

# Teaching Methods

FLINDERS UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA  
STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING UNIT

ROOM 1304  
PHYSICAL SCIENCES BUILDING

FAX: (08) 8201 5169  
TELEPHONE: (08) 8201 3180

## LECTURING FOR THE FIRST TIME



Let's face it, giving a lecture for the first time is more than a little scary. You're exposed, you're outnumbered and you may be a little worried about how you're actually going to pull the whole thing off. This brief handout aims to help you plan and deliver effective lectures. Firstly, what not to do.....

### SOME MISTAKES LECTURERS MAKE

- trying to say everything there is to know about the subject
- not defining the main points of the lecture, so the students can't see the woods for the trees
- not giving enough time for the students to think about the points raised and ask questions
- not giving enough time for the students to take adequate notes
- assuming the students remember everything they've ever been told
- not helping the students to see what to do between lectures
- not linking lectures to assessed topics
- not linking lectures to other lectures that the student may be taking
- looking at their watch or the clock ( this will always cause everyone else to check the time, making it "drag". Instead take your watch off and put it somewhere so that you can idiscreetly refer to it.

# Teaching Methods



## **THE TOP SIX STUDENT TURN-OFFS:**

- Poor visuals (using red or yellow pens on overheads, unclear writing, too much information at once etc.)
- Unclear lecture structure
- Distracting habits (repeatedly touching hair, looking at watch, tapping pen, pacing, overusing the laser pointer etc.)
- Monotone voice and / or mumbling into the board
- Going too fast
- Disorganisation (not knowing how to work equipment, losing overheads etc.)


## **THE TOP TEN STUDENT TURN-ONS:**

- Providing a syllabus which outlines the course
- Lecturer enthusiasm
- Varying the delivery
- Giving handouts which summarise the main points (allowing the students to listen more)
- Briefly recapping key ideas before building on them (including material from previous years' lectures)
- Clear, simple visuals (produced with dark colours)
- Using examples which put the information into context or apply it to reality
- Demonstrations and models
- Pausing between points so that they can be thought about and any questions discussed
- Providing references for further reading

## **POINTS TO REMEMBER BEFORE YOU START**

- **What are your objectives?**
  - Decide on the structure and the main points of the lecture. (This may be stated in the course syllabus.)
- **What aspects of the students' knowledge do you wish to improve?**
  - What are the most important points you wish to get across?
  - Is this practical given the amount of time you have? If not can you keep the points to a basic level or provide other sources of learning? (Textbooks, practicals etc.)
- **What is the level of the students background knowledge?**
  - Is it reasonable to assume they have remembered everything from previous years?
- **Are you familiar with the venue?**
  - Do you know what equipment is provided?

# Teaching Methods

- 
- Are you confident in being able to use it? (do you need to practise writing on the board or using overheads?)
  - Do you need to organise to bring anything of your own? (Spare pens, chalk, pointers, overhead projector, models etc.)

# Teaching Methods

## **HOW TO STRUCTURE THE LECTURE:**

### **1. "Tell 'em what you are going to tell 'em" (Introduction)**

- **State the purpose of the lecture**  
Put this in context to what they are learning
- **Give a summary of your AIMS and lecture CONTENT**  
This should be adequate to grab the students' attention. It also clearly signposts where the lecture will lead.
- **Revise earlier material if necessary**  
This ensures you are all at the same starting point.
- **Aim to grab the students' attention whilst you are delivering the introduction**  
If you do this at the start you are well on the way to delivering an effective lecture. You may wish to:
  - open with a controversial statement then put it in the context of your talk later on
  - tell a relevant, anecdotal story highlighting the issues at hand
  - do something unusual, dress up or give a demonstration

### **2. "Tell 'em" (Main Body)**

The main body is the major part of your talk where explanation and reinforcement of ideas occur.

A good way to structure this is to:

- state the main point
- develop and explain the ideas behind it
- give examples
- provide a restatement of the point.

Repeat this for all the points that you wish to cover, remembering to allow adequate pauses in your talk so that the students can take in what you have just said. Finally give a conclusion (your opinion).

When planning your delivery, it is also worth noting that the average attention span of a student is

only 5-6 minutes so you must use variety in your delivery to keep them focused. This will also assist the different types of learners (visual or verbal for example) present in your class. For instance, you might like to rotate between:

- **Mental involvement**  
giving them a challenge or a problem to think about
- **Visual involvement**  
overheads, writing on the board, models, demonstrations
- **Verbal involvement**  
asking for questions or comments on specific issues
- **Physical involvement**  
incorporate activities, small group discussions, etc.

### **3. "Tell 'em what you told 'em" (Conclusion)**

After bringing your main body to a climax, say the magic words "In summary..." to bring back those who have mentally wandered and confirm to the attentive students that they were with you all the way. This also confirms the important "take home messages".

- concisely summarise each main point in single phrase form
- summarise your conclusion
- summarise the purpose of your lecture (putting it into perspective)
- ensure you have an obvious finish

# Teaching Methods



## **DRESS**

Dress appropriately so that you feel good. Usually audiences only notice when you are poorly dressed. Dark colours are authoritative, but make sure you don't blend into the background. Also make sure your dress is not disarranged. Skewed ties or jewellery will distract up to 20% of the audience!

## **DEALING WITH STAGE FRIGHT.**

The statement "Good lecturers are not nervous" is false. They suffer from nerves just like everyone else, however they learn how to handle them differently. Think of all the signs of nervous fear: perspiring, dry throat, trembling, fast heartbeat. They are identical to the symptoms of nervous excitement! The experienced speaker therefore puts "mind over matter" and mentally transforms the signals into "inspiration".

Nervousness cannot and must not be eliminated. If you are too relaxed you may lapse into monotone and cause the students to fall asleep! Channel your nerves into creating an exciting delivery.

Fear is actually an absence of CONTROL. Remember you have been asked to lecture because the department feels you know your stuff. Therefore if you've prepared well, got there early, checked your equipment and rehearsed your lecture beforehand you are in control.

If you're still nervous, apply the "Catastrophe Scale". Think of the worse thing that could ever happen to you and give it a score of ten. Now think of the worst thing that can happen to you in the lecture and give it a score. Forgetting a pen or an overhead? Put the talk in perspective - you are not going to die!

Remember to BREATHE during your lecture. This is not only an effective way to calm your nerves, but also gives the students time to write things down and think about what you are saying. Also make sure you have a drink handy.

Finally, remember that the students are friendly. They want you to succeed!

# Teaching Methods



## **REFERENCES:**

The following resources are available in the "Staff Development and Training Unit", situated in Room 1304, Physical Sciences Building, Ext.3180.

Baume, David and Carole (1996). "Learning to Teach - Making Presentations." Oxford Centre for Staff Development.

Bochner, Diane; Gibbs, Graham and Wisker, Gina (1995). "Teaching more students - Supporting more Students." Oxford Centre for Staff Development.

Cannon, Robert (1995). "Lecturing." HERDSA, Green guide NO. 7.

Department of Human Services and Health (1995). "The Art of Presentation - The complete guide to design and delivery."

Gibbs, Graham (1992). " Teaching more students - Independent Learning with more students." Oxford Centre for Staff Development.

Jones, Graham (1995). "Enhancing Postgraduate Supervision at UNE." The University of New England.

Percival, Fred and Gibbs, Graham (1994). "Course Design for Resource Based Learning - Technology."

Oxford Centre for Staff Development.

Tennant, Mark (1993). "Teaching matters - Lectures." The centre for learning and teaching, University of Technology, Sydney. (VIDEO)