

Quality Advancement

Quality Forum

Forum Outcome: Captivating and exciting learning in large lectures

Captivating and exciting learning in large lectures

A common challenge when we teach in large classes is how to engage students to ensure high-quality learning. We want students to be captivated, enthused and to think deeply about the subject matter, but this can be problematic in a large lecture theatre where students may feel anonymous and it is difficult to meet their individual needs.

Despite the challenges of teaching in large classes, there are many successful teachers who provide memorable, thought-provoking lectures. What are some of the general principles and strategies for successful learning in large classes? The panel spoke on this topic on Tuesday 7th May 2019 in a Quality Forum.

Outcomes:

Look for opportunities to break a large lecture into small groups

In order to create captivating and exciting learning, successful teachers look to create opportunities to run small group activities and are comfortable transitioning between the large lecture format and these smaller groups. Students need opportunities to engage with the content of the class, so successful teachers often do exercises with students, such as completing diagrams or creating definitions. They actively change the pace of the lectures but allow time to summarise learning and finish on time.

Build rapport with students

Large lectures can be challenging, the panel talked about courses which were content-heavy, compulsory, or had repeating students. However, successful teachers talked about creating a rapport with their students by simple acts such as smiling, playing music before their lectures, and referring to students by name. They were open to sharing stories about themselves and told stories to make content relevant and relatable (even resorting to Dad jokes). Relating content to personal stories helps students make links between ideas and can make it easier for them to recall key concepts. Successful teachers spoke about appreciating the diversity in their classroom and not making assumptions about students or their background. They found moving around the lecture theatre a useful strategy for engaging students but did not tolerate behaviour that would be disruptive to other students.

Good teachers are personally invested in their subject area and in teaching.

In order to provide exciting lectures, the panel said they needed to be passionate about their subject and also teaching (students notice when teachers seem happy and interested in their subject). They limited the text provided on PowerPoint, or did not use PowerPoint at all, and they were always purposeful with media. Successful teachers would be explicit with their instructions and would refer to lecture learning objectives. They were also comfortable challenging students. Successful teachers were reflective; they sought formal and informal feedback on their teaching from their students and from their peers, which they would respond to.

Some further tips

- Explicitly tell students how and when you can be contacted (students feel more comfortable approaching you to ask questions)
- Use student questions as a teaching tool (students link questioning with learning)
- Show up early to your lectures and greet students as they arrive

[Click here to view recording on-line](#)

Thank you to the Facilitator Rob Wass and Panelists:

Nicola Beatson	Accounting and Finance
Dr Brad Hurren	Anatomy
Dr Kim Brown	College of Education, Graduate Research School

