

What makes a good teacher?

This document brings together a summary of the discussion outcomes from the session on 'What Makes a Good Teacher?', led by Anne Tierney at the event 'Teaching in the Biosciences: an Introduction for Postgraduates and Postdoctoral Teaching Fellows'.

Teaching Types – Strengths and Weaknesses

Delegates considered the strengths, weaknesses, and for some the relationship between the teacher and the student, for each 'type' of teaching.

Lab practicals

Strengths	Weaknesses
Hands on experiences	Variability of knowledge (demonstrators)
Working in groups	Time management (demonstrators)
Time management (for students)	Work intensive to prepare
Getting out of the lecture theatre	Practical may fail
– lab	– frustration
– outdoors	– feeling of failure
– "be" a scientist	
Instructive and informal	Large cost in time, money, resources
If the practical is successful	
– enjoyment	
– teaches success	
Looks good on CV	
Improves relationship with teaching staff	
Supportive environment	
Teaches problem solving	
Teaches nature of scientific research	

Lectures

Strengths	Weaknesses	Relationship
Get lots of information to large number of students	Lecture may be too long (students get bored)	Lecturer gives info
Can be interactive	Death by PowerPoint!	Students receive info
Expert knowledge	Not interactive	
Can include current, unpublished research	Size of audience (no. of students)	
Socialise after lectures		

Seminars

Strengths	Weaknesses	Relationship
Encourages discussion	Quality of speakers	Interactive
Disciplined time / structure	Uneven participation	Student-led
Practice for future	Speakers confidence	Informal
Information dissemination	Communication gap	Coordinator
Improves communication skills		

Tutorials

Strengths	Weaknesses	Relationship
Small group size	Time consumption	Close relationship
Individual approach	Resources	Interactive
Better engagement with students		Mentoring / motivating

Project supervision

Strengths	Weaknesses	Relationship
Personal contact for a longer time	Need to focus on one objective / technique	More informal relationship
Common interest (same area)	Smaller group dynamics? (no. students)	
Student: Learns more Teacher: better overview (knowledge)	Need increased patience – can interfere with own work	
Improve ability to solve problems	Lack of results can be frustrating	
More individualised feedback	Increased stress and responsibility	