
**Standards Fund:
Dissemination of Good Practice Project**

A Guide to Effective Teaching and Learning



**A collaborative project between
Sparsholt College Hampshire and the
South East Land Based Colleges**

Contents	Page
Foreword Director of Learning and Academic Development	2
Introduction	3
Chapter 1 Assessing Learners' Needs	5
Chapter 2 Planning and Preparing Teaching and Learning Programmes for Groups and Individuals	11
Chapter 3 Developing and Using a range of Teaching and Learning Techniques	15
Chapter 4 Managing the Learning Process	21
Chapter 5 Providing Learners with Support	27
Chapter 6 Assessing the Outcomes of Learning and Learners' Achievements	31
Chapter 7 Evaluating Yourself	37
Glossary	39

Foreword

Students (or more recently learners) are the reason why our Colleges exist. Amongst the mêlée of paper and systems it is sometimes possible to forget this. In more recent years, through the Common Inspection Framework the importance of teaching and learning has been heightened. Changes in Government policy, social trends and attitudes and the types of students coming to college have caused many of us to rethink the way we teach and deliver courses and the curriculum.

Teaching is about making a difference. We, whether teachers and/or college managers, are entrusted with students for a period of time in their lives to make that difference.

One thing we all remember perhaps from our time at school, college or university are the good and the bad teachers. Indeed, many years ago I remember the following comment or words similar being made at a conference during the early days of IT in education (1992ish) that “the most important marketing for a College goes on in the classroom”.

The "e" revolution is now upon us however without "energy", "enthusiasm" and "empathy" there can be no "engagement" - the essence of teaching and learning.

This guide resulted from the Standards Fund Dissemination of Good Practice Project within South East Land Based Colleges and has been written by an experienced practitioner.

The guide is highly readable. We trust that the guide will be a help to both full time and part time staff. Wherever you are in your teaching career, we trust the guide will help you to reflect on what you do and consider how it can be done better.

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Introduction

Teaching is different. At various points you will be called upon to be a leader, an actor, a counsellor, a diplomat, an expert, a manager and a friend. Occasionally, you will be all these people, at the same time.

You will be expected to cope with the elation of success and the disappointments of failure; sometimes within the same class, certainly within the same course.

You will be working with students of all ages and backgrounds, some with the foresight to work hard to achieve their goals, many with a worrying absence of drive and application. Some students will make you want to laugh out loud; other will bring you to the point of tears. All will challenge and excite your professional skills to the limit.

You will learn much from your teaching colleagues, but you can learn valuable lessons from those on the other side of the teaching desk as well. Teach them well and they will teach you how to be better still.

As a sector we are no longer solely interested in delivery of teaching; we are now focused on effective learning. Effective learning requires structured teaching, which in turn is based on core competences, which you should seek to develop to best effect in all your lessons.

As a teacher you have to make a difference to the understanding or skills of your students. You have to secure improvements in each member of your class. There is room at Sparsholt to bring your own insights and strengths to bear on our students. We welcome enthusiastic, innovative teaching provided it is founded on sound educational principles and practices.

Please take the time to read and evaluate the issues in this guide. They are a distillation of much educational practice and research and have proved their worth in millions of classroom hours throughout the sector. They are central to your success as an effective teacher.

Teaching is different, very different. Different, every day, every class, every time.

Chapter 1

Assessing Learners' Needs

Who Are My Learners?

In short, they are the students in your class: a collection of young people and adults who have made a conscious choice to invest their time, money, personal interests and professional aspirations in you and your course.

All learners expect to be taught well, to work hard, to have their work related to the vocation they are following and to be treated as the adults they are. They look to you as the subject's expert, expect to learn all about your subject from you and want you to provide constructive feedback on their progress.

They expect you to have a positive effect on all relevant aspects of their development and to help them to realise their full potential.

Identifying the Potential to Succeed

Ask any student to profile exactly his/her academic potential and you will be met with a mixture of embarrassment and bewilderment. Few of us can define the component parts of our academic potential, let alone hazard an informed guess at the limits of it. While we express our academic aspirations quite easily, most of us are rather more reticent about articulating what our potential is for achieving these goals.

There are problems in store when a student's academic aspirations are not matched by their potential. Fortunately colleges are pretty good at getting the right students on to the right course. Careful pre-course counselling and diagnostic assessment ensures weak students won't be asked to do advanced courses, while academically stronger students won't be allowed to coast on courses which are beneath them. Enrolments are carefully managed to give the right mix of units for each student.

You can be sure that the students sitting in your class have earned the right to be there, as they hold a suitable blend of academic capabilities and personal qualities, which with your help will enable them to cope with the demands of the course you have planned for them.

They embark on your course with your help and most will need your help to stay on it. It may seem relatively straightforward to get all your students to the same academic end-point. It could be if all your students had identical academic potentials, But, why should we expect students who differ from each other in age, gender, social, cultural or religious backgrounds, levels of confidence, motivation and previous educational experience, to have identical potential?

Their potentials are indeed very different. Academic potential is as varied and intriguing as the personalities of each of your students. Coping with this diversity is the cornerstone of differentiation in the classroom and effective teaching and learning.

Do Students' Needs Change During a Course?

Only a few, very gifted students cope equally well with all parts of a course. Some individuals will cope quite effortlessly with the practical parts of a course, while others will make more rapid progress in the work experience aspect of their studies. A few, very few, might really enjoy a long formal lecture.

Some students may manage well enough with parts of a course, say Units A, B and C, but have major problems with Units D and E. For other students it's a different combination of Units which cause them problems. And within a single course Unit, you can expect students to have varying degrees of success with the each of the different topics you cover.

Perhaps problems with note-taking for a majority of students stops them listening attentively to your fast-talking presentation. In other circumstances it may be a general weakness in Maths or English which makes progress in some topics more difficult, whereas weak study skills stops these same students making effective progress in their private study sessions. Each student will have his or her own combination of strengths and weaknesses, which they bring to you each time your class meets.

How Do You Develop Them?

Not only is each student's academic potential different, but the ways in which their potential is best developed will also be different.

Two students may have broadly similar academic potentials, but to develop them the teacher almost always has to manage their learning in different ways. For example, one may understand a topic best by carrying out an investigation in a lab or workshop, while the other learns more effectively by reading different accounts or analyses of the problem and coming to an independent understanding. These are called **preferred learning styles** and we will return to them later in this handbook.

We have been making the case that your students have a range of different learning needs; ones which may persist throughout their time with you (e.g. dyslexia, hearing problems, attention deficit disorder etc.) or ones which will develop and recede as they confront the range of subjects and topics which make up your course. Be alert to these changing needs and the effects they have on their owners. Left undetected and/or un-addressed these learning needs will compromise your student's achievements and make your teaching much more difficult and be a very dispiriting professional experience for you in the process.

Securing Student Success by Meeting Needs

At the start of this chapter a class was considered a collection of young people and/or adult learners. It has now developed into something more. It's a group of students sharing a common interest and displaying very different and differing learning needs.

Understanding this distinction is crucial to your role in the classroom. Your primary teaching aim is to recognise these learning needs in students as/when they arise, deal with them appropriately, manage the learning for each student in ways in which they learn best and enable them all to achieve their goal, which should be in line with their academic potential. Not an impossible task, as we shall see.

How to Get to Know Your Students' Needs

We need to be clear that you are not expected to be an expert on students' learning needs. There are professionals who can identify students' learning problems very easily and advise staff on ways of minimising their debilitating effects on learning. You are very likely to be working with course colleagues to implement these individual learning plans, produced for students in your class and you should be willing to work as a member of a team to do so. Full advice is available from learner support office or through your course team leader.

Your first class brings you, your syllabus and your students together. You know a lot about yourself and about your syllabus, but at the outset you don't know very much about the group assembled in front of you. You want an idea of your students' needs quickly so you can start planning your course around these needs. You will have been told your students' names, ages and probably their current qualifications, but nothing really in terms of their individual strengths and weaknesses. Getting to know your students' situations is relatively simple.

Table 1 has a list of issues you might investigate with your students and the how you can use their feedback in structuring learning in your classes

You won't get all the information you want from the first lesson. Indeed, the course leader/manager should provide a profile of the student group as part of the teaching team briefing.

Some of the issues outlined above will alter as individual students' personal and study circumstances change. The important thing is that you continue to monitor, evaluate and react to these changes as they occur and adapt your teaching to match these changes.

TABLE 1

Question/Issue	Examples of how students' feedback helps you plan your course:
Why are they doing this course?	<p>Gives an insight into your students' motivation and which can affect interactions in group work you have planned</p> <p>Indicates popular/unpopular parts of the course which you can address as you plan</p> <p>Students' career intentions provide evidence of personal enthusiasms, which you can tap into when planning activities and assessments</p>
How they feel about education and training?	Helps identify students whose previous educational experiences were positive /negative /neutral. Allows teacher to work in different ways with these sub-groups to use and adjust perceptions
How confident are they?	<p>Enables teacher to identify the under and over confident in the light of previous academic success and adjustments to the tone and nature of assignment feedback</p> <p>Different teaching strategies can be used to promote, funnel or curb enthusiasm to help learning</p>
How much previous knowledge do they have?	Provides a profile of current subject-specific understanding. Allows teacher to identify gaps in class's baseline knowledge and decide on ways of addressing the shortfall before course goes too far. Also provides opportunities to use students with knowledge beyond the baseline in novel ways
What are their personal circumstances?	Tells teacher whether students' commitment or concentration is/may be affected. Provides time and opportunity to plan activities around unusual personal circumstances
How do they relate with other members of the group?	Provides information used in planning group work and leadership exercises as well as seating decisions in classrooms or workshops
What are the "character traits" of the individuals within the group?	Insight into the reticent and attention-seeking members of the group. Together with personal data it allows teacher to plan teacher–student and student-student classroom interactions which makes use of or adjusts characteristics as required
What activities best suit their preferred learning style?	Provides information on ways in which each student learns best and allows teacher to plan activities which feed these learning channels as often as possible

Planning the Classroom Dynamics

The first class will be the first time all your students have met one another. Set up the room to promote a lot of initial eye contact and allow enough time to cement good working relationships between you and your students. Ways of doing this are covered later in this handbook.

You could use a discussion format to get answers to some of the more general issues. Or use a written exercise for the more personal needs. Be prepared to do a lot of learning about your students' learning needs in the first few classes. It will pay dividends in the weeks to come as you will be planning for a group which you have fully profiled, safe in the knowledge that you are matching learning activities to the needs of your students as closely as possible.

A Word of Reassurance

The requirement to tailor learning activities to the preferred learning style and learning needs of your students is not a new concept in education. This differentiated approach does not require you to produce multiple sets of tasks and teaching materials, each closely honed and matched to the specific needs of a particular student. You would be run ragged if you tried to do it.

Nor are we saying that weaker students should be given easy questions, while more able students get the harder ones. No, it's more to do with making the learning and feedback personal, making sure that at times in your delivery the methods and approaches you use include all the learning styles of your students at some point and that opportunities for learning go beyond teacher input. Learning styles are considered in more details in later chapters.

Successful teaching is about developing a suitable rapport with your students, treating them as individuals and meeting their individual learning needs yet maintaining the coherence of the group.

Remember, you can have learning without teaching, but you can't have teaching without learning. How you can do this is covered in the next sections

Chapter 2

Planning and Preparing Teaching and Learning Programmes for Groups and Individuals

Your syllabus requires you to plan and deliver effective teaching which will cover of a range of subject and topics. These topics are likely to require you to develop your students' intellectual and physical skills, their understanding and appreciation of facts, principles and concepts and to develop a range of higher-level personal and professional values and attitudes in them.

The balance between all of these will depend on the subject you are teaching, the level of the course you are teaching, the nature of the qualification linked to it, as well as the capabilities of your students.

You have to find approaches to covering all the syllabus topics in ways which enable all your students to acquire the skills, knowledge and attitudes required of them by the qualification's awarding body. This is not easy as students in a class rarely learn in the same way or at similar rates.

The ways in which humans learn is still an actively researched issue in education and theories abound on the psychological/biological processes involved. A number of educational theories lay great significance on the power relationship between teacher and students and modern teaching methods promotes a much more equal power relationship than in the past.

Many teachers build teaching plans on a few basic principles. They adopt strategies which help students to help themselves by encouraging them to use learning resources effectively, assume responsibility for their own learning, take decisions about how they learn best, reflect on the ways in which they learn and making learning as active and participative as possible.

The teaching of skills requires a different approach to that used in the teaching of knowledge. In turn, both will be different to the approaches that effectively develop students' attitudes. Finding the most effective combination of methods is a pre-requisite to effective teaching.

With so many pairs of eyes on you at the front of the class the need to feel in control of the teaching process is natural and necessary. At the outset you are likely to adopt strategies with which you are most comfortable, are most familiar or which you have experienced as a student. You will grow in confidence as teaching methods begin to have the effects you anticipated.

As your confidence grows you will wish to experiment with how your students learn best and you will find yourself looking for ways of enabling your students to learn more effectively.

Begin to investigate different ways of teaching and structuring learning for your students, explore each approach in depth for the contribution it could make to the way in which you want your students to learn. Build up your expertise in each approach to teaching and develop your confidence in adapting and applying it to the classes you teach.

Your classes may be different sizes. Some approaches to teaching will work well with large classes, but not with small ones. Other approaches are most effective when you are working with individual students or small groups and you would not use them with large groups.

Most approaches lie somewhere in the middle and depend upon what you want your learning outcomes to be. What works well in your situation and makes your teaching most effective has to be your guiding principle.

Students appreciate variation and would not thank you for using the same teaching technique at every class. You should try to become proficient at using as wide a range of teaching techniques as possible and choose the right combination of techniques for each class.

Setting Clear Objectives

Be governed by the principle that you only use what works. In this context *works* relates to the achievement of the learning outcomes you have set for all members of your class. Therefore be clear about what you are trying to achieve with your students and match the approach to the size and ability of your class.

Learning objectives are at the centre of your planning process. What is it you want your students to be able to do as a result of being in your class?

A learning objective for a skill-based class on stable management may look something like this:

By the end of this class my students will be able to:

- (a) identify and remove all soiled straw from a stable*
- (b) dispose of soiled straw in a safe manner*
- (c) estimate the volume of clean straw required and arrange its safe collection from the straw store*
- (d) apply clean straw to a depth of 7 inches in all parts of the stable floor.*

While a class designed to develop horticultural knowledge and understanding might have the following learning objectives:

By the end of the class my students will be able to:

- (a) state four physical differences between monocotyledonous and dicotyledonous plants*

- (b) select the three monocotyledonous plants from the sample of eight pot plants provided*
- (c) describe the germination conditions for two of the monocotyledonous plants on show*
- (d) make an annotated drawing of the appearance of 2 day old seedlings from plant specimen D*

Whereas, a series of linked classes in animal care seeking to develop higher skills in students may have these objectives:

By the end of the class my students will be able to:

- (a) write a 250 word account of the main parts of UK law regulating the importation of pets into the country*
- (b) Comment on 3 weaknesses of the current legislation*
- (c) Provide an analysis of how improvements to the legislation would address these 3 weaknesses*
- (d) Using evidence drawn from other two other European countries, argue the cost/benefit analysis of extending English law in the ways they suggest*
- (e) justify their views in a plenary seminar of course peers and lecturers using a PowerPoint presentation of no more than 4 slides.*

You should be very specific about what you want the learning outcomes of each class to be, as they will frame and influence your approaches to teaching the topics and will help you to choose the right teaching techniques. A lecture might achieve the transfer of small amounts of knowledge, but it's not a good method for developing students' evaluative skills. If your expected outcome was a physical skill such as adjusting the blades on a lawnmower to 2 mm, the teaching methods you would use would be very different to that used to calculate the fuel used by a lawnmower to cut a cricket circle. You would assess each of these outcomes in very different ways.

The next chapter looks at the range of teaching methods available to you and discusses the situations in which you might consider using them.

Chapter 3

Developing and Using a Range of Teaching and Learning Techniques

Your choice of teaching methods is wide. Some are very teacher-centred, while others are student-centred. The list of methods includes lecture, demonstrations, team teaching, discussions, debates, question and answer, video, seminar, laboratory/workshop, games/quiz, brainstorming, field trips, role-play, simulations, case studies, projects, assignments, tutorials, and 1 to 1 teaching. Levels of student participation vary greatly across this list.

Teaching Plans and Class Sizes

Your teaching plans will be greatly influenced by the size of your class. Some times you will teach a very small group of 1 or 2 students. Projects, assignments, tutorials will probably be most appropriate in these circumstances. As your group size increases it begins to resemble a more traditional FE class. Small classes of 5 to 20 students would enable you to use discussion techniques along with a combination of other methods, such as short lecture, followed by question and answer, some small groups discussion and individual work. How you combine these methods and in what order and for how long you use each of them, will be up to you.

Some classes of more than 20 students make individual work difficult and your choice of effective teaching methods can be limited. Dealing with individuals in a class of this size is not easy and you may elect to use a combination of lecture and demonstration as your main teaching methods.

Teaching and Learning Styles

Students in your class will learn best in different ways. Some of your students may learn best by carrying out practical tasks in a laboratory or workshop, while others will prefer to learn in a group which has been presented with evidence and set the task of working back to find the principles underpinning it. Others may learn best by reading and listening. This is not to say that students can learn only in one way. They may have a preferred style in which they learn best, but they can and will learn in lots of other ways, albeit that these learning styles are not their most effective channel of doing so.

The issue for you is how you meet these different styles of learning. You should attempt to structure a series of different approaches to learning which, when put together as a whole provides your students with part of their learning in a style which suits them.

You are not expected to tune every part of your class each to each student's preferred learning style. Such an approach would take hours to plan, place a heavy demand on college resources and would require you to be running a number of parallel mini-classes all at the same time. However, you should mix and match your teaching methods to ensure that they match the learning styles of all your students at some points in the class.

Teaching Methods

A list of common teaching methods is given in Table 2. Some methods are particularly effective in developing students' skills, others in developing their subject knowledge and understanding, while other approaches address students' attitudes. Each of the methods below carries:

S helps with skills development,

KU useful in developing students' knowledge and understanding,

A may help you develop your students' attitudes.

These recommendations are not exclusive. If used in an inspired way many if not all of these methods can promote learning in all three areas of student development.

TABLE 2

Lecture KU	Formal teaching method, with limited opportunity for student/teacher interaction. Used mainly to impart knowledge and understanding. Teacher can adjust duration to suit circumstances
Discussion KU, S, A	A more balanced relationship between teacher and students. Teacher plays catalytic rather than instructional role; moving in to steer, calm or galvanise process when necessary
Practical KU, S	Experiential learning; can be a real situation or a contrived simulation
Question and answer KU, S, A	Questions can come from teacher or students. Careful phrasing of questions by teachers is required to make them a good learning or assessment tool
Tutorials KU, S, A	A method to provide guidance and support for individual or very small groups of students
Demonstration S	Students observe teacher carrying out activities. Students' physical involvement is limited but can be made participatory by combining with insightful questioning by the teacher
Seminar KU, A	A formalised discussion session in which students report on issues of research carried out individually or in small groups
Problem solving KU	Teacher defines issue and the class solves the problem. With care, it lends itself to whole-class, small group and individual working
Case study KU, A	Discussion method in which students examine a real or simulated situation and consider their findings
Role play A	Students enact roles in a simulated situation and consider the implications which arise
Project KU, A	A method where student participation is very high: as the choice of how to approach the task is for students to decide. Can be used to bring different parts of the course together.
Assignment KU, A	A focussed vocationally relevant exercise, usually quite structured in format

It is no use selecting teaching methods which have been carefully matched to your students' learning styles, only for the effectiveness of your teaching to be compromised by the inability of students to use the methods to best advantage. Lecturing requires students to take their own notes. Some students can't do this or are not used to doing it for long periods. In the same way the attention spans of students are different. Mature students may be able to cope with fairly long periods of the same teaching method, but some younger classes will respond more positively if you change the approaches to teaching more often within a class.

Rarely will you be faced with a class of consistently highly motivated students whose enthusiasm for your teaching knows no bounds. More likely, the motivation of the most committed students will rise and fall over time, sometime within the same class session. Your enthusiasm for your subject and the ways in which teach it can affect students' motivation enormously. Some students enjoy working with others, so use groups teaching methods in these circumstances to capitalise on this enjoyment.

Negotiate with students to find the best ways of matching your teaching with their learning. You won't be able to meet these needs all the time, but they will influence your teaching plans and make your classroom teaching more effective.

Schemes of Work

Deciding upon teaching strategies is only one part of planning effective teaching. Your selection of appropriate teaching methods is important, but each approach needs other factors to ensure that it deliver the outcomes you expect

Your teaching methods will depend on good teaching aids. You have to consider the relationship with your students and recognise that the arrangement of the teaching room will affect the communication in the classroom and that you have an obligation you have to assess learning in a fair and valid way if you are to retain the confidence of your class.

You should structure a teaching session around the objectives you have set for your class. A scheme of work details the sequence of topics you will cover in each of your classes and gives you an overview of the order in which you plan to develop the learning of your students. You can use this information to check that the developmental process you plan is logical and builds the skills of your students in an incremental manner.

Lesson Plans

Individual classes should be planned in a much more detailed way. The type of plan depends upon the learning required for that session. The requirements are different for a skills-based class compared with a knowledge session. The lesson plan is a strategy for teaching and provides you with a series of prompts to be used during the lesson. Your plan is not the same as lesson notes which are your comments of the content you want to cover. The lesson plan is pre-occupied with how and when you will deliver the content.

Lessons rarely proceed as planned. There will be developments and delays which will affect your lesson plan so you should build in flexibility and adaptability and not be fazed by minor amendments to delivery intentions. Remember; you are seeking to achieve learning outcomes and not teaching inputs. Provided developments in the classroom contribute to the achievement of your learning outcomes you should be prepared to accommodate them.

Lesson plans are usually divided into 2 parts: initial information and the body of the plan. The initial information will include the title of the lesson, details of the class and the time of the lesson (to allow you to file each lesson plan in your course records) and most importantly the learning objectives.

The body of the plan covers the introductions, the links with previous work, the development of the topics you will cover in the lesson and a conclusion. The balance of each of these will depend upon the type of lesson you have planned- whether it is seeking to develop students' skills, understanding or attitudes or a mixture of these.

Tell the students what you expect to be learned and why it is important that it is learned. Set your lesson in a context of what has been covered in previous classes. Organise the information logically and provide adequate practice and reinforcement opportunities throughout. Assess each student's performance in a fair way and wherever possible share the results of the assessment with them as soon as possible and work with your students to plan remedial action if this is required.

As you begin your class, refresh students' memories of the work which has gone before. Tell them the learning objectives you have set for this class and why they are important at this point in the course. Guide reflection and jog memories to enable students to make connections between earlier, current and future classes.

Allocate times for activities in a class. Be realistic. It won't take you 20 minutes to outline the learning objectives to the class, but it will take more than 20 minutes to carry out a laboratory investigation of the properties of different soil types.

Be Yourself in the Classroom

Don't write out what you are going to say: you will end up reading it and panicking if you lose place in the text. Restrict your notes to cues and key words and extemporise on the themes involved, making sure you have covered the main issues.

Identify the teaching methods and resources you will use. Now move your insight from your teaching input to considering the learning outcomes Visualise yourself in action and move your view on to your students. What are they doing while you are carrying out your plan? Are they active or passive? Have you asked them to carry out activities which link with the teaching methods you are using? On average, students should have a change of activity at least every 15 minutes.

A lesson plan proforma can help you plan a class in detail. It enables you and colleagues to determine whether the approach, timing and teaching methods will support the learning outcomes you have set for the class.

With a large syllabus to work through it is natural to want to concentrate on the content of a lesson and craft an effective delivery mechanism for it. After all the expected learning outcomes for the class are set in terms of the students' understanding of the content. However the introduction and conclusions to a class are critical to the success of the session.

Introductions should be used to motivate your students to want to know more about the topics you are teaching. Use the introduction well. Set the scene for the class while completing administration activities, recap on previous sessions and link each of them to the learning outcomes you have set for this class. Talk about the methods you will use in the class. Profile students' involvement from the outset, so they can visualise their part in the class. Help them to identify what you want them to do. Tell them to take notes when you are speaking, if that's what you want them to do. Alert them to activities they will undertake with others in the class, or if they are going to work on their own and when any assessments will be taking place.

Engage with your students and try to establish a partnership with each of them. Use the relationship to tell them as much about their next learning experience as possible. Then deliver it.

Conclude and Look Forward

Having addressed the lesson's content, as you had planned, you want to conclude a successful lesson in the best way possible. Allow 10% of the lesson time to do this important activity properly. Start concluding by reviewing the lesson and reminding students of the main points of the lesson. Tell them where their understanding was at the beginning of the class and where it is now.

Set homework if it is appropriate and make sure students see the connections between the work being set and the coverage of the topics in the classroom. Test your students understanding of the main learning objectives in a light-hearted way, by having a short question session covering the main points. Ask them if there are any areas of confusion and misunderstanding and be prepared to answer requests for clarification.

And finally, keep their interest and anticipation levels up by looking at what will follow the next time you meet.

Chapter 4

Managing the Learning Process

Your class will have students with a range of capacities and capabilities. In this chapter we look at how will their differences affect you in the classroom and the plans you are making for teaching the class?

Students differ in their abilities to use words with understanding and fluency. Numeric levels will vary, as will students' capacities to memorise the material you have covered. Some students remember better if they see the issues, others if they see them and hear them. It all depends on what works for them. Some of the higher intellectual skills such as reasoning, and creativity will also be different. Manual skills, dexterity, speed, precision and manipulative capacity, reaction times and spatial ability can vary greatly.

Students' enthusiasm and patterns of interest in parts of the syllabus will be different. Their ages will differ and so you should expect differences in objectivity, responsibility and curiosity within the group. The younger students cannot be relied upon to behave as you would expect and most of them will be anxious, fearful of failure, self conscious and more indifferent to aspects of adult-adult interactions you are trying to develop in the classroom.

Perception levels vary and perseverance levels are notoriously fickle in both the young and older students.

A standard course cannot meet the range of abilities, expectations and temperaments of all the students all the time. The best you can hope to achieve is that you meet some of their needs some of the time. Negotiation can help, as students usually respond positively to the process and respect the attempts you are making to match the teaching style with their learning styles. The learning agreement that emerges detail what you and each student should expect to contribute to the learning process and the rights you both have.

Getting Going at Last

All the preparations that normally take place outside the classroom door have been completed. You will have broken down the syllabus into the topics you want to cover. You have spoken with colleagues and ensured that you are briefed on the course duration, the likely reactions of students to your modules/topics, which types of teaching strategies work well with your classes, what tutorial arrangements are in place and how you can use the mechanism to address students' underperformance, how you get access to all the resources you need, settled on the sources of assistance you may need as you progress through the syllabus and the arrangements for formal assessments. So, its time to get in there.

You are as prepared as possible and ready to deliver the lesson and secure the learning outcomes you have set for this class; a process which places demands on all your people management skills. You begin by trying to create an atmosphere in which the most effective learning can take place for all students. It will test your control of the learning environment, your capacity to direct and manage the learning of different students and your resilience to cope with the individual differences of students.

Learning Environments

Many new teacher find it difficult to identify the correct learning environment for a class. Rest assured that you will have created the right environment when all your students are working industriously and keen to master the new knowledge, striving to get as much satisfaction from the process as possible and are eager to gain approval from you and their peers.

Creating this productive atmosphere on a consistent basis is the dream of all teachers. You can increase your chances of creating it by ensuring that your initial work with students raises their motivation, lifts their expectations by being clear about what is expected of them, by telling them how their achievements will be rewarded and making sure that the you maintain the a purposeful authority throughout so that disruptive behaviour for other class members doesn't compromise the achievements of any students in your group.

Keeping Motivation Levels Up

Try to raise motivation by getting students to respond to your efforts to increase his/her commitment and participation. Disinterested, tired and overexcited students are not going to respond to even your most inspired motivation-raising efforts.

But, you can stimulate students and attract their interest by doing a few basic things: ensure that you can be heard easily at all times, change the tone, rate and expression of your voice; use colour in your board-work and in presentations; use novel and unexpected ways of covering the class material; have the highest expectations of all in your class and make this expectation explicit from the outset. Praise achievement when it is justified, even if progress is incrementally small and slow.

Don't belittle or humiliate students and avoid punishment, especially in front of their peers. Set out the rules for acceptable behaviour from the beginning. Try to get to know your students as individuals in their own right and tailor your interactions with them to their needs. And, if you have planned your lesson well, all your students will be occupied on tasks and activities which clearly relate to the goals and objectives they and you have set out.

Communication in the Classroom

The basis of effective performance in the classroom is thorough preparation before you go in and effective communication when you are in there.

You will issue handouts, write on the board and recommend text books; all with the in-built assumption that students can read and understand what is in front of them. You should make sure that the degree of difficulty of all your reading materials is carefully matched to the reading age of all your students. Too often they are not matched well enough and academic performance suffers.

Keep everyone occupied and interested and extend and motivate each of your students throughout each part of your class. Set rules for contributions from student as they need to know whether they can offer insights as they arise, or if should they wait for invitations to do so from you.

Check the readability of a typical piece of writing on your handout in the following way.

*Select a passage of 100 words and count the number of complete sentences. Now count the number of words in each complete sentence in the passage. Find the average number of words per sentence (**L**) by dividing the number of words in all the complete sentences by the number of sentences.*

*Count the number of words of 3 or more syllables in the 100-word passage (**N**). Add **L** and **N** together, **multiply the total by 0.4** and add **5** to get the reading age, in years, of your 100-word passage.*

To reduce the reading age of a text you should bring down the number of long words and long sentences. Most word-processing software can check the reading age of a piece of text for you.

Most courses have their own jargon which is unavoidable. Make sure that your students recognise the need to master the essential jargon and don't use unnecessary jargon in your teaching.

Some students don't listen. Some hear what they want to hear. Give students clues on what they should be listening for in a class session and when to listen hard. The physical and emotional states of students will influence their capacities to listen properly. All people listen for periods ranging from 20 to 40 seconds, which is usually followed by processing of what they have heard.

Speak clearly, enthusiastically and loudly enough for all to hear. Resist the temptation to read from notes as it is boring. Keep eye contact with the group and use mild gestures to communicate your enthusiasm for the topic, but don't let your actions become distracting and encourage questions from the class to keep communication moving in both directions.

And remember, you must listen effectively as well. Identify the main points in a student's question as soon as possible by listening for the key words, as not all

students can ensure that their questions and analysis contain only relevant information!

Question in Probing Way

Questioning students in a probing way is a skill which you should practise and develop. Closed questions only require a Yes/No response from your class and are not particularly valuable. For example the question “Does a daisy have 5 petals” doesn’t move learning on a great way.

Open questions demand students think aloud when answering. Their answers contain details, justifications and analyses. So the question “What environmental factors could have resulted in this daisy having 6 petals?” allows you to check on a range of important principles underpinning plant development. Well-phrased questions are clear, probing and stimulating to students. However, you have to be confident that you can cope with the range of informed, uninformed and at times bizarre answers you will get back from an open question.

Make sure you include all students in the questioning exercise. It’s too easy to offer a question to the group and wait for the most confident or mentally-agile student to answer. Nominate who you want to answer before you pose the question and use questions at all points in a class: to introduce topics, link learning objective to previous work, check and assess understanding and to take learning into new territory by deftly using the “What if..” questions occasionally.

Students can have weak voices when answering questions and the less confident will mumble, especially if they are not sure of the answer they are giving you. Listen attentively and repeat the answer you were given to ensure all students can hear the reply.

And don’t pitch questions at the wrong level. Allow the class to settle with simple recall questions early on in proceedings and save the questions requiring complex and analytical answers until your students are tuned-in and re-acquainted with your material

Non-verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication is very important in teaching. Be aware of how students will react to poor eye contact from you or a slumped posture at a desk or flip-chart. How you dress can tell students about your attitudes and values. Dress appropriately in ways in which help you develop a rapport with the group.

Be sensitive to personal space. It has to be respected at all times, but move easily within the group to show them that you are confident about being in their midst.

Teaching Aids

Although you are the teacher and the primary source of learning, you will probably use on teaching aids to help get your message across.

Teaching aids can address most of the human senses. Cassette recorders and CDs use hearing sense; charts, posters, hand-outs and books use sight; specimens and models use touch etc and some can combine and address more than 1 sense at a time e.g. audio-visual TVs.

Effective use of aids can enhance your students' learning. Most human learning comes through the visual channel, so make maximum use of it in your teaching. Aids can be used to develop understanding of issues and reinforce learning which has already happened. And they add variety to proceedings and raise motivation as well.

Don't make aids too complicated. Keep them simple and interesting, but make sure that the room you teach in will allow you to use them to maximum effect. It's no good developing a visual aid which is projected on a wall if the room can't be blacked-out enough for students to see what you have produced. Move the room furniture and seating around to ensure sight lines are good for everybody in your class.

There are many professional teaching aids on the market, but most teachers rely most on the whiteboard, overhead projector and handouts.

Black and White Boards

Black/white boards are common and cheap but few new teachers use them effectively. Writing on a vertical surface for the first time is not easy. Make sure you practise the process well in advance of your first class and go to the back of the classroom to admire your handiwork. You will probably notice that your board writing slopes down on the right-hand side and that what you thought were straight lines are definitely not that. Words that look as if they are spelled wrongly on a horizontal piece of paper have an annoying habit of keeping the same message hidden when written vertically. Check spellings carefully.

Increase the size of your normal handwriting. Minimum size for upper case letters should be 5 cms, and make lower case letters no smaller than 3 cms. Use coloured chalk or pens to make your work look better and experiment with out-sized lettering, spacing and underlining to draw students' attention to issues and facts. Remember to get out of the way when you have finished writing of the board as you will have been blocking students' views all the time you have been writing.

Remember that what you put on the board is almost always replicated in your students' notes. Some students copy down your board work just as it appears to them, so keep your board work neat and tidy and your students' notes will look the same.

Handouts

Handouts can save time. Make them attractive and informative and ensure that the language you use is accessible to all your students. Use sketches and flow diagrams rather than big blocks of dense text. And use your design skills to good effect by not crowding the page and using plenty of white space around the important points you want to make.

Experiment with gapped-handouts, by leaving spaces in your handouts for students to enter the important words as you cover the topic in the class. It makes working with handouts much more active. Put ring-binder holes on the left hand side of each page before you hand them out, unless you are content to have the paper hole punch circulating while you are explaining the next important point.

Over-head Projectors

Overhead projectors are powerful tools, but like handouts many home-produced transparencies contain too much information. Limit each transparency to one topic and mock-up your designs on paper before you do them on the transparency. Computers and photo-copiers allow you to develop and replicate ideas in a professional way. Put the main ideas in the middle of the transparency and use simple key words, not sentences. Upper case is difficult to read. Use it in titles, but don't use it in main texts.

Classroom Arrangements

Be aware of the arrangement of chairs and desks in front of you. Move them if the arrangement compromises the class you have planned. Your most keen participants will be ranged right in front of your desk; the others will be spread around the walls, hoping you won't pick on them for an answer to a choice question. Make sure you do!

Arrive before the class and begin on time. Where the room furniture allows it be adventurous with the arrangement of desks and chairs. You don't have to use the conventional set up: break it up for group work or dispense with it altogether and put the chairs in a circle if you want a more intimate and cooperative atmosphere. But make sure the room stays clean and tidy.

Assessment

Mark the work given to you within a reasonable period of time and make sure your comments are constructive.

Above all be yourself in the classroom, behave in ways in which you show that you respect your students and you should enjoy the professional respect of your students in return.

Chapter 5

Providing Learners with Support

When students articulate their anxieties about becoming a student a number of identify issues emerge, most associated with the reactions of people to the difficulties they are experiencing. Most chapters in this handbook have been about supporting students' learning. You should consider the commitments and recommendations in these chapters alongside what we have covered here.

Students' Anxieties

Many students fear that others perceive their need for help and support as a significant weakness. It is a major embarrassment to them. Because they have these needs, students feel their lecturers see them as less credible students and have a low opinion of them. They fear being teased or rejected by peers who will not work with them, as they are an academic liability and run the risk of reacting inappropriately as their personal frustration rises.

Very few students cope with academic courses without some help. We lecturers are seen as holding our students' hopes and aspirations in our hands, but the way we work with our students means that we also influence their self-esteem and vulnerability directly. Support for students should be seen as a right and an opportunity for students and teachers to maximise the effects they are having together.

When students get into difficulties with their studies it is often assumed to be an academic problem. The first 4 –6 weeks of a course can be an unsettling period with a lot of stress. Loneliness, acclimatisation, performance anxieties and self-doubt can be major problems.

Induction

Induction used to be a euphemism for the administrative process of enrolment, but increasingly it is being seen as an essential part of the management of the settling-in process. Induction is the time to identify the mismatches between previous experience and course requirements. It is a time to explode myths and define reasonable expectations and to identify those students who may be at risk of failing or leaving.

But as outlined in Chapter 1 all students' needs cannot be met in the first few weeks. While some needs can be addressed at the outset, many only develop later in the course as academic demands grow and new skills get tested and old ones found wanting.

Induction covers settling in, registration and enrolment, social orientation and group bonding, institutional orientation and orientation to the course and academic study. Information on their course of study will have been sent out to students in advance. It has told them the pre-requisites for study, time required for studying including independent study, as well as the kind of skills expected at entry and which will be developed while they are on the course.

Bonding

You may be asked to teach groups of students in the first few weeks of their time at the college. If so, make sure you can accommodate the essential need for the group to continue its bonding; especially where there are mature or non-traditional students in the group; if student confidence is low, where the intake is varied or course numbers are large, if students have to work under pressurised conditions, where you want to use group or team working early in the course or where students' commitments make spending time with peers outside the classroom difficult. It will repay you in the long run.

Information Technology

IT is a growing influence on education, but many students are not happy using it. If you intend to use IT in your classes, make sure that your students understand the terminology and can use the basic facilities. If you recommend or set assignments based on websites, ensure all students have the IT skills to access them.

Make certain that your students know who to go to for help. Tell your students if you have course responsibilities in addition to a teaching role and how they should make contact with you outside the classroom. Many PT staff use email to keep contact-ensure your students know what is permissible and what is not.

Check periodically that your class is aware of who they should go to if they are having difficulties with coursework, issues which are affecting their performance, are having language problems, need help with their disability, have attendance problems or change address. Your team leader may suggest that second year students brief new first recruits on what to expect- it can provide a unique set of insights for worried students, which they would not get from the most student-centric member of staff.

From the outset, get your class to understand the culture you want for your course. Tell them if you are particularly promoting competitiveness or problem-solving skills, or if group working will figure highly in your classes. Clarify how students should prepare for your classes, what is supposed to happen in taught classes and if this changes in your practical sessions.

Be Realistic

Point out that all students will hit difficult times on your course, as there will be issues with which they will struggle. Help them to cope with these difficulties by pointing out when there are no "right answers" to some class/ homework exercises.

Moving from basic ways of thinking to more advanced, abstract ways of seeing issues can upset a lot of students. Signs of difficulty can be good, as they tell you that students are being stretched, but don't let difficulty turn into despair. If a lack of progress is beginning to show itself, step in to help.

When assessing students' performance, we have to be sure that we are marking a student's own work. What constitutes original work should be explained and where the boundary with plagiarism lies.

Diagnosing Needs in Detail

As more students enter further education from widely differing backgrounds they will have different base levels of expertise and experience to draw upon. Pre-course diagnostic testing can set a baseline for further development.

Helping students to identify their own needs can help. It build a reflective capacity in them which you can develop in your teaching. It sends the message that skills are as important as facts; it reinforces the belief in students that the college can develop what they already possess, it identifies at-risk students as early as possible and ensures targeted support can be provided more quickly.

Pre-course testing gives an indication of students' current levels of attainment, but it can be an notoriously inaccurate guide to potential, particularly for mature students. Some students have un-used skills which can be revived quickly, while other students need help to develop the rudimentary skills of reading and writing to be able to participate fully in your classes. The pre-course testing will shape the college's response to these needs.

Diagnostic tests which relate cover material most closely to the nature of the course being followed provide a lot of unique evidence. There is a battery of generic tests, which provide valuable evidence of need: library tests, prose tests, dictation, numeracy. subject quizzes, comprehension teats and free-writing exercises.

Your Response to Student Needs

Students in difficulty arouse many fears in staff. They remind us of our own limitations and as a new teachers faced with an array of learning needs in your class you can start to worry that they are not up to the job. It would be unusual for subject teachers not to have fears about supporting learning.

It is natural to be apprehensive about students bringing problems which are too large to handle. You may be worried that you will respond emotionally to some of the problems students share with you. Giving the wrong advice or response to a problem is a major concern for those new to teaching. But the college has support services in place for both staff and students and you are encouraged very strongly to pass students with difficulties on to other authorities. Your team leader has details.

Helping Students Through

Challenge beliefs about learning-especially the one which says “if its not hurting its not working”. Set achievable goals in consultation with each of your students and by organising their work into manageable chunks.

Relate your topics to the everyday experiences when possible and linking abstract ideas to the experiences of students can help understanding. Give constructive feedback and don't show your frustration when writing comments on pieces of work. Receiving a page of marked homework with a series of red exclamation marks in the margin is a de-motivating experience for all but the most motivated students. Avoid suggesting that students knew what was required but were too lazy or un-interested to bother about doing it. Build up a supportive group atmosphere from the beginning-it may eat into your class time but it will be worth it later as the pressure and intensity of work rises. Give students an idea of the scale of the work expected. Finding a student has purchased just one small folder for a 2 year course suggests a mis-judgment of the scale of academic commitment required..

Be prepared to contribute to college mechanisms which monitor the effectiveness of student support services. Contribute your insights into student support needs to new course development activities and participate in the regular reviews of student screening tests to make them more accurate and meaningful to you and your students. And take full advantage of staff development opportunities put on in this important area of your work, as the better you become at supporting learners and their learning, the more effective you will become as a teacher.

Chapter 6

Assessing the Outcomes of Learning and Learners' Achievements

Why Assess?

Throughout your time with a class, you will be required to make important decisions on each student's performance. To do so you must seek evidence of their accomplishments and make informed decisions based on that evidence to decide which students have been successful and when students have achieved the objectives you have set for them.

Assessment consists of tests and observations we use to determine how well students have achieved these objectives. Obtaining the right evidence from your students and making the right judgements on it is a crucial aspect of teaching.

What Does Assessment Tell My Students and Me?

The best assessments provide a basis for action planning future academic development in which weaknesses can be rectified. If some of your class are not coping with your course, you and they need to know as soon as possible that there is a problem. High quality assessments will provide irrefutable evidence of the nature and scale of the difficulties being experienced.

The right type of assessment carried out at the right time can tell you where to begin teaching your class; will identify those students with learning difficulties; can let you know when students are ready to move on to new topics; will give you insights into the effectiveness of your teaching methods, as well enabling you to grade each class member's performance.

On the basis of these judgements you will be expected to plan the future development of each student in your group, so it is essential that the assessment evidence you collect is a fair and accurate reflection of each person's attainment and that your evaluation of the assessment evidence leads to decisions which are targeted, informed and appropriate. If not, you run the risk of planning future academic development on illegitimate grounds. The dangerous implications for you and your students of doing so are obvious.

Both teacher and student have a lot to learn from well-designed valid assessments which motivate both teacher and student to improve their performances still further.

When Do I Assess?

Very simply, you should assess as you consider necessary and as required to meet the assessment requirements of the qualification's awarding body. The nature and frequency of your assessments should be designed to provide you, and each of your students, with unambiguous evidence of their competence and progress.

Assessments must be able to discriminate between students of different ability, be objective in the scoring of students' achievement, be valid in terms of being able to measure what the assessment wants to measure and be reliable in consistently being able to measure what the assessment is supposed to measure.

Formal assessment is usually required at two major points in a course - when students start their programme and when their learning has been completed. You can assess students informally and formally between these two points to keep you and your students informed of progress and to gather feedback on the effectiveness of their learning and (just as importantly) the effectiveness of your teaching methodology.

Assessment Techniques

You can use a variety of well-proven assessment techniques. These include written tests, oral tests and practical tests. But there are many objectives for which tests are not appropriate. For these it may be better to use non-test methods such as students' self-reporting, teacher's observation and profiles. You have to decide which method generates the evidence of student performance you seek.

Question Tests

A written test is made up of a variety of questions. Naturally, questions differ in their content depending on the topics being assessed but they can also differ in the ways in which students are expected to respond to the question set for them.

Selection-type questions provide students with a set of responses from which they are asked to choose the correct answer. Multiple choice, true/false and matching questions are common examples. Be warned, that while it may take students only a few seconds to answer these questions, the time it will take you to set challenging, discriminating and unambiguous selection-type questions will be substantially more.

Supply-type questions include structured and open-ended essays and practical questions. Although these are quick to set up, the marking time for an average-sized FE group can be significant.

Practical tests require students to complete a practical exercise according to pre-prepared instructions. You can combine practical tests with written work to make assignments or projects.

Non testing methods can be used to determine competence in the so-called *softer* skills such as leadership, communication and safe working, along with the reflective capacities which enable students to identify their own strengths and weaknesses and participate effectively in personal progress reviews.

Formative and Summative Assessment

It is important to recognise the difference between a) an assessment that is designed to tell the student about his/her progress (formative assessment) and b) an assessment which takes place at the end of the course and is used for certification purposes (summative assessment)

Formative assessments are essentially diagnostic. They usually have three qualities: their duration and formats are short term and informal, they provide teacher and student with rapid feedback on each student's performance and attract feedback from you which is sensitive enough to motivate students to continue with their learning.

You are using formative assessment when asking questions in a class, providing the manner of the feedback you give to your students concentrates on where improvements can be made, rather than the awarding of marks or grades.

Supply and selection type questions, projects and assignments, essays and practical tests can all be used as formative assessment techniques provided that your comments concentrate on how things can be improved while at the same time indicating why answers are incorrect and ensuring that praise is given where it is due.

Summative assessments are concerned with measuring the final achievement levels of students. The methods used in summative assessment include some of the formative assessment instruments such as supply and selection type questions, projects and assignments, essays and practical tests. But as summative assessments are important official milestones in an academic career they have to accredit the abilities of students in a much more formal and public way. Detailed marking schemes accompany summative assessments and the assessments' development and marking are quality assured and rigorously monitored to ensure national standards are maintained.

Because of the highly public nature of certification which is associated with summative assessment it is essential that there is confidence that these assessments are fit for their purpose and can carry out the tasks expected of them at all times.

For these reasons students taking summative assessments would a) achieve the same score if different examiners were assessing their answers, b) be awarded the same marks if the examiners were to score the assessment on subsequent

occasions and c) achieve the same score on the same test if it is administered at a different time.

Norm and Criteria-referenced Assessment

End examinations have been traditionally marked so that students' performance can be gauged against the performance of their peers. In a typical class/course assessment there will be a range of candidates' marks which when arranged in graphical format can be seen to be distributed around a norm. The pass mark for the assessment is adjusted to ensure a pre-determined proportion of candidates pass. This is norm-referenced assessment

Newer types of assessment are criterion-referenced. This means that each candidate's performance is compared to independent criteria which relate to the learning objectives or technical competences set out in the syllabus. All students can attain full marks if they attain the required standard suggested or alternatively, they can all fail if none of them reaches the set standard.

Assessing As Part of a Course Team

In most cases your assessments will be part of a course-wide approach to assessing student performance. Your course leader will want to consider your proposed assessment techniques in the light of those proposed by his/her other teachers. It is important that there is a balance of approaches to assessment over the entire duration of the course and you should be prepared to adapt your assessments to help establish and maintain this balance.

There may be opportunities for shared assessments which straddle more than your topic. You may find yourself invited to help design assessments which combine course topics or asked to add new dimensions and or skills from other subject areas to assessments you will run.

Your assessments will be closely monitored throughout their development, implementation and marking. You will be asked to submit assessments for internal scrutiny where they will be checked for reliability and validity and for other common weaknesses: authenticity (does all the evidence relate to the candidate's own abilities?) and sufficiency (is there enough evidence to demonstrate competence?) and if the assessment is rewarding the candidate's progress and effort rather than achievement.

Maintaining National Assessment Standards

National courses are externally verified to maintain standards. If your course requires an external verifier the qualification's awarding body will appoint him and liaison with the college will be through. The verifier's prime responsibility is quality assurance; ensuring that individuals from different centres are assessed in the same way with a

common interpretation of the assessment criteria. Your course leader will advise you on the role of internal and external verification.

Accreditation of Prior Learning and Achievement

Many students will have competences and learning which have been developed outside your classroom. It makes little sense to ask them to relearn this material or to re-sit assessments to demonstrate their skills and understanding. For some courses students can present evidence of prior achievement or learning and have this accredited. There are four major sources of evidence: historical evidence from activities undertaken in the past at work or elsewhere; performance at work where the evidence comes from the student's current or past job practices; performance on assignments where students use course work assessments to generate the evidence and finally, supplementary evidence which can come from oral questioning of students on their competences.

The range of admissible evidence runs from projects and assignments on previous courses, through artefacts such as models, videos and photographs to documents used in professional practice and on to evidence from written tests. Endorsed statements from employers, CVs, certificates and awards and references can supplement these sources.

Learning from Assessment

Assessment is concerned with the accurate recognition of achievement. You may have considerable freedom in choosing how to do this on your course. If so, then interrogate the results of your assessments as much for what they say about the effectiveness of your teaching as they do about the standards of your students' learning.

Chapter 7

Evaluating Yourself

In this last chapter, we ask you to reflect on how well you feel you are teaching and what you can do to improve your performance in the classroom.

As a new teacher you will have anxieties about many aspects of teaching. We have said that this is quite normal and a natural part of the settling-in process. If we are to improve we need an objective assessment of our current performance and this usually involves an appraisal of our own performance and the performance of the courses on which we teach.

Professional autonomy in teaching is prized. It allows you to plan and deliver courses in ways in which you consider most appropriate. It recognises the professionalism which you bring to your job, it invests expensive resources in your judgements and trusts your sense of responsibility to deliver a quality learning experience for all your students. You therefore enjoy considerable freedom to decide what you will teach, when you will teach it and how you will do so.

However, in return you will be asked to monitor and report on your own standards of performance. These reports should be comprehensive rigorous and insightful. They should convince the authorities that you can be trusted with the autonomy given to you and that you are prepared to be held accountable for the effectiveness of your teaching.

You should expect to be observed in the classroom by internal and external quality evaluators and have your teaching files and records looked over by auditors and funding representatives.

To satisfy your own curiosity you should develop a capacity to evaluate your own performance. Look for evidence of your competences in your students' performance.

Re-read this handbook and identify the areas in which you can gather feedback on your performance. A possible quality list would include: your preparations for teaching; your teaching skills, the nature of your relationships with students and how well you communicate with them, the quality of your assessment processes as well as the mastery you have of the subjects you are teaching.

Invite a colleague to sit in your class and comment on the appropriateness of your choice of teaching methods to the achievement of the class objectives. Issues such as the organisation of your classroom's physical environment and your use of accessible language can also be included in the feedback from your critical friend.

The important point is that you have an evidence-based evaluation of all these issues. Whether your performances were good, bad or indifferent, you have the

evidence to back up these judgements and the chance to develop a personal improvement strategy based on them.

And finally, consider adopting reflective practice diary. Keep a diary of your professional experiences and comment on the successes and failures you have had in the classroom. Re-read it periodically to see how you have improved.

Because teaching changes lives and being a teacher will change yours for the better, as well.

Glossary

Assessment	Measurement of student attainment, usually against learning objectives
Attainment	Achievement of a set standard
Common Skills	General skills which underpin student performance and achievement
Competence	A capacity to perform activities or procedures
Criterion	A standard set for an assessment
Curriculum	The learning experiences planned and delivered within a formal course
Differentiation	A capacity to distinguish between students of different abilities
Entry Behaviour	Levels of understanding about a topic at the start of teaching
Feedback	Mechanism to pass back to students an appraisal of their performance
Formative	An informal assessment used to gauge student performance. Normally used motivate
Induction	Process of introducing students to the college and settling them in effectively
Initial Assessment	A formal appraisal of students' academic strengths and weaknesses; usually linked to a needs analysis for support
Learner	Student following a course of personal development
Learning	The process of developing self through the acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding
Lesson Plan	A formal document outlining the delivery schedule for a class
Module	Discrete part of a learning programme
Norm	Individual performance set against the performance of the population at large
Profile	A way of recording student achievements
Reliability	A measure of an assessment's ability to consistently measure what it purports to measure
Scheme of work	A plan for the delivery of a series of lessons
Teaching	Process of structuring and delivering effective learning
Tutorial	A 1 to 1 learning situation
Validity	An assessment's capacity to measure what it claims to be able to measure