

# **HOT TIPS FOR TUTORS**

## **A Survival Guide**

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## **A Survival Guide**

**Fourth Edition**

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and the  
Centre for Academic Development**

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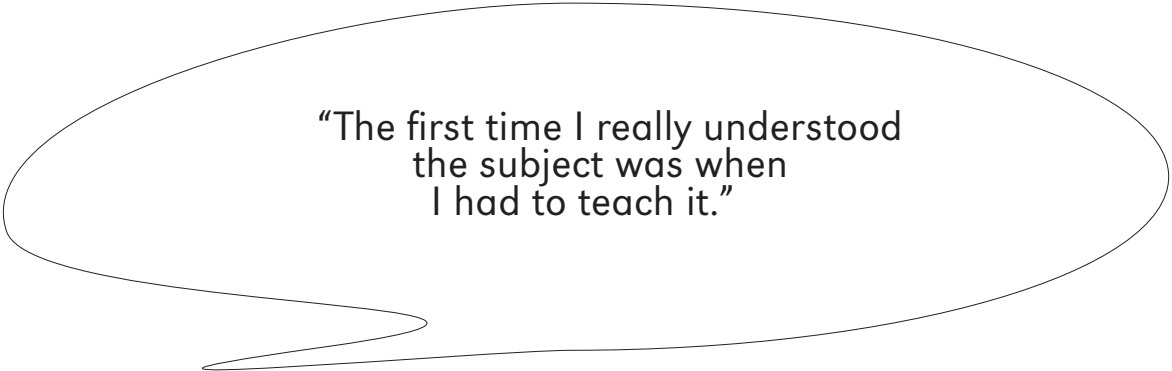
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## 1. Introduction

This **Survival Guide** is specifically directed at recently appointed tutors who will be involved in small-group teaching. We hope that experienced university teachers can benefit from the tips too. Each page deals with a particular issue, and aims to provide some quick, useful strategies for a range of situations. It is not meant to be exhaustive and apart from the sections on 'Learning styles' and 'Stages in students' thinking', there is very little theoretical discussion. If you want a more comprehensive consideration of the educational issues underpinning the strategies suggested here, consult the references listed at the bottom of some of the pages and the 'Select bibliography' on page 24.

The kind of small group you will teach can vary quite widely; for this reason not all of the tips will be useful for all tutorials. The guide needs to be read with this in mind. However, the general skills outlined here are, in principle, important to all small-group teaching.

### Tutoring Folklore



"The first time I really understood  
the subject was when  
I had to teach it."

#### Source:

Jones, John (1995) 'Peer tutoring for academic credit', in Goodlad, Sinclair (ed.), *Students as tutors and mentors*, Philadelphia, Kogan, p.195.

## 2. Characteristics of effective small groups

Effective tutorials are usually ones that have a positive and pleasant climate. Think back to the tutorials that you enjoyed. It is quite likely that they had the following things in common:

- You felt as if you were **part of a group**.
- You were **acknowledged as an individual**, i.e. someone spoke to you, or recognised you, or knew your name.
- **Your contributions to the group were welcomed** and acknowledged but you didn't feel compelled to make them and weren't put down.
- The tutor **showed interest** in the material and in the group itself.
- The tutor was **well prepared**, or at least had a good structure for the session.
- The aims of the session were **clear and achievable**.
- Everyone had a chance to **participate**.
- You left the session with the feeling that you had **learnt/achieved** something.

### Characteristics of effective tutors

- **Facilitate** and support good relationships within the group.
- Get students **actively involved**.
- **Vary** the activities in tutorials.
- **Challenge students**: question and probe students' reasoning processes.
- **Anticipate** the difficulties and problems that the students are likely to have.
- Demonstrate **flexibility**: admit to not knowing and be open to learning from students as well as **with** them.

### 3. Surviving the first tutorial

What happens in the first tutorial can set the scene for subsequent ones. A tutor should aim to show that he/she is **well organised but consultative**. If you are tutoring for the first time you may be anxious (remember that the students are often nervous in the first tutorial as well!), but mapping out what you intend to do in the first session can help dissipate these feelings. You should also aim to take the focus off yourself for some of the time (see 'Icebreakers/Introductions'). The following are ideas you might use for the first session:

- **Introduce yourself.** You may do this as part of the general class introductions, or you may do it separately. Write your name on the board and your office number and your office hours (if you have them). Tell them where your office is.
- Do a **'getting to know each other'** session (see 'Icebreakers/Introductions'). This gets the students talking to each other and takes the heat off you for a while.
- **Discuss expectations** about what will go on in the tutorial and negotiate some ground rules (see 'Clarifying expectations: ground rules'). It is a good idea to write the ground rules down so they can be referred to later, if necessary.
- Even though the students may have received a handout or handbook about the subject or particular paper, it is useful in the first or second session to **go over some of the essential information** that they need to know to successfully complete the paper or course. You may not have time to do this in the first session - it will depend, to some extent, on the size of the group.
- Things to explain:
  - critical dates - assignments etc,
  - the departmental policy on getting extensions for written work,
  - weighting of in-course assessment versus exam, your availability outside office hours.
- Ask the students if they have any **questions or concerns**. Get them to talk about this in pairs (or on paper to be collected anonymously) before they raise them with you.
- Finally, tell them **how excited you are about the course** or subject. Enthusiasm can be contagious!

## 4. Icebreakers/Introductions

The start of any group is likely to be suffused with anxieties about identity, uncertainty about how one will be seen, and an understandable reluctance to take any risks. The sooner the members of your tutorial **group get to know each other** (and you) the sooner they will feel easier about working together and participating in discussion. By conducting some kind of 'getting to know you' exercise, you will demonstrate to students that you are concerned for their welfare and that you intend to establish a friendly, relaxed and positive tone in the group.

**Note:** Choose the subject matter for discussion with sensitivity to what people may not want to disclose. Open topics which offer choice are probably best.

- Invite students to **talk to the person next to them**, telling them their name, something about their family, and a couple of their favourite hobbies or pursuits. This information can, if it is thought appropriate, be relayed back to the group by the individual concerned or by their partner. (Students may feel less self-conscious talking about their partner than themselves.) This exercise gets everyone in the group talking about a subject that they know more about than anyone else - themselves!
- Issue each student with a sticky label and on it get them to write their star sign, or a favourite kind of food (give them three to choose from). After attaching the label to themselves they have then to find someone in the room with a related label. They can then **tell each other a little about themselves**, which may be shared with the larger group. This exercise has the advantage of promoting movement in the room, which can lessen the tension.
- Students form groups of three or four and spend five minutes finding out **what they have in common with each other**, such as taste in music, favourite TV programme, etc. At the end of five minutes they report to the other groups what they have in common.

- Everyone, in introducing themselves, says:

my name,

where I'm from,

why I'm here,

*or*

my name,

which options I'm doing,

who else I know in this room.



## 5. Learning names

### Why bother?

People like to be known by name. Students will respond to you more if they feel that they know you, and above all, that you know them. Getting their names right is a useful step towards building up the sort of relationship which fosters learning. Think how you feel when someone gets your name wrong - especially someone you would have expected to know. One of the problems with large groups is that the members of the group can feel quite anonymous and alone. Do something about this early on.

- At early stages it could be useful to give students **sticky labels** to write their names on in bold felt-tip pen. This gives you the chance to call them by the name they prefer - and gives them a chance to start getting to know each other.
- Each person in the group could **pair up with someone they don't know well** and then introduce themselves to each other, or interview each other for two minutes. They then very briefly introduce the other person to the group.
- People could do a round where they **say something about their name** - why they were given the name - or a nickname associated with it - or identify a famous person who shares the same name.
- An alternative is to get the students sitting in a circle. Ask one to say his or her name, then the person to the left to say, '**I am...and this is...**' Carry on round the circle, adding one name at each stage, until someone goes right round the circle correctly.
- When small groups of learners are sitting in a particular place for a while, it could be useful to give each a **place card** with their name on it. Cards can be seen at a distance much better than labels. You can address individuals by name, and this also helps them to get to know each other's names.

### Other ideas:

Hand out name cards at each class until you get them right!

Ask students to visit you in your office.

When students tell you their name, repeat it in your response to them.

Make a quick room plan on the blackboard and write names onto it.

## 6. Clarifying expectations: ground rules

*'I found the time spent on establishing ground rules was well spent. It helped develop a positive atmosphere and good relationships within the group.'*

Most groups function better when there is a **clear understanding of the 'rules'**. If this isn't done then there may be a variety of agendas at work. Establishing clear ground rules for your tutorial or small group is therefore very important, and may prevent problems from developing. It might even be possible to negotiate the ground rules with the group, although you may have some which are *not negotiable*.

- Below are a few suggestions for ground rules - but they are not exhaustive, and you might want to develop your own for the particular group and the subject
  - We all contribute.
  - We listen to each other and don't interrupt.
  - We respect each other's point of view.
  - No put-downs.
  - The tutor and the group will be on time.
  - All members of the group will do some preparation.
  - All individuals are given time to speak. (No one to dominate)
- Here are a couple of ways ground rules can be established:
  - By pyramid-style discussion.
  - Put some ground rules up on an OHT and invite people to talk about them in threes, and then respond to them by suggesting more.
- You may also find it useful to review the ground rules some time during the semester. This can be particularly helpful if you sense things aren't going quite so well.

**Note:** Some people find the concept of ground rules inappropriate for a university classroom and prefer to work with the idea of expectations instead. In this case, the discussion in your tutorial might run along the lines of "what are your expectations?"

## 7. Warm-ups

Students in tutorials often arrive from different parts of the university or from home and need to **orient** themselves to your tutorial. Instead of launching straight into the task for the day, consider starting with a brief warm-up exercise. This can make students feel relaxed and ready to contribute. **Warm-ups can also help build trust and cohesion.** Warm-up happens at various levels, not just when a class meets for the first time. Every time you begin a session, every time you ask students to begin a particular exercise, the way you speak and act is a warm-up. Reflect on the way you do this: are you using good questioning and listening skills?

- Ask students to get out their most recent lecture notes, browse for three minutes and then ask them to **write down a question they would like answered.** These questions could then be tackled in pairs (or threes), or they could be put in a hat (or box) and a question or two could be drawn out at the beginning of the next two or three tutorials.
- In a round, **each person recounts one fascinating (or contentious, or surprising)** piece of information that they have learnt from a recent lecture (or from some reading).
- **Put up an issue/item** on the whiteboard or give out a (brief) handout: give them a task to do in pairs or threes such as **find the fallacy** or **uncover the underlying assumptions.** Make the task quick and useful for the students.
- **Invite the group to focus on what they want or need** to get from the session, and to brainstorm a group list. They could do this in twos or threes. You may need to help the group to set priorities.
- Invite students to **share what they like and dislike about the course** so far. This could be done in pairs first and then shared with the larger group, as a round or a brainstorm.

What tutors say and do at the beginning of a learning process may affect the way the whole process goes.

## 8. Room set-ups

How people behave in small groups is often affected by the way they are seated in relation to one another and to you, the tutor. If you spend all your time at the front of the class, near the whiteboard, you may reinforce the belief that you are the person with all the knowledge. This is likely to induce passivity among some students.

- Although it is not always easy, the best arrangement is a **circle or semi-circle**. This is a friendly arrangement. It encourages active participation and you are not the focus of attention. Get the students to help you with this - it can function as a good warm-up.
- Think carefully about where you position yourself in relation to the board and leave a gap in front of it, so that any group member can feel free to use it.
- If you want some of the **quieter participants** to contribute more, sit opposite them and give them plenty of eye contact (not staring) and non-verbal feedback when they venture a tentative answer or comment. Do the opposite for noisy or long-winded contributors. Sit beside them so they receive little eye contact from you when they are speaking. (To do this, you'll need to leave getting your seat until others are seated.)
- **Disperse small groups** around the room. This enables the groups to engage in activities without interfering with one another too much. You can move around among the groups.
- If the tables or desks are fixed, think about **moving just the chairs** to the space in front.
- Just as the arrangement of the furniture needs to echo the activity of the group, so the **furniture needs to be rearranged** when the group activity changes. Get the students to move their chairs away from the tables and into groups and then return to pool ideas. Physical movement provides a helpful break for concentration.
- **Vary your seating position** - it doesn't hurt to walk half-way around the circle to get to the whiteboard.
- **Ask the students** themselves what they think would be a good arrangement.

## 9. Getting participation

**‘Many of the early tutorials that I ran petered out into embarrassing silences.’**

Tutors sometimes find it difficult to get students to contribute in tutorials. This situation is made worse if tutors talk too much. Tutors need to be careful that they don't rush in to answer their own questions. You need to be able to tolerate silence. Below are some suggestions for helping groups become more active.

- Divide learners into smaller **discussion groups** for (say) 5-10 minutes, getting each group to appoint a recorder and reporter who will report back on behalf of the sub-group. You could also use the pyramid technique, buzz groups, problem-solving groups, or fishbowls (see 11: 'Ideas for sub-grouping'.)
- Get people talking to each other using **non-threatening situations** such as those described in 'Icebreakers' or 'Warm-ups'. It's useful to build up a stock of these so that you can start off the session in an informal way.
- Establish with the group some **ground rules for discussion in tutorials**. When the ownership of the ground rules rests with the learners themselves, they are more likely to try to live up to the criteria, including everyone contributing.
- One way of focusing is to get students to **brainstorm their ideas on paper first**, before the discussion begins. Comparing notes briefly with their next-door neighbour is also another good idea.
- **Rounds**. In a round, everyone in turn, including the group facilitator, makes a statement uninterrupted on a given topic. It can be planned in advance or in response to a situation as it arises.
- It could be helpful to **alert participants about an upcoming discussion** (a week before) so that anyone who is nervous has the opportunity to do adequate preparation, and will feel more at ease about contributing.
- Sometimes **ask for contributions** "from someone who hasn't contributed yet" without looking at anyone in particular. This tactic can put the brake on over-contributors.
- After you've asked a question, **count to ten** before you respond to it. Suggest to over-contributors that they do the same.
- The following will also help to get discussion going:

Ask **open-ended** questions.

**Personalise** these wherever possible.

**Focus** on specific problems and ideas.

## 10. Questions and questioning

**Questioning is a key facilitation skill** and if done well can open up a good discussion. On the other hand, if done poorly it can inhibit group learning. Lively discussions are more likely to take place if our questions are 'open-ended'. Questions which invite yes or no answers will kill discussion. So, use open-ended questions, e.g. "What thoughts do you have about the downfall of the Labour Government?" instead of... "Did the 1987 stock-market crash cause the downfall of the Labour Government?"

### When planning your class:

- **Prepare strategies for asking questions.** Will you pose questions to the group as a whole, to pairs of students, to small groups? Will the question be a prompt for brainstorming, consensus building or debate?
- **Identify your key questions in advance** and anticipate the range of student responses. Ask 'why' or 'how' questions that lead students to figure things out for themselves.
- Try and make the questions interesting and relevant by using **real-life examples** that students can relate to.
- **Show that you value all answers.** This can be done by non-verbal signals (eye contact, nod, and smile) as well as verbal responses.
- **Give students time to answer.** A useful technique is to ask students to jot down some ideas for a couple of minutes before the discussion begins.
- **Encourage students to take more responsibility for asking questions.** Be careful about how you elicit questions. Asking "any questions?" is easily dodged by those who don't want to contribute. A skilled tutor is more likely to say "What are your questions?" This presumes that every student has at least one question and it is merely a matter of asking it.

### You could also ask students to:

- Write their questions on the whiteboard, or post-it notes/sheets of paper to stick to the wall.
- Work in pairs, to generate questions choosing one of the questions to discuss for a preset time.
- Ask a question and then chair the ensuing discussion.

# 11. Ideas for sub-grouping

Although we shouldn't assume that **silent students** are *not* learning, there is an expectation that small-group teaching will involve students interacting with each other and with the tutor. Talking will often be facilitated by breaking the larger group into sub-groups. This also has the benefit of taking the focus off the tutor, and it can be an acknowledgment that the group itself possesses a lot of knowledge.

Below are some suggestions for different kinds of activities with smaller groups of students:

- **Think, Pair, Share** (pyramid technique) - ask the participants to write their response (think), to a question, scenario or a problem; share their response with another (pair); then the pair can join with another pair, to think through the original issue further, and finally one member of the group reports back to the whole group (share).  
  
(You can leave out the group stage to make a faster process.)
- **Buzz groups** - are pairs or small groups of students who are assigned a task or discussion topic for a limited period of time (5 minutes max). A good moment to suggest a 'buzz' is when you want members of your tutorial to reflect actively on something and come up with quick ideas. The discussion itself may be enough, or you may get them to report back.
- **Syndicates** - teams of students work for a longer period of time (15-20 minutes) in parallel on the same task - analysing a problem or case, studying a text or artefact, preparing a proposal or bid, then present their ideas to the whole group.
- **Fishbowls** - students in a small circle of chairs have a discussion. Students in a surrounding larger circle listen in. The outer circle can join in the discussion by swapping seats with someone in the inner circle. This can be useful for a focused discussion in quite a large group. It's also fun.
- **Brainstorms** - a task is set and small groups quickly brainstorm their ideas and these are fed through to the larger group without discussion, elaboration or criticism. They can then go back through the suggestions to see which are worth pursuing.

## Further reading:

Baume, David & Baume, Carole (1996) *Learning to Teach: Running Tutorials and Seminars*, Oxford, The Oxford Centre for Staff Development.

## 12. Activities for tutorials

Tutors have to talk in tutorials but unless you plan carefully you can be trapped into talking too much - and students become silent. It's hard then to know whether or not they understand, or for them to learn from one another. Here are some ideas and strategies that get students involved, either as individuals, pairs, or small groups.

- **Read some material:**

Ask students to read part of a handout and note their response to it. Alternatively, ask them to read from an OHT. This may be followed by a small-group discussion.

- **Write a question:**

Ask students individually or in pairs/groups to write down one or two precise questions on a recent lecture. These can be dealt with in a variety of ways. An effective way is to put them in a hat/box and draw them out at random and get the whole group to suggest answers.

- **Solve a problem/answer a question:**

Set a problem or a question based on a lecture, or a course reading etc. Ask students to solve the problem or answer the question, individually, or in small groups, or individually followed by group work.

- **Give an example:**

Ask students to invent examples of a presented concept and compare them with another student.

- **List pros/cons:**

Ask students to consider briefly likely advantages and disadvantages, or strengths and weaknesses, of a procedure or theory. Discuss their ideas.

- **Watch a video-clip:**

Show a short video, giving clear instructions on what to look for. Discuss their responses.

- **Read your notes:**

Ask students to read their recent lecture notes or summary of a chapter in a text. Invite students to exchange and discuss notes so that they can add to their notes and compare approaches.



# 13. Holding office hours

'I was desperate for some help with my assignment, but when I waited outside my tutor's office he never turned up.'

Office hours (if you have them) can be an important adjunct to your tutorials. They can allow your students to deal with any difficulties they might be having, to discuss an assignment, to seek clarification about a piece of work that has been handed back, or to talk to you informally about some aspect of the paper. Some students find it difficult to seek help or to clarify what is expected of them under the public gaze of others, so office hours can redress this. It can also be a chance for students to get to know you (and you, them) on a different level.

- Make it clear to students **what office hours are for**.
- Tell the students on the first day **when** your office hours will be. Also post the times outside your office. If your office is hard to find, draw a map on the board. You might also consider scheduling students to visit your office in pairs. This can make it easier for a student to visit when they need help.
- Unless there are specific reasons for not doing so, **offer a variety of times and days** for your office hours.
- **Be disciplined** about keeping your office hours. Students get upset with tutors and lecturers who are not present for the full period of their posted office hours. If you are unavailable during a scheduled office hour, get someone to post a notice on your door.
- If you don't want to be at your students' beck and call, you may have to stress that you **will only see students** during scheduled office hours or by appointment.
- Try to **give students your undivided attention**. Some students may fear that they are wasting your time; by listening carefully you can dispel their concerns. Put aside your papers or work and try not to let phone callers or visitors interrupt your conversation with the student.

## 14. Dealing with email

Check with your department to see if there are any special **guidelines** for using email in your subject. Consult The University of Auckland 'Email Usage Policy'.

Think about how you personally will use email with your students. Consider what **boundaries** you will set with your students. This needs to be done in the first couple of tutorials along with details about office hours, course materials etc.

Because email can be written at any time of the day or night, students may be tempted into thinking they can access you in the same way. This is not the case. Tutors are paid to conduct tutorials and in some cases to mark work, but not to be available 24 hours a day.

The **immediacy of email** sometimes leads students to think that a reply can be expected within the hour – tell students that you would hope to respond during your office hours or perhaps within 48 hours (or whatever limit seems appropriate for you).

It is a good idea to teach students **email etiquette**: how to correctly address you and how to sign off. You also need to clearly spell out what sort of things you will, and will not, respond to. You could give some examples to clarify.

Ask students to be **brief and clear** in their emails, and to not to use text message language as they would to a friend.

If students have a detailed enquiry, refer them to your **office hours** where you can deal with the questions more easily.

Encourage students to submit their questions to an **electronic 'message board'** if one has been set up. In that way you can answer a question that might be on the minds of a number of students.

Some tutors might be tempted to give students their mobile phone number, but this simply increases the number of questions and enquiries.

Like their tutors, students want to be noticed, valued and validated. When you respond to students, be polite and be conscious of your language and your tone. **Read your email very carefully** before you send it. Remember that an email can be a permanent record in the same way as a letter.

# 15. Marking assignments

Many tutors are expected to assist with marking. There are a number of issues that need to be dealt with before you start. What are the expectations of the person setting the questions? Is there a marking scheme? Will there be 'check-marking' of the assignments by the lecturer and/or other markers? What sort of feedback is expected by the lecturer and the students?

It is also important that tutors give thought to the length of time that they will devote to the marking of the essay or assignment. Marking can absorb large amounts of time. A balance has to be struck between careful marking on the one hand, with a reasonable turnaround on the other, so that students get their work back quickly and the tutor can return to other activities.

The following are some suggestions:

- Use a **marking scheme** and have clear guidelines, so that your grading is consistent. If the course lecturer doesn't provide one, make your own, perhaps in consultation with a fellow tutor.
- Use '**range finder**' papers (a random selection from the pile) to get an overview of the student grasp of the topic. Select 'good' and 'not so good' papers to guide your grading.
- **Read the paper (quickly)** before you begin to mark. This gives you a general impression of the student's work.
- Choose the **appropriate level of feedback** for the assignment and make comments future-oriented so that improvement can occur.
- It is a good idea to **check your marking** if there is quite a time gap between the first papers you marked and the last ones. Have you been consistent?
- If there is **more than one grader**, try and meet with them to determine the evaluation criteria. It may be useful to have each grader pick a question and grade all the students' responses to that question.
- **Take breaks!** You will be more efficient if you give your mind a rest and reward yourself at regular intervals.

## Further reading:

Jones, John & Grant, Barbara (1991) *Writing, setting and marking essays*, The University of Auckland.

# 16. Giving written feedback

Written feedback from you can be regarded by students as very authoritative. This has advantages and disadvantages. **Try and think about how your comments will be received.** The most frequent complaints from students are that criticism and feedback is: not soon enough, not enough, not useable or that there is too much all at once. The suggestions which follow may help to ensure that your feedback is well received and assist students to improve their work.

- Try to **start and finish with something positive.**
- Be as objective as possible and **be specific in your directives.** Give reasons. If you say that the assignment could be improved, suggest one way that this might be achieved. Remind yourself that the primary purpose of giving back marked work is to let students find out exactly how they are doing and what to do about any weak areas.
- Consider giving the students a sheet **setting out the assessment criteria.** This could become part of the marking sheet which is handed back with the assignment. Handing in assignments without knowing how they will be assessed is frightening to many students.
- Save yourself time and provide even more feedback by preparing **model answers** to questions and assignments (where this is feasible), with your own commentary showing typical dangers and key points.
- For feedback to be really effective, it needs to reach students **as soon as possible.**
- Give students a clear description of **how to approach you** if they are unhappy with, or do not understand, their grade. Only discuss a student's grade in private.
- On the whole it is not useful to make detailed corrections on students' essays: rather, focus on the most serious issues the student needs to address to improve. And comment on any strengths the student shows.

# 17. Responding to problems

'I have a student who won't shut up.'

'Some of the students are rude.'

'The students won't talk.'

These are just some of the common problems one might encounter in a tutorial group. The issues need to be dealt with fairly early if your tutorial sessions are to succeed. Remember that **some conflict is perfectly normal and healthy**. Try not to feel too uncomfortable about it, but have some strategies ready. Effective tutors work on developing their interpersonal and communication skills as well as their mastery of content. You may also have students who have personal problems of their own. Be supportive and direct them to appropriate services within the university.

- Develop and maintain **ground rules**. Being able to refer to ground rules will often help defuse a potentially irritating or disruptive problem.
- **Confront the situation**. Confronting has the connotation of aggression, but positive confronting simply means stating your concern about behaviour you find unsettling or disruptive. Self-disclosure can be useful e.g. "I feel frustrated when some students do not participate".
- **Be assertive**. This may involve you stating your opinion or request in private to an individual student; listening carefully to their opinion; reflecting back on what they says without comment or criticism; then calmly restating your point of view (or changing it).
- Some **problem situations** and problem students to watch out for. See further reading below for ways to deal with some of these problems:

attention seekers,

students who dominate discussion,

silent students,

unprepared students,

the discouraged, ready-to-give-up student,

the angry aggressive student (not too often).

## Further reading:

Lublin, Jacqueline (1987) *Conducting Tutorials*, HERDSA, Campbelltown, NSW.

## 18. Learning styles

Recent educational research suggests people learn in different ways, with distinct **preferences in the styles of learning** they adopt. An implication for teaching is that students should be exposed to material in many different ways. Tutors can also encourage students to experiment with different learning styles. The key issue in planning tutorials is not to rely on, say, just discussion (either in small groups, or tutor facilitated), or hands-on exercises, or theoretical expositions, but use a variety of teaching/learning processes from week to week.

The following are four major learning styles:

- Some students have a preference for **concrete experience**. They like being involved in immediate, real situations in a personal way. Learning is enhanced when teachers are friendly helpers, and when knowledge and skills are drawn from, or practised in, real-life problems.
- Others are interested in focusing on **ideas and concepts** and are concerned with general theories. Learning is enhanced when they can think alone and when they are required to read theoretical material and case studies.
- There are also **active experimenters**, who have a pragmatic concern with what works. They like to see results and emphasise practical applications. Learning is enhanced when small-group discussions are used, homework and projects are required, and when they can try something out and get immediate feedback.
- Some are **reflective observers** who try to understand the meaning of ideas and situations by carefully observing and impartially describing them. They appreciate different points of view and are good at looking at things from different perspectives. Learning is enhanced when teachers provide expert interpretations and guide and limit discussions.

It has been argued that in general we remember: 10% of what we read, 20% of what we hear, 30% of what we see, 50% of what we hear and see, 70% of what we say, and 90% of what we both say and do. So the lesson is to get students involved in the learning process by providing an environment that engages different styles and promotes active participation.

### Further reading:

Entwistle, Noel (1990) *Handbook of Educational Ideas and Practices*, London, Routledge.

# 19. Teaching for inclusion

Students are a diverse group, coming from a variety of educational, social, ethnic, economic, religious and language backgrounds. Tutors need to take this into account (wherever they can) and aim to create a **learning environment** which is both challenging and safe and where all participants feel included. When planning and running a tutorial, a tutor might take into consideration the social, cultural and teaching issues involved. For example, students may have different learning styles (see page 18), and so getting more variety into the tutorials will be more inclusive.

- Students with **different cultural backgrounds** may have different ways of doing things and have different ways of making sense of the world. Make the workings of the tutorial explicit so that all have a common understanding about what is going on.
- For students who have English as a second language:
  - speak slowly and avoid colloquialisms,
  - provide visual backup - OHPs, diagrams, notes, handouts,
  - make rules and procedures clear and in writing.
- In general:
  - avoid stereotyping,
  - avoid assumptions that an individual represents a culture,
  - be non-judgmental,
  - check out perceptions and understandings on both sides,
  - ask appropriate questions.
- Some students from minority groups **may need extra encouragement** and one-to-one help. Some departments make special provisions for Māori and Pacific Island students. Check to see if your department does this.
- You may have students who have any of a range of visible and invisible learning disabilities: visual, hearing, mobility, speech, or psychiatric impairment. There may be students with special medical conditions. In all cases **get to know the student** and establish what might be helpful or unhelpful.

## Further reading:

*Tertiary Students with Disabilities: A Resource Guide for Staff*, The University of Auckland (1996).

## 20. Tutors as mentors

Whilst **all tutors are mentors** to some extent, those who are designated specifically as mentors across departments in the University have a slightly different but very important role.

Mentoring is a partnership between a more experienced person and someone who is relatively new (the mentee). In the university setting a mentor is usually a student who has recently passed through the system, and who therefore has **first-hand knowledge** to help the mentee. Mentors may also have an ethnic and cultural affinity with the student.

Mentoring is typically **more informal than tutoring** and targets students who are under-represented in the university system. Such students may be at a disadvantage because of language difficulties, or cultural backgrounds that are different from the majority of students.

The mentor is accessible to the student to **help negotiate the academic system**; to become familiar with the particular subject department; to help with study skills; and to guide the student to other resources within the university that might be useful, such as the Student Learning Centre and the English Language Self-Access Centre.

Mentors should set up boundaries with students they are working with, such as how they will communicate, how often they will meet, and in what ways they will help students. It is a good idea to talk about **expected outcomes** from the relationship. Mentors guide students and encourage them to develop skills in the particular subject, but they don't do the work for the student.

Successful mentors often develop a close and trusting relationship with the student, and are approachable and enthusiastic. In getting to know students mentors are more able to **ascertain their individual needs**. They should also create opportunities for students to work together, and perhaps form study groups. Mentors can also be helpful in connecting material that is being studied to real-life contexts.

Some Māori and Pasifika students are reluctant to seek extra help, so mentors may have **to be pro-active** in encouraging students who would benefit from the mentoring relationship. Mentors who are from different language or cultural backgrounds from these students need to be sensitive to the religious and spiritual beliefs of some Māori and Pasifika students. Opportunities for socialization in the learning process might also be useful.

Mentors who are working with **Māori and Pasifika** students need to note the support of the Tuakana Programme, run by the EO Office. Training for tutors and mentors working with Māori and Pasifika students is run by CAD.



## 21. Stages in students' thinking

Psychologist William G. Perry (1968) posits several stages through which students pass on their way to cognitive maturity:

- (1) Initially students see the world in black and white simplicity - authority figures like teachers supposedly know and teach absolute truths about reality.
- (2) They come to realise that there is uncertainty, but that the variety merely reflects that not all authorities are equally legitimate or competent.
- (3) They accept the notion that genuine uncertainty exists, but only as a temporary state that will resolve once an authority finds the answer.
- (4) They are likely to become *relativists* where they consider all views equally valid: with there being no hope of one true interpretation or answer.
- (5) They may reserve *dualistic* ideas of right and wrong and may permit certain instances where facts are truly facts and only one plausible truth exists.
- (6) Eventually the inability to deal with all the internal inconsistencies leads students to a more general cognitive stage of commitment to a particular view in some area.
- (7) In the later stages they examine the impacts of commitments, the trade-offs it carries, and come to realise that embracing or modifying a position in the hindsight of experience is a major part of personal and intellectual growth.

### Implications for teaching:

In any one group of students there are likely to be those whose intellectual capacities are at different stages - at times this may be a source of conflict and frustration. How quickly students develop intellectual maturity can be a product of the quality and type of instruction they receive. Perry contends that we can help students' progress through these stages by familiarising them with *uncertainty* and *standards of comparison* in our disciplines.

### Instructive examples might include:

- (1) The range of viable interpretations that can be made of certain works of art and literature.
- (2) The different conclusions that can legitimately be drawn from the same historical evidence and scientific data.
- (3) A discipline's history of scientific revolutions and paradigm shifts.
- (4) Unresolved issues on which a discipline is currently conducting research.
- (5) Historical and scientific unknowns that may not ever be resolved.

Perry, William G. (1968) *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years: A Scheme*, New York, Holt Reinhart & Winstone.

## 22. Planning

Skilful teachers usually plan their teaching sessions carefully - but in a way that still allows flexibility and some spontaneity. Whilst a plan shouldn't look like your lecture notes it provides a good framework about what you intend to do in the session. In particular, thought should be given to the processes that will be used during the session. If not, there may be too much emphasis on content, a traditional focus at universities, often to the detriment of the learning process.

- A good plan balances tension between flexibility and structure, between content and process.
- A good plan helps coherence and a logical development of ideas; develops group rapport; ensures important content gets taught; and manages time.
- When thinking about a teaching session the following questions can be helpful in devising a plan:
  1. What are the objectives for the session? (**What** do I want the students to learn?)
  2. What teaching/learning processes and resources will I use? (**How** shall I teach them?)
  3. Evaluating and reflecting (What went well and what didn't?)
- It is very helpful to estimate roughly how long each activity is likely to last. This is a guide for you, but sometimes you might communicate this information to the students e.g. "for three minutes write down your ideas on x, and then we will have a ten-minute discussion".

A plan could look like this:

PLAN: (title)		
OBJECTIVES:		
Time-frame	Content	Process
Warm-up		
1st Activity		
2nd Activity		
3rd Activity		
Wrap-up		
Evaluation		

## 23. Evaluating your tutorials

Good tutors are **reflective**. They think about what they are doing, why they are doing it, and how they can improve. If you want to improve your tutorials, you will need to do some kind of evaluation of them. This can be quite informal or it can be more carefully thought out and assisted by the evaluation section of the university.

- It can be very instructive to do some kind of evaluation **mid-semester**, and then you can make changes if you need to.
- An informal evaluation might simply involve you asking your students how **they feel about the tutorials** e.g. “How did the session go today?” “Did you feel that there was enough time to discuss the issues?”
- You might decide to get them to **answer some questions on paper**, anonymously. The feedback is likely to be more honest. You could ask what they like about the tutorials so far, and in what way(s) they could be improved. You are likely to get some positive and negative feedback, but both help you as a tutor.
- You could ask another tutor or some other colleague to **sit in on your tutorial** and give you some feedback. If you do this, you should ask them to observe specific teaching areas - such as the length of time you talk (is it too much?); or your listening skills; or the amount of variety in the tutorial.
- **A video tape** of your tutorial by a colleague (although it sounds daunting) can be a very effective in allowing you to reflect on your performance. It can also help you to analyse interaction within the group.
- **One-minute papers**. Stop the class two or three minutes early and ask students to respond briefly to the following two questions: “What did you find most useful about the session today?” and, “In what way could the session have been improved?”. This is a quick process and gives manageable amounts of information to which the tutor can respond. It is a good idea to give feedback on the results of the one-minute paper and to note any changes that will be made.

### Further reading:

Angelo, Thomas A. & Cross, Patricia K. (1993) *Classroom Assessment Techniques*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.

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