

Guide to Facilitating Week 1 Tutorials

This short guide provides some ideas for staff to consider when facilitating first week tutorials and other small classes, particularly when students are new to Deakin University. The guide is not designed to be prescriptive, nor to replace teacher expertise. Rather, it is offered as a source of suggestions about how to structure and manage Week 1 small classes to ensure maximum benefit for students and their learning.

Session purpose

The central purpose of the Week 1 tutorial is to immediately engage students with the curriculum and their wider learning experience. The first tutorial also provides the opportunity to introduce the unit, outline the assessment, explain necessary administrative matters, answer initial queries and connect students with you and with other students. More specifically, Week 1 classes provide:

- an immediate experience of a small group learning environment;
- an opportunity for you to outline essential administrative matters such as staff contact details, office hours, agreed class rules and the like;
- an introduction for students to the learning requirements for each subject;
- an opportunity for students to clarify the assessment requirements;
- a chance for students to meet you; tell them a little about your studies or research
- an opportunity for students to meet other students with whom they will be studying;
- a clear message about the expectations of students to attend and participate in classes from the outset; and
- a chance for students to begin to formally engage with the curriculum at the earliest opportunity.

Student expectations

Students are likely to be curious about the following:

- What types of assessment will I have to complete? When are assessment tasks due? How are they marked? What mark do I need to pass?
- How are tutorials different from lectures?
- What are the expectations of me?
- Will I work independently or in teams?
- How can I access staff and other types of support?
- How will I be taught in this unit?
- What is covered in this unit?

Session content

By the time most students arrive at their first tutorial, they will have received a large amount of information. So while it may be beneficial to revise some of this information, the Week 1 tutorial shouldn't replicate welcome sessions run during Orientation. Instead, students should be provided with details of where they can access welcome information and resources that they may have missed if they did not attend Orientation.

The following provides a set of suggestions for how to structure the first class.

1. Welcome students

Welcome students to the unit and give a brief overview of:

- The context of the unit within the discipline and/or course;
- The roles and responsibilities of tutors; and
- How to address and contact tutoring and other staff.

2. Introduce students to each other

It is important that the first tutorial provides opportunity for students to get to know one another, so that they are not expected to work with strangers in the following weeks. Facilitating some 'get-to-know-you' activities will reduce any tension or anxiety that students may be feeling and ensure that the trimester begins on a positive and friendly note (see example ice-breakers on page 4). Using an introductory activity can also help you begin to learn student names – research has shown that a teacher knowing a student's name has a very positive effect on students, their experience of being at university and their transition to university study.

3. Clarify expectations and establish the ground rules

Students will be anxious to know what is expected of them in tutorials, as well as what to expect from the class and wider unit. It is therefore important to clarify expectations and to set 'ground rules' or expectations so that students have a clear understanding of how the class will function. Wherever possible, ask students to contribute to developing these expectations. For example, you may wish to discuss expectations around:

- Preparation for class – how many hours, what sort of preparation is expected;
- Participation in class – what does 'participation' mean, whether it is assessed;
- Punctuality, class starting and finishing time;
- Respect for others in the class and how this is demonstrated;
- Attendance and how this impacts on learning and assessment;
- Independent learning – what this means and how to do it (see *Trimester planner*, *Weekly planner* and *Time management* resources attached and online at www.deakin.edu.au/study-skills);
- What materials to bring to class – textbook, other.

4. Orient students to learning in the unit

The first tutorial is an ideal time to talk about learning outcomes for the unit, what learning approaches will be used and how students will be assessed on these outcomes. This is also a good time to explain some of the discipline and university terminology that will be used in class. You might consider discussing:

- Assessment:
 - Type(s) of assessment that will be used and what each entails (quizzes, essays, presentations, reports, exams);
 - Due dates, where and how to submit assessments and policy on extensions and Special Consideration;
 - Timing of assessment tasks and planning around these dates;
 - Referencing and plagiarism;
 - Grading structure, criteria and weighting; and
 - The nature of feedback and how students can respond to feedback.

- Teaching approaches to be used in the tutorial:
 - Independent study;
 - Group and/or partner work; and
 - Whether lectures will be reviewed in tutorials.
- Definitions:
 - Glossary of academic terms (e.g. critical thinking/analysis); and
 - Key terminology within the discipline discourse.

5. Explain where to find help

Outline the sources of academic and other support available to student including:

- Academic assistance
 - Tutors and other teaching staff
 - Language and Learning Advisers
 - Learning communities (online/face-to-face study groups)
 - DUSA advocacy
- Health, welfare and careers support:
 - Counselling and Personal Development
 - Medical Centre
 - International Student Support
 - Careers and Employment
- Enrolment and other course advice:
 - Faculty office
 - Important websites (Faculty, School, Current Students, Getting Started).

6. Finish on a positive note

Students will leave their first tutorial or small class with an impression of what lies ahead for them. Aim to end this first formal contact in a way that will have a positive impact on students' impressions of the extent to which Deakin cares about them, their learning and their experience as a student. A smile, an encouraging comment, an indication that you are looking forward to seeing them next week and other simple gestures can have a marked effect on student perceptions and their approach to tackling the critical first few weeks of transition to university study.

Ice-breakers

What's in a name?

Ask each person to introduce him/herself and tell the group where their name came from. For example: "My name is John and I was named after my Grandfather" or "My name is Rose and I was named after my mother's favourite flower". This is a very simple and non-threatening exercise that is surprisingly effective.

Line up

Ask the group to form a line based on different topics (if you want to make it more challenging, ask students to complete a topic without speaking).

- Tallest to smallest
- Birthday months – January through to December
- Distance they live from the campus

Three in Common

Form small groups of no more than five people. Ask the groups to talk to each other in order to find three 'uncommon' things they have in common. Share answers with the group.

Two truths and a Lie

Ask volunteers to stand up and tell the group three things about themselves – two truths and one lie. The group must then try to identify the lie. Great fun.

Interviewing

Pair students with a partner and ask them to interview each other on the topics of:

- The 3 most exciting or unusual events of their lives;
- The person they would most like to meet in the world; and/or
- The 2 most important responsibilities they have had.

Students then present a brief summary (no more than 1 minute) of their partner's information to the rest of the group.

Silent Scramble

Have the group form a circle and one by one say their first names only once. Then ask everyone to put themselves in alphabetical order without communicating verbally.

Ball Throw Q & A

The group forms a circle. The circle does not have to be perfect, however everyone should be facing in, looking at each other. The ball gets thrown to different people in the circle. When a person catches the ball, they need to answer predetermined questions. For example:

- What is your name?
- Why did you choose to study this course?
- What are you most looking forward to with the start of classes?

Expectations

Ask students to form a group of 4-6 people and discuss what they are expecting to learn from the unit. Each group can share their responses with the class. You can use their answers as a starting point to discuss how their expectations will be met and what your expectations of the students are.

Time Management

Managing your time

University life can seem unstructured in comparison to school or the paid workforce. There may seem to be a lot of 'free' time. However, university students are expected to spend time in independent study and devote an average of **ten hours a week** to **each** unit (subject) they are undertaking. Structuring your time effectively is vital to success.

Getting organised

You have a whole day ahead of you. Your assignment is due in two days but you'll spend the entire day working on it. It'll be fine.

You sit at your desk, pull out your books, sort a few things, wander about a bit, make a phone call, read the question again, make a few notes, have lunch, send an email, have another coffee, start reading a chapter and ... suddenly the day is gone and you've got that meeting tonight and no assignment. But you've been studying all day?

Wrong!

You need to learn and use organising and time management skills.

Planning and efficiency are extremely important and they do not come naturally to all of us.

Timetabling is the place to start. To help you plan your time efficiently, you will need three kinds of timetables:

- a trimester planner. This will enable you to map out tasks for the trimester.
- a weekly timetable. This will ensure that you structure your time in the short term while allowing flexibility.
- a diary with daily 'things to do' (TTD) lists. These will keep you on track.

Planning for the trimester

A trimester planner is vital. You can buy or make one. Enter in all study periods, exams,

assignment deadlines and other important dates (including major tasks and family/social commitments). Put this up above your study desk. It gives you an overall view of the extra busy times, so you can organise around them.

Planning for the week

You need copies of a blank weekly timetable in one-hour blocks.

Each week fill in:

- lectures and tutorials
- online study-related tasks
- paid/voluntary work time
- domestic commitments
- leisure/sport/free time

Note: If you do not build in free time you will resent your timetable and not keep to it. Exercise is also important to keep your mind fresh and alert. Try to do some exercise at least a couple of times a week. Divide the rest of your time into **subject study blocks**. Some subjects may need more time than others. Even a half-hour block is valuable, although you will need some longer blocks (1½ - 2 hours) for each subject too.

What you do in these blocks should largely be determined by assignment demands and be made specific in the 'things to do' (TTD) list.

Planning for the day

The 'things to do' or TTD list is an important daily list. It should be included in a diary so you can carry it with you and shuffle things around when necessary. Remember, you should never start a study block without a clear idea of what you are going to achieve. Each night you need to make yourself a list of what to do the next day.

For example:

- read Smith Chapter 2
- analyse sociology essay question.

Work out the order of importance (prioritise) and think about the most efficient way to fit them in (i.e. if two items are library-based, can they both be done in the one trip?). If you do not get through all the tasks you will have to fit in extra time the next day. But be careful! You cannot keep moving things forward without getting overloaded.

Studying efficiently

Beware a whole day set aside for study. This can be difficult to use effectively. Draw up a timetable for such a day and keep to it.

Try to study three different subjects per day, or at least engage in three distinct tasks. Changing tasks produces a new energy surge. People tend to wind down if they work on the same thing for too long.

Work in intensive blocks with short regular breaks. Up to two hours on one subject is usually enough. An intensive two-hour work session can cover as much ground as a whole day of half-hearted shuffling about.

Schedule adequate computer time. It always takes longer than you think. Have a plan of action in case of technological hitches. 'The computer was down' is no excuse!

Think about when your brain works best. This could be in the morning, at night or in the middle of the afternoon. Plan your TTD list accordingly. If you are going to read a difficult article for the first time, do not start at 10.00pm unless you are a natural night owl! Do something less demanding in your 'low' times: organise your notes; write the next day's TTD list.

Get out of the house. Work in a library (or other suitable space), as there are fewer distractions.

Do pre-lecture/tutorial reading. You get a lot more out of a lecture/tute if you are already familiar with many of the terms and ideas.

Review lecture notes on the same day of the lecture. After that time your ability to 'reconstruct' the lecture, and consequently commit any new ideas to memory, reduces rapidly.

Structure your time to keep up with your weekly reading. This is particularly important for off-campus students.

Re-read all your notes for each subject every week. (Build this time into your timetable.)

Obviously, it will take more time each week as your notes pile up but it will dramatically reduce your exam study time at the end of the trimester and make you confident that you know your subject.

Talk in tutorials. Talking about your subject (even if only to ask questions) is a way to test your understanding. Pre-reading will help you in this. Off-campus students and students studying an online subject can 'talk' with their lecturers, tutors and fellow students through DSO.

Use library time effectively. Do not borrow huge piles of books that you may not read. Use over-viewing techniques to decide which books are really useful.

Do not photocopy huge numbers of pages. This is a waste of time and money. Take notes on the spot rather than postponing the task. Take down all bibliographic details and page numbers so you have quick access to all your references.

Organise your notes and do not borrow notes from others. Keep all your notes in labelled files in chronological order. If you have missed or know you are going to miss a lecture or tutorial, see the lecturer or tutor. Other people's notes are not very helpful - they reflect someone else's interpretation, often in a way that might not make sense to you.

Further reading

Time management can be accessed online in the A-Z index at www.deakin.edu.au/study-skills. Other resources available at this web address include:

Assignment writing
Reading.

The A-Z guide on the Counselling and Personal Development website at www.deakin.edu.au/counselling includes the following resource:

Procrastination.

Weekly planner

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7-8							
8-9							
9-10							
10-11							
11-12							
12-1							
1-2							
2-3							
3-4							
4-5							
5-6							
6-7							
7-8							
8-9							
9-10							

Using a weekly planner to manage your time

On the weekly planner enter:

- scheduled lectures, tutorials, seminars etc.
- an hour for preview **and** an hour for review for each one of these university commitments (ideally these should be scheduled immediately before and immediately after lectures, tutorials and the like).

If your scheduled lectures, tutorials, seminars etc. remain the same for a number of weeks, photocopy your planner (make a number of copies!) before adding anything else.

Then, at the start of each week, add:

- paid work obligations
- meal times
- sporting/recreational commitments
- online time
- family commitments
- social events
- 'me' time.

There should be some white squares left! What are you going to do with them?

Firstly, you have to decide how many hours you need per area of study – and block them in! Remember, some weeks you may have a commitment all day Sunday and so are unable to allow any study time; in other weeks you might nominate Sunday to be full of study commitments – that's why you complete a new planner each week.

How much study time should you allow per unit?

It is generally recommended you allow 10 hours per unit per week which includes lecture and tutorial time. However some areas of study require more than this.

If you haven't got enough time for everything then **prioritising** what you need to do is the key.

Weekly planners are just one way of organising your time effectively – you also need a **trimester** planner for entering exam dates and assignment deadlines to give you an overview of the months ahead.

A **daily list** is needed too – what exactly do you intend to do in that two hours you blocked in on your weekly planner for example?

Remember to be specific with your list:

- ✓ read McDonald chapters 3&4 (NOT 'do reading'!)
- ✓ analyse assignment question 2 & make a draft plan (NOT 'start assignment'!)

Trimester 1 planner 2010

March	April	May	June	
		1		sat
		2		sun
1 Orientation		3 W8		mon
2		4	1 W12 (continued)	tues
3		5	2	wed
4	1	6	3	thur
5	2 Intra trimester break	7	4	fri
	3	8	5	sat
	4	9	6	sun
8 W1	5 Intra trimester break	10 W9	7 Study period	mon
9	6 Intra trimester break	11	8 Study period	tues
10	7 Intra trimester break	12	9 Study period	wed
11	8 Intra trimester break	13	10 EXAMS	thur
12	9 Intra trimester break	14	11	fri
13	10	15	12	sat
14	11	16	13	sun
15 W2	12 W5	17 W10	14 EXAMS	mon
16	13	18	15	tues
17	14	19	16	wed
18	15	20	17	thur
19	16	21	18	fri
20	17	22		sat
21	18	23		sun
22 W3	19 W6	24 W11		mon
23	20	25		tues
24	21	26		wed
25	22	27		thur
26	23	28		fri
27	24	29		sat
28	25	30		sun
29 W4	26 W7	31 W12		mon
30	27			tues
31	28			wed
	29			thur
	30			fri