

CLASS PLANNING AND CLASSROOM TIPS

This document has been put together as an advice sheet to help in the preparation and running of classroom sessions. We aim for this to be a collaborative exercise to support our new and returning staff– know of something which worked well in the classroom? Email us (luke@reachcambridge.com) and we'll add it in!



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This document has been updated for 2015. If you have any queries or questions about anything in this document, please don't hesitate to contact me at luke@reachcambridge.com

1. AIMS AND THE BASICS

Reach Teaching aims:

1. Inspire students to have a passion for learning and in particular a passion for your subject
2. Introduce students to University-level material and ways of thinking.
3. Encouraging hands-on learning through student interaction.
4. Support all students by working at a level they understand.

The basics: what do *students* look for in a teacher?

1. good teachers are enthusiastic;
2. they make lessons fun;
3. they know their subject;
4. they respect students as adults;
5. they help if students don't understand.

2. GET TO KNOW YOUR STUDENTS

It is vitally important that you try to connect and establish a rapport with your students. As it says above, students respond positively to those teachers who treat them like adults and individuals.

These are just a few suggestions:

- (a) use name games to try and introduce each other. Ensure you include yourself so students know you too!
- (b) Get students to fill in a quick form telling you about their background & interests. This could also include details of their favourite topics and level of knowledge for different topics within your subject – a great way to quickly gauge their abilities & interests.
- (c) Start or finish each class on a fun game which links in to their learning from previous lessons.

Summer School Student Profile:

- All international students
- Male & female students in each class
- Ages from 14 - 18 years old - level of knowledge can vary (see (3) HELPFUL HINTS)
- Different religions, cultures and backgrounds - *Activities such as debates need to be handled sensitively but encourage fascinating perspectives and ideas from students.*
- Level of English can be varied but generally strong - *Some students may speak in other languages to each other, this needs to be discouraged so that all students can confidently communicate with the group. We always emphasise that English is the language of Reach Cambridge.*
- Different motivations for being on the summer school and on their subject course – some curious about the subject from a position of little knowledge, others may have studied it in a fair amount of detail at school, and be very driven to pursue it further.

The main Teacher's Handbook & Guidelines touches upon the importance of respect and creating the right environment within the classroom.

3. PLANNING AND LESSON STRUCTURES

Planning your lessons is crucial and gives each class purpose and value. The structure beneath provides very useful guidelines for ensuring that lessons follow a coherent path which students can understand & follow.

- AIMS > *ensuring that students have a clear direction to work towards.*
- INTRODUCTION > *starting the session by clearly stating aims, outlining the session structure and brainstorming student's initial subject knowledge.*
- MAIN ACTION > *the different activities from which students will learn the topic in question.*
- ASSESSMENT > *ensuring that students have clearly understood the material at each step.*

(1) 'AIMS / ENQUIRY QUESTIONS'

- You may wish to set aims which are discrete and attainable for each session. For example, by the end of this session students will understand the following three points about the structure of cell walls.
- Another format would be to establish a number of 'Enquiry Questions' rather than a list of set aims. For example, "Why did the First World War start in 1914?" allows for a range of answers as opposed to the more daunting "By the end of this session you will understand why the First World War started in 1914".
- Using Enquiry Questions allows for students to contribute their own answers at the end of class which could be a useful way of assessing their understanding. It can also work well to set a puzzling and intriguing question which the students are motivated to pursue.

(2) INTRODUCTION

Introducing the Session

- Establish the aims/enquiry questions and outline the structure of the session: what will we learn, how will we learn it and when?
- It is helpful to tell students the rough format of the particular part of the session, and what expectations this sets for the students i.e. what style of teaching will the next hour be and what is the student's role in the session? Listen and take notes? Get involved in a group discussion? Raise questions and ask if they are unsure as they go? If students are unclear as to how they should engage they may not necessarily tell you or ask questions - make sure they know how to get involved!

(3) MAIN ACTIVITIES

It generally works best to use a mix of formats and activities across a lesson to keep students engaged and motivated. Ensuring that the students are taking an active part in lessons is essential, and ideally students should be engaged in a number of different learning styles during each lesson. A summary of some lesson formats can be found below:

Direct Teaching –

- Classroom session, including short questions and interactions such as:
 - Quick brainstorm sessions
 - ‘Think-Pair-Share’ feedback
 - Hands-up questions and answers
 - Please note: if this section focuses on teachers imparting information, maintain the session flow (and thus students’ attention) through keeping questions/breakouts to 2 minutes max.
- Lecture
 - University style, with some short questions/interactions.
 - Please note: students are unlikely to be used to this teaching style, which should be taken into account by keeping lectures short (45 minutes max) or punctuated by more interactive elements.
- Summary
 - This can be teacher-led or student-led, an interactive summary of session aims or enquiry questions. E.g. what have we learned, and what are the key points?

Group Work – student-led work on topic set by teacher.

- Group research and feedback to the class, or more formally prepare a presentation.
 - Set clear collaborative goals and individual responsibility such as:

- 'Home/Expert' format of group work researching an issue, or analysing a source.
- 'Hot Seating' students take it in turns to answer questions from the rest of the class. Short, snappy and fun!
- Group research and debate (with formal rules)

Individual work – students working on topics set by teacher such as:

- Creative writing; diagram-drawing; question-answering
- Writing a short summary of a topic to be presented back to group.
- Writing a set of questions in preparation for exploring a new topic, or to ask a guest lecturer.

4. THINGS TO TRY & CLASSROOM TIPS

Classroom tips for Introductions

- Students could take part in a 'round robin' – each asked to contribute an idea or opinion on a new topic.
- To develop this more fully these ideas could contribute to a brainstorming session in which each contribution is entered into a mind map on the whiteboard. Additionally a student could act as the scribe, or students could each contribute their own idea to a mind-map format established by the teacher. E.g. students asked to add their ideas to a 'for and against' mind map on a whiteboard, or asked to place topics/keywords into groupings defined by the teacher.
- Students to work in small groups to discuss a topic and report back to group. A short introductory task that should take no more than 2 – 4 minutes in order to maintain the rhythm of session.

Classroom tips for Direct Teaching

- Use quick questions to ensure that students' attention is being held. If this is a short lecture session then it is not always feasible to spend too much time on questions which can be kept back for a more in-depth

interactive student session. Keep these questions during a lecture short – no more than 2 minutes.

- ‘Think-Pair-Share’ – instead of asking for ‘hands up’ answers to questions, perhaps try asking students to discuss with their neighbour and report back on their answer. This can help ensure students are more involved and helps to overcome the issue of some students answering consistently whilst others lack the confidence in ‘hands up’ answering.

Classroom tips for Group Work

- Group work is most effective when the aims, roles and timeframes are clearly defined. There should be a balance between collaborative goals and individual accountability.
 - Suggestions: allocate roles within the groups so that each student has a defined topic to research, which then comes together as a group. *E.g.* group project on the origins of WWI – one student to look at the Alliances System, one at International Trade and one at Nationalism etc. Students then each become ‘Experts’ in one issue and are expected to synthesise this material as a group. For large class groups the ‘Home/Expert’ arrangement can work by which all the ‘Experts’ in a chosen issue discuss as a group before each report back to their ‘Home’ group for synthesis.
 - Each student given a resource to interpret (e.g. a scientific graph, a newspaper report) and group produces a synthesis or an argument in favour/in opposition to an issue.
 - ‘Hot-Seating’ a student takes a chair at the front of the class and the class question the student who answers questions from the group or teacher. This can also be played around so that the student must play a persona.
 - Debates can be a fun way of addressing an issue, if given sufficient preparation time and sufficient structure. The ‘Oxford Rules’ of debating form a clear format which students readily adapt to (and quite enjoy the playful formality of!)

Classroom Tips on using Resources

- Using a mix of resources is a great way of engaging student's attention and we are very happy to help you with any resources you may need for your sessions (handouts, photocopies, films, etc.) however do try to ensure that resources are used well – that they are justified and discussed as sources. A fun YouTube video can help bring out material but without explaining the relevance this may disrupt student's concentration.
- Explain the relevance of the resource – how does the media effect the message? How does a magazine article on a scientific discovery differ from an academic report and how does this affect our understanding?

Reach has photocopying and printing resources and is happy to help with printing hand-outs or making copies.

5. ASSESSMENT

- Students at Reach are not required to produce work for formal assessment, meaning that sessions can work towards more intangible aims of broadening student's comprehension of their chosen subject, or introducing them to University-level studies.
- Whilst there is no formal assessment it can be fun to work towards a final group or class project. If you're thinking of something extra special please let us know and we can help!
- It is really useful for the students if you can link each 'assessment' section of the class to key skills as well as the simple 'how much have you learnt today about 'x' topic'. As well as improving their knowledge of the topic in hand, through your activities you should also be trying to build their confidence and helping them to improve in areas such as debate, public speaking, time management and presentation skills.

6. DIFFERENTIATION

- All groups have different levels of understanding, but also levels of confidence and communication. These are not necessarily linked – quiet students may be high achievers but may not necessarily have the confidence to communicate with the student group or teacher, and more vocal students may not necessarily have all the answers. Try to create an environment in which students feel comfortable to volunteer answers and avoid relying too much on ‘hands-up for answers’ teaching which can embed the dominance of confident, vocal students against those who are less vocal. Invite other students to answer and use a mix of lesson formats which mix up groups and ability levels.
- Teachers should aim for “Access and Challenge” for all material – will all students be able to access and understand the material? Will all students have sufficient challenge to find the material worthwhile? Structured but open-ended and creative tasks, which can be approached and undertaken at different levels, are a good way of ensuring this.
- Using broader aims or open-ended Enquiry Questions allows for a broader range of abilities to engage with the material.
- Providing students with choices can be helpful – if students are asked to present information on a topic they could have the option of doing so in a poster, a comic strip, a presentation or a short piece of prose. This can help students to work at their own level and in their own way.
- Using ‘Extension Questions’ can be a useful way of pushing higher ability students once they have fully understood your base material. This can be a way of getting students to apply their knowledge in a new context and can help students explore the issue in more depth in their own time (suggestions of further reading etc.)
- Always plan more than less, and try to be flexible & adaptable according to how confident students are with the material.
- For a document full of suggestions please refer to ‘The Differentiation Deviser’ (available here <http://www.tes.co.uk/ResourceDetail.aspx?storyCode=6233159> and on our Teacher’s Link).

7. DEALING WITH CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR

Students' behaviour during the summer school is generally excellent, but it is best to be prepared for all eventualities.

Reach supports all staff and if a behavioural issue arises please tell a member of the senior team (Luke, David or Jenny) and we will support you and address it straight away. Let us know if you have any concerns about any students for pastoral or behavioural issues and we will help you and the students through them.

The brief notes below are provided to help create a positive teaching atmosphere and address any issues if and when they arise. Above all it is important to remain calm. Further information – including a list of basic rules and recommended sanctions – can be found in the Teachers Guidelines & Orientation Handbook.

- Using positive language:
 - Instead of “will you stop talking” you say “I’d like everyone listening, please”. Instead of “Jill, stop turning around and distracting Jack” you say “Jill, I’d like you facing this way and getting on with your work... thanks.”
- Presenting choices rather than ‘do-what-I-say’:
 - “Jane, you can do what I’ve asked or I will raise this with the Senior Supervisor”
 - This places the emphasis on the student and empowers them to make the right decision, rather than the teacher needed to rest on own authority which can present the behavioural issue as a power struggle between teacher and student.
 - Address issues in a calm, positive and brisk manner.
- Ensure that you have the student’s attention before talking: pause and gain eye contact before you begin addressing the student.
- A very effective way of dealing with minor disruption while you are talking or leading an activity is to stop abruptly and make eye contact

with the student(s) concerned. Once their attention is gained, you can present them with the sort of choices mentioned above.

- Knowing when to “power up” and when to “power down” is important – if students are overexcited or loud, “power down” by adopting an exaggeratedly calm and measured tone of voice when dealing with them. If a student does something more serious, and the severity of their misdemeanour needs to be communicated to them, “power up” by talking with a slightly louder, firmer tone – whilst remaining calm and without shouting, of course. “Powering down” more than “powering up” is always advisable, and can help to create a calm and convivial atmosphere.
- If a student is causing a serious issue, ask them to join you outside the classroom or at a quiet point in the room where you can present them with the choices of dealing with their behaviour. Do not shout or demand them to immediately join you, allow them to come in their own time and deal with their behaviour issue between the student and teacher, rather than between the teacher and the entire group. **As mentioned above, please don’t hesitate to discuss any behavioural issues which are concerning you with Luke, David or Jenny.**

(See <http://headguruteacher.com/2013/01/06/behaviour-management-a-bill-rogers-top-10/> for more information)

Thanks very much for getting involved and we hope that you enjoy the teaching! If you have any questions at all – during the preparation or during the course – do ask us, we’re always here to help!

The Reach Cambridge team