

Lecture Notes: To Post or not to Post?! That Continues to be the Question

Things to think about...

Audience of Handouts/Lecture Notes

1. Instructor use (e.g., organizing tool, lecture guide)
2. Student use (e.g., learning aid)

*whatever the case, the audience will influence the role of the handout, the format/organization of the handout, the amount/type of information shared, and when the handout is provided

Role of Handouts

1. fact sharing to ensure a common basic background/shared level of information (e.g., levelling the playing field for all students)
2. to release class time for discussion, activities, group work (this requires you to rethink how class time should be spent – information sharing VS information processing/engagement with material)
3. to reduce student pressure (students expect notes and associate them with learning material – put their minds at ease by providing them some form of handout)
4. to save note-taking in part or in full (e.g., to encourage strategic note-taking vs. free for all)
5. to make available hard-to-get or customized material (e.g., graphics/illustrations/notes)

Timing of Handouts

1. before class (e.g., background information; lecture guide; preparatory exercises/questions/review)
2. during class (e.g., worksheets/lecture guide)
3. after class (e.g., homework sheets; study notes; lecture summary/questions)

Types of Handouts (suggestive/not exhaustive)

1. worksheets (e.g., activity based, problem based)
2. lecture guide (e.g., headings/subheadings with blank space, fill-in-the blank/labelling illustrations, reflective questions)
3. response/reaction sheets
4. information sheets (e.g., summary of key points – student or faculty generated; revision sheet for lecture notes)

Strategies to Help Students Learn

1. student-generated summaries (use at the end of class and at strategic points in class; direct students to individually or in groups to summarize key points of the lecture; review in class or in preparation for next lecture)
2. student-generated questions (students generate questions based on readings/lecture material, before or during class; provide time to answer some in groups or as a whole class; gather a selection of questions for future use – they might come up with ones you never thought of)

3. pause during lecture to allow students to take and compare notes, fill in the blanks, generate definitions and examples for new terms and concepts, elaborate on ideas, identify questions/muddy points
4. concept/mind mapping exercises - help students draw relationships between concepts/ideas and develop understanding of material within and across lectures (see:<http://www.learningcommons.uoguelph.ca/ByFormat/OnlineResources/Fastfacts/LearningFastfacts/Fastfacts-ConceptMapping.html>)
5. use classroom assessment techniques to gather student information about their learning (my top three picks – minute paper, muddiest point, directed paraphrasing); use this information to revise and revisit lessons; solidify what students know/don't know; clarify misconceptions, etc.)
(see: <http://www.siue.edu/~deder/assess/catmain.html>)

More Instructor Strategies to Help Students Learn

1. relate new information to your students' experiences/frame of reference (e.g., popular culture references)
2. chunk course material into logical blocks of manageable size (it's easier for students to integrate and process)
3. design exercises that require students to elaborate, relate and apply course material to new situations/experiences/settings
4. present information more than once and with multiple approaches (e.g., short lecture, illustration, class-generated mind-map, activities)
5. provide an overview/agenda at the beginning of class – check off when you have finished addressing a section to cue students that you're moving on
6. use a variety of cues to guide students along (e.g., #5, key phrases “let me summarize”)
7. provide examples (see #1) or cognitive “hooks” which students can use to associate or recall information for later use/review
8. provide skeleton outline of key points for students to fill in the blanks (e.g., notes, student generated lists, outcomes of discussion)

Issues and Concerns

1. intellectual property (ownership of material – making it clear to students appropriate uses of posted lecture notes)
2. student passivity if we give them too much (active engagement should be our goal)
3. student attendance / participation
4. copyright (paper vs. electronic)
5. student note-taking skills
6. course level / maturity of students / competence of students in note-taking

Sample of Handouts/Guided Lecture Notes*

Key Point (instructor or student generated)	Significance/Context	Example/Scenario	Questions	Reflections
1.				
2.				
3.				

*change the headings as appropriate

The Teaching Professor Newsletter (short articles addressing issue of lecture notes)
(http://www.magnapubs.com/subscribe/magnapubs_tp.html)

* access guidelines are available from the Educational Development website
(www.wlu.ca/edev)

- Online Lecture Notes Can Aid Student Learning – September 2004
- Providing Notes: A Research Update – June/July 2005
- Fill-in-the-Blank Lectures Notes: Advantages – October 2005
- Creating Effective Handouts – October 2005

References

Bligh, D. (2000). *What's the Use of Lectures?* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

McKeachie, W. (1999). *Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research and Theory for College and University Teachers* (9th edition). Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company

Nilson, L. (1998). *Teaching at Its Best: A Research-Based Resource for College Instructors*. Bolton: Anker Publishing.

Race, P. (ed.) (1999). *2000 Tips for Lecturers*. London: Kogan Page.

Ramsden, P. (1992). *Learning to Teach in Higher Education*. London: Routledge.