



Teaching Large Classes

This document includes all the Teaching Tips that were compiled with the help of Ryerson faculty members at workshops that were hosted by the Learning & Teaching Office.

Faculty/Student Contact
Policies on office hours, student emails, and other forms of contact with students.

- **Office hours**
 - Be accessible, but set rules for large classes. For example, no informal drop-ins outside of office hours, or have students schedule appointments.
 - Consider virtual or group office hours.
- **Electronic communication strategies**
 - Establish expectations for turn-around times for emails, and set boundaries as to when you will and will not be responding to messages (i.e. policies around weekends and evenings).
 - Provide guidance as to what messages should be sent to you via email and which belong on a discussion board. For course-related material, ask students to post to a thread in D2L to benefit other students who have the same question.
 - Only respond to student email from an official Ryerson email address. Let students know that any other email will be ignored. Explain why – the need to authenticate emails, security, academic integrity, etc.
 - When teaching large classes with multiple sections, ask students to use a subject line containing the course and section number when sending emails.
 - Model professional communication in emails and discussion board posts – no slang, abbreviations, informal language, etc.
 - If you have teaching assistants, delegate some administrative work to them, for instance having them moderate discussion boards.

Instructional Strategies
Learning/teaching strategies for the large class: student engagement, examples of active learning, collaborative learning, etc.

- **Provide an agenda** for each class not only on the first slide, but also on subsequent slides to show where the current topic is in relation to the entire lecture. Give students a sense of how the current lecture fits into the bigger picture of the course or program. Backtrack to reinforce certain themes or concepts in subsequent lectures.
- **Try to avoid covering too much material in the lecture** and then rushing the last ten minutes, frustrating students with quick explanations. It is important to structure the lecture in priority sequence with respect to material that needs elaboration or emphasis.
- **To hold student attention, chunk the class in 15-20 minutes segments.** For each chunk, vary your teaching strategy, e.g. from lecturing to group discussion, from group discussion to problem exercise, etc. Make sure every activity meets the course objectives.
- **Get out from behind the podium!** Move around the classroom and make eye contact with students – the wireless microphone and slide remote are your best friends.
- **Use technology to expand the range of strategies.** For example, showing videos, running interactive simulations, using clickers or other classroom response technology (PollEverywhere, Kahoot), or having students work with laptops on collaborative Google Docs.
- **Acknowledge the textbook, handouts, readings** etc. within the lecture to make a clear connection and assure students that you are aware of what they should have prepared prior to attending the lecture.
- **Discuss strategies to support learning outside of the classroom** – e.g. how to get the most out of assigned readings, how to set up study groups, where to find course materials in D2L, how to effectively communicate on discussion boards, how to complete collaborative projects, or what supports are available from Student Learning Support.
- **Keep students engaged:**
 - Use story-telling – share examples of problems solved, personal experiences with professional matters, how course content will be relevant to their future professional lives, famous case studies, etc.
 - Deliver difficult concepts in many formats – video, demonstration, textbook chapter, mini-lecture, activity.
 - Flip the classroom – have students watch a recorded lecture or complete a reading and use class time for discussion and problem-solving exercises.
 - Divide students into small groups to work through a question or set of questions. Have them discuss the question and nominate one person to report back. You could also have them solve problems in their groups and submit a group solution.
 - Play competitive games in groups like Jeopardy or Family Feud as a way to review topics.
 - Have students post links or articles to a discussion board that are relevant to a class topic. Use these contributions as the basis of your next class discussion.
 - Create a “burning question” list or a “parking lot” for ideas that are worth returning to but that would distract from lesson objectives. Address them at the end of class, the start of the next class, or at the end of the unit.

Credits

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