or other assignments”.</i>

Another very well known model of student approaches to learning is by John Biggs (1987) who developed the Study Process Questionnaire (SPQ) to measure an individual student’s approach to learning. Like Richardson’s model above, the SPQ contains the Surface and the Deep approaches, but also includes an Achieving approach to learning. Each approach is a combination of ‘motive’ (motivation) and ‘strategy’ (action). The following table describes each approach:

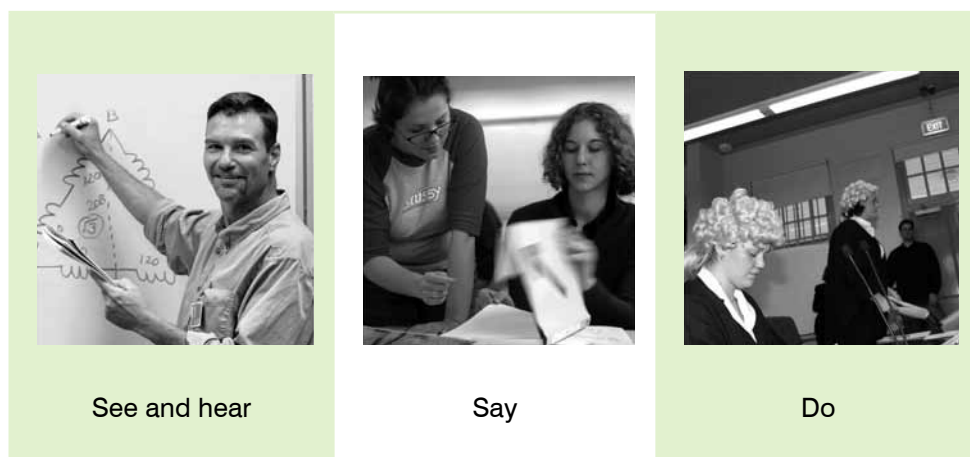
Approach	Motive	Strategy
Surface	Extrinsically motivated – (often to avoid failure) by assessment requirements and the need to ‘pass’, seeing study as a means to an end such as a job, balancing not working too hard with passing.	Focuses often on just the bare essentials, the facts and details (rather than making connections between them and seeing the structure of what is being learned), in order to reproduce the information accurately, and often uses memorising strategies. Aims to meet assessment requirements but often only to minimum standards, and appears to be focused on passing the assessment instead of learning and understanding.
Deep	Intrinsically motivated – usually to satisfy personal curiosity and interest in the topic.	Aims to maximise their own understanding of concepts, and makes sense of what they are learning. They read widely, discuss ideas with others, reflect on different perspectives, relating ideas together and making connections with previous experiences.
Achieving or Strategic	Motivated to achieve academically, often linked to ego and self-esteem, and wish to obtain high grades or other rewards/ recognition.	Optimises their organisation of time and effort and chooses the most efficient and effective strategy for particular tasks. While memorising is often considered a surface strategy, it depends on the intention, and is often a part of the achieving approach if it is the most efficient and effective way of learning the particular material. Identifies the assessment criteria and standards and estimates the learning effort required to achieve a particular grade. Often follows up all suggested readings/exercises, scheduling time and organising workspace.

Studies of student learning show that often the approach adopted by students is strongly influenced by factors in the environment such as the teaching method, the amount of content to be covered, the workload required, the type of assessment used, feedback received and the enthusiasm of the teacher.

Research also shows that the learning approach adopted by students is often closely related to the quality of their learning and their academic achievement. Students who have a surface approach to learning are extrinsically motivated and focus on facts and details rather than on understanding and relating concepts and developing an interest in what is being learned. Students taking a surface approach to their learning will normally achieve a lower quality learning outcome.

Teachers can influence these factors to varying degrees. For example, we can encourage students' intrinsic interest by sharing our own passion and enthusiasm for the subject, emphasising its relevance to students' overall program of study and their career goals. We can design interesting activities and assessment tasks that help students to make connections between the subject and the 'real world' of work or the profession.

It is making connections between ideas that distinguishes between surface and deep approaches to learning, and hence, the quality of students' learning. We can also see now why students retain more knowledge if they see, hear, say and do; that the more students 'say' and 'do', the more they are likely to make sense of the information for themselves, develop an understanding of the material and relate information learned to other parts of the subject or beyond. These ideas are brought together in the following section on theories and principles of learning.



Theories and principles of learning

Recent developments in student learning have been primarily based on a constructivist philosophy, whereby effective learners are considered to be the determinants of what is learnt. From this 'learner-centred' view, the teacher's role is

that of a facilitator of the learning, and the prior ability and knowledge of the learner determines the learner's approach to a learning task. Learners take an active role in the learning process, particularly those who choose to be engaged in meaningful learning where their intentions become more significant than those of the teacher (Moon, 1999).

According to the constructivist view of learning, the effective learner constructs their own knowledge and the knowledge is conceived to be organized like a network (i.e. cognitive structure) rather than a bucket of information contained in memory. Students utilise what they already know (their prior knowledge) in helping them learn new material and integrate or assimilate it with their existing knowledge – they build on what they already know and are more likely to engage in meaningful learning.

Meaningful learning (or deep learning) occurs when the learner intends to understand the learning material and make sense of it in terms of what they already know and experience. It occurs when learners intend to utilise this knowledge in new situations. This is in contrast to rote learning or learning by memorizing (or surface learning) which occurs when the learner does not, or cannot, relate the material of learning to prior knowledge and instead learns isolated bits of knowledge such as facts and details.

Given these notions about how students learn, here are some key principles of learning that are important foundations for effective teaching and learning (Angelo, 1998; Biggs, 1999).

1. **Learners need guidance and support**, and benefit from being given some basic structure from which to grow their knowledge – having 'sign posts' pointing out key information is crucial if it is to be learned. .
2. **Learning is best facilitated when students' prior knowledge is 'cued'**, so that they can begin to assimilate new information in an organised way that relates to their existing knowledge.
3. **Learning occurs through communication and social interaction**, and students should be encouraged to share, question, reflect on and challenge ideas so that their knowledge is modified and advanced.
4. **Learning is not a 'spectator sport'** and students need to act on information for it to become meaningful and integrated with their existing knowledge.
5. **Deep understanding occurs when students are able to apply their knowledge to new situations**, and this kind of learning occurs through practising with this information many times in different contexts.
6. **Students learn better when they are aware of their own learning processes**, the strategies they use, and if they continually monitor their understanding.

Some notes about adult learners

Research shows that adults, as mature-age students, have some common characteristics. One of the major differences between mature-age students and university students who have moved on straight from high school, is that adults have much more work and life experience. Their experiences can be an excellent resource and contribution for the class, and the teacher should try to capitalise on this and integrate these rich work and life experiences into the learning environment.

Adults also often have a real sense of purpose for their learning that is sometimes quite different from younger students. They are often wanting to change their career, or have come to university after many years at work, and may not be learning 'just for learning's sake'. They may have a very clear idea of what they want to do when they finish studying. This is in contrast to high school leavers who often don't really know what career or occupation they want to pursue. Adult students are often extremely motivated: they are spending their own time, money and resources to study. They may have given up work to study, but still have family to support, so are dedicated to passing each subject. Adult students tend to be very focused in the classroom and like to cover material quickly, but completely.

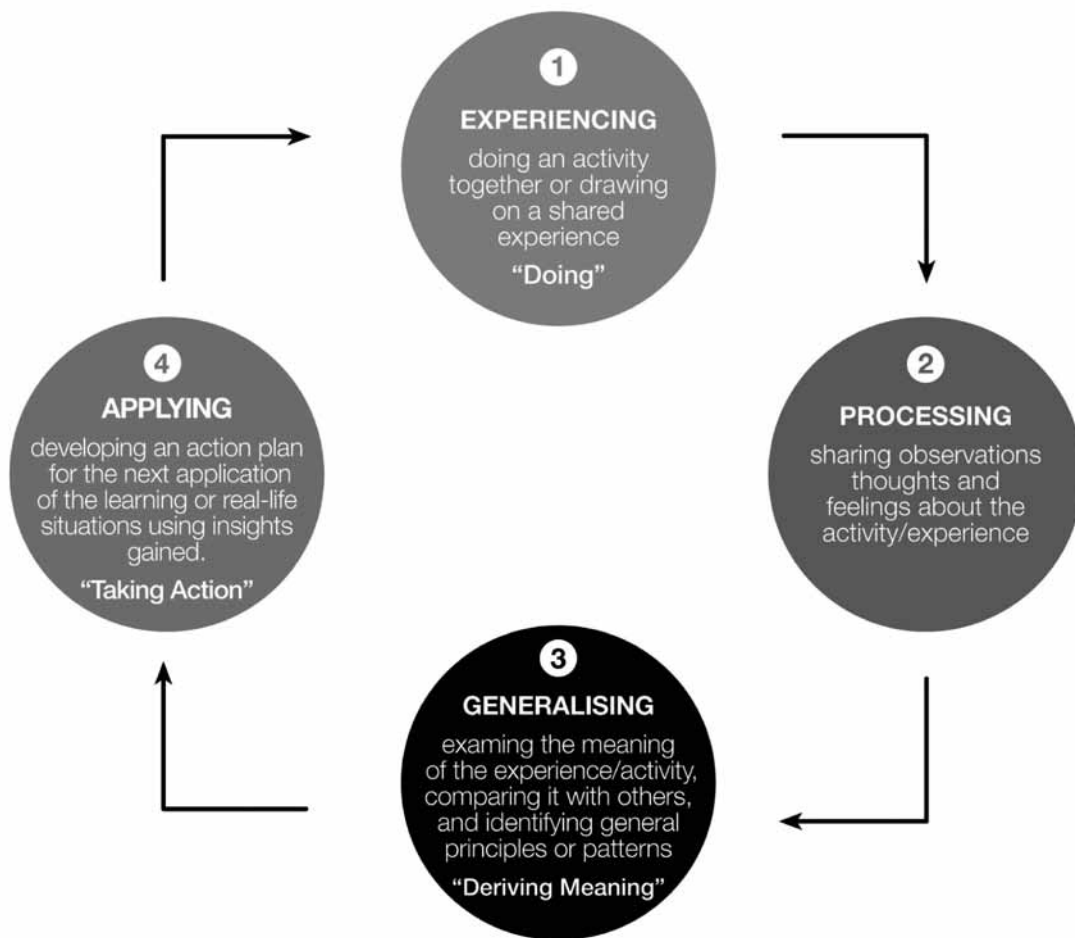
All students, but particularly mature-age students, need to feel valued and respected not just by the teacher but also by their fellow students. Set an example in the class and treat them as individuals with a mature outlook, successful in their work, and with a variety of experiences. If adult students have not been in a formal learning situation for a while, their self-esteem may be fragile. They may approach learning with some fear as their past learning experiences may have been negative.

Here are some **key principles for adult learners** – they prefer learning environments that:

1. are active, practice/problem-based, rather than passive (e.g. listening or watching).
2. support and promote positive self-esteem.
3. enable them to integrate new ideas with what they already know.
4. show respect for them as individual learners.
5. value their experiences and perspectives and contributions.
6. allow them choice and self-direction, and are meaningful for them and their needs.
7. reinforce their learning, and enable them to apply their learning immediately.

(from: <http://www.trainingpost.org/index.html>, and <http://oesi.nci.nih.gov/series/cted/trainersguide>)

The following diagram represents a model of the **Adult Learning Cycle** (based on what is called the Action Learning Cycle), but it represents a good model for all learning and can be used to plan individual tutorial sessions, and well as the overall session program. It reflects the constructivist view, and incorporates four stages of learning. Guiding learners through this cycle will help promote a learning environment that supports the adoption of meaningful or deep learning approaches.



[from: http://oesi.nci.nih.gov/services/cted/trainersguide/Trainers_1_m.pdf]

SECTION 3 - Effective Small Group Teaching and Learning

Introduction to small classes



Small group teaching refers to tutorials (both discussion-based and problem or example classes), seminars, practical classes, demonstrations and clinical settings where students are taught in groups of between 20 and 35 – just the kind of teaching environment that you will most likely be responsible for as a tutor.

These classes are very important in the overall quality of the experience that undergraduate students have at university, and are especially important in establishing and maintaining contact between students and their teachers and peers, helping students to learn effectively and develop a sense of belonging to the university.

Role of small classes in student learning

Small classes provide opportunities for demonstrations, expansion and elaboration on student understanding. They provide a more effective forum for giving and getting feedback for both students and teachers (than larger classes do), and they allow students to explore the relevance of knowledge within the context of a unit, lecture or topic. Moreover, in the small class environment, students can develop in three key ways:

Personally – small classes are important for students' well-being, as well as learning, and fulfil a very important role in:

- *Building confidence in themselves as learners* e.g. developing the ability to discuss and argue, solve problems, give presentations, work in pairs/trios/project groups, present and justify an opinion etc.
- *Making studying at university more enjoyable and more rewarding* (although not for some such as introverts, who may never prefer smaller classes) – providing an environment in which students can establish friendships and peer groups that can then be extended outside the classroom.

Socially – effective learning is often collaborative and social, rather than competitive and isolated and as such, learning is essentially an interactive, interpersonal, and emotional activity. Therefore tutorials can:

- *Provide an opportunity for teaching staff to get to know students* – frequent student-teacher contact in and out of classes is perhaps the most important factor in student motivation and involvement. The concern that teachers show for students helps them to keep working and get through rough times. Knowing a few teachers well enhances students' intellectual and emotional commitment to learning.
- *Enhance learning by making it more like a team effort than a solo race* – like the old saying, "two heads are better than one". Working with others significantly extends the potential for learning. Articulating ideas and questions and sharing these as well as responding to others' reactions improves students thinking and deepens their understanding – not only of the course content, but of the process of learning itself! A supportive learning environment where learners feel empowered to negotiate tasks, take risks and be part of a shared context is necessary to develop cooperation among students.

Educationally – working in small groups not only improves the quality of learning, enhancing students' personal understanding and learning, but also extends the scope of learning from unit content to higher order reasoning and thinking skills, and other such skills and abilities that are often called "generic skills". These include:

- Problem solving skills
- Reasoning skills
- Development of relevant or appropriate attitudes (e.g. professionalism)
- Speaking skills
- Listening skills
- Leadership
- Cooperation



Essential elements of small classes

According to Newble and Cannon (2000) there are three elements necessary for successful small group teaching: active participation, face-to-face contact, and purposeful activity. Suggestions for implementing these elements are made below:

Active participation

- Participation by all the students – requires keeping numbers as low as 5-8, but you can break up classes of 20-35 into smaller groups for at least some of the time. Having students work in twos or threes is even more effective in promoting participation by everyone.
- Getting everyone involved in a way that is productive and inclusive – this is one of the major skill areas for you to develop as a small class teacher.
- Creating the right atmosphere from the beginning is important, and it is important to recognise and respect students' personal comfort zones – the use of ice-breaker activities and getting to know students' names helps in the early stages to make the context non-threatening – so students feel comfortable discussing their ideas and sharing their questions with the group.

Face-to-face contact

- It is important to ensure that your physical environment (i.e., classroom) allows face-to-face contact between you and the students, and among the students themselves. If it's possible in the room you're using, arrange seating so that students can see each other – a U-shape works well for discussion-based activities, and four to eight around a table works well for example-based activities.
- If you're teaching in a room with fixed furniture arranged in rows, get students to work with their neighbour or with their neighbour plus a student in front or behind. (When you finish, remember to put the room back the way it was before, and to clean the whiteboard for the next teacher using the room.)
- Non-verbal communication (gestures, facial expressions, etc.) is often just as important as the spoken voice in the delivery and comprehension of people's ideas.

Purposeful activity

- Learners must recognise that information is important if it is to be learned – knowing why you have to know something enables students to 'fit' this into their developing knowledge, connecting new information with their existing knowledge. It is much easier to learn subsets of knowledge when you have an idea of the big picture, can see its relevance, see how it is connected to practice and how it builds on what you already know.
- Therefore, each session should have a purpose or rationale (that is clearly explained to students). This requires you to plan tasks that are going to bring

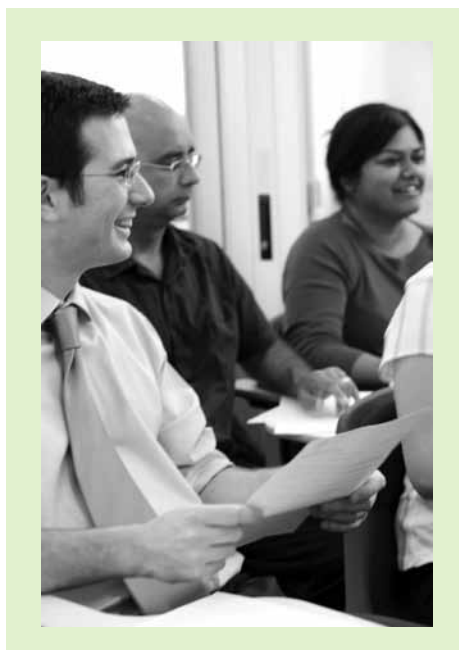
about the learning you want students to achieve. Be mindful that you are part of a whole learning process, so spend time trying to establish what your unit coordinator hopes to achieve with this tutorial. During the class, monitor time spent on activities, to ensure that all the intended outcomes for the class are achieved.

- Remember that there are many skills students may be learning (such as social and personal skills) while they are working through tasks that seem on the face of it to be concerned with content. So, staying mindful of what your students can, and are, learning while they are doing small class activities is very important because it allows you to self-consciously build into your planning both the specialist disciplinary content and the small group skills you want them to learn.

To these three key elements, we could also add:

Intellectual engagement

- Students need to make some sense of what they are learning in terms of what they already know (or think they know). It is important for teachers to encourage students to relate the learning material to their existing knowledge, but to also go beyond simply linking ideas to prior knowledge – encourage students to engage in investigative inquiry stemming from the linking of prior experiences and identification of relationships between new and already known concepts.
- They need to be intellectually challenged in a manner that is relevant for the learning you want them to achieve – consider what kind of learning outcomes have been set for the unit; do students have to acquire knowledge of particular concepts? Do students need to be able to demonstrate their ability to critically analyse key theories or research findings related to the topic? Do students need to show how they can use reasoning and analytical skills in order to draw conclusions from sources of information?



Working with small groups

Effective small group teaching requires not only a good understanding of the subject matter, but knowledge of how groups develop and function over time. As the initial 'leader' of your class group, it will be important for you to keep track of how the group is going, being mindful of potential difficulties, and being ready to respond if or when these arise. This is particularly important if the students are also required to form small groups within the class in order to undertake learning activities. The following section will guide you through the essential principles of working with small groups.

A model of group formation and processes

(from: Tuckerman, 1965, and Atherton, 2003)

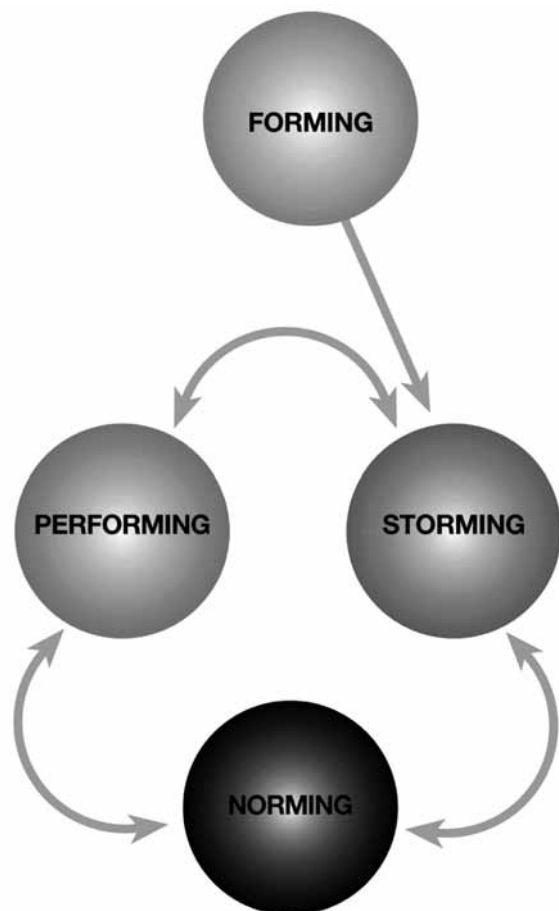
Forming – the group is just coming together, and members often show shyness, uncertainty and diffidence, although extrovert members may assume some kind of leadership.

Storming – establishing pecking order among members, and sometimes 'testing' out the leader (in a class, that's often the teacher, but may be fellow students in initial stages of group work). Disagreements can occur and roles are eventually allocated (initial leadership may change). Can be an uncomfortable process, but an important stage not to be avoided by the facilitator.

Norming – following on is an emergence of group identity and cohesion. What kind of behaviour and contribution is acceptable and what isn't? This is rarely done explicitly, of course, and it can readily slip back into Storming.

Performing – when the productive work and learning occurs.

(Mourning) – when the session is over and the group disbands. The mourning stage is a measure of success of the group!



The diagram here shows the group process not as a linear sequence, but as more of a cycle, after the initial forming. However, the group can progress to and from any of the three later stages during its lifetime.

In extended group work such as occurs when students work on projects over weeks or months, it is to be expected that the group will revisit various stages of group formation. A valuable resource that you can direct students to, to help them function effectively in extended group work, is the Learning in Teams series (Gibbs:1994-1998): student guide, student manual, tutor guide. They are held in the UWS Library - see Library resources at the end of this Guide.

For teaching in small classes, it is perhaps most important to recognise the 'Storming' phase. This process may not always be obvious to you as the tutor, or to the students in the group. It is inevitable and it cannot be structured out of existence, however, within the classroom situation, it may need to be contained to some degree, particularly if the process begins to test the most obvious role in the group – that of the teacher (Atherton, 2003).

It is important for you as the tutor, to respond to any processes of storming, particularly if your role is tested (e.g. students not adhering to ground rules, out-of-role questioning, etc.). The rest of the class will most likely be looking at you to act in some way, to respond to students involved, and may become confused about their place and role (and yours) in the class group, and will not know where to look for leadership if you do not act. You may not want to "lead" or emphasise your authority, but you may well have a problem of wasted time and loss of a learning culture if you do not.

Getting students to form groups

There are a variety of methods you can use to get students to form small groups. For example, prior to class you can allocate numbers to groups and then get each student to select a numbered card from a bucket in class, and join together as groups according to your selected groupings (e.g. if you have 28 students in the class, you might allocate numbers 1 to 4, 5 to 8, 9 to 12, etc into groups). This method of course, is completely arbitrary, and depending on the mix of students in your class, you might prefer to use a method by which students form groups on their own, using some kind of self-selection criteria such as:

- Intending to go on to further study in discipline (e.g. similar career goals and interests)
- Studying the unit as a core unit in their course
- Taking the unit as an elective
- Desire to succeed or get high marks (e.g. all those who want a 'distinction' to form one group, all those who just want a 'pass' to form another, etc.)
- Desire to minimise workload
- Desire to complete unit regardless of marks (e.g. driven by personal interest in the course)

Of course by using such methods, students may miss out on learning from each other in some ways. For example, by not mixing interest areas those students who don't think the unit is particularly interesting may not pick up on other students' enthusiasm and interest. Enthusiasm can be contagious. Or by not mixing achievement levels, some of the lower achieving students may not learn from their higher achieving peers. However, the obvious advantage to using self-selection is that you might minimise group conflict problems.

If you find that self-selecting groups are not performing as well as you would like, try reorganising these, either during the class or for the next class.

Techniques for group facilitation

Ensuring equal participation

Having a good group 'climate' is one of the main things to establish and maintain in order to ensure active and equal participation by all students in the group. Avoiding the dominance of a single member is an important role for you as the tutor, as is supporting and encouraging the quiet student/s to contribute or participate. Here are some steps to take to ensure equal participation of all students;

- The physical layout of the room can be arranged to encourage participation by everyone, e.g. sitting members around a table so that they see each other while discussing or problem-solving together.
- Provide a set of 'rules' for discussion/group work– these may be some that were generated as ground rules for the group in the first tutorial (e.g. contributions can only be made in turn, time limits may be set, comments in favour of an idea are allowed only by comments against it, etc.).
- You may find yourself tempted to fill silences by reverting to mini lectures. Remember that tutorials are places of student learning activity – allow them time to reflect on what's been said or asked. Silence can be a useful prompter of activity. When you pose a question to the class, allow students time to think, perhaps discuss with the person beside them, jot down their thoughts, or formulate their own questions – before you require a response.
- It is easier to draw all of the students into a discussion if you know their names. Use a list if you can't rely on your memory. It is important however not to embarrass or force contributions from class members which may scare them off opening their mouths in class again! Consider drawing in the quieter students by asking non-specific questions, e.g. "What do you others think about Rachel's model for an alternative?" Or, "I'd like to hear from students who haven't spoken yet in this discussion".
- Consider telling students that next week's tutorial class will involve a discussion about "X", to give anxious or shy students plenty of time to think about the topic and therefore feel more confident about sharing their ideas during group discussion.

- Similarly, get students to brainstorm their ideas about the discussion topic for a few minutes before starting the discussion, and perhaps get students to share their brainstorming with the person next to them first.
- If students are required to form small groups, in selecting members for each group, take into account the likelihood that any one member will 'dominate' perhaps from their personality characteristics or 'expert' knowledge. Consider building in participation by asking students to take on group roles such as note-taker, time-keeper, participation or process consultant.

Using questions

Facilitating student participation in the group also relies on the use of questioning, and this is a key skill for small group teaching. Sometimes you will need to use a variety of techniques to get discussion going, and to maintain it for any length of time. It's often a good idea to prepare some strategies for asking questions, particularly if you have a feeling that the topic for discussion is difficult or boring, something to which students may not spontaneously respond.

It is also important to remember not to use closed-ended questions – these are questions that can be answered with only one or two words, or with 'yes' or 'no'. This does not encourage discussion, and doesn't require students to show the reasoning behind their responses. Open-ended questions are best, and usually start with terms such as "How..." or "Why...".

Because facilitation of discussion and questioning is so important to effective small group teaching, you'll find advice about questioning techniques in just about every guide to teaching (see the Library Resources section at the end of this Guide, and the TDU website <http://www.uws.edu.au/tdu> but here are some common questioning techniques that are easy to remember and implement as a new tutor:

- **Pausing** – allow students time to think about a question before responding;
- **Re-phrasing** – perhaps the students aren't responding because they have no idea what you mean, but allow sufficient time to get a response (try counting to 10 or 15 before speaking again) and use eye contact to encourage any student "thinking about" having a go at responding; (Image)
- **Directing** – the question in different ways (for example, ask a question to the whole group & wait for response, or ask an individual to respond, or ask an individual the question first up, etc.);
- **Redirecting** – questions to other students (e.g. "Mary has argued that..., what do you think Tim?") is a useful technique to involve other learners and draw out other views;



- **Focusing** – using pre-planned questions.
- **Refocusing** – is essential when students have wandered off track, and you can either repeat the original or focus question (e.g. “so, how does that relate to...” or “now, to go back to our original topic...”), or try rewording it slightly – this is particularly useful if you want to encourage students to see something from another perspective (e.g. “how do you think that would work when...”, or “how does that compare with what [reference] theorises?”);
- **Probing** – use probes to follow-up on students' contributions, for clarification or for examples (e.g. “What do you think will happen then?” “Tell me more about the...”), as this can help to stimulate thinking and reasoning skills;

Some other key things to remember when facilitating group discussion include:

- **Reacting** – always react in a positive way despite the response. In the case of an inadequate answer it may be necessary to clarify the question or redirect it to another student;
- Make sure the questions **involve all the students if possible**, and discussion is distributed around the class. Allow many students' contributions to build towards a coherent whole answer to the initially-posed problem, rather than making a large contribution yourself;
- **Encourage** student questions, and perhaps allow time for reflection. Respond positively to any questions that emerge, showing that you value all responses (e.g. either verbally or non-verbally with smiles, nods, eye-contact, etc.);
- It is very important to **pitch questions at an appropriate level** for students' understanding, but vary the level to accommodate different individuals' levels of understanding – and to respond to every contribution appropriately;
- **Reward the good** (including that within a response that otherwise needs work), and correct the bad (avoiding ridicule) – try using these questioning techniques to draw out the problems or strengthen up the argument.

Helping students make effective presentations

Many tutorial classes involve student presentations. For the student or group preparing the presentation, the work leading up to the presentation requires them to research new information, deepening and consolidating their understanding – an effective learning experience. To teach something (as in giving a presentation) it's necessary to know it well. Effective presentations however involve the whole class. Listening to one presentation that only talks at the audience is boring, listening to more than one such presentation in a class can prompt disengagement and be demotivating to students.

To help students make relevant and interesting presentations, Baume (1996) recommends briefing students or helping them to work out the purpose of their presentation, develop an appropriate structure and duration for it. If it would help

students prepare an engaging presentation, you might suggest that they plan the presentation for another audience, eg potential customers, work colleagues, chair of a public enquiry, etc.

Bear in mind that students are often nervous about speaking publicly and making a presentation in front of the class. Ways to help alleviate this concern include discussing with the class what they've learned from previous experience (either presenting or being an audience member). Ask students to describe a successful presentation they've attended or perhaps given – what made it successful? See if there are various viewpoints about this. Then ask students to describe an unsuccessful presentation – what made it unsuccessful? Again, find out from other students what they think about this. Draw out the characteristics that you think are important for presentations in your discipline (eg how did the presenter involve the audience?) – highlight these for students.

Another strategy that some teachers use to help their students learn how to make effective presentations is to give a presentation themselves and ask students to critique this using a criteria sheet or marking scheme. Make sure you don't give a perfect presentation!

If class members are providing feedback on presentations, Baume (1996) suggests establishing ground rules for feedback (eg must be specific, and must be owned by the person giving the feedback – “I didn't understand the part about...”), establishing criteria for feedback and ensuring that feedback uses these criteria. Importantly, ask the presenting student or group to give self-feedback on their performance, first, before you pass on feedback from other students.

Methods for group-work during class

Even though a class of 20 to 35 students is considered a 'small group', as a tutor, you will find that this is often too big to enable effective participation by all students in the class. Breaking students up in to smaller groups can be very successful in facilitating students' active engagement in the learning material, and in providing opportunities for practising problem solving and critical thinking. It also takes the focus away from you, the tutor, as being the 'knowledge holder', acknowledging that students themselves have valuable ideas and knowledge to offer. Here are some common techniques for group-work in class:

Pyramiding or “Think, Pair, Share” – to start, ask students to think about (and write down) their ideas or response to a question, topic, or problem on their own, then after a couple of minutes, turn to their partner and share their response. After a couple more minutes, each pair joins with another pair and this group of 4 shares their responses, thinks about the issue further, and negotiates a common set of ideas. After a few minutes (say 5 – 10 minutes), ask one member of each group to report back to the whole class (group generated points can be summarised by you or the students on an overhead transparency or whiteboard).



Buzz Groups – this is a great technique for getting students to discuss a particular issue, problem or topic for a very short period of time (say 5 minutes). Students form pairs or small groups of 3 or 4, and one student acts as reporter and/or scribe. Depending on the size of the class, all or some groups are called upon to report on their discussion. Group generated points can be summarised by students or teacher on an overhead transparency or whiteboard or the teacher can provide his or her own solution or summary of important points.



Jigsaw Method – for this strategy, each student works on one part of a learning task and then works collaboratively with a group of other students to combine the various parts and complete the activity. The learning task/problem is broken into parts and students are asked to work on a response to that part-task individually. Then students working on the same part work in a group together to come up with a response and check their understandings against those of other students. Students then form into different groups in which each of the different parts of the task is represented, and each student explains to the others their response to their part of the problem.

Debate – The division of a class or individuals into groups to represent particular points of view (most commonly ‘for and against’) on a controversial topic. Each group works to develop an argument to support its allocated point of view. Students could be invited to argue a view they don’t endorse, engage in the debate in character or through role-plays.

Fishbowl – this is a great method for introducing a bit of fun and energy to a focused class discussion. Some students start off the discussion by sitting in a small circle of chairs, with the rest of the class in a surrounding circle of chairs, listening to the discussion. Students in the outer circle can join in the discussion by swapping seats with someone in the small inner circle.



There are many other small group strategies you can use – see the References Section at the end of the Guide, and the TDU website. <http://www.uws.edu.au/tdu>.

Dealing with difficult situations



Don’t panic!! Many tutors may never encounter a really difficult, tricky or uncomfortable situation in class. Those who do may at first feel like just running away from it, but like all the skills you need as a tutor, you will develop skills in managing difficult situations with experience. However, while this may be the result of good luck, it’s probably worth erring on the side of caution and putting in place good management strategies in order to minimise or avoid such situations.

Here are three important tips for good classroom management:

1. **Ground rules help the group work better** – especially if the ‘rules’ are generated by the students themselves (see Section 1 for details).
2. **Structure is just as important in small groups as it is in lectures**- students will work better if the purpose of the class and/or activity is clear to them (e.g., a statement of aims and learning outcomes for the class works well). Remember to be explicit about what you expect from your students, and avoid

giving them a task to complete without a rationale – this may help reduce some problems in class like students being distracted, off track, disinterested, or non-communicative.

- 3. Pay attention to the 'tone' of the group** – interaction in a small group is greatly influenced by the tone or atmosphere, and whether students feel able to take a risk in front of you and their peers. You can actively work towards setting and maintaining the tone of the group through your own actions and non-verbal communication.

Problems with student participation

Of the problems that you are most likely to encounter when working with small classes, many of these will be related to student participation and interaction, particularly in terms of group discussion. Below are some possible problem situations and useful techniques for trouble-shooting small group discussions.

Problem	Possible techniques
The group is silent or unresponsive	<p>Use buzz groups, pyramiding sequences</p> <p>Ask what's going on – why are they silent?</p> <p>Make a clear statement about what you want from the group.</p>
Individual students are silent	<p>Use small group methods such as think-pair-share to get discussion going.</p> <p>Try to draw the student out by picking up on something relevant to them and the topic for discussion e.g. "You've had experience as a nurse, Jane, haven't you – so how do you think psychological illness is perceived by nurses in general?"</p> <p>Ask to hear from students who haven't yet contributed to the discussion.</p>
Students not listening to each other, not building discussion but point scoring	<p>Use a listening exercise e.g. where one student has to paraphrase what another student says.</p> <p>Refer back to the ground rules (or introduce a new one)</p> <p>Say what you see or feel, e.g. "There's seems to be a lot of antagonism here in the group..."</p>

<p>Sense of a group or clique among some students, a private joke</p>	<p>Don't use sarcasm, but confront the students, e.g. "Is there a reason why you aren't participating with the rest of the class?"</p> <p>Invite them to share their discussion with the group</p> <p>Self-disclosure, e.g. "I find it hard to lead the group, and listen to what people are saying..."</p>
<p>One or two students dominate</p>	<p>Use hand signals and verbally ask them to let others speak</p> <p>Assign roles for the group discussion, e.g. timekeeper, scribe, summariser, reporter</p> <p>Ask to hear from students who haven't yet contributed to the discussion</p>
<p>Discussion goes off track, or becomes irrelevant</p>	<p>Set a clear topic at the start</p> <p>Draw the groups attention to the situation, e.g. "I'm wondering how this is related to our topic of discussion?"</p> <p>Ask a clear question or make a clear statement to direct discussion back to the topic</p>
<p>(adapted from: Gibbs & Habeshaw, 1989; Smith, 1997).</p>	

Managing student behaviour

Just as you, as a member of staff, are bound to behave according to the University's Code of Conduct and Teaching and Learning – Fundamental Code, students are also required to behave according to University policies, including the Code of Conduct, the Teaching and Learning – Fundamental Code, and the Misconduct – Student Non-Academic Misconduct Policy. Codes and policies are accessible at http://www.uws.edu.au/policy/policy_dds

These policies and codes outline the expectations and responsibilities relating to students. For example, the University's Code of Conduct states that all members of the University community will act with diligence and responsiveness and treat other UWS members with fairness, respect and courtesy and without discrimination or harassment. The Student Non-Academic Misconduct Policy states that, students as individuals are expected to avoid conduct which:

- damages or destroys University property (including library books, computing hardware or software, or the deliberate release of computer viruses)
- harasses, vilifies, bullies, abuses, threatens, assaults or endangers staff, students or other members of the University's community directly or by other means of communication
- unreasonably disrupts staff or students or other members from undertaking their normal activities at the University
- behaves inappropriately in an activity (e.g. in the virtual and physical environments such as e-learning sites, face-to-face classes, meeting), facility in or under the control or supervision of the University or a recognised University student association.

It's unlikely that you will ever have to draw students' attention to these policies in order to deal with problem behaviour, however it is important for you to know that they exist. More often than not, the kind of behaviour issues you will come across as a tutor will be related to the following kinds of students (adapted from: <http://www.ust.hk/celt/ta/taguide/skills/manage.htm>).

The expert student

Often, you will have one (or two) 'experts' in your class, students who seem to have a comment or opinion about just about everything! While you will probably find these students frustrating and disruptive to the flow of the session, it's important not to 'put them down' or openly show your frustration. This may discourage other students from offering their comments and opinions, but also may impact on the 'expert' student quite negatively. Sometimes, people who appear to be 'experts' are over-compensating for an actual lack of self-esteem and may perhaps feel 'beneath' the rest of the class (e.g. a mature-age student, a student from a different discipline or experience background, etc). Or, sometimes they may be 'experts' in the true sense – this is particularly likely when students are mature age – in this situation, draw on the students' experience when appropriate.

In class discussion times, allow 'expert students' to respond, but use techniques such as 'redirecting' (see section on questioning above) to encourage other students to have a go. Often peer pressure will also work to eventually limit their activities. If you can't seem to work around the person using subtle directing and redirecting (e.g. "Thanks Sue – that was very interesting...how about someone else...?"), then you may want to talk with them before or after class – be gentle, alert them to their 'over-zealousness' in discussion and how it would be for the other students if they didn't dominate so much...etc.

The negative student

You may also experience different kinds of negativity, either overt (such as challenging the class discussion or activity in a negative manner) or covert (such as remaining silent and not participating). Try methods such as those above (under 'the expert') for dealing with the overt negative student, and try bringing the covert negative student into the group activity by methods such as asking them directly to give their opinion, etc. If these kinds of techniques don't work, then try talking with the students individually. You might actually find that there is a particular reason for the negativity, and that by addressing this with the student you are able to facilitate a change in attitude quite easily.

The truly 'disruptive' student

While the above two kinds of students are usually quite disruptive to the healthy flow of the tutorial session, you may also have to deal with a truly disruptive student at some time. This student's behaviour is much worse and can involve direct disagreements with other individual students (possibly physical), verbal outbursts, cursing or other disruptive actions. Obviously, this kind of behaviour is not something that you can 'just see how it goes' with subtle management techniques.

Instead, try using silence to direct the student's attention to you and to the situation (usually, the rest of the class becomes silent also, thus making a bigger impact), politely ask for his/her co-operation, and use the ground-rules set up by you and the class as a way to direct your request. Otherwise, ask the student (or students) to stay after class and talk to them about how disruptive their behaviour is to you and to other students. If you decide it's appropriate to meet with the student privately (without other students being present), ask the unit coordinator to be present at the meeting. Draw the student's attention to the codes and policy mentioned above (under Managing student behaviour) and review what their responsibilities are as students of this University.

Helping students find support

Because of the nature of your role as tutor, and your relationship to a small group of students, students often see you as an important person in their lives as a student, and may approach you with problems or issues other than those directly related to the course you are tutoring in. While it's important to deal with students empathically, don't feel that you must help (or solve) all of their problems for them. If a student approaches you with a need, problem or concern outside the scope of your role as a tutor, it's important for you, and for the student, that you direct them to the appropriate student support network or section. Students will always have concerns or needs external to their course or program of study that are best dealt with by other people, such as those in student support services.

Most universities have policies and sections of the institution that deal with the following student support issues. However often not all teachers and students are aware of the range or extent of services, or indeed that some exist. For example, at UWS there are services that provide the following:

- academic skills programs
- careers advice
- counselling
- disability services
- indigenous student support
- international student support
- library skills
- accommodation
- childcare
- financial aid and managing money resources
- enrolment
- clubs and societies

As a tutor, you might like to summarise some information about the kind of support services that are offered at your institution, and provide this to students at the first tutorial session. The booklet *Teaching@UWS* (Section 4: Support services for learning and teaching) provides an overview of the services for students and staff at UWS.

The Support Services for students website provides links to a range of support services to help students reach their academic and personal goals. Refer to http://www.uws.edu.au/currentstudents/current_students/getting_help

SECTION 4 - E-Learning

Introduction to e-learning

E-learning is learning facilitated and supported through the effective use of information and communications technology (ICT). Computers and the internet are ubiquitous in our lives today and as such we need to be able to use them effectively to achieve our goals, including those of promoting student learning. This means having an appropriate level of technological literacy to complement and inform our discipline and in-class teaching skills and knowledge.





At UWS, teaching staff are extending student interaction and learning opportunities through e-learning. In undergraduate units at the University, e-learning has had a strong presence for a number of years. It is often used in addition to face-to-face classes, to provide additional resources, communication channels and assignment submission. Increasingly learning activities are being provided online. Where learning in a unit occurs both online and in-class, this is often referred to as 'blended learning'.





Student cohorts are increasingly competent with using ICTs, although with a diverse student population there continue to be some students who are not yet confident with using computers and the internet. The UWS Graduate Attributes state that we prepare our students to 'command multiple skills and literacies to enable adaptable lifelong learning'. This includes technology literacy, with students 'able to apply communication and other technologies effectively in personal and professional learning'. Many of the students at UWS, and indeed across the sector, engage in paid work, hence have less time to commit to study. E-learning can extend the student learning experience beyond the in-class context, enabling students to learn independent of place and time.

vUWS (Virtual UWS)

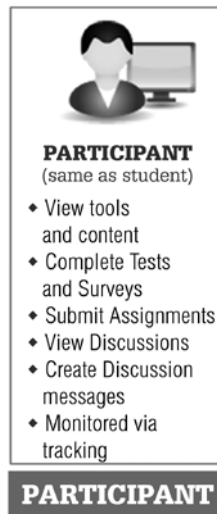
The e-learning system and associated technologies which we use at UWS is called vUWS (Virtual UWS and pronounced 'views'). At UWS, 100% of taught units use vUWS. Your unit coordinator or the designated 'instructor' of the site will give you access to the relevant site in vUWS. You can access the unit's site by logging into vUWS at <http://elearning.uws.edu.au> using your MyUWSAccount. There are a number of different access roles in vUWS and your unit coordinator will enable your access at a level suitable for the activities they require you to do in vUWS.

The Access Roles and the activities in vUWS a particular role can perform are outlined below:

 BUILD	 TEACH	 GRADE	 AUDIT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Add tools and content ◆ Create Assignments Tests and Surveys ◆ Create and manage Groups ◆ Manage site settings ◆ Import content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Release and hide content ◆ Release and hide Assignments Tests and Surveys ◆ Access Course Reports ◆ Access Performance Dashboard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Mark Tests ◆ Mark Assignments ◆ Mark Discussions ◆ Access and manage Grade Centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ View tools and content ◆ View Tests and Surveys ◆ View Assignments ◆ View Discussions ◆ Does not affect tracking
INSTRUCTOR			

 BUILD	 TEACH	 GRADE	 AUDIT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Add tools and content ◆ Create Assignments Tests and Surveys ◆ Create and manage Groups ◆ Manage site settings ◆ Import content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Release and hide content ◆ Release and hide Assignments Tests and Surveys ◆ Access Course Reports ◆ Access Performance Dashboard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Mark Tests ◆ Mark Assignments ◆ Mark Discussions ◆ Access and manage Grade Centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ View tools and content ◆ View Tests and Surveys ◆ View Assignments ◆ View Discussions ◆ Does not affect tracking
TEACHING ASSISTANT			

 BUILD	 TEACH	 GRADE	 AUDIT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Add tools and content ◆ Create Assignments Tests and Surveys ◆ Create and manage Groups ◆ Manage site settings ◆ Import content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Release and hide content ◆ Release and hide Assignments Tests and Surveys ◆ Access Course Reports ◆ Access Performance Dashboard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Mark Tests ◆ Mark Assignments ◆ Mark Discussions ◆ Access and manage Grade Centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ View tools and content ◆ View Tests and Surveys ◆ View Assignments ◆ View Discussions ◆ Does not affect tracking
AUDITOR			



What can e-learning offer?

The ways in which the World Wide Web can support e-learning are potentially limitless. The web can provide:

- a communication mechanism – enabling two-way communication from student to student (individually or in groups), student/s to teacher, student/s to outside expert. Communication can occur in real time (synchronously) or independent of time (asynchronous).
- an enormous wealth of dynamic and up-to-date electronic resources, links to online journals and other information that is easily searchable.
- ways of automatically providing students with fast and effective feedback to help them identify gaps and their learning needs.
- opportunities to collaborate with peers and professionals independent of place and time.
- opportunities to build reflection time into learning activities.
- opportunities to develop the kinds of skills now required in most workplaces, e.g. locating and evaluating current information required to inform planning and research for real-world tasks, working in teams, communicating in writing, etc
- images, audio, video and interactive learning resources that can assist students with difficult concepts or visual knowledge.
- access to high quality education for students who are unable to attend classes and tutorials on-campus.

A useful way of thinking about the internet for education is as a 'tool'. A tool that can be used to support the learning outcomes that have been set for your unit and assist students to gain the skills and knowledge they require to successfully complete the assessment tasks.

As with any tool, there are times when using the internet may not be the most appropriate means of supporting learners. Online learning may not be appropriate for situations such as practising motor or laboratory skills, laboratory experiments and manual handling techniques.

As a tutor you may be required to undertake duties that are associated with online teaching and learning. It is important that you prepare yourself for this role.

Managing e-learning effectively

Knowing a little about how to manage e-learning will assist you to become an effective online tutor. You will need to check that you:

- ✓ Are prepared for the role
- ✓ Know how to manage student expectations online
- ✓ Are familiar with 'Netiquette'
- ✓ Are aware of the different kinds of online communication mechanisms
- ✓ Know how to facilitate discussions online (if online discussions are used in your unit)
- ✓ Know something about assessment & evaluation online
- ✓ Know a few survival tips and tricks
- ✓ Are familiar with where students can obtain support using the online environment

The following sub-sections will assist you with these points so that you can manage e-learning more effectively.

Preparing for the role of online tutor

Your involvement in e-learning may take the form of participating in a vUWS site using the communication tools. Prior to taking on this responsibility it is advisable that you attend to the following checklist:

Checklist for tutors preparing for a role in the vUWS site

<input type="checkbox"/>	Discuss the purpose and features of the site and your role and responsibilities with the unit coordinator.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Peruse the vUWS site and its features (including online help) and clarify anything that you are unsure about with your unit coordinator.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check out the E-Learning Staff Support vUWS site and the E-Learning Student Support vUWS site so that you are aware of the assistance available to you and to your students. Both these sites are available to you once you have logged into vUWS
<input type="checkbox"/>	Undertake any training (technical and educational) that may assist you with your role.

How to manage student expectations online

The 'Establishing expectations or ground rules' segment in Section 1 of this booklet is just as relevant for e-learning. There are also a few specific points about e-learning that are worth noting.

Your expectations of students

Having a virtual presence compared to a physical one means that you may not always be there when students have questions and needs. This means that you will need to clearly articulate expectations of students in terms of:

1. their behaviour;
2. the standard and format of work they need to complete;
3. how you want them to use their 'virtual space'.

The part of this manual in Section 1 on 'Establishing expectations or ground rules' is especially pertinent.

Students' expectations of you

Conversely, it is essential that students know what they can expect from you. This means being clear about:

- how and when you will participate in the vUWS site;
- response times for feedback on their questions and assessment;
- your preferred means of communication.

If you don't convey these things upfront then students will expect you to be available 24x7! Stating your conditions upfront can avoid disappointment and discontentment on the part of students.

'Netiquette'

Working online implies a certain kind of anonymity which can lead to some tricky situations. Netiquette (online etiquette) guidelines will help students communicate more effectively in this environment.

Here are some key points that you may wish to convey to your students to help you set the ground rules for online communication:

- Don't type messages in all caps – IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE SHOUTING!
- Avoid pasting any fancy signatures, animations or graphics into your messages unless they are really necessary for your topic.
- Keep messages succinct and to the point. Some people are paying for internet access by the hour and so it is costing them time and money to read your posting.
- Clearly identify your topic in the subject line so that people can decide whether to read your posting.
- Remember to re-read your message before posting, people can easily mistake your tone. Be particularly careful about use of humour and sarcasm – it can often be taken the wrong way in this medium – this can cause 'flaming'. If you are making a joke you could include '(joke)' in your message to ensure that others do not read your message in a way other than how it was intended.
- When posting a message always be polite and respectful of other participants and their point of view.
- Body language and visual cues are not seen in online communication so ensure your wording is clear and not ambiguous before you hit the Submit button.
- When replying to another person's posting refer to the relevant section of the message you are replying to so that the reader can relate to the context of your reply. Alternatively use the Quote option which includes the author, subject line and message in your reply.
- Do not use the virtual space for your own commercial benefit. Unsolicited mass-mailing advertisements amounts to junk mail on the internet and is generally despised. It is called 'spamming'.
- Remember that anything you post to the internet is a public comment that is published. This means that what you post to discussion boards or even in a private email can be used in grievance procedures and even litigation.
- All quotes and sources need to be properly attributed to the author(s). Copyrighted materials should be treated according to copyright laws. The UWS Copyright Officer can assist: phone (02) 4736 0090.

UWS has Online Netiquette guidelines available that can be added easily to your vUWS site. Contact the E-Learning Service Desk on (02) 9852 5252 or email vuws@uws.edu.au for instructions of how to add the guidelines.

Online communication mechanisms

Discussion boards

Discussion boards are a communication mechanism that is asynchronous. That means that participants make a contribution to a discussion independent of time and place. Other users can access their posting when they next go online. Often discussion boards are comprised of a series of discussion forums. Clearly delineating forums (setting up separate topics and naming them) can make the discussion area a little easier for students to navigate.

Discussion forums can be used to achieve many different goals. For example:

- For information sharing amongst students and between yourself and students.
- As a mechanism for students getting to know each other and you.
- For processing ideas that come up in lectures or readings.
- As tutorials, focused on tutorial questions and activities.
- To promote thoughtful responses to topics or questions, since students are able to read trigger material and think about it before responding.
- As a group discussion area for work on collaborative projects (each group having its own discussion space).
- As a student space for helping each other and discussing areas that may be difficult or confusing.
- To provide feedback to students as a group.
- As a space where students can interact with industry specialists and experts independent of time and place.
- For debates or lively discussions on meaty issues.
- For assessment items where discussion, communication and interaction with other students are key criteria.

How to facilitate discussion online

A person who facilitates an online discussion is known as an 'e-moderator'. Your role as an e-moderator will largely depend on the purpose for the discussion, but here are some overall guidelines:

- Initiate a discussion with a warm welcome message. In this message articulate the goals of the discussion and set out your expectations and any ground rules for participation.
- If students have not met face to face it can be useful to do an online ice-breaker. Have a look at the ice-breakers in Section 1 of this Guide for ideas.
- Make sure students are aware of your participation level in the discussion. Let them know how frequently you will (realistically) check the discussion and please

stick to this to avoid complaints! If you are going to be away for any period of time be sure to convey this to students in terms of your participation level.

- Engage the students in the discussion by using (and modelling) strategies such as presenting conflicting opinions, drawing on readings and other references, using questioning, building on what others have said.
- Use informative keywords in the Subject line of your posts.
- Refocus the discussion if it gets off topic.
- Don't lecture online. Aim to create postings that entice students to participate. Try ending your postings with a question that invite further discussion. When explanations are required, use examples, direct them to other resources and ask other students to help.
- Don't become the gatekeeper – aim for productive discussions that will require less input from you over time and more interaction amongst students.
- Don't over contribute – let the students answer questions from others. Be prepared to sit back a little and let others respond.
- Accept 'lurkers' for a while at the start of the discussion unless immediate participation is a requirement, but try to gently entice lurkers into the discussion.
- Do not tolerate bad behaviour or language such as inappropriate postings of a sexual, cultural or gender nature. Monitor the discussion topics you add to the vUWS site for inappropriate messages. There are ways of doing this quickly so that you skim the messages instead of reading in depth and the E-Learning Service Desk can provide advice in this regard. Contact the E-Learning Service Desk on (02) 98525252 or by emailing vuws@uws.edu.au

Chat rooms

Chat rooms are a synchronous communication mechanism. This means that in order to participate everyone needs to be online at the same time. If there are large numbers of students involved chat rooms can be difficult for anyone who cannot type very quickly and/or are from a non-English speaking background. They can be used for many of the same types of activities as discussion forums. Significantly, chat rooms tend not to promote reflective answers as the imperative is to respond quickly (as in a class context). If students are working on a collaborative project and don't usually see each other face-to-face, chat rooms can be a good tool for them to get some decisions made quickly or do a group brainstorm.

Messages

Messages is another asynchronous communication mechanism. Mail messages sent using the Messages tool in vUWS remain in vUWS. They do not appear in your UWS email account and you will need to log into vUWS regularly to check for messages that your students may have sent.

Although you may send mail messages in vUWS to the whole class, you are likely to receive individual mail messages from students. If they are all asking the same questions you may be better off asking them to direct such enquiries to a discussion board topic (Unit Related Questions) where you can then answer, once, to the whole class.

Blogs

A blog or 'weblog' is basically an online journal to which a single or multiple participants contribute and which are open to others to read. Blogs are based around some kind of special interest or purpose. They have been found to be useful for sharing information and opinions and can be incorporated into a range of educational activities.

Blogs can be set up in vUWS and the student needs very little expertise to update and maintain the blog; the functions are very similar to using online discussion boards.

Assessment and evaluation online

You may be required to oversee some assessment tasks online. Make sure you are well aware of the skills you will need to do this as it can be a stressful time for students if things go wrong! Discuss your role with your unit coordinator.

Some survival tips and tricks

- Don't promise what you can't deliver (e.g. to check and respond to online discussion postings daily, when actually you can only do this twice a week on work days only).
- If students are displaying inappropriate behaviour (e.g. flaming) act immediately and refer the matter to the unit coordinator. Do not delete any inappropriate message; instead move the message to a private discussion forum just in case the message is required as evidence in disciplinary action.
- Students will only use and interact with resources and each other on the site if they see it is of relevance to them – explain how resources and activities are relevant to their learning in the unit.
- Discussion topics often work well where they are structured around a particular task that is relevant to assessment. Allocate realistic timeframes, whether that's several days or several weeks, so the discussion doesn't labour on.
- If you have a chat room, recommend that students organise their own chats to help each other. You might also suggest that they 'invite' you to a chat session when there is a group of them. That way they appreciate and value the opportunity.

Student training

Make sure that students have the appropriate skills to engage in e-learning. Ensure too that students are aware of what the vUWS site has to offer them. Communicate the specific relevance of what is contained in the vUWS site, in terms of how it will support their learning. This can be done by providing an orientation to the vUWS site for students. There is an 'Orientation to your vUWS site' guide available in the E-Learning Staff Support vUWS site; you will have access to this once you've logged in.

All students have access to the E-Learning Student Support site and if your students are having difficulties in using vUWS please refer them to this site which is available once they have logged into vUWS. This site has a range of interactive videos and instruction guides to support their use of vUWS. It also has a practice quiz, practice assignment and practice survey which they can use to familiarise themselves before they need to submit a quiz, an assignment or a survey as an assessment task.

Useful e-learning resources

E-MODERATING

Salmon, Gilly. (2003). E-moderating : The key to teaching and learning online. London: Kogan Page. **371.358.2 (UWS Library)**

Salmon, Gilly. (2002). E-tivities : The key to active online learning. London: Kogan Page. **371.334 102 (UWS Library)**

Resources for Moderators and Facilitators of Online Discussion:
<http://www.emoderators.com/moderators.shtml>

For further ideas on e-learning, refer to the TDU website. http://www.uws.edu.au/learning_teaching/learning_and_teaching/teaching_development_unit

All staff have access to the E-Learning Staff Support site which is available once you have logged into vUWS. This site contains more information about teaching and learning online as well as interactive videos and instruction guides to support your use of vUWS.

SECTION 5 – Marking and Giving Feedback

Most tutors will be required to undertake some kind of marking of students work, whether it be formal assessment tasks, in-class or take-home activities or exercises. Whichever the case, it is important to prepare yourself appropriately for the task and take it seriously.

Students are often very anxious about assessment and their performance, particularly when it concerns major pieces of assessment. Your 'performance' as a marker is therefore just as crucial as their performance as a student. From the student's perspective, every mark counts!



Before we talk about marking students work, here is an overview of some of the key principles regarding assessment at UWS.

UWS principles for assessment

Assessment is an integral part of the learning and teaching process and makes a significant contribution to the achievement of student learning outcomes. At UWS, the purposes of assessment are to:

- promote learning;
- provide timely feedback to students on levels of attainment;
- indicate to students areas of misunderstanding or conceptual difficulties and assist with improvements;
- provide feedback to teaching staff to indicate areas in which students are experiencing difficulties, and to identify and diagnose if there is a need for a change/modification of teaching method;
- judge performance using appropriate methods, and to award marks and a grade which indicate whether, and how well, a particular student has attained the stated learning outcomes; and
- determine whether the student is sufficiently well prepared in a subject area to proceed to the next level of instruction.


At UWS, students are provided with information about their assessment at the start of session, in the unit learning guide. While an overview of assessment (number and types of assessment, due dates and marks allocated for each task) is also provided in the unit outline, detailed information about each assessment task forms a major part of the learning guide. The learning guide also provides a standardised cover

sheet which students should attach to their completed assessment task. In addition, the learning guide provides information about plagiarism and processes for late submission of assessments, or requesting an extension, etc. As the tutor, ensure that you provide an opportunity in class time for students to ask questions about assessment tasks. Any questions of an administrative nature, e.g. 'What topics will be covered in the test?', 'When can I withdraw from a unit?' etc should be referred to the unit coordinator.

UWS has a criteria and standards-based Assessment Policy. This requires that assessment is based on established criteria and standards for each task. Students' work is marked against criteria and standards for the task, and not ranked against the work of other students. The Teaching Development Unit has produced an Assessment Guide to support the UWS staff in implementing criteria and standards-based assessment. This is available electronically at the University's QILT (Quality in Learning and Teaching) web site, at <http://tdu.uws.edu.au/qilt/>

Guidelines for marking

- Be sure you use the marking guide (the criteria and standards, or rubric) that has been established by the lecturer in charge of the unit, for the specific assessment task. If the unit coordinator doesn't clearly explain the marking guide to you, arrange to meet with them to discuss this. It is important that you check your understanding of the criteria and standards against which you will be marking students' work, especially with regard to giving 'part-marks'.
- Explain the assessment criteria and standards to your students. Consider providing examples of good assignments, and have students use the criteria sheet or marking guide to identify the difference between their own work and these examples. Of course, this can only be done with the permission of the students whose work is used as examples. Run your plans for providing example assignments past your unit coordinator.
- Explain to students the accepted academic conventions for writing and authorship in their field of study. Check the University's policy on Student Academic Misconduct and explain to students the consequences of failing to follow these conventions. Policies are available at http://www.uws.edu.au/policy/policy_dds
- Be vigilant about cheating and copying.
- When marking, make comparable judgments across students and groups – e.g. moderation before marking, or cross-marking with other tutors. In moderation before marking or cross-marking each tutor marks a few assignments, making a note of the marks given, and then exchanging these assignments with another tutor who marks them without knowledge of the original tutor's marks – tutors can then discuss their assessment of the students performance and the marks they have allocated, checking that they have a shared understanding of the criteria and standards for that assessment task. If the unit coordinator does not set up arrangements for cross-marking, suggest this to them.

- It's often useful to check back over your marking of students' work, particularly if the length of time between marking the first few and the last few was quite long. Sometimes your ideas change as you go through, and it's important to ensure that your judgments are consistent throughout the marking process.
- 
- Provide constructive timely feedback. Try to avoid the 'red-pen' effect and just correcting grammar, spelling and references. Try to find something within the assessment on which you can comment favourably and then indicate to the student the weaknesses of their assessment task, as well as what they can do to 'feed forward' (Hounsell, 2004) for the next assessment task. Choose an appropriate amount or detail of feedback according to the importance and length of the assessment task (e.g., a short 1-2 page report should not require as many comments as a 1500 word essay).
 - Consider giving generic feedback to the whole class (such as a summary of overall performance on assessment and common strengths/weaknesses) – but ensure that generic feedback is meaningful. For example, if the worst results were for a particular question of a test, or aspect of an assignment, explain why and how students' work for this particular task could be improved.

Giving feedback

Giving feedback to students, apart from being part of University policy, is a very important part of the learning process. According to policy, staff are "to ensure that feedback is timely and justifies the mark given against the stated assessment criteria and standards, and identifies what could have been done to achieve a higher mark".

Feedback is a valuable and personal way of improving individual student's learning outcomes and developing rapport between you, the tutor, and the students in your class. However it can also lead to difficult interpersonal situations between you and a student if they become upset with the feedback you give. Try and think about how your feedback will be received by the individual.

Feedback can be provided to students in a number of ways and, as mentioned in the section above, may vary in its level of detail depending on the relative importance of the assessment item (its weighting), and its location within the session - students may pay less attention to feedback on final assessments or exams. It's worth putting more effort into feedback on the initial, formative, assessment task, when students are likely

to pay more attention to feedback and hopefully will be able to use this in improving their achievement in the later assessment task/s.

The amount of feedback that can be provided is also dependent on resources – your time. It's important to determine upfront how much time you should allocate to marking a particular assessment task in the scheme of the overall session/unit.



Feedback may include discussion as a group, written comments on work, model answers, lists of common mistakes, peer and self-evaluation, and sheets containing common positives and criticisms as well as some individual comment on the completed criteria sheet or marking guide. Also, you may consider including ongoing tasks that utilise tutor and/or peer feedback such as set exercises, short in-class quizzes, weekly papers – this forms continuous assessment and feedback to track progress.

Tips for giving feedback to students

- **Provide constructive, timely feedback** – part of the responsibility for marking also requires markers to be clear in their responses to students, and as objective and specific as possible (remember that the primary purpose of giving feedback is to inform students about exactly how they are going – what they are doing well, and in which areas they can, or need to, improve).
- **Be sincere and positive** with students about their results.
- **Use criteria and standards or marking schemes** for marking work and giving feedback to students so there is consistency in the way you structure and provide feedback to individual students.
- **Be constructive in your comments** – identify strengths and areas for improvement in relation to the learning outcomes, and give indications of how the work can be improved.
- **Avoid generic symbols** (ticks/crosses) without explanatory comment.
- Remember to **balance your comments** with both positive remarks and critical (yet constructive) comments. It's good to begin and end with a positive comment.

Race (2001) says that feedback should be **'oriented to opening doors, not closing them'**. He suggests being careful with the words chosen to give feedback. Words such as 'weak' or 'poor' can communicate final judgments without giving the student specific information about what was weak or poor. Be specific so that the student can learn from the feedback.

For more information about marking and giving feedback on assessment tasks, here are some useful web links:

- <http://www.flinders.edu.au/teaching/teaching-strategies/assessment/feedback/> (Flinders University)
- <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocslid/firstwords/fw21.html> (Oxford Brooks University)
- <http://www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au/assessinglearning/>
Assessing learning in Australian Universities - Ideas, strategies and resources for quality in student assessment (by James, McInnis & Devlin, Centre for the Study of Higher Education, University of Melbourne)

For further ideas about marking and giving feedback, refer to the TDU website.
http://www.uws.edu.au/learning_teaching/learning_and_teaching/teaching_development_unit/resources

Plagiarism

The University has adopted the following definition of plagiarism:

"Plagiarism occurs in a student's work when he or she submits work in which ideas, words or other work are taken from a source (for example, a web-site or computer program, another student's essay or presentation, a book or journal article, a lecture, a performance piece or other presentation) and presented as if they are the student's own, without appropriate acknowledgement of the original author."

"In this definition of plagiarism, it is the act of presenting material as one's own without appropriate acknowledgement that constitutes plagiarism, not the intention of the student when doing so. 'Appropriate acknowledgement' is defined as the conventions of citation recognised as acceptable to the University"

(Misconduct-Student Academic Misconduct Policy, available at http://www.uws.edu.au/policy/policy_dds)

Plagiarism can take many forms (James, McInnis & Devlin, 2002), and is also described differently depending on the conventions of the particular discipline or culture you are working within. However, some common forms are:

- Cheating on an exam by copying from other students or other unauthorised material.
- Submitting someone else's work as one's own for a piece of assessment.

- Using any information, written text, graphics or other material from the internet and not acknowledging it as someone else's work (and therefore, presenting it as one's own work).
- Quoting or paraphrasing material from a source (e.g., a book or journal article) without acknowledging where you sourced the information (and therefore, presenting it as one's own work).
- Group work also presents a context for possible plagiarism. For example, if a student copies from other members while working in a group, or if a student contributes less, or nothing to a group assignment and then claims an equal share of the marks
- However, plagiarism may not be necessarily intentional. Even if you do detect some plagiarism, don't immediately assume that the student intentionally did it. Some reasons why unintentional plagiarism may occur include:
 - o The student may not understand what plagiarism actually means, either at university or in the particular discipline area.
 - o The student may not have a correct understanding of citation and referencing conventions, or may have limited skills in summarising and paraphrasing of information.
 - o The student may also have problems with stress and workload management

As a tutor or sessional teacher, discuss any case of suspected plagiarism that you encounter with your Unit Coordinator and Head of Program (before you talk with the student!). Inadvertent plagiarism and suspected deliberate plagiarism are treated differently – see the Misconduct-Student Academic Misconduct Policy.

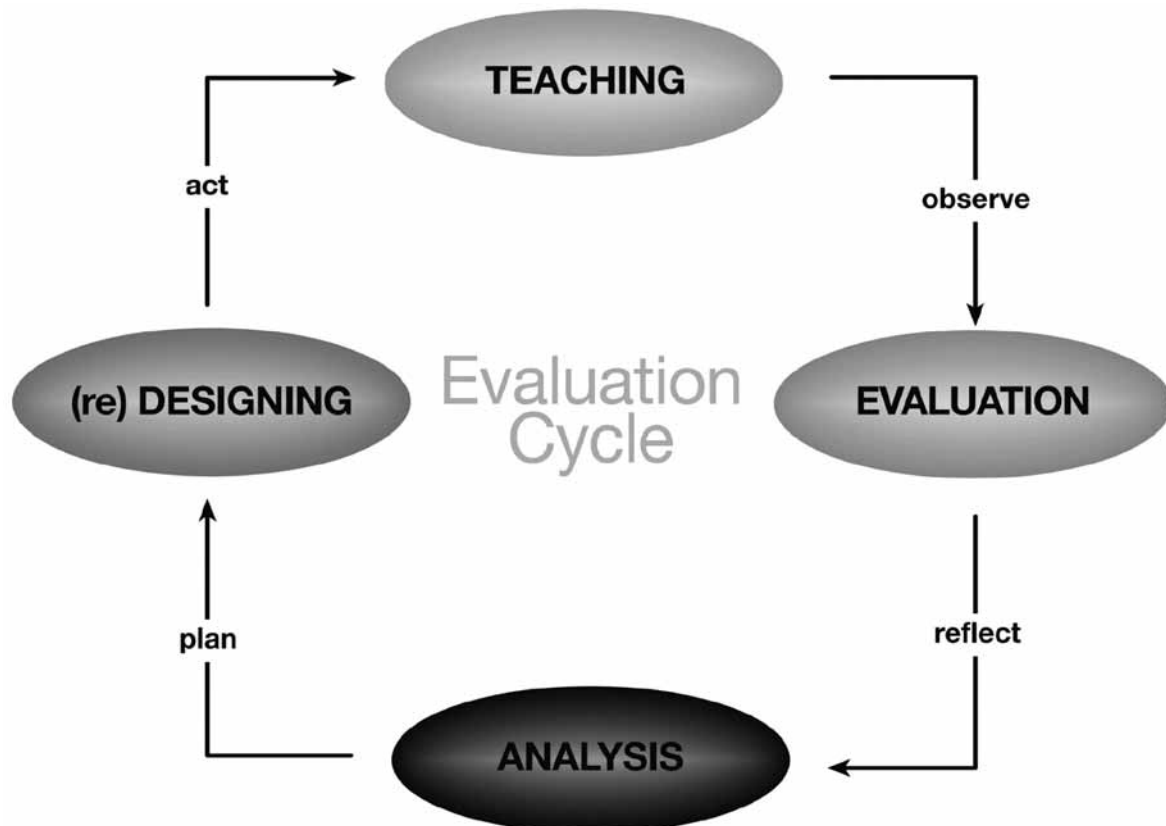
However, an important part of your role as a teacher is to make sure that your students are aware of plagiarism as a University policy, to discuss with them what plagiarism is, and to check that your students are aware of the correct referencing conventions for your discipline.

SECTION 6 – Evaluating and improving your teaching

Evaluation as reflective practice

A good professional reflects on what they do (and why they do it!), to gain an understanding of their strengths and their weaknesses, or areas in which they can improve. In higher education, we call this process engaging in reflective practice, an ongoing cycle of planning, acting, observing and reflecting (adapted from Carr & Kemmis, 1986).

This process is described in the diagram below. As a new tutor, you will start in the planning and designing phase (e.g. before your first tutorial!), move to the acting phase (which in this case is teaching), and then at some stage you might want to get some information to inform you about how you are going as a tutor – this is the observing or evaluation phase. Once you have some information about your practice you might then reflect or analyse this information in order to find out in what areas of teaching you are doing well, and what areas you can improve on.



The information that you recollect with regards to your practice can be used for both summative (i.e. used for promotional/career purposes, you can put this in your CV as evidence of your skills and abilities) and formative purposes (i.e. used to develop and improve your practice).

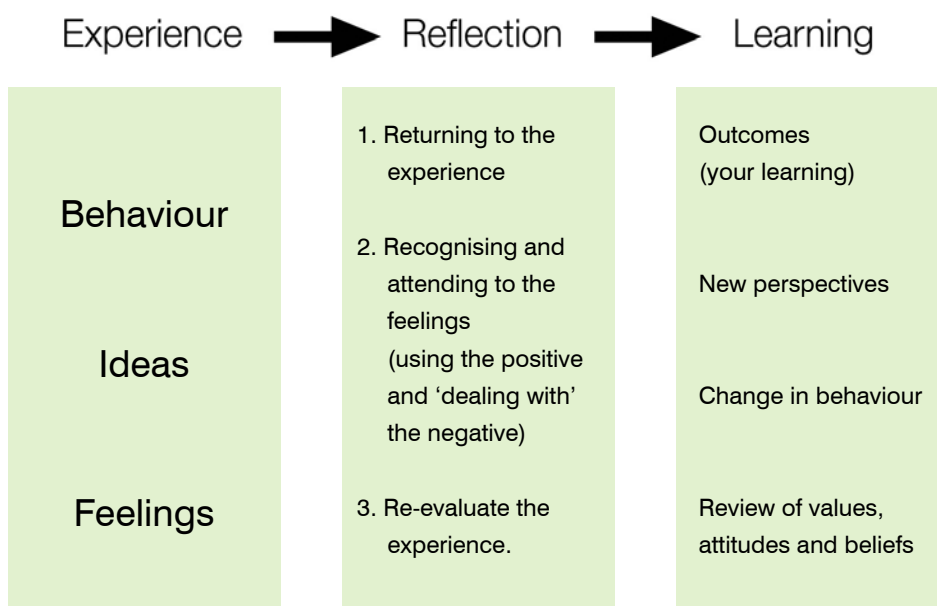
There are a variety of methods for evaluating your teaching practice, and different types of information or data you can collect. For example, the data can be qualitative (e.g. student comments) or quantitative (e.g. ratings on survey items), and it can be formal or informal. The next section describes different methods of evaluating your teaching practice.

Evaluation methods

There are four key areas by which you can collect and evaluate data about your teaching practice – yourself, your peers (e.g. other tutors), your students' experiences, and your students' learning.

Self-evaluation

- **Self reflection, analysis & evaluation**
 - Using the “good tutor” attributes that were discussed in Section 1 of this guide, we have developed a self-evaluation tool that can be used to help you prioritise areas of teaching on which to focus for evaluation and/or improvement. You are asked to rate each attribute according to how important it is to you as a teacher (or to the context in which you teach), and also according to how you perceive your performance on each particular attribute. In reflecting on the outcomes, you can then focus on those attributes for which you rated your own performance poorly (or at least, not as good as other attributes) that you also considered to be important. You may not worry so much about those attributes that were rated lowest by you on performance if they were also rated as low on importance to you. Go to the back of this guide to find the complete version of this self-evaluation tool. As an example, the following figure shows the first few attributes and the rating scales for importance and performance.



So, for example, after your first tutorial class for the session you might replay the class (or parts of it) from memory, observing and recalling your behaviours (and perhaps the behaviours of students), feelings, exactly what took place and what your reactions were, attending to detail, but avoiding judgment (you can observe and note that there was judgment in the original, but avoid making judgments during the recall).

Peer feedback

- **Classroom performance** – ask another tutor (usually someone who is an experienced teacher) to sit in on your class and give you feedback. Be specific about the aspects of your practice that you want to be observed and commented on – this makes it easier for the observer to give useful feedback to you.
- **Teaching and learning materials** – similarly, if you have developed some materials for use by your students, you can ask the unit coordinator or a fellow tutor to comment on these materials in relation to certain aspects as requested by you (for example, whether they are they interesting, well constructed, clear, etc).

The following resources provide more information about getting feedback from peers:

- <http://www.tedi.uq.edu.au/downloads/evaluations/guidebook%5Fpeerreview.pdf> (University of Queensland)
- <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocsd/firstwords/fw43.html> (Oxford Brookes University, United Kingdom)
- <http://www.flinders.edu.au/teaching/quality/evaluation/peer-review/peer-reviewhome.cfm> (Flinders University, South Australia)

Student experiences

Students are a very important and reliable source of information about how your teaching supports their learning, and they are often the best source of information about classroom processes, assessment tasks, and the interpersonal aspects of teaching. The following methods describe different ways in which you can obtain information from students about your teaching, both formally and informally.

- **Student Feedback on Teaching questionnaire** – Most universities encourage their teaching staff to use student evaluation of teaching methods, and often there is a standard tool that teachers can access. At the University of Western Sydney, this tool is called Student Feedback on Teaching (SFT) Survey. http://www.uws.edu.au/opq/planning_and_quality/surveys#5 The survey also asks two open-ended questions which enable students to comment on those characteristics of the lecturer/class which they found most valuable and which they feel are important to improve.
 - If you want to seek student feedback on your teaching using the SFT process, lodge a request online at <http://staff.uws.edu.au/staff/adminorg/corpserv/opq/teacheval> . Requests are personal: you can request SFT for your teaching and your class, but others cannot request SFT on your behalf. SFT results will be sent directly to you, after the end of the session. It will be up to you to decide whether to share the results with anyone else. Academic staff employed in contract and tenured positions are required through the Enterprise Agreement to participate in SFT at least once a year. Sessional staff can choose whether to use the SFT process, but it's valuable to do so if you are interested in continuing teaching as it will help you identify where you might improve your teaching.

A point worth noting is that if you want quick feedback on your teaching in order to judge whether and what may need changing, then use informal methods such as those discussed below. Informal methods produce immediate data.

- **Informal class feedback**
 - The Minute Paper (Angelo & Cross, 1993): stop the class two or three minutes early and ask students to respond very briefly – in one minute! – to two questions: “What did you find most useful about the session today?” and “In what way could the session be improved?”. Ask students to write their answers, anonymously, on a piece of paper and to leave this sheet at a designated place near the exit when they leave the class. This is a very quick and easy method of producing instant and manageable data to which you can respond. It's important to remember to give feedback about the general outcomes of the questions to the class and note any changes that you are going to make as a result of their feedback.

- Chat with students as they come into the room to re-establish a friendly atmosphere for the start of each class. Ask them how they're finding the class so far.
- Alternatively, consider using a "suggestion box" for getting feedback either on how a particular session went, or about how the classes (and your teaching) are going in general. This might be a good option if students seem uncomfortable or shy about chatting to you as in the above method, and it provides the students with an anonymous way of giving you feedback.

Student learning

- **Student's self-reported knowledge** – sometimes it can be very helpful to get feedback from students about their learning as a way of getting feedback about your teaching. For example, if you have taught a class on a particular concept and you want to know whether your approach was effective in helping students to understand that concept, try using a method called "The Muddiest Point" (Angelo & Cross, 1993).

At the end of class, ask students to respond to this question on a piece of paper – "What was the 'muddiest' point in this class. In other words, what was least clear to you?". From students' responses you can gauge how effective the class was in facilitating student learning, and perhaps identify where any major problems occurred (e.g. if the majority of students comment on the same aspect as being the muddiest point). You then have the opportunity to address this the next time you meet with your students. This strategy can be used during a class too, allowing you to address immediately any shared difficulties.

- **Student work** – similarly, you can get an idea of your students learning from their performance on assessment, in-class or out-of-class activities. This information can also help you to pinpoint where you may need to think about your approach to teaching and how effective it is in facilitating student learning. For example, if your students complete an in-class quiz and most get the questions about facts correct, but many fail the questions that require application of knowledge to solve a problem, then you may need to think about how you approached this aspect of the learning material with students.

- **Approaches to learning**
 - The VARK questionnaire – can help people to appreciate the variety of different ways in which people learn, and to identify their own learning preferences (e.g. Visual, Aural, Read/write, Kinaesthetic or Multimodal). The VARK questionnaire can support students who have been having difficulties with their studies by helping them to identify the most effective learning methods for their learning preference. It is useful too for teachers who would like to develop additional learning strategies for their classrooms. The VARK questionnaire can be used with a group or class or with one-to-one counselling, but it does require some explanation to avoid students or teachers leaping to inappropriate conclusions. Try it yourself first. Access the questionnaire at: <http://www.vark-learn.com/english/index.asp>
 - Similarly, you can use The Approaches to Study Inventory (ASI) with students to help them examine the approach they take to learning in class contexts. See Section 2 – How do students approach their learning - for an overview of the theory that underpins the ASI questionnaire. A sample of the ASI is included in the back of this guide.

Some general principles...

- Don't overuse students as sources of evaluation data
- As a new teacher, consider getting feedback early on in the session, so that you have an opportunity to address any aspects before it's too late.
- Always be prepared to respond to feedback and inform students what you will and will not be doing on the basis of it, and why.
- Don't ask specific questions about the unit or your teaching if you don't intend to or can't change this.
- Guarantee anonymity – students need to be confident that any written feedback they give is anonymous.

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EVALUATION RESOURCES

Approaches to Study Inventory

(from Richardson, 1990)

How to complete this questionnaire:

Please answer every item quickly by giving your immediate response.

Circle the appropriate code number to show your general approach to studying.

- 4 means definitely agree
- 3 means agree with reservations
- 2 is only to be used if the item doesn't apply to you, or if you find it impossible to give a definite answer
- 1 means disagree with reservations
- 0 means definitely disagree

1.	I try to relate ideas in one subject to those in others, wherever possible	4	3	2	1	0
2.	I usually set out to understand thoroughly the meaning of what I am asked to read	4	3	2	1	0
3.	Ideas in books often set me off on long chains of thought of my own, only tenuously related to what I was reading	4	3	2	1	0
4.	I like to be told precisely what to do in essays or other assignments	4	3	2	1	0
5.	I often find myself questioning things that I hear in lectures or read in books	4	3	2	1	0
5.	The continual pressure of work – assignments, deadlines and competition – often makes me tense and depressed	4	3	2	1	0
7.	I find it difficult to 'switch tracks' when working on a problem: I prefer to follow each line of thought as far as it will go	4	3	2	1	0
8.	Lecturers seem to delight in making the simple truth unnecessarily complicated	4	3	2	1	0
9.	I usually don't have time to think about the implications of what I have read	4	3	2	1	0
10.	In trying to understand a puzzling idea, I let my imagination wander freely to begin with, even if I don't seem to be much nearer a solution	4	3	2	1	0

11.	I generally put a lot of effort into trying to understand things which initially seem difficult	4	3	2	1	0
12.	I prefer courses to be clearly structured and highly organised	4	3	2	1	0
13.	A poor first answer in an exam makes me panic	4	3	2	1	0
14.	In trying to understand new ideas, I often try to relate them to real life situations to which they might apply	4	3	2	1	0
15.	When I'm reading I try to memorise important facts which may come in useful later	4	3	2	1	0
16.	I like to play around with ideas of my own even if they don't get me very far	4	3	2	1	0
17.	I am usually cautious in drawing conclusions unless they are well supported by evidence	4	3	2	1	0
18.	When I'm tackling a new topic, I often ask myself questions about it which the new information should answer	4	3	2	1	0
19.	Often I find I have to read things without having a chance to really understand them	4	3	2	1	0
20.	In reporting practical work, I like to try to work out several alternative ways of interpreting the findings	4	3	2	1	0
21.	I find I have to concentrate on memorising a good deal of what we have to learn	4	3	2	1	0
22.	Often when I'm reading books, the ideas produce vivid images which sometimes take on a life of their own	4	3	2	1	0
23.	The best way for me to understand what technical terms mean is to remember the text-book definitions	4	3	2	1	0
24.	I need to read around a subject pretty widely before I'm ready to put my ideas down on paper	4	3	2	1	0
25.	Although I generally remember facts and details, I find it difficult to put them together into an overall picture	4	3	2	1	0
26.	I tend to read very little beyond what's required for completing assignments	4	3	2	1	0
27.	Having to speak in tutorials is quite an ordeal for me	4	3	2	1	0
28.	Puzzles or problems fascinate me, particularly when you have to work through the material to reach a logical conclusion	4	3	2	1	0

29.	I find it helpful to 'map out' a new topic for myself by seeing how the ideas fit together	4	3	2	1	0
30.	I find I tend to remember things best if I concentrate on the order in which the lecturer presented them	4	3	2	1	0
31.	When I'm reading an article or research report, I generally examine the evidence carefully to decide whether the conclusion is justified	4	3	2	1	0
32.	Tutors seem to want me to be more adventurous in making use of my own ideas.	4	3	2	1	0

Thank you for the time it took you to complete this questionnaire. Your lecturer is very interested in your responses and will have a report back soon about the scores for the whole class. You will then be able to compare your own scores with the general pattern of responses for the class as a whole, and perhaps discuss them with your lecturer.

-----Cut or tear here if you want to keep a record of your score-----

When you have answered all items, you may use this table to calculate your scores:

Subscales and SCALES	Code	Items to add	Sum	Divide by	Score
Deep approach	DA	2 + 5 + 11 + 18		4	
Comprehension learning	CL	3 + 10 + 16 + 22		4	
Relating ideas	RI	1 + 14 + 24 + 29		4	
Use of evidence and logic	UE	17 + 20 + 28 + 31		4	
MEANING ORIENTATION		All four sets above		16	
Surface approach	SA	8 + 9 + 15 + 19 + 21 + 23		6	
Improvvidence	IP	7 + 25 + 30 + 32		4	
Fear of failure	FF	6 + 13 + 27		3	
Syllabus- boundedness	SB	4 + 12 + 26		3	
Reproducing ORIENTATION		All four sets above			

I give clear explanations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I use a variety of teaching and learning methods	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I generate purposeful activity (aligned with the learning outcomes of the class and/or unit)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I show the relevance of the content	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I utilise the knowledge and experiences of individuals in the group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I spend time in class listening	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I manage group dynamics well	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I treat students equitably and fairly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I facilitate student interaction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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