Engaging your students

Lee Anton-Hem, lecturer from the School of Medical Science, won the 2007 Early Career Academic RMIT Teaching Award. Lee shares her thoughts regarding student engagement.

What does 'student engagement' mean to you?
To me, student engagement is the most important prerequisite to learning. Students learn by being actively involved in and excited what they are doing. Therefore, I hope to create an environment where my students can’t wait to get to class.

What steps do you take in the planning of your courses that address how to better engage students?
I ask myself three questions:
1. Why are students doing this course?
2. What do they really need to know and be able to do to be effective in the work place?
3. How can I instil passion for what they do?
I try to ascertain the answers to these questions from my students and through the relevant work place knowledge that I have. I then try to provide relevant, enjoyable and challenging courses that reflect current practices in the work place.

What strategies do you use in your teaching to engage learners?
Importantly, to motivate students to do their best it is essential that I demonstrate passion and enthusiasm for my work. I try to achieve this by maintaining constant high levels of energy and enthusiasm in the delivery of my courses.

I also believe that it is very important to cater for different learning styles through varied teaching and assessment practices.

It is also important to provide an opportunity for students to have input to course outcomes, to maintain constant contact with students and reflect on this consultation regularly.

I also try to deliver creative and innovative lectures and tutorials and design innovative and inspiring teaching and learning resources.