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Lecturing Series

Intro

Starting a career in university lecturing is an exciting step. Because of the independence and autonomy that the role offers, you might lack confidence when starting out in this job. You may only receive limited practical advice and training before you are expected to appear in front of a class of students. Sound familiar? If so, read on: this eguide is for you!

Tapping into the expertise of scholars who have walked this career path, this eguide offers advice for early career lecturers as they embark on an academic career. Topics include how to deliver entertaining and informative lectures; how to run lively seminars; one to one student care and how to integrate your teaching with your research expertise.

Whether you are still doing your PhD and are teaching for the first time, or are starting a temporary or permanent contract, this eguide will guide you in developing your skills. It offers practical tips and advice on how to cope with common problems inside and outside the classroom.

Lecturing Series: Integrating Teaching Responsibilities with admin and research

As an early career lecturer finding time to do anything other than teaching preparation and being in the classroom is challenging. However, this is a vitally important time in your career and you need to make sure that you are developing a rounded academic profile. This article will offer advice on how to integrate your teaching responsibilities with other aspects of the job.

The Challenge:

When you start lecturing you will spend a lot of your time writing lectures and preparing small group teaching. It is always more difficult to teach courses for the first time and in subsequent years the preparation time becomes far less onerous.

If you have a part time or temporary contract, you might also be doing another job, or commuting long distances to work, and then it is harder to dedicate time to other aspects of your academic career.

Don't over-prepare:

Inexperienced scholars spend far too long preparing each teaching session. It should not take you more than a day to write a lecture, or a few hours to prepare a seminar. As a lecturer you simply cannot afford to dedicate more time than that. If you have been asked to teach something completely outside your expertise you may have to do more preparation, but as a rule of thumb: don't over-prepare. This will free up more time for you to do other things.

Research:

You must keep up your research and writing profile while starting your lecturing career. This may mean publishing articles from conference papers, being an active book reviewer, or turning your PhD into a book. Doing this while preparing new classes for teaching is a very difficult juggling act, but it is vital that you do not allow your research and writing to fall behind. You may find it challenging because you no longer have your PhD supervisor with whom to regularly discuss your research. You have to have the ambition to drive your research forward yourself.

Administration:

You may be required to keep detailed records such as course registers and you must keep on top of this. But you might also be invited to attend meetings and to take a full part in the life of the department. This will be expected of you if you are an early career lecturer who has a permanent post.

If you are a temporary or part-time staff member, it may not be compulsory but if you want a career in academia then you need the experience of taking part in these activities. So, even if you feel that you do not want to attend meetings because they are not part of your contract and you do not get paid to do so, attending occasionally is a good idea to help you understand some of the important concerns in the sector and get a clearer idea of how your university works.

Blending all three:

Having a career that integrates teaching with research and admin is a challenge even for experienced academics. Most scholars spend their term times focusing on teaching and admin and then dedicate the holiday periods to research, but sometimes deadlines do not allow you to make such a neat division. Good time management is key; for example, if you can restrict teaching to two or three days per week, this will free up at least one day for research. Other people get around the problem by working at weekends, although it is also vital to maintain a sensible work-life balance and not to burn out.

Curriculum design

You might be asked to design and deliver a module of your own choice or undertake a redesign of an existing module. This can be rather daunting and probably something not done while a PhD student, so here are some broad tips on how to start this process.

Job interviews:

The first experience of curriculum design is often being asked during a job interview what courses you will offer should you get the job. This is a test to see whether you are familiar with what the department currently offers and how your own courses could fit into that. When you are offered the job, your new colleagues will not expect you to stick to the proposals you offered at interview, so here's some points to consider when designing modules.

- Check to see what is currently on offer in the department. You will see what is popular and what students already learn about. You'll learn about the format of the courses (yearly, termly) and will get some ideas about assessment strategies.

- Decide what it is that you want to teach. Fit it around the current offering and do not make it too narrow to attract student interest.

- Make sure that the resources needed are available in the library.

Practicalities of designing a module:

- **Aims and Objectives**

You will have to fill in official quality assurance paperwork in which you describe the aims and objectives for the students taking the course. This is a good place to start because you will be able to work out what it is you want the students to achieve.

- **Week by week outline of topics**

The first important task is to plan what topics you want your students to study, bearing in mind the learning outcomes you have set for them. To get ideas about this, look at other similar courses on offer elsewhere (some universities allow public access to this information).

- **How will you teach these topics?**

Will you use lectures, seminars, workshops? Some universities are very rigid about this in order to achieve parity across the student experience while others allow you to be as creative as possible. Bear in mind that student contact hours are a contentious subject, so don't expect them to do everything outside the classroom. Consider the significance of e-learning facilities. Can you use these to bring variety to the classroom or even integrate them into the teaching schedule?

- **What assessment will you require (qualitative and summative)?**

Your assessment regime has to provide both practice and feedback for students during the course of their learning (qualitative) and a result for them at the end of the period of study (summative). You have many different options; you must decide which form of assessment suits the material and skills you want to convey. Lab practicals, essays and exams are traditional forms of assessment, but there are many others to consider, such as presentations, book reviews, research projects, portfolios and online work such as contributions to wikis.

- **What resources do you need?**

If you are designing a module from scratch, you will need to let the library, or the e-learning team, know what resources you need. There may be limits on the amount of new materials they can order, so you might have to use existing resources. You should be given several months to create a new course as it will take time to gather these resources.

Amending someone else's module:

If you are inheriting someone else's module and want to change it, there are several things to consider. Don't alter things for the sake of it. The library and administration systems will be used to the module the way it is. If it works, then leave it! Ask colleagues who have taught on the course previously whether they think it works. If some topics fall flat every year then those are the ones to change. Whether you are amending existing modules or creating new ones, tap into the expertise of your colleagues. They will be able to advise you on the strategies that work best.

Lecturing series: Moving away from standard assessments

As a new lecturer you might have the opportunity to devise assessment strategies for a course that you are working on. This will give you the opportunity to be creative but also requires you to be able to fit the acquisition of skills into a broader curriculum.

Why move away from a standard model?

The standard higher education model of assessment is usually essays throughout the course and exams at the end of it. There are many reasons why this model is inadequate. It allows students who are strong in sustained writing to flourish whereas others can struggle. It doesn't actually test the use of knowledge but often the memorising of information and also these sorts of assignment bear little resemblance to tasks completed in the world of work after university.

So by changing your assessments you can help to improve student experience, either by giving them more skills that will be useful after university or by allowing them to display their knowledge in a new way.

Key questions to ask:

If you are thinking of moving away from the standard essay or exam model, consider what other lecturers do on their courses. Is innovation possible and encouraged at your university? If so, what do others do? You will need to check two things. Firstly that what you propose to do gives students a comparable experience to other courses and secondly that it is not duplicating tasks they will complete elsewhere.

What options do I have?

Here are some of the non-standard assessment options. Each will not be suitable for all subject areas but most can be adapted to fit your curriculum.

- Oral Presentations: asking students to prepare a presentation and deliver it in front of their classmates is an excellent skill to have moving forward into the workplace and will also give those learners who struggle writing extended pieces of prose the opportunity to show what they can do.

- Electronic assessments, for example wikis or blogs: most universities now have e-learning systems which allow you to assess your students by allowing them to contribute online to a wiki or blog. Tests can also be conducted online, which can allow students to repeatedly attempt questions.

- Peer reviewing elements: this means that students contribute to marking other students. Obviously it would not be appropriate for students to decide a large proportion of the marks for their peers, but allowing a contribution from their classmates, judging for example a presentation, encourages in-depth participation from students. They are likely to be rigorous yet fair because they want the same treatment in return.

- Assessing classroom participation: some lecturers award bonus marks for participation in small group activity. Sometimes it is difficult to encourage students to contribute in a seminar but giving them bonus points is one way to do this. However, it does mean that the teacher has to be alert all the time, noting who is making comments in class time and who remains quiet. It also penalises the students who are very bright but very shy.

- Assessing attendance: some lecturers award marks for good attendance. But again this can be difficult to monitor, especially as you will have some students who miss class for a justifiable reason but this might only emerge later.

Team Teaching on large modules: opportunities and challenges

This article will discuss the subject of team teaching. Many university lecturers have their first experience of team teaching as PhD students and part time lecturers, because they are not initially permitted to design and run courses in their own area of interest but as class sizes increase, is also becoming part of the working life of permanent staff members as well.

Team teaching: what is it?

This refers to a method of teaching that involves a number of different lecturers working on the same unit (i.e. individual course). They might be involved right from the start in the design process or simply cover the teaching and delivery aspect.
This method usually is employed on large, 'survey' modules that involve cohorts of a significant size.

What are the positives?

For students, being taught by a range of lecturers can enhance understanding due to being able to see the subject from a number of perspectives. This can allow lecturers to speak on their own topic as part of a larger unit without having to revise and write a lecture on topics about which they are unfamiliar. It can also mean that the load of seminar/workshop/lab teaching is shared among staff members.

In terms of teaching development, team teaching can encourage innovation and the sharing of best practice. In ideal circumstances, a unit should be run in a democratic fashion where any contributing lecturer should have the opportunity to suggest a new approach. Regular meetings should be held between the staff members to ensure parity across the student experience and staff workloads.

What are the negatives?

For students the inconsistency and lack of routine can be unsettling. Taking a unit with one lecturer means that you can get used to that person's style and requirements. Team taught units can leave students unsure as to who is in charge and unclear about the right person to approach with a particular problem.

Lecturers sometimes dislike this approach because they too find it 'bitty' and inconsistent. They would prefer to work with a cohort for the whole year rather than see them just for a few weeks.

Often the team taught module doesn't encourage collaboration and can even increase the divisions between 'us' and 'them' with the lecturing staff (usually permanent members of the department) distinct from the small group staff (usually part time lecturers or postgrads). In these cases, very little input is sought from the staff leading the small groups, despite the fact that they are the ones with more student contact.

Good practice:

- Encourage all members of the staff team to meet regularly to share experiences and make suggestions for improvement.

- Make sure that students have a single clear point of contact that is consistent throughout the year

- Use staff members' expertise to improve the course. Allow them to develop lectures in their own areas of research rather than forcing them into something unfamiliar.

- Encourage staff to engage with the whole course and not just turn up to deliver their few sessions as this will enhance student experience by ensuring continuity.

Research-led teaching

Being able to undertake research-led teaching in academia is often seen as the 'holy grail' of teaching: the opportunity to integrate both parts of the job and to share with students our latest research findings. However, for a lecturer at the start of his or her career, this approach can seem challenging. Here are some tips on how to genuinely integrate your research with teaching.

What is research-led teaching?

Research-led teaching is a way of teaching a topic or a technique driven by the tutor's research experience. So it may involve sharing with students your latest research findings or methods. You might devise one session or an entire module based on your own research. It will usually be taught at second or third year level, allowing you to penetrate the topic at some depth.

Advantages of research-led teaching:

Many students come to university wanting to be taught by experts in their field and research-led teaching provides them with this experience. The enthusiastic and more able students among your cohort will be inspired by this approach, often wanting to undertake their own research projects, perhaps doing an undergraduate dissertation with you, or even going on to a masters or PhD.

It will give you the opportunity of showing students the subject area that most interests you, but also allows you to show the trajectory of the development of your field. By demonstrating the latest techniques of research in your area, you are showing them how to be 'historians' or 'sociologists' or 'chemists', rather than mere 'students'.

Pitfalls:

Most of the problems will come from students being unused to this approach. Most will have not been exposed to this at school. Departments are also increasingly hostile to the development of modules that rely on the expertise of one person. Instead they prefer to develop modules that can be taught by more than one member of staff to protect against staff sickness or absence problems. However, if you are able to develop your own module based on your research:

- Don't over-estimate your students' knowledge. You have been immersed in this topic for months, if not years. They may be completely new to it, so don't expect too much.

- Relate the specific areas of your own research to the broader module outline and the broader curriculum. Tell students why your subject area is important and how it integrates into the rest of their programme of learning.

- Students may feel uncertain developing subject knowledge that is cutting edge. They are often used to relying on textbooks for their information.

- Students may not have the skills needed to focus on your subject area in depth. For example they may lack language skills, analytical skills or the ability to interpret unfamiliar sources of information.

- Make sure that there are enough resources, for example in the library, for students to engage with the topic.

Despite these words of caution, being able to develop individual sessions or entire modules based on your research area is one of the most rewarding aspects of being a lecturer, so take advantage of the opportunity if offered.

Lecturing series: Use of E-Learning Portals

In this next article we will look at how to develop your use of e-learning portals.

What is e-learning?

All lecturers are now expected to engage with the idea of e-learning. It stands for 'electronic learning' and refers to the use of electronic resources during teaching. Many universities now have an integrated system for delivering their e-learning, such as WebCT or Moodle. You will probably be asked about this in job interviews, so make sure you know what system that institution uses.

How can it benefit students?

You can use an e-learning portal to provide materials to support their classroom learning or provide a whole new aspect to it.

So, you could post lecture notes and slides electronically, so that students can revise from them or those who couldn't attend can catch up. This also benefits students with learning difficulties such as dyslexia who may find it difficult to take notes during a hastily delivered lecture, but can absorb the information easily when reviewing a text version on the web.

Other materials, such as set readings scanned in and digitised, can be provided easily. This has the advantage of allowing students access from their computer terminal without having to go elsewhere to find a resource. Many university libraries and laboratories no longer have the resources to provide a copy of materials for every student, so by providing electronic versions it means that students can all have access.

Web portals can also be used to communicate a message to a cohort of students and make announcements about, for example, assessments or changes of plan. Students can use it to contact their lecturer rather than spending time looking for their lecturer in person.

Being innovative?

Some lecturers take their use of e-learning a step further and rather than just supporting their current practice, use it to develop new ideas.

Instead of lecturing to students in a room, lectures can be delivered via podcast. Learning activities can also take place virtually with students sharing ideas such as discussions on a wiki or forum. Quizzes and tests can be completed online. This is an especially good method for a multiple choice-type test.

Practical problems:

The use of e-learning portals is not without difficulties. Sometimes there can be teething problems, especially with large numbers of students being involved at the very start of the year. This can mean that access is very slow or that the system does not behave as it should.

Technical difficulties can consume your time and make life harder for students and you. What starts out as an innovation or a labour-saving device can develop into a source of stress, especially if the technical support provided by your institution or the creators of the web portal is not prompt or efficient.

There is also the important issue of copyright. You must ensure that you have permissions to display any materials you put on the portal. Most universities have copyright agreements for a limited amount of material for teaching purposes but check with your librarian if you are unsure.

Pedagogical Issues:

It is also important to consider the pedagogical merit of using e-learning. In some cases, such as online degree courses, it has replaced face to face teaching altogether. In most institutions, though, it will be used along side traditional teaching. You need to make sure that in using this technology, your students' learning experience is enhanced rather than merely changed.

Lecturing: Supervising Undergraduate Dissertations

This article explores an aspect of a lecturer's job that is rarely discussed: supervising dissertations. As a PhD student you will have probably gained experience in lecturing, leading small group work, marking and even designing your own sessions. But it is rare that anyone other than full time staff are asked to supervise dissertations. So, how do you prepare for this task?

One to one work:

For some lecturers, dissertation supervision is one of their favourite parts of the job because it presents a rare opportunity for working closely with one student over a period of time (usually one academic year) on a project close to your area of interest. This activity requires a different communication skill to that of speaking to a classroom full of students. You need to be informal, collaborative and friendly but maintain the distance between tutor and student.

There are also important issues to be aware of when conducting one to one meetings. It is recommended that you don't meet with a student of the opposite sex behind closed doors. Have your office door open or meet in a public place. Keep a record of every meeting so that if a colleague or your line manager queries your progress you will be able to inform him or her of what has happened in your meetings.

Achieving a balance:

Acting as a supervisor is a difficult job because the student will often be studying something dear to your heart so the tendency is to try to guide them too firmly. It is important that the student is allowed to design their project, undertake the research and write it up without too much interference from you. You are a guide and advisor, not the senior partner in a project requiring them to do the menial tasks. You are there to facilitate their independent learning.

Time management and record keeping:

A key duty is to encourage your student to stick to a timetable by which they can easily complete their project. This will usually involve setting mini-deadlines throughout the year and meeting regularly to hear updates on their progress. It is your job to ensure that these timetables are met, and to chase students who forget to contact you for weeks at a time.

It is also important to keep notes recording the progress of each student. You may have ten or more dissertation students, so keeping track of their projects is a challenge.

Extra duties:

Because you will see this student regularly, he or she will probably find you more approachable than other tutors seen only in a large group context. You may become a confidant for that student, listening to a range of academic and personal problems. Usually you only have to provide a friendly ear. However, on some occasions you may have to help with accommodation, finance, relationship or other personal problems that are beyond your remit. In that case, refer to your departmental guidance. Make sure you protect the student's privacy and integrity when discussing the case elsewhere.

You might be asked to act as a referee for jobs after the student has finished university. Although this is rather time consuming, it is a rewarding part of the job because you see your students move on to the next stage in their lives. When writing a reference, it is important to be honest in your evaluation, but bear in mind that the candidate can ask to see their references so don't write anything that you would be embarrassed for them to see.

Integrating work experience/work placement into your teaching

There are many reasons for considering including elements of a work experience or work placement programme into your teaching. As an early career lecturer you might be asked to formulate new courses on your arrival at your new teaching job. If so, consider the benefits to students and the department of including work experience.

Benefits to students:

Having a period of work experience can benefit students because of the skills they develop (both in terms of practical, subject-based skills, but also more generic skills such as networking) and also by enhancing their CV. It might also guide those as yet undecided on a career path. Students might also make contacts in the world of work that will prove useful to them later on in their career.

Students who do less well in formal essay type or exam assessments might flourish in a more creative, practical assignment. You must decide how the period of work placement will be assessed and what you need from the external employer to complete this.

Benefits to academic departments:

Academics are being asked to develop their third stream, impact, public engagement and outreach activities and work experience programmes can contribute to all of these agendas. By making connections with public sector bodies or private companies and collaborating to deliver part of your teaching programme, departments can enhance their standing and reputation, both in relation to governmental initiatives, but also more broadly in their local region.

As departments may be struggling to make up student numbers under the challenging new fees regime, being able to offer work placement programmes will make your department stand out from the competition and as a result may attract more students.

### How to start a work experience programme:

In order to integrate a work experience element into your teaching programme, you will have to get approval through your university's quality assurance mechanisms and so your plans will probably be discussed at departmental level. Through these discussions you may find that colleagues have prior experience of running this sort of programme, or if not, they may have contacts in the local community who may wish to be involved.

Before offering the programme you need to ensure that you have enough employers on board and if necessary to contribute to the students' assessment. Some work placements are offered on a full time basis for a number of weeks; others require only a minimum number of sessions to be undertaken while the student continues with his or her classroom-based studies. Negotiating the exact arrangements for the work experience programme will take a long time. Don't expect that you can create this scheme in a few rushed weeks before the start of an academic year.

Once the employers have been secured, students then have to be attracted to the programme. Will it be compulsory or optional for the cohort? It will be important to make sure that this is correctly marketed.

Examples of work placement:

Work placement on vocational degrees will naturally be closely associated with the qualification itself, i.e. on law degrees, work placement might be in a solicitors' office; similarly, medical degrees will offer on the job training in hospitals or doctors or dentists surgeries. It is also possible to offer work placements in more traditional academic subjects. For example, in the subjects of History or Archaeology, placements could be offered in museums or galleries, archives or libraries or on an archaeological dig, or in the council offices covering planning.
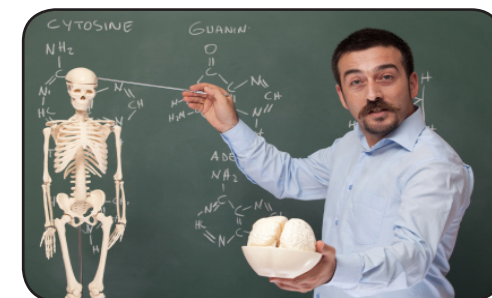
Lecturing Series: Student Support – what extra support can you offer students?

This article offers advice to new lecturers on what support they might be required to offer their undergraduate students. It covers the following themes:

- Skills
- Employability
- Dyslexia
- Personal matters

Skills:

You might find that some students come to your classes without the basic skills needed to undertake their degree programme. This will be unusual as most students will have been chosen because their qualifications make them suitable for the degree, but perhaps students that come through clearing, or mature students who have been out of education for a while, or students from overseas might not have the skills needed.

One area for improvement might be language. If English is not the student's first language, your university will usually offer a short English language course to help them improve. Another area is essay writing and exam skills. This area can be especially weak in returners to education who have not studied for a long time. As well as giving the student the skills they need, confidence building is also important.

If you feel you do not have the knowledge or the time to impart these skills, many universities now have a Student Support department which will be able to offer the student one-to-one guidance.

Helping students to avoid plagiarism (citing someone else's material as their own) is a very important part of a lecturer's job. This is best done by teaching good research methods (such as effective note-taking) and referencing methods.

Employability:

Increasingly universities are offering employability advice (i.e. helping students decide what they want to do after finishing their degree). The careers service undertakes the main part of this, but as a lecturer you might also be required to offer advice to students.

If you work with third year students you are likely to be asked to act as a referee for their job applications, so it is important that you see their CV and discuss with them what their ambitions are. You might also be required to promote the subject you teach by explaining explicitly to potential students what career prospects they may end up with once they've studied your subject.

Dyslexia:

Increasingly students are arriving at university with a diagnosis of dyslexia or dyspraxia and you need to know how to help those students perform at their best. This will probably involve working with student support teams to provide extra resources (such as lecture notes in advance) and guidance. These students may also be offered special assessment regimes.

You may also encounter students who you strongly suspect of having dyslexia or dyspraxia. In that case, inform the student's personal tutor or year tutor and they will be able to approach the student and offer help and support.

The main thing to remember about these cases is that you're not alone. Talk to colleagues and ask their advice, remembering to handle this issue in a confidential and sensitive manner.

Personal Matters:

Any lecturer, but especially those assigned the role of personal tutor, might find themselves in the position of having to support a student with a personal problem. This could be a health or mental health issue, a problem with accommodation or money, a relationship breakdown or being the victim of a crime.

Again, you are not alone. Remember that it is your job to reassure the student and be a friendly face, but you do not have to solve their problem yourself. The student support team can help, as can the personal tutor or year tutor system within your department. The Students' Union can also advise on financial and accommodation matters.

Usually the student has come to a lecturer because they fear that their studies are being affected. Perhaps they have missed classes or assessment deadlines. You may be able to help them get extensions for their pieces of work, or support them by informing other lecturers of your conversation so they do not penalise this student.

On all these matters, the best advice is to be sensitive and confidential, to ask advice on what you should do from institutional and departmental support systems and to follow procedure as outlined in your staff handbook. If in any doubt, ask your teaching mentor or line manager for help before the situation gets too serious.

Teaching students with English as a second language

Depending on what subject you teach, you may have a number of students in your class who don't have English as their first language. In some vocational and science subjects, this may be the majority as UK universities try hard to appeal to the lucrative overseas student market. As an early career lecturer, this experience may be unnerving because it means you have to adjust your teaching methods. Here are some tips on how to do this.

Should I assume that their language skills are good enough?

The vast majority of students with English as a second language will be competent and confident enough with English to understand your lectures, labs, workshops or seminars as normal, perhaps with even better language knowledge than the native English speakers! So do not assume that your overseas students will struggle and certainly don't 'dumb down' the work for them.

They will mostly have come to the UK knowing their standard of English has to be high and they will have worked hard to achieve that. Some will arrive early before the new academic year starts to take intensive language courses. Most students will be brave enough to tell you if they are struggling to understand what you are saying.

Watch for signs of students struggling

Having said that some students suffer in silence, hoping that they will improve without having to admit there's a problem. You will probably only notice that they are in difficulty when they have to do practical work or written work. Speak to that student in private (not in front of their peers) to work out a way to help them improve. They may require a language refresher course or they may simply require more support from you.

How can you support students with English as a second language?

Often a student's written comprehension will be better than his or her oral comprehension. To support your students struggling with the language, you could provide written copies of lectures so they can study what you have said in written format and look up any words or phrases that they are not familiar with.

While you shouldn't amend the content of your lectures and seminars, you could try to avoid colloquial or idiomatic phrases. Delivering clear lectures is always important, so having some students with English as a second language in your class might encourage you to hone these techniques.

How should you mark their assessed work?

Ask colleagues for advice on this and also consult the regulations for your university, but mostly, students with English as a second language should not be given special dispensation in their assessed work. If they are able to express their ideas clearly and argue well but happen to have a few wrongly-chosen words or grammatical errors then their work should be marked as you would mark a native English speaker. Sometimes students struggle with the language to such an extent that they are unable to express themselves well enough to complete the task. This can happen to native English speakers as well as non-native speakers. In both cases, the work should usually be marked as seen, but you will need to investigate whether that student needs extra support.

Promoting International Student Exchanges

This article will explore how you as an early career lecturer should encourage your students to consider going on an overseas exchange during their time at university. It will also offer advice on receiving incoming exchange students into your classroom.

Internationalisation:

Increasingly universities are focusing on exchange programmes in order to meet the internationalisation agenda. Forming liaisons with universities overseas can benefit the learning experience of students and the research life of your department. Having a wide range of exchange partners will also make your university seem more attractive to potential students during the admission process. However, this article will focus on the way that you as a lecturer can enhance your students' experience.

Why promote exchanges?

Student exchanges benefit the individual in many ways. The excitement of immersing yourself in another culture for an extended period of time means that students learn a great deal about the world, other people and themselves. Going on an exchange will also enhance a student's employability because employers are impressed by someone who takes this sort of initiative. So it is now an important part of your duty to guide students who may wish to go abroad.

Where do I find the information?

Your department may have a member of staff responsible for managing the exchange programme. If so, make sure you talk to him or her to find out exactly what you offer. If there is no one currently responsible for this area, why not volunteer to take it on?! Your university's International Office will be the administrative hub looking after all incoming and outgoing exchange students, so it's important that you make links with that team too.

To deal with initial inquiries of interest, most universities also have a dedicated website and page in the prospectus giving information about why exchanges are a good idea and where it is possible to go, so refer to those for background information. Another important avenue is to ask students who have been on an exchange before to link up with those interested in going in the future. They will be able to give a genuine picture of the experience, both highs and lows.

What can I practically do?

Make sure you are aware of the exchange programme 'cycle'. Students have to think about this very soon after the start of the academic year and in many cases will apply before Christmas, so if you are going to talk to your students about this, make sure you allow them enough time to fill in applications.

Receiving exchange students in your classes

As well as sending students out to other universities, your department will receive exchange students from overseas and you might find one in your class. Unless advised otherwise, these students should be treated in exactly the same way as others. You will probably find them confident and outgoing: after all, it takes guts to uproot, travel thousands of miles and throw yourself into another education system.

There may be slightly different administrative procedures for these students, so check with either the tutor responsible for exchanges or your teaching mentor to find out whether, for example, their work will be marked in the same way as other students. But these minor difficulties aside, you will usually find that having an exchange student in your class is a benefit because, not having gone through the English school system, they bring a different view to the subject. This will enhance everyone's learning experience.

Personal Development Planning for students

As an early career lecturer you may have personal tutor responsibilities. This means that you will be the point of contact for a group of students (who you may also teach), and need to advise them if they have any problems that are affecting their work.

Offering them pastoral care is only part of the job. You might also be expected to undertake personal development planning with them.

What is personal development planning?

Personal development planning, usually takes the format of a series of face to face meetings throughout the year designed to encourage the student to work with you to improve their skills and knowledge base to benefit them in the future. You might be asked to help them to improve their CV, formulate a plan to achieve a job and conduct a self-reflexive assessment of the learning they are doing.

How can I prepare?

The system should already be in place at your institution so you won't have to devise anything from scratch. Find out what other, more experienced tutors do in their meetings. Ask your mentor or line manager for advice. There should also be some paperwork (perhaps in the staff handbook) to guide you through your responsibilities.

You should also have an awareness of how university life can enhance a student's employability, specifically how the skills they acquire can be tailored to their future career. If you are unsure about this, there is plenty of background material that you can read to acquire this information. For example, for History, the Higher Education Academy (HEA) has distributed a booklet entitled 'The Employment of History Students': click here for details.

Also consult your own university's careers department. They will be able to give you some guidance on how to help your students and then you can all work together to improve your students' chances of securing a good job.

These meetings will allow students the chance to raise any issues with their current studies, so make sure that you have checked the student records (whether on paper or held electronically) to find out whether this student has had any particular problems.

What should I do in the meetings?

The main part of your job is to be encouraging and supportive. If the student is having a particular problem with their work, such as time management, then you can direct them towards practical help, for example by contacting a student support tutor for them.

You will also have to complete some paperwork with the student to ensure that you have a record of these meetings. This may seem tedious but it provides the student with a record of their progress at university and also offers you both the security of having your discussion recorded in the public domain. Of course you and the student will not want to record everything, some of it may have been too personal, but you can decide together what to write on the official forms.

Each meeting will probably take between 10 and 20 minutes. One to one meetings are one of the most enjoyable aspects of the job, but they can also be very intense and tiring. But by being well prepared and willing to direct the conversation in a fruitful direction, you will ensure that the personal development planning experience is valuable for the students in your care.

Summary

This eguide has provided information to help you become a better and more confident lecturer. It has helped you in preparing seminars and lectures as well as in designing your own curriculum. It has taught you how to be innovative in teaching techniques, such as the use of e-learning. You are now ready to enter the classroom with a new confidence. Good luck!

- Don't over-prepare. You'll know more than your students, have confidence in your ability

- Be creative in your lecturing: you don't have to talk solidly for an hour

- Bring variety into your seminars to engage students with a range of learning styles

- When designing new modules, try to be creative with the assessment strategies

- Enjoy team teaching: take the time to learn from more experienced colleagues

- Make sure you allow time for research: you have to keep developing your publishing profile

- Try to be innovative with e-learning

- Bring employability skills into your classroom

- Enjoy the one to one time you spend with your students – allow yourself the time to get to know them as individuals

- Learn about dyslexia and other common learning difficulties so you know how to help students with these issues

- Welcome exchange students into your classroom and teach your students about international opportunities open to them

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