

TUTORIAL (group 1)

Challenges & Solutions

- Unresponsive students (are they getting it?)
 - o Assessing if students understand
 - o Have each student answer a question (going to the class systematically)
 - o Have students nod/shake their heads to indicate that they understand
- Students don't understand questions
 - o Rephrase the question, checking in with students
 - o Have students re-phrase the question
 - o Have students discuss questions and answers in groups, and go around listening in to see what they get/don't get + help where necessary.
- Not enough time in tutorials (e.g. to check in with each group)
 - o Create a friendly atmosphere (so whole class discusses)
 - o Have each group teach part of each question to the class
- Being challenged by students
 - o Prepare very well (better able to explain nuances)
 - o Bring it back to the class (does anyone agree with...?), ask students what they learned in lecture about the topic
 - o Ask students how they could find out...+ Encourage them to do some research
 - o Be open (say when you don't know) and follow through
- Email or discussion board for communication
 - o There are pros and cons
- Insufficient number of TAs (many 1st time TAs) overworked (how to deal with course coordinators?)
 - o Redirect students' questions to instructor
 - o Discuss with course coordinator. How to reduce workload/be more efficient, etc
 - o Find out who to talk to and ask for specific help
- Plagiarism
 - o Give suggestions on how to avoid it
 - o Ensure students understand what is OK and what is not OK
 - o Provide good examples
- Students being upset about marks
 - o Explain how marking was done fairly
 - o Use 24 or 48 hour rule

TUTORIAL (group 2)

Challenges & Solutions

- Organization of course

- Mistakes in rubrics and quizzes
- Last minute details (e.g. about what topics will be taught the next day)
- Coordinator has mistaken assumptions about what needs to be covered in prep sessions
- Professor/instructor not involved in labs
- Only talked about lab activities, didn't practice activities
 - o Talk to a senior person in the course or Department
- Answering questions that you don't know the answer to
 - o Discuss questions with experience TA or other TAs
- Working more hours than being paid for (working for supervisor who will provide references)
 - o Speak with course coordinator, or with union representative.
 - o Ask about other courses where hours worked don't exceed hours paid
- Group dysfunction (non-contributing group member)
 - o Group evaluation to voice opinions
 - o Reassure contributing students that you understand and they won't be penalized
 - o If possible take into consideration individual strengths/weaknesses when forming groups
- Shy students: don't contribute as much due to shyness, can negatively impact grade
- Plagiarism: don't have comprehensive mastery/understanding of the language
 - o Have two definitions for plagiarism (e.g. separate not citing enough from theft/copying of ideas, intentional/unintentional)
- Cheating. How to minimize?
 - o Stand behind students who have wondering eyes
 - o Have alternative versions of the test
 - o Have space between students
- Students who don't show up to class regularly and/or hand in assignments on time
 - o Check in with students in a supportive way.
 - o Early alerts

LABS (group 1)

Challenges

- Electronic distractions (how to monitor?), social networking with students
- Not attentive , listening to instructions
- Motivation: not caring, not engages , sleeping, working on other causes
Diversity in student engagement
- Nervousness before teaching
- More interested in networking/schmoozing with TA
- Prepare the content knowledge
- Students overwhelmed

- How to help struggling students
- Students over confident (slack off)
- Students leave studying to last minute
- Coping with changing technology

Solutions

- Exercise to focus “Zen moment” – just listen
- Set guidelines, define use of electronics be clear when it is ok, keep them busy
- Exercises to move your body
- Interact with non-motivated students
- Change students groups
- Adjust teaching activity for students’ interests
- Let students know that they have choices
- Advise and guide until is obvious you will no longer remind
- Students need to be given the chance to realize there are consequences
- Structure explicit about expectations repeating key concepts/instructions
- Model enthusiasm, get students interested.
- Use hook to interest students
- Reach out, encourage students to persevere
- Try alternative approaches
- Motivational prep talk, learn from mid-term, put exam in context
- Help students keep up with quizzes, or some need to learn more failure
- Provide suggestions on how to study effectively (e.g. form a study group)
- Relate to students, take pauses, ask for feedback
- Take clues from students’ reactions and faces
- Practice or think through before the first class
- It’s OK to say I don’t know. Consult or look it up
- Ask for midterm feedback from students

LECTURE

Challenges & Solutions

- Students bullying other students about their work, bullying graders or lecturer about their marks
 - o File an early alert, this worked well eventually (it helped the student)
- Students coming for help asking questions outside our area of expertise

- Model for students how to look it up. Admit when we don't know. Show them how/where to find reliable information
- Confusion about our role in teaching the class. No connection between us and the students, no one come to office hours
 - Advertise your office hours
 - Make announcement in lecture about office hours
 - Talk about study tips, assignments, common questions
- Student with health problems missed a lot of classes and failed exams
 - Talk to student and ask them seek medical help, put in an early alert, talk to your instructor if you notice a student asking having difficulties ask them if they are OK
- Overly friendly students who want to hang out, go for coffee or dinner, people wanted to add as friend on facebook
 - Politely turn them down, say you can add them as friends after the term is over (if you want)
 - Set boundaries, talk about your research or about the class but not about your personal life
- Students asking about what is going to be on the exam
 - Answer to all students or during office hours
 - Give examples from past exams
 - Point them towards course resources (e.g. practice problems)
- Explaining a concept again and again but students just don't get it
 - Tell instructor
- Don't agree with the answer you are expected to give, but don't want to discredit the instructor (don't agree with what the instructor said in lecture)
 - Send students to instructor for that question, talk to instructor before if possible to find an understanding. Answer the question "as far as this course is concerned..." or 'for the exam you should know'. Could talk about scientific debates if there is general scientific disagreement in the topic (context dependent).
- Students with vastly different backgrounds, hard to find a balance to challenge good students while not leaving behind students that are less prepared
 - Encourage upper students in some more challenges topics while other students are finishing up work
 - Make bonus mark questions
- Students wanting help understanding exam questions

Language barrier

 - Help students with common phrases used on exam questions.
 - Point them to helpful resources
- Not much of a role in lecture class, just sitting there

- Talk to instructor about how to expand the role, circulate during group work and clicker questions to help students. Help instructor answer questions at end of class
- Teaching materials and techniques. I have never done that before. Stressful to prepare enough to feel confident. Teaching other's people materials.
 - Prepare, try techniques before teaching them
 - Make some changes to have more ownership over the material (e.g. use an example you know well), make a worksheet for students to do in pairs to make it more interactive.
- Difficult to interact with 200 students in a large lecture class.
 - Make an effort to talk to every student over the term. Sit in a different seat each class. Go to different parts of the room to answer questions about activities. Some people won't ask question unless you pass by them