Lecturing

Before you begin

(Adapted from: Race, P (2006) *In at the deep end – starting to teach in higher education*. Leeds: Leeds Metropolitan University.)

There are a number of things to take into account before you start lecturing. The following is a useful checklist:

- Do I know how many lectures I will be giving to this class?
- Do I know roughly how many students maybe there?
- Have I found out what these students are likely to know already about the topic of the lecture?
- Do I know where my particular lecture fits into the overall course or module my students are studying?
- Have I been to see the actual lecture room I expect to be using?
- Have I got the published intended learning outcomes for this lecture, if any?
- Have I turned these into the actual intended learning outcomes I will introduce at the start of my lecture?
- Have I prepared slides or overheads to accompany my lecture?
- Have I checked out that I can work the equipment I need in this particular venue? Is all the equipment already there?
- Have I prepared any handout material I want students to have in their hands during my lecture?
- Have I the opportunity to talk about my particular lecture to other colleagues who already work with these students?
- Have I tested that I can be seen and heard well in this lecture venue?

**What Students Appreciate in Effective Lectures**

1. *Clarity of Presentation*

An effective lecturer:

- Presents materials clearly and logically
- Explains key concepts clearly so that students are able to understand the basic principles of the subject
- Paces lectures appropriately for the needs of the students
- Connects lecture material in meaningful ways to learning activities outside the lecture (e.g., in tutorials, small group activities, readings etc.)
- Establishes and maintains a sense of continuity and coherence throughout a series of lectures by regularly reviewing what has been covered and connecting it to the ‘big picture’ of the course or program.

2. *Scholarship*

An effective lecturer:

- Shows an expert knowledge of the subject
- Understands how to guide novice students step-by-step to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the discipline, its traditions, conventions and methodologies
- Demonstrates practical applications of the theory of the subject to encourage engagement with learning
- Regularly makes links between theory and practice to demonstrate the relevance of the subject.
1. Willingness to Develop Students

An effective lecturer:

- Readily considers students’ viewpoints and is aware of the diverse range of backgrounds represented in large class groups
- Allows and encourages questions during lectures
- Encourages students to think independently and critically
- Shows an interest in student progress by providing timely feedback on learning
Planning your Lecture

While it is important to plan each lecture there is no simple formula for doing so. The following plan exemplifies one approach to preparation which demonstrates how you might plan for interactivity and audience activity time. This micro-level planning may not work for you, but consider ways in which you might adopt some of the planning principles.

Sample lecture plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 minutes</td>
<td>• Introduction</td>
<td>• PowerPoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 minutes</td>
<td>• Identify learning objectives</td>
<td>• Diagram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identify connection with previous learning and/or real world applications</td>
<td>• PowerPoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 minutes</td>
<td>• Your plan for the session</td>
<td>• Use a concept map diagram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 15</td>
<td>• Present main information (part 1)</td>
<td>• PowerPoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minutes</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Demonstration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 minutes</td>
<td>• Class activity</td>
<td>• Develop scenarios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>• Feedback session</td>
<td>• Summarise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 minutes</td>
<td>• Pause/stretch/jot down reflections/a key question arising from part 1</td>
<td>• Discussion starter questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 15</td>
<td>• Present main information (part 2)</td>
<td>• What have you learnt?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minutes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 minutes</td>
<td>• Questions from the class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 minutes</td>
<td>• Exam tip and/or what have you learnt activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prepared by Lyn Burnett
Delivering a Lecture

Adapted from GIHE Good Practice Guide on Teaching Large Classess prepared by Dr Lynn Burnett and Professor Kerri-Lee Krause.

Context and Key Issues

A large class generally includes 100 students or more, but there is no single definition. In some cases, large may signify a class of 50-70 students, in others, it may include up to 1500 students in a single cohort. Large classes are most common in the first year of study at university. This carries the added responsibility of supporting first year students through the transition to university, while also introducing them to learning in the university context.

Teaching large classes requires a combination of skills and strategies including:

- Organising and presenting effective lectures;
- Engaging students and developing a sense of belonging;
- Integrating active learning elements in traditional lecture formats;
- Blending face-to-face and technology-enhanced learning activities;
- Crowd control in large groups; and
- Managing and supporting staff teams, including tutors.

What Do We Know About Students’ Learning in Large Classes? We Know That:

1. Individuals learn better if they think about what they are learning and are actively engaged with the information;
2. Students need to be engaged in deep learning if they are to develop and become autonomous, critical thinkers and learners;
3. The first 20 minutes of a lecture is the most crucial time for facilitating deep learning and student engagement with the material;
4. If there is no immediate application of what is covered during a lecture, then over a period of a few days there is a rapid drop in the percentage of material retained; and
5. If there is no student participation during a lecture then there is limited opportunity for ongoing and timely feedback to the lecturer about student understanding and engagement.

Strategies

The following strategies are suggestions only. Not all of them will work for all lecturers. You will need to determine what best suits your context, discipline, student cohort and teaching style.

Take the time to consider how you might adapt some of the following to your own context and discipline.

- Keep it lively – move around with purpose and reduce student anonymity
- Make connections between previous learning and real world applications
- Handouts – allow for working space
- Encourage and engage with/in student interaction
- Ask questions and expect responses
- Show you value all answers (use both verbal and non-verbal signals) and give students time to answer
- Establish participation as one of the ground rules for contributions to lectures
- Use a mixture of activities to break up the lecture and engage with students (For example, Think, pair, share; Debates; Quiet time; Role plays; Problem-solving tasks; Demonstrations; Think Breaks; Identify clearest and most unclear point; The one minute paper; Fill in the gap exercises, and Buzz groups)
- Use half a lecture for information delivery and half for problem-based activities, case studies and discussion to promote higher-order thinking and the integration of theory and practice
- Include a range of technologies, music, mixed media, humour and unpredictability, as appropriate
- Ask key questions at the end of each session. Combine lower and higher order questions for students to respond to either by submitting or sharing with friend for further discussion
- Evaluate student understanding (for example, Mini quizzes; and True False responses)
Don’t just ‘lecture’
(Extract from: Race, P (2006) In at the deep end – starting to teach in higher education Leeds: Leeds Metropolitan University.)

A notional one-hour lecture doesn’t boil down to 60 minutes’ worth of ‘content’, as the intended outcomes need to be introduced and then de-briefed, and your class needs to settle in and leave. So we’re normally thinking about no more than say 45 minutes for the ‘delivery’ part of your lecture. But in practice, 45 minutes is too long for you to ‘deliver’ and too long for your students to ‘receive’. Concentration spans are much shorter than 45 minutes. It is better to break your lecture down into some shorter elements, for example no more than ten minutes at a time of you talking to your students, interspersed with getting them to do things, for example making notes, asking you questions, answering questions you ask them, and so on. Already the scary prospect of giving a one-hour lecture is much more manageable – all you need to do is to manage a few episodes of talking to your students, and intersperse a few episodes of them doing things (giving you the chance to catch your breath, regain your composure, and plan what exactly to do next).

Crowd Control

Techniques for large classes

- Never keep talking over conversations
- Maintain eye contact with talkers
- If possible, move around the theatre
- Discuss the problem openly
- Set ground-rules early and implement them
- Humour can work but be cautious

What can I do when the technology lets me down?
(Extract from: Race, P (2006) In at the deep end – starting to teach in higher education Leeds: Leeds Metropolitan University.)

For example, your PowerPoint slides disappear, or freeze! The thing not to do is to struggle for ages, with the undivided attention of the whole group, with a mouse, a remote control, a keyboard, or any other piece of technology. Alternatives include:

- Smile, rather than sweat! Even if inside you’re quite tense about it, it’s best to give the impression of being cool about it.
- Give your students a discussion task to do – something to talk about to those sitting next to them – a decision to reach, a problem to solve, and so on. It’s a good idea always to have such a task ready and waiting. Then when they’re all busy and eyes are off you, you can try to rescue the technology.
- Ask for help. “Anyone know how to fix this please?” quite often brings a competent volunteer from the floor. Sometimes, you can ring up technical support, but it remains advisable to give the students something else to do until help materialises.
- Recognise when the problem is terminal – for example when the bulb has failed in a ceiling-mounted data projector.
- If it’s towards the end of a session, wind up. Remind your students of the intended learning outcomes, and promise to cover anything important that remains outstanding on a future occasion – or to put the relevant slides onto the web. Your students won’t mind you stopping early!
After the Lecture
(Adapted from: Race, P (2006) In at the deep end – starting to teach in higher education Leeds: Leeds Metropolitan University.)

Questions:

- Did I introduce and explain the intended learning outcomes clearly to the students?
- Did I manage to speak confidently and clearly?
- Did I give the students some things to do as part of the lecture?
- Did I manage to involve all of the students in doing things during the lecture?
- Did my slides or overheads help the students to make sense of the subject?
- Did I remember to switch the screen display off when it was not needed?
- Did my handout materials work well with the students?
- Did I engage the students by asking them questions during the lecture?
- Did I succeed in getting the students to ask me questions?
- How well did I answer the students’ questions?
- Did I return to the intended learning outcomes, and find out how the students felt they had got on with them?
- Did I bring the session to a rounded and punctual close?
- What was the best thing about this particular lecture?
- What was the least satisfactory thing about this particular lecture?
- What is the single most important change I intend to make next time I give this particular lecture?

Remember:

Summarize what the topics you have covered in the lecture, highlighting the key points you want the students to ‘take home’ with them.

Further Reading: