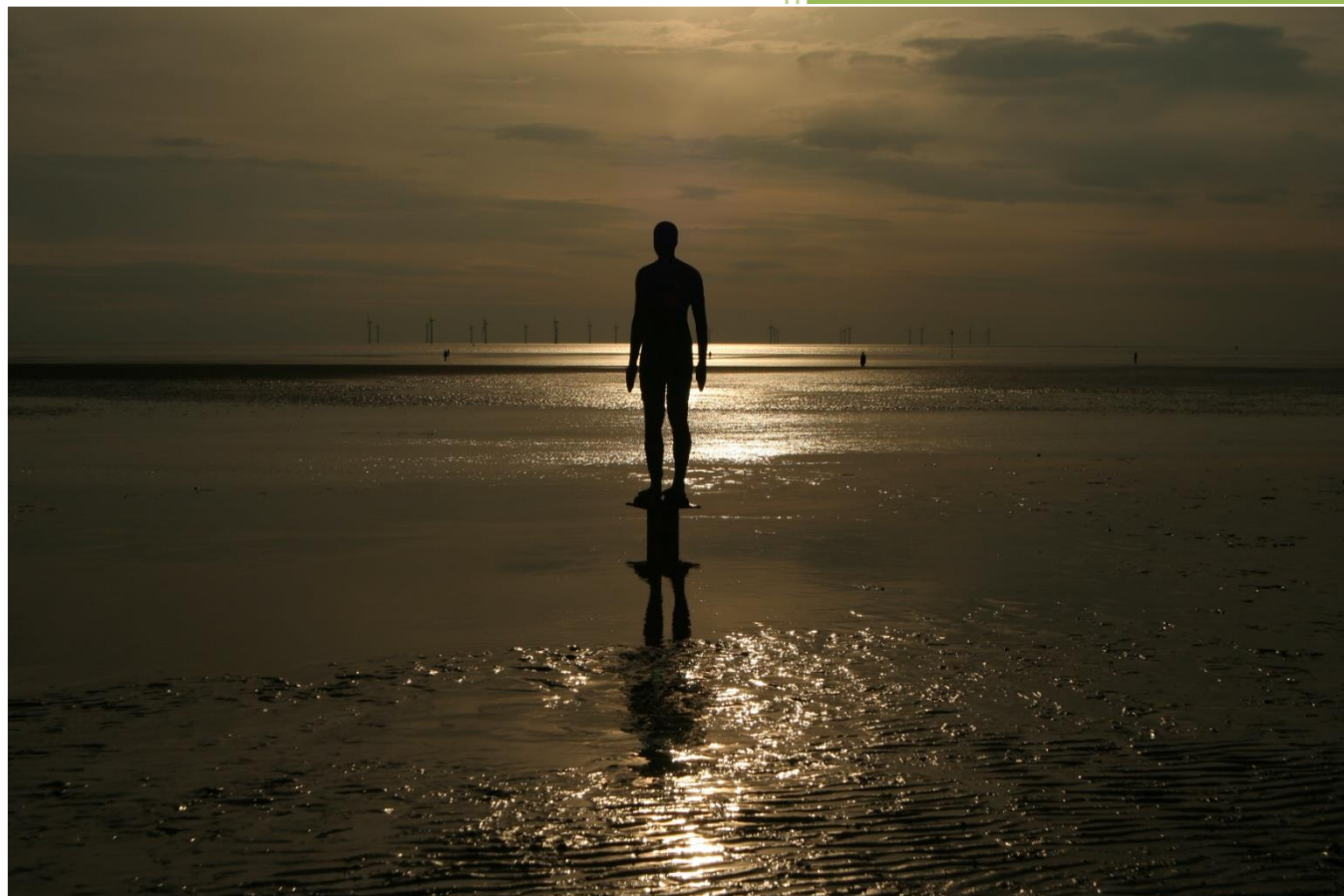


Graduate Teaching Assistants



Session 2

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University of Manchester

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GTA Training

By Andrew Davies



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.

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

Approachable

Encouraging

Respectful

Communication

Expert

Enthusiastic

Passionate

Humble

Flexible

Reflective

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? Discuss as a group.

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 on 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 this particular period in History".

Task 2

In small groups of 3 or 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.

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)

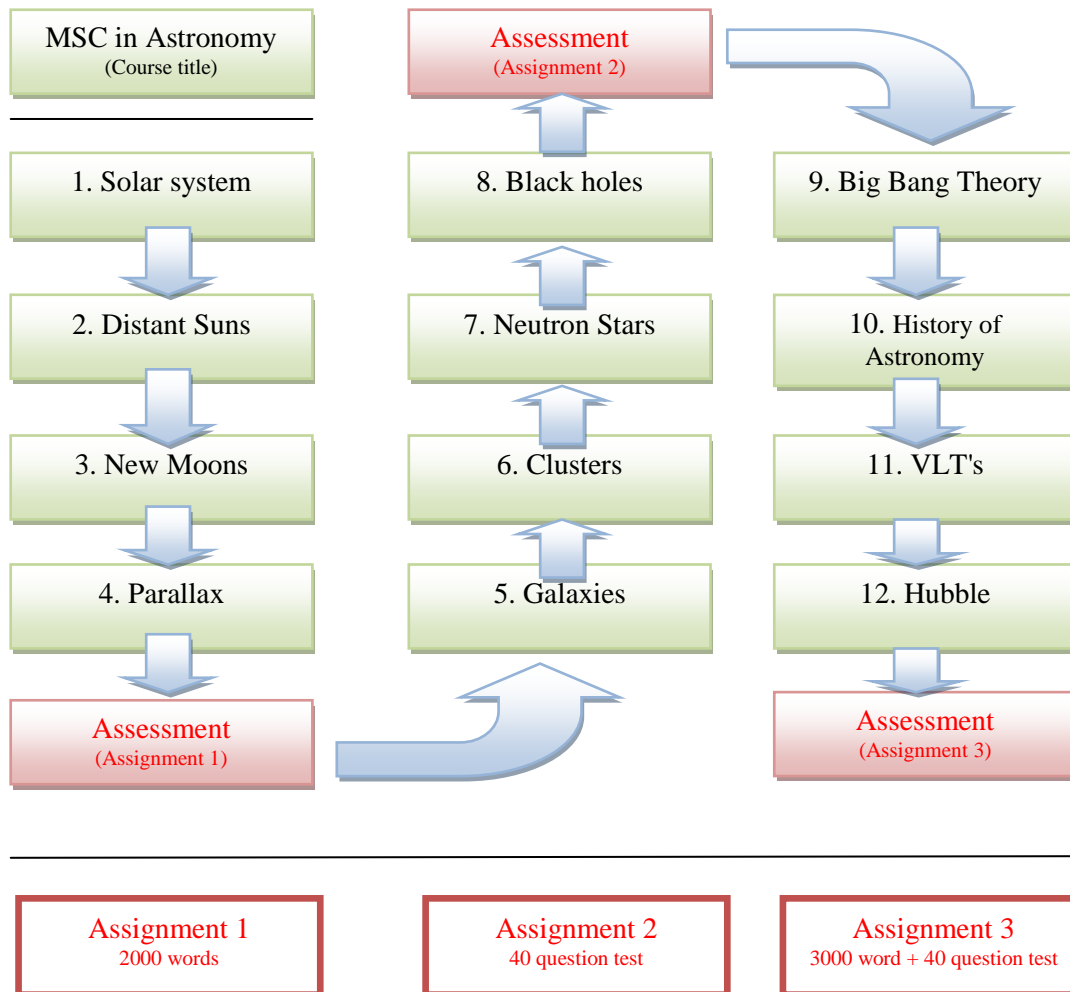
Course guides can contain all the information a student might want about a course for example:

- 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:

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 an oppression than those usually imposed by teachers. Assessment has a powerful influence over what and how a student 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 he/she 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 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?

The reflective practitioner – reflection-in- and -on-action

The Reflective Practitioner: Schon

Donald Schon

It is important to reflect on what you are doing, as part of the learning process.
(page 7)

One of Donald Schon's contributions was to bring 'reflection' into the centre of an understanding of what we, as teaching professionals do.

The notions of "*reflection-in-action*", and "*reflection-on-action*" were central to Schon's efforts in this area. The former, "*reflection-in-action*", is sometimes described as 'thinking on our feet'. It involves looking to our experiences, connecting with our feelings. It entails building new understandings to inform our actions in the situation that is unfolding.

The teacher reflects on the phenomenon before them, and on the prior understandings which have been implicit in their behaviour. They carry out an experiment which serves to generate both a new understanding of the phenomenon and a change in the situation (Schon 1983: pp68).

We have been concentrating on the latter: "*reflection-on-action*". We have seen that the act of reflecting-on-action, be it ours or that of others, enables us to spend time exploring why we acted as we did, what was happening and so on. In so doing we develop sets of questions and ideas about our activities and practice.

Practitioners build up a collection of images, ideas, examples and actions that they can draw upon. Schon saw this as central to reflective practice.

Learning styles

The Reflective Practitioner: Schon & Kolb



Donald Schon

It is important to reflect on what you are doing, as part of the learning process.
(page 7)

Reflective Observation is the second stage in the Kolb learning cycle.

Kolb

Kolb developed a theory of experiential learning that can give us a useful model by which to develop our practice. This is called The Kolb Cycle, The Learning Cycle or The Experiential Learning Cycle.

(page 8)

How?

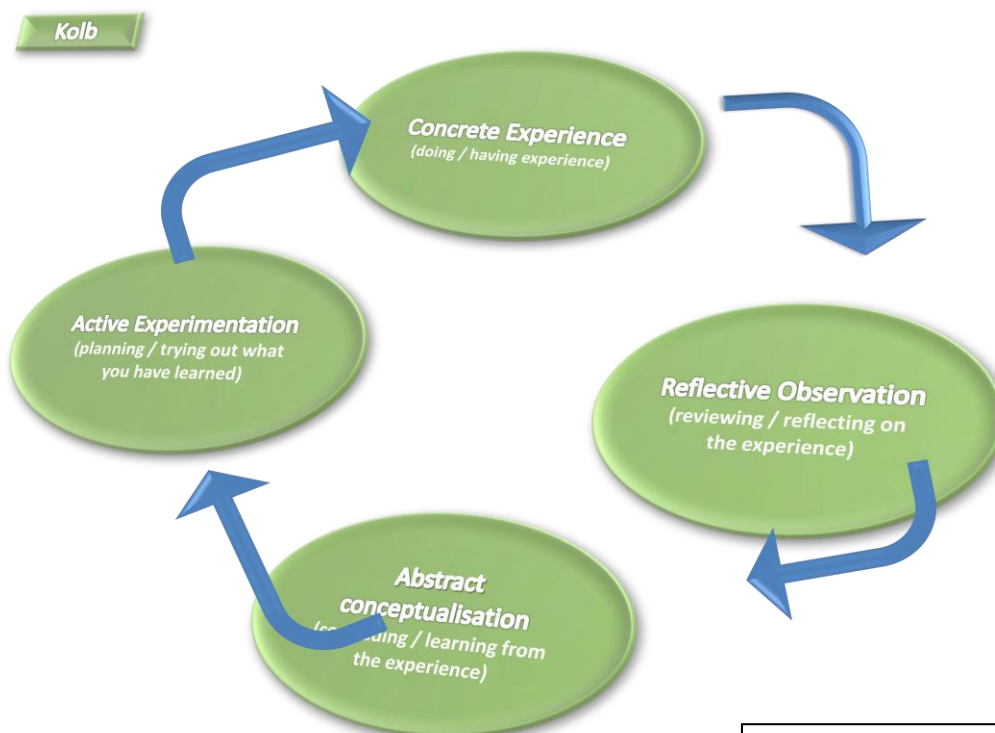


These can be achieved through a process of reflection.

According to Boud, Cohen and Walker:

“Reflection is an important human activity in which people recapture their experience, think about it, mull it over and evaluate it. It is this working with experience that is important in learning.” — (1985:19)

Kolb's learning cycle provides a useful descriptive models of the adult learning process.



Learning cycle. Adapted from Kolb, D.A (1984)

Learning styles

Learning Styles



In exploring how reflective practice can support and aid learning it is important to look at how we learn. The following points have been made about the process of learning:

- Learning is individual.
- Learning is contextual.
- Learning is relational.

In exploring how reflective practice can support and aid learning it is important to look at how we learn. The following points can be made about the process of learning:

- **Learning is Individual:** *All students start from their own position of knowledge and have their own set of experiences to draw upon.*
- **Learning should be Contextual:** *Students need to understand that the context in which they learn and operate affects how and what they understand.*
- **Learning is relational.** *In order to make sense and achieve a deep understanding of material and experiences students need to relate new information to existing knowledge and experiences.*

learning styles indicators



page 11

The VAK learning styles model provides a very easy and quick reference inventory by which to assess people's preferred learning styles, and then most importantly, to design learning methods and experiences that match people's preferences:

VAK: visual-auditory-kinaesthetic learning styles

The VAK learning styles model provides a very quick and easy reference inventory by which to assess people's preferred learning styles, and then most importantly, to design learning methods and experiences that match people's preferences:

Visual learning style involves the use of seen or observed things, including pictures, diagrams, demonstrations, displays, handouts, films, flip-chart, etc.

Auditory learning style involves the transfer of information through listening: to the spoken word, of self or others, of sounds and noises.

Kinaesthetic learning involves physical experience - touching, feeling, holding, doing, practical hands-on experiences.

It is easy to begin to assess your own or another person's learning style within the Visual-Auditory-Kinaesthetic model.

Here are some common indicators.

Tick the statement which best applies to you. (See example).

Let's say, for example, you want to bake a cake. Your preferred method would be to:

"Ask a cook", you would tick as follows:

	A		B		C	
Bake a cake	Read recipe book		Ask a cook	✓	Have a go	

Each tick equals 1 point. Total each column to indicate dominance.

Remember, there are no right and wrong answers.

Task	A		B		C	
1. Operate new equipment	Read instructions		Listen to explanation		Have a go	
2. Travel directions	Look at a map		Ask for spoken directions		Follow your nose and maybe use a compass	
3. Cook a new dish	Follow a recipe		Call a friend for explanation		Follow your instinct, tasting as you cook	
4. Teach someone something	Write instructions		Explain verbally		Demonstrate and let them have a go	
5. You'd say..	I see what you mean		I hear what you are saying		I know how you feel	
6. You'd say..	Show me		Tell me		Let me try	
7. You'd say..	Watch how I do it		Listen to me explain		You have a go	
8. Faulty goods	Write a letter		Phone		Send or take it back to the store	
9. Leisure	Museums and galleries		Music and conversation		Playing sport or DIY	
10. Buying gifts	Books		Music		Tools and gadgets	
11. Shopping	Look and imagine		Discuss with shop staff		Try on and test	
12. Choose a holiday	Read the brochures		Listen to recommendations		Imagine the experience	
13. Choose a new car	Read the reviews		Discuss with friends		Test-drive what you fancy	
	A		B		C	
Total ticks						

Task 3

Based on the VAK learning style indicators, what type of learner are you and are there any occasions when that could change?

Look at your partner and see if you can identify their learning style from observing and talking to them in the brief time you have had together.

Discuss your thoughts with your partner. Now, look at the others in the room and see if you can guess what their learning style is. Discuss with them when you have all made your choice.

Were you correct?

How many of you have the same learning style? _____

What are the implications of this?

How would you address this when planning teaching sessions?

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* Influential book that examines professional knowledge, professional contexts and reflection-in-action. Examines and studies the process involved in various instances of professional judgement. This has become a core reading in most teacher training programmes.