

MANCHESTER
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The University
of Manchester

Graduate Teaching Assistants



Session 2

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GTA Training

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SESSION 2

While we are waiting:

Make sure you have booked yourself in on the sheet.

Make sure you have a copy of the handout.

Aims and objectives

To explore and gain a better understanding of:

- Getting ready to teach (Task 1)
- Learning objectives (Task 2)
- Introduction to Assessment (Task 3)
- Introduction to Diversity and Complexity (Task 4)

Introduction

The First Day of Teaching is...

... Your Chance to Make a Good Impression...

...it will set the tone for the entire year/term or session...

Plan to work, work to plan, but be adaptable.

Recap Session 1

Teaching	Learning
Motivation	Development
Enthusiasm	Knowledge
Communication	Curiosity
Approachable	Methodological
Fun	Achieving
Preparation	Patience
Management	Performing
Challenging	Challenging

Task 1.

Try, if you can, to think back to your first day of a training session or School, it could be your first day at University or on a training course. Ask your selves the following questions and think before you answer.

1. How did you feel?

2. What were your expectations from the course?

3. What were your expectations from the teacher?

4. What were your expectations from the School/College/University?

5. What were your expectations from the other students?

Tick the "Yes or No" boxes of the expectations that were met or not met!

	Yes	No
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
Totals		

Discuss with a partner why you think your expectations, if any, were not met?

Students want to know!

Task 1. page 3

- Nature and scope of the course
- About you, the teacher, as a person

Students typically want to know two kinds of information on the first day of class.

1. They want to learn as much about the nature and scope of the course as possible, which helps them to decide whether they want to remain in the course and, if so, to better anticipate the work requirements for the semester.
2. Students are also curious about the teacher as a person. They want to know if you will be reasonable and fair with them, if you care about them as individuals, and if you care about the course content itself.

Information

Tell them what you are going to tell them (Introduction)

Tell them (Teaching)

Tell them what you have told them (Summary)

Streamlined and adapted for education from Aristotle's advise on public speaking

Introduction: Telling them what you are going to cover, and how you are going to cover it, e.g. Experiments, theory, presentations, videos....

Teaching: The doing bit.. This is the bit we enjoy, doing the teaching, demonstrating, showing, reading, writing...

Summary: Describing what you have done and what conclusions you may have drawn.

This also applies to presentations.

Other Important Information

- How long
- Breaks
- When finished

Introducing

The first few words (Introduction)

There a number of ways to begin

(Task 2, page 7)

The first few words you utter will set the tone for your entire session. This is the part where you "tell 'em what you're gonna tell 'em."

So it's important that you say something that will capture your student's attention and give you rapport with them. There a number of ways to begin your presentation.

You might start simply with a greeting:

"Good morning. Thank you for letting me share with you how we might work together to improve the quality of our knowledge of maths".

Task 2

In small groups of 4, discuss methods of introduction that you have tried, heard of, seen or been part in.

Make a list on the flipchart sheet and put into order of best method first, and worst method last. Present to group, as a team, why each method is where it is in your list. (5 Minute micro-teach)

Assessment:

Group 1	Assessment criteria	Comments	Completed Y / N		Grade 1-5 (1 poor and 5 Outstanding)
1	Planning/preparation				
2	Clear and informative				
3	Worked as a team				
4	Met criteria				
Total grade (/20)					
Group 2	Assessment criteria	Comments	Completed Y / N		Grade 1-5 (1 poor and 5 Outstanding)
1	Planning/preparation				
2	Clear and informative				
3	Worked as a team				
4	Met criteria				
Total grade (/20)					
Group 3	Assessment criteria	Comments	Completed Y / N		Grade 1-5 (1 poor and 5 Outstanding)
1	Planning/preparation				
2	Clear and informative				
3	Worked as a team				
4	Met criteria				
Total grade (/20)					
Group 4	Assessment criteria	Comments	Completed Y / N		Grade 1-5 (1 poor and 5 Outstanding)
1	Planning/preparation				
2	Clear and informative				
3	Worked as a team				
4	Met criteria				
Total grade (/20)					
Group 5	Assessment criteria	Comments	Completed Y / N		Grade 1-5 (1 poor and 5 Outstanding)
1	Planning/preparation				
2	Clear and informative				
3	Worked as a team				
4	Met criteria				
Total grade (/20)					

How do you think you did? Do you think you met all the assessment criteria?

The whole picture

Conventional syllabus

Course guides (Page 8)

Course maps (Page 9)

Conventional syllabuses don't help students much since most students see them simply as a list of unconnected items. Some course syllabuses can be unrealistic. They can be too wide, they can be too detailed and they can be over-ambitious in terms of the level of understanding that their students are required to achieve in the time available.

It is suggested that on some professional courses this is a deliberate policy to produce a high failure rate and to limit entry into the profession. In academic courses they seem to be a consequence of an attempt to dupe external examiners or validating bodies about standards. Some suggest that often lecturers don't cover everything listed in their syllabus, and students certainly don't study everything. Gibbs & Habeshaw (1989)

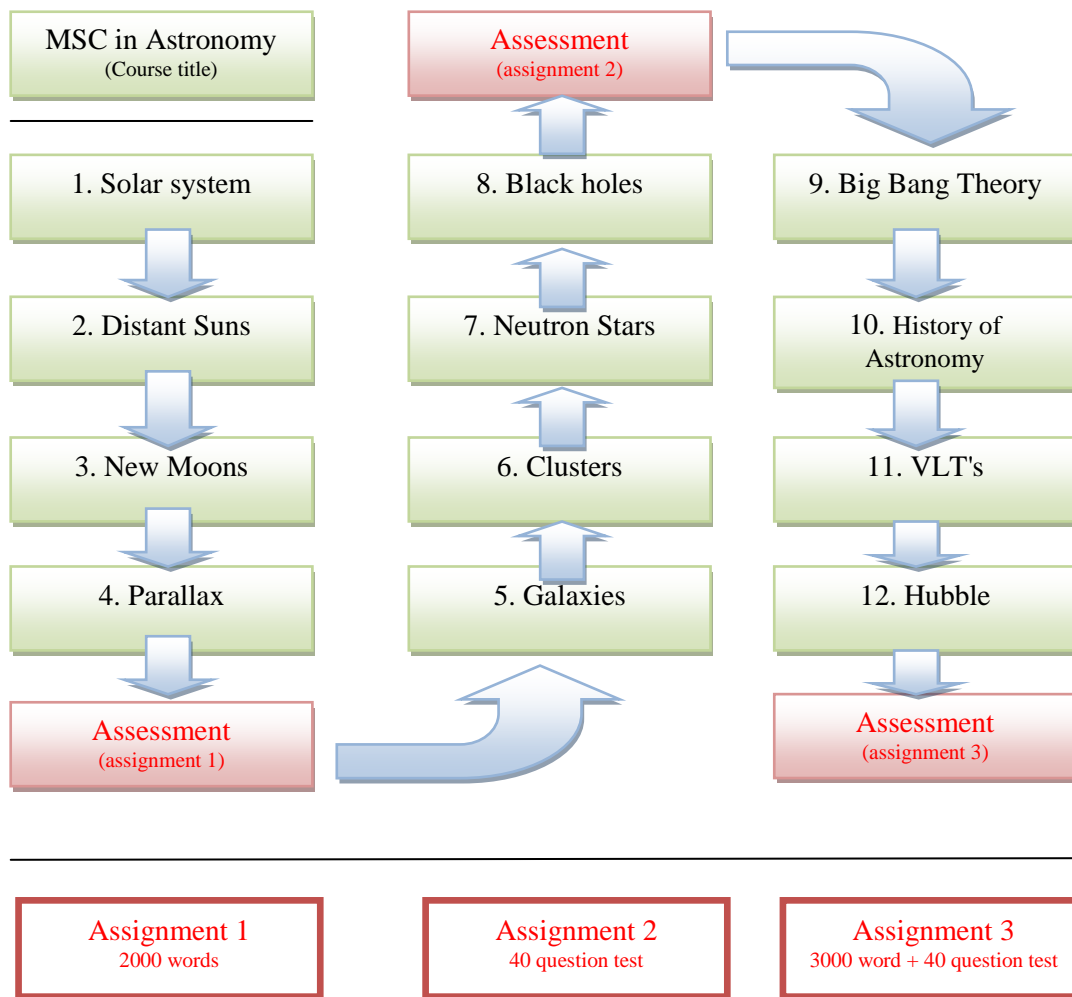
Course guides can contain all the information a student might want about a course for example:

- One page overview of content aims or objectives
- One page explanation of course process and teaching and learning methods
- Comments from past students
- List of lectures
- Summaries of lectures
- Lecture handouts
- List of seminars
- Summaries of seminar topics
- Reading list (related to lectures or seminars)
- Annotated reading list (with advice on each book or article)
- List of assessed tasks
- Advice on essay writing/project work/ lab report writing
- Recent exam papers

Course Maps

Course maps are visual, easy to read if not too fussy and can be printed off by the students so they have a copy either on their desk, in their notebook or in their portfolio.

Example of a course map:



The whole picture



Conventional syllabus

Course guides (Page 7)

Course maps (Page 8)

Driven by assessment (Page 10) Task 3

Students are driven by assessment

On many courses students are driven by the assessment system. What is assessed is seen as what matters most. The tasks which you assess and which count towards a qualification will receive ample attention, whilst those which are not assessed will often be ignored. Un-assessed essays or homework is seldom written or given 100%. Most students submit no more than is strictly necessary, and may even skip sessions once they have submitted final assessments for that unit. There are several strategies which could be adopted in response to this pattern of student learning.

Task 3

In your groups, think about assessment, what it means and possible other ways of assessing students work.

Make a list of your suggestions with a short description of meaning:

Four main suggestions



Let students in on the act

Assess on-going learning

If it moves, assess it

Don't bother with assessment

Notes:

Lined area for notes with 20 horizontal lines.

Let students in on the act

If students are expected to become involved in the setting and marking of assessed work it can be possible to allow freedom for students to pursue what they find interesting. The use of negotiated learning contracts and self assessment fall into this category.

Sometimes the tasks and standards students set themselves become no less of an oppression than those usually imposed by teachers. Assessment has a powerful influence over what and how students learn and is your most powerful tool in moulding your course. Letting students in on the act can make assessment work for them, too!

Assess on-going learning

Students submit a portfolio which gives an impression of the range and depth of learning. This is common in soft skills, where it is easy to equate learning with concrete outcomes, but it is also possible where diaries are used to indicate the quality of engagement of the student with reading and with the course. There are also problems with this approach. They include students learning to 'fake', students submitting a false impression of what they have been up to, and the generation of enormous piles of material which teachers can be required to sift through.

If it moves, assess it

If a teacher wants the student to take a piece of work seriously, then she or he will formally assess it. It is easy for the teacher to capture students' attention in this way and to orient them towards what he or she thinks matters. This approach incurs heavy marking loads for the teacher, lack of freedom and flexibility for the student, and starts to drift towards a state where the purpose of all activity is to gain marks.

Don't bother with assessment

Assessment is very limited indeed, consisting perhaps only of formal exams at the end of the course. Assessment is assumed not to affect students' learning adversely because there is so little of it and because it is so poorly related to most of the learning which takes place. There are problems with this approach. A good proportion of students will cruise through the course without doing much. Some students who work hard will not be rewarded because the assessment is so poorly related to what they work on. When the final exams do come students will have had little preparation for them.

Before we move on:

Remember that some students will simply not be committed to studying the course: they may not be interested in it, have no choice, have been forced by timetable clashes to take it, or be more concerned that term to run the students' union dramatic society. They will be concerned to get by with the least possible effort and will also be selectively inattentive. This is a fact of life for a lecturer.

Some lecturers pretend that this is not the case and teach their course as if every topic, every teaching method and every piece of assessed work had the same high priority both for them and for their students. These lecturers have abandoned the possibility of directing students' limited attention and interest where it really matters. If most students are selective by default they are likely to miss many of the components which lecturers think really matter. If they are selectively casual they may be making inappropriate decisions, or have found a way to slip through with little effort.

Given that it is impossible for students to do everything that is wanted of them, it makes sense to point their attention more deliberately and to give them clear guidance about the following:

- ❖ Which (if any) are the important things are and which could most safely be dropped.
- ❖ Which are the essential readings and which are supportive.
- ❖ Which lectures will summarise the key theoretical points.
- ❖ Which of the sessions/lectures are compulsory and will count in attendance.
- ❖ Which criteria will be used in assessing course work.
- ❖ Which topics will come up in the exam.

Diversity and Complexity in a classroom

Diversity, in a classroom, can include race/ethnicity, disability, and cultural background. In the modern classroom, diversity may manifest itself in many other ways. Nowadays teachers face many challenges on several fronts and dealing with classroom diversity is certainly one of them. Students differ in many different ways.

Task 4

In your small groups, think of as many issues of diversity that you think you may encounter in your classroom.

In Session 3 we will continue on the topic of delivery from task 2. Looking at good practice, presentations teaching styles and do's and do not's.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all a
very Happy Holliday and all the very best for
2012



References

Gibbs, G. & Habeshaw, T. (1989) *Preparing to teach: An introduction to effective teaching in higher education*. Technical & Educational Services Ltd.