

## Activities to try in lectures

Lectures place severe demands on students' concentration and attention span. Research shows that attention and thus learning drops rapidly after about 20 minutes. In order for lectures to be effective, we suggest you include varied **activities**. Here are some suggested activities which can be used to break up lectures and keep students focussed and motivated.

Although lecture room layout and the available technology in rooms can often determine what can and cannot be done, most of these activities can be adapted accordingly.

<b>Buzz groups</b>	Students discuss an issue for 2-3 minutes and then feed back to the whole group
<b>Groupwork</b>	Students in pairs or threes complete a task and feed back to the whole group
<b>Problem-solving</b>	Students solve a problem (alone or in groups) and feed back
<b>Pyramid (think-pair-share)</b>	Each person thinks about the issue alone, then discusses with one other person, then two pairs discuss the issue, etc
<b>Fishbowl</b>	One group discusses a topic, another group observes and makes notes about a particular point (e.g. important points, a person's contribution)
<b>Fill-the gaps</b>	Students complete unfinished sentences (e.g. individually on a handout or together on a powerpoint slide)
<b>Instant questionnaire</b>	Students fill in a very short questionnaire
<b>Quiz / Mini-test</b>	Students complete a set of questions
<b>Brainstorming/mindmaps /spider diagrams</b>	Students brainstorm a particular topic for a few minutes (in writing or verbally)
<b>Personal response systems ("clickers")</b>	Each student has a personal response system ("clicker") and answers a multiple choice question (similar to 'Ask the audience' on <i>Who wants to be a millionaire</i> ). Contact your learning and teaching unit about whether clickers are available for your use.

<b>'Pass the parcel'</b>	Pass something around the room to illustrate your point
<b>Show of hands</b>	Students put their hand up to indicate what they think and lecturer conveys result

<b>Q&amp;A</b>	Students ask their neighbour any questions they have, if they cannot answer it, give time at the end to ask the lecturer
<b>Questions</b>	Students write down the questions they want answered in the lecture and hand them to the lecturer (can be done before the lecture via email or at the beginning of the lecture)
<b>Use new technologies</b>	Get students to write an SMS with a response to you; set up a videoconference with an expert on the topic; get students to listen to a short podcast introducing the topic before the lecture; show a short film clip

<b>Review</b>	Allocate time for everyone to review their lecture notes
<b>Read</b>	A time is assigned to read a passage
<b>Reflection</b>	A short time period is given for students to reflect on what they have just learnt
<b>Identify key points</b>	Students identify the key points they have learnt in the lecture (in writing or verbally)
<b>Compare notes</b>	Students compare their notes with their neighbours'

### Example: Quiz

Some topics require students to have background factual information which can be quite dull if read out by the lecturer and merely noted down by students. This exercise can be used at the beginning of a lecture on the role of the EU in UK social policy. It can also be used to make the point that people in England are very poorly informed about EU matters and tend to take minimal interest in the EU. Reasons for the lack of interest can be explored.

Students guess the dates, which gets them thinking about the topic. When the correct answers are obtained, additional information can be added by the lecturer.

When ...	Year
... did Britain join the European Economic Community?	
... did the European Convention of Human Rights become part of English law?	
... was the European Economic Community (EEC) first set up?	
... did the Maastricht Treaty come into force?	

	... did the EEC become the EU?		
	... was the Social Chapter accepted by Britain?		

**Example: Show of hands**

A lecture on the relation of politics to social work begins with a sounding of students' views. Students rank their responses to the following statements on a scale of 0-5:

*Social work and politics are related:* Not at all (0) ..... Closely related (5)

*Social workers should engage with political processes:* Not at all (0) ..... In all their work (5)

A show of hands gives a sense of students' opinions at the start of the lecture and the exercise is repeated at the end to assess any changes in thinking.