Planning your classes

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Dr Andrea Chester, senior lecturer in the School of Health Sciences, provided this memo to help tutors formulate lesson plans.

MEMORANDUM

TO: First Year Tutors  City Campus  GPO Box 2476V  Melbourne 3001  Tel: 9925 3150

CC:   Tel: 9925 3150

FROM: Andrea  Fax : 9925 3150  Email: andrea.chester @rmit.edu.au

SUBJECT: Foundations of Psychology

Welcome to tutoring in first year Psychology. I hope the semester is rewarding and you enjoy the experience of working with our undergraduate students.

There are three parts to this first tute:

1. Getting know each other
   Time spent on an ice-breaker is a valuable investment. An interactive, engaging activity can set the scene for the semester, allowing the students to feel like they are part of the group and reducing anxiety. In our pre-semester briefing we discussed a number of activities that could be used here. You may find you spend up to 50 minutes getting to know your students and helping them get to know their colleagues.

   Please take your time to get to know the names of the students in your group and encourage them to learn each others’ names. You will probably need to spend some time on this each week for the first three weeks.

   Feel free to use your own games if you have a favourite that works well. Otherwise, this one is quick and good.
   - Instruct the group to form a circle. No name tags!
   - Tell the group they are going to arrange themselves in alphabetical order in a moment, without any talking, but they will have one opportunity to hear all the names.
   - Working around the circle, invite students to say their name once aloud to the group.
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- Once everyone has stated their name, instruct them to arrange themselves in alphabetical order, without talking.
- When everyone is satisfied, test the group by checking the names.
- If they are incorrect, they must rearrange themselves.
- Finally, test students' memory of the names, by getting 5 or 6 volunteers to recall all the names. You should do this too (this will help your own memory and model that you are prepared to have a go!)

Some students will be late to class as they are still finding their way around the campus, so we should be a little flexible and make sure that in the first tute no crucial information is covered in the first 10 minutes.

Please ensure you check your tutorial list weekly and keep a record of attendance.

2. Introduce yourself – 10-15 mins

Take some time to introduce yourself to the students at the start of the tute, write your name on the board and include how and when they can contact you outside the tute. It’s very useful for the students to hear about your research/study/psych-related work, so do let them know a bit about your expertise. This would be an appropriate time to talk to them about your expectations for the course e.g., your availability outside class time, your expectations about students being on time, whether they need to email you if they are going to be absent, how you will get in touch with them outside tute time (e.g., some tutors set up an email list – this can be done simply from the class list that will be provided for you, or I can set up a group on the learning hub for your tute), how the tutes will run, etc.

A suggestion for beginning subsequent tutes: Feedback from first year students is clear – they like tutes that are well structured, but that allow plenty of time to explore and discuss content. One suggestion is to tell students you want them to bring at least three questions/issues they are curious about as a result of their reading/lecture attendance for this week. Begin each tute by listing 5 or 6 of these on the board. Some may be answered by the review questions, some might be addressed by activities you have planned, others may be answered quite easily by you or other students. By the end of the tute many of them may be ticked off. If there are any remaining at the end of the tute, you can encourage the students to determine how they would find out their own answers e.g., might the answer be in the textbook, could they search one of the psych databases, would a google search help?

3. Clarification of assessment and course guide

Students received a shortened Course Guide in the first lecture and we briefly discussed the five assessment tasks, however, you may need to spend some time going over the requirements. Also important here is an explanation of how tutorials will be structured. Tutes have two parts:

- Work on assessment
- Content – activities and discussion around the module, chapter, and lecture material for the week. Each module has a series of review questions at the end and these are used to guide the discussion. I recommend that you allocate 2-3 students to each week so they can prepare answer to the review questions to share with the class.

4. Lecture review and discussion

The topic for this week is Perception. Peter has provided some detailed information on the review questions and visual illusion activities (attached).

At the end of each tute it is useful to encourage a couple of minutes reflection and ask students to consider two questions:

- What was the most important idea you learned today?
- What questions are you left with?