

Scenarios

Below are 3 scenarios which outline some of the potential problems associated with practical work. For the scenarios please discuss

- how you would cope
- **2 major advantages and disadvantages** with the strategy you adopt

Scenario 1

It is September and one of your responsibilities in your new post is module manager for a first-year 'Practicals' module. The introductory module consists of 11 laboratory classes which allows students to practise using equipment and different techniques. The course illustrates theoretical knowledge and aims to consolidate learning and develop student's report writing, data presentation and processing skills. As part of your responsibilities you are allocated 6 of these 3hr practical classes. Previously students have been expected to write an individual report for each of the practical classes on the course. However, the school has decided to move over to a common first year and so student numbers have jumped from 80 to 190, more than doubling your potential marking load. Your predecessor 'kindly' ordered additional equipment and materials, thus committing you to the current practical course. How would you cope, while still maintaining standards?

Scenario 2

Your institution's widening participation policy has been hugely successful, and as a result, 30 of the 110 students taking your first-year Applied Biology module come from a non-traditional background. One of the consequences of this is that the student group now has a wider range of abilities and previous experience than before and you can no longer make the same assumptions as to what they know or can do. The module is a compulsory component of the Applied Biology Degree and the first time students are introduced to laboratory work. There are currently eight 3 hr practicals associated with the module and students are expected to write a report for each.

What strategies would you employ to ensure that all students were 'up to speed' before entering the laboratory class and appropriately supported throughout the module?

Scenario 3

You are responsible for the practical component of a second-year Animal Biology module. Previously there were ten 3 hr practicals. Each week students individually studied a different species. Despite your vociferous and reasoned arguments on the importance of practical classes for scientific training the accountants have got their way and the budget is reduced and the time allocation for the practical classes halved. What strategies would you employ to make sure that standards are not compromised?

Alternatively

Think of a module or course on which you are responsible for the practical content. Now imagine the time allocation is halved. What would you do to maintain academic standards?