

# GUEST LECTURING

## A guide to guest lecturing

The role of guest lecturer is an important one. You have been called upon to share your knowledge, expertise and real-life experiences with students. Students benefit greatly from being exposed to the additional perspectives that a guest lecturer can provide, but there are limitations, and teaching within someone else's paper comes with its own issues:

- ▶ often the timeframe is short with only a few sessions available – giving the sense of never really gathering momentum often there are large gaps between spells of teaching so it is difficult to remember what worked well from one guest slot to the next.

Make sure that everyone involved in the course, including the students, share the same expectations for what is to be covered and achieved through the guest lecture.

The following provides some advice about how to get the most out of your guest lecturing.

## Design for Learning

- ▶ When you are planning your guest lecture start with what is expected of you. Find out what the topic is and what the objectives or specific learning outcomes for the lecture are.
- ▶ Familiarise yourself with the content to be covered. More often than not you are called upon to give a guest lecture where you are an expert.
- ▶ Clarify if there are any expectations for assignment/exam marking or setting as a result of guest lecturing.
- ▶ Try to get a sense of who your learners are. This is a key principle of learning design and it will enable you to better meet the needs of your students. When planning your lecture focus on the students and their learning.
- ▶ Develop some specific learning outcomes for your lecture. These should be statements that describe the knowledge, capability or skill a learner will be able to demonstrate after your lecture. It is helpful to write learning outcomes in the second person ('you') and describe what can be done ('will be able to...').
- ▶ Once you know the curriculum/content that your lecture is covering, give consideration to how you might deliver it. Since you are a guest you can probably break with any conventions of providing a lecture that is a didactic delivery of course content to a passive audience. Instead, consider:
  - extending students' learning by weaving in supplementary material;
  - sharpening their learning by focusing on selected core concepts or skills;
  - drawing connections between that session's content and material covered in previous lectures;
  - linking what is being taught with wider social, economic, scientific or commercial contexts.

Even when there is a water-tight case for sticking pretty close to the curriculum, there are ways of doing so which may make it more stimulating for all concerned. For example, you can:

- ▶ make learning more student-directed by asking students what they need covered/revised/revisited
- ▶ change the pace in our classes by combining different media (voice, video, etc.)
- ▶ make more explicit the connections between course content and the 'real' world.

## Delivery

Explain what you intend to do during your sessions and outline how it fits into the 'bigger picture'.

Because students might not have time to get to know your teaching style, make your expectations clear, especially around participation. In particular, encourage student questions so that they can benefit from being able to tap into your knowledge and expertise.

## Evaluation

Get feedback from students. Since you are only with them for a short amount of time it might be easier and more appropriate to gather informal, in-class feedback from students rather than using a more formal evaluation like MOST. You can do this by either bringing a pre-prepared evaluation form or just asking the students to make a few comments on paper to hand in.

If you choose to create an evaluation form, keep it short. Consider asking three simple questions along the line of... *What helped my learning? What interfered with my learning? What changes and improvements do you suggest?*

The learning doesn't have to end when the class ends. Consider giving students your email address if you are willing to answer student questions. Alternatively, you could get guest access to the course Stream site and continue the conversation with students for a set time afterwards.

Reflect on your teaching soon after the class. Make some notes of what worked, what didn't and what you would do differently next time. These will be useful to refer to when you plan your next guest session.

If your colleague whose class you were taking was in attendance you can ask them for feedback. Rather than just asking them "How did I do?" you might ask them a more specific question like "How could you tell that the students had engaged with the material I was covering?" This might lead to a conversation about your teaching, the students and their learning rather than a single word response.

Have a look through the feedback you gathered from the students and make some notes about what you would do differently next time.

## When planning your next guest session

Take the time to refer back to your reflections and the feedback you received from your colleague and students. This serves as a reminder of what worked well last time and what you can work on this time.

Keeping these reflections and evaluations will show how your teaching has improved over time. They also provide evidence that might be useful as part of an application for a teaching position or for promotion.

## Further reading

Biggs, J., & Tang, C. (2007). *Teaching for quality learning at university*. Maidenhead, NY: McGraw-Hill/Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press.

Hunt, L., & Chalmers, D. (Eds.). (2012). *University teaching in focus: A learning-centred approach*. Victoria, Australia: Acer Press.