



# Engaging students in large groups

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## Preparation

- Check out the lecture room a couple of days before your first class and make sure you can operate the equipment.
- Ensure that students understand (via the VLE construction) what role your lecture plays for your student's learning.
- On entering the lecture theatre for the first time check with the students that they are in the room waiting for your class rather than, for example Biology 238.
- Use the clip-on microphone if you can. Be aware whether your lecture is recorded or not.

## Slides

- Consider publishing obviously incomplete slides (and name them as incomplete on your VLE).
- Consider printing your slides and using the data projector rather than projecting straight from the computer (makes adding notes and highlighting super easy)!
- If you are running out of time and want to skip over a number of slides to get to the last one in your presentation simply type '99' on the keyboard and then press enter. Typing any number equal to or greater than the total number of slides in the presentation will have the same effect.

## The start

- Start your lecture with an audience response system (ARS) question that is interesting/funny/curious but, at the same time, helps you set the tone for the topic that will be covered in the lecture.



## You

- Try to vary the way you begin each class to keep it interesting and appeal to different types of learner.
- Make an informal contract with the students. Tell them at the beginning of the class that if they focus on the material and do not become distracted by social media that you will give them a break after 20/25 minutes.
- Encourage student questions; you can direct questions at individual students if you feel comfortable doing this.



## The students

### **Note taking:**

- Encourage note taking; it is ok to remind students that you would have expected them to take notes over the last couple of minutes as you said some crucial things which were not written on the slides.
- To demonstrate that there is more to the lecture than just the content on the slides, it is useful to turn the presentation off at various points during the session. This is easy to do by simply pressing either the letter 'B' or 'W' on the keyboard during a PowerPoint presentation. This blanks the screen – pressing 'B' sends the screen black while pressing 'W' sends it white. Pressing the same letter once again returns the screen to the PowerPoint presentation. Turning off the presentation is an effective way of signalling to the students that you really want them to concentrate on what you are going to say for the next few minutes.

### **Student activity:**

- Build in student activities (calculate through an example, discuss a question with the students around you, audience response system (ARS) question); use an online clock to time the activity (helps to keep students focussed on the task).
- Do not worry if the student activity creates a buzz and noise in the classroom! You will quickly regain the students' attention once the correct answer/solution is going to be revealed!
- Walking around the lecture theatre during the student activity helps reducing the 'physical' and 'psychological' distance with students! Even if you can't speak to everyone you will gain an insight into how your class is doing.
- Consider dividing students into groups, along different criteria you choose, and then compare answers across these groups.

### **Student behaviour:**

- Students coming late: If many, try and figure out whether they have a lecture just before. Otherwise ... ignore.
- Many students on the phone: Means that you are not capturing their attention sufficiently.
- Students chatting such that others are distracted: Go towards the students and ask how you can help with their query. If they have a question others will have similar questions!
- Students asking questions: Well done, this is what you want. Praise students with questions if you can.

## The end

- Explain how this lecture fits into what students have or are expected to have done before and will do after the lecture.
- Invite students to chat after lecture or come to office hours. Encourage use of discussion board in case things are unclear.