Demonstrator Training Session

Original slides created by Matt Smart

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September 29, 2015
Outline of this Session
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Why?

- **Demonstrators are very important to the School!**
- Important part in teaching/learning in larger modules:
  - Some classes are very large - demonstrators are often the only way to give one-to-one teaching
  - Allow for a more personal approach to feedback and teaching
  - Better feedback to the module lecturer on how the module is going
- You need a sound knowledge of whatever module you’re working on
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  - Your CV
  - Better understanding of the subject from different angles
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What Demonstrating Involves

- Usually helping a large number of students to complete exercises
- Useful - students get to ask you, rather than badgering the lecturer
- Assumes you are confident about any questions you might receive, and you know how to handle students’ enquiries
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You will usually meet once a week with lecturer/module TA

- Ask questions - make sure you’re certain about next week’s work
- Each week, you’ll be (typically) paid for around an hour to prepare for the exercise, an hour for the meeting, and up to four hours for demonstrating (6 h/week)
- This might be in a computer lab, or in a class
- The University allows students to work a maximum of 15 hours during term time.
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How Marking Works

Workshop module (such as Java) - you’ll probably have to **one-to-one mark** your students.

- A one-to-one demonstration (**viva**) is a short marking session between you and your student
- Look at the student’s work with them, mark it according to a set of criteria you’ve been given
- The student must have the opportunity to answer questions about their work, to demonstrate understanding
- Detect plagiarism (and lack of comprehension). If you suspect plagiarism, *report it*
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- What you write on people’s work can hurt—be tactful and helpful, but no-one wants to read an essay in red ink.
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Small group tutorials - the most important job of those discussed: you are imparting knowledge.

- Reinforce knowledge
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- One of the most important things: interaction!
  - You can talk with your students individually...

- One-to-one demos - build knowledge of each student's skills and weaknesses
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Structuring Your Tutorial

- **Learning Outcomes**—What will you teach?
- **Time Management**—When will you teach it?
- **Student Involvement**—How will you teach it?
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Reflection

Donald Schöen defines a couple of ways that you can *reflect* upon your teaching: both will apply to you.

Reflection *in* Action

You’re in your tutorial, and something goes wrong. Your students aren’t understanding—what can you do?

Reflection *on* Action

Done *before* or *after* a teaching session, based on previous experiences, or feedback

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What You Should Do

It’s all too easy to assume that because you find the exercise easy, the student will too. So...

- **Remember**: If it’s not obvious to them, it’s not obvious!
- Remember what it was like to be a beginner—be patient
- Be understanding: the student might think you’re going to blame the problem on them
- Explain the question before discussing how you might answer it

Part adapted from Phil Agre’s *How to Help Someone Use a Computer*.

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What You Should Do (2)

- Interact with the student at their level:
  - If they’re sitting at a computer, kneel or squat next to it (don’t tower over them)
  - When they look at the screen, look at the screen. When they look at you, look back at them.
  - Don’t patronise!

- Explain your thinking! Don’t make your answers mysterious; show why something works

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What You Shouldn’t Do

Just as important as what you should do is things you should never do... Remember what it was like when you were in their shoes. What would have helped you?

- Your primary goal isn’t to solve their problem—it’s to help them to solve the problem on their own:
  - Don’t just give them the answer! Work around it! Think about active learning—students learn and reflect best from doing things themselves.
  - Don’t show off—you’ll just look like an idiot, and you’ll intimidate people that have come to you for help.

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What You Shouldn’t Do (2)

Most importantly...

Don’t take the keyboard!

- If you’re in a lab, don’t take the keyboard from the student: at the very most, tell them what to type, so they learn from the interaction.
- If you’re in a class, don’t take the pen!
- If you’re tutoring, get your students up and involved in the tutorial.

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Beginners face a language problem: they can’t ask questions because they don’t know what the words mean, they can’t know what the words mean until they can successfully use the system, and they can’t successfully use the system because they can’t ask questions.

(More from Phil Agre)
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*(More from Phil Agre)*
Payment and "The Rules"

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Who to contact...

- If you are a research or master’s student:
  - Patrycja Adams (Room UG45, Computer Science)

- If you are an undergraduate student:
  - Julie Heathcote (Room UG45, Computer Science)

- For issues concerned with payments:
  - Melissa Fletcher (Room UG47, Computer Science; M.L.Fletcher@bham.ac.uk)
You are responsible for keeping track of the hours you work. The module co-ordinator/TA will not do this for you.

However, the hours you should work on the module are pre-set and your claims must be consistent with that.

You are responsible for entering the correct information on your time sheet.
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Worklink and contracts

- Payments will be set-up through our casual worker system, *Worklink*.
- *Worklink* will contact you to set up your employment record.
- If you work for more than 13 weeks (e.g. for example over both terms), you will be asked to complete an HR contract. (This will happen in January or afterwards.)
- The administration of this is through *Worklink*. 
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Documentation Required

For *Worklink* registration, you will need:

- email address
- National Insurance Number
- passport
- visa (if required)
- copy of their CV
- bank details

This information will be needed as part of the eligibility to work checks and post activation. Mel will be in touch to let you know when this is required.
Documentation Required

For Worklink registration, you will need:

- email address
- National Insurance Number
- passport
- visa (if required)
- copy of their CV
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Postgraduate Teaching Assistants and undergraduates involved in academic support must receive appropriate training and support for the duties they are required to perform. This shall include attending generic training provided centrally by the University, i.e. a core module (ILT001) and a further module (one of ILT002-008) based on the type of teaching and academic support undertaken by the individual postgraduate. This should also include discipline specific and module specific training provided by the School/College.

(Code of Practice: Teaching and Academic Support of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Students by Postgraduate Teaching Assistants and Undergraduates, Section 5.1)

You will **not receive payment until you have completed all your training.**