**Planning and reflecting on your teaching: two checklists from ‘The Lecturer’s Toolkit’ (4th Edition) by Phil Race to be published by Routledge, London in 2015**

*Table 7.1: some questions which may help you plan an element of teaching, then reflect upon it with hindsight*

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Session title:** | **Class size:** | | | |
| **Place:** | **Date:** | | | |
| **Checklist question** | **Yes** | **No** | **n/a** | **Reflections with hindsight after the session** |
| **Drafting your session outline** | | | | |
| Has a good title been chosen for the session?  Will this title help to motivate students to turn up for the session rather than just download any relevant materials later?  Will this title be ‘lived up to’ by the session in practice? |  |  |  |  |
| Has the ‘rationale’ been drafted well?  Does it clarify well what the title actually means in practice, and why the session will be important and useful to students? |  |  |  |  |
| Have intended session outcomes been formulated carefully?  Are these relevant and achievable?  Do these enable students to see exactly what the session will be about?  Will these ensure that there are no unwelcome surprises or disappointments for students at the session? |  |  |  |  |
| Has an outline programme or plan been worked out for the session?  Does this give enough detail of how the session will unfold?  Is the outline programme still flexible enough to allow the session to be fine-tuned at the session itself, to accommodate students’ wishes, expectations and emergent needs? |  |  |  |  |
| **Setting the venue up** | | | | |
| Is the venue a ‘known quantity’ to you and to the students? |  |  |  |  |
| Has the room been visited and checked out for size, shape, lighting, equipment, furniture, and so on? |  |  |  |  |
| Is the seating moveable? |  |  |  |  |
| Are tables (if present) easily moveable? |  |  |  |  |
| Have decisions been made about the initial room layout, e.g. for plenary introductions? |  |  |  |  |
| Have decisions been made about the way that small groups will be accommodated for group work elements of the session, if relevant? |  |  |  |  |
| Will it be necessary to allow time before the session to set up the room in exactly the required format? |  |  |  |  |
| Will you need a flipchart in the room? Is one there already? |  |  |  |  |
| Are there whiteboards or blackboards in the room, and will you need them? |  |  |  |  |
| Are data projection facilities in the room? |  |  |  |  |
| Is internet easily available? |  |  |  |  |
| Can you use your laptop for slides, or will you need a memory stick? |  |  |  |  |
| **Online resources, and so on** | | | | |
| Have online resources been selected relating to the session? |  |  |  |  |
| Will these be made available in advance of the session? |  |  |  |  |
| Are these intended to be downloaded after the session? |  |  |  |  |
| Will some of these materials be used at stages during the session? |  |  |  |  |
| Will slides be made available to students before the session? |  |  |  |  |
| Will a feedback questionnaire be used relating to the session? |  |  |  |  |
| **Getting the session off to a good start** | | | | |
| Will you be finding out what students already know about the topic near the start of the session? |  |  |  |  |
| Will the intended session outcomes be explained clearly near the beginning of the session? |  |  |  |  |
| Will it be possible to fine-tune the intended session outcomes in the light of students’ expectations at the start of the session? |  |  |  |  |
| **Making it an active learning experience** | | | | |
| Is there an emphasis on students doing things rather than simply listening to people talking at them? |  |  |  |  |
| Is there a suitable variety of tasks, including individual work, small-group work, jotting down questions while watching a video clip, reporting back in plenary, question-and-answer sessions, and so on? |  |  |  |  |
| Have task briefings been thought through carefully so that students will see what they are intended to get out of doing the tasks? |  |  |  |  |
| Will briefings be shown on-screen so that students remain on task during the activities? |  |  |  |  |
| Are the tasks demonstrably linked to the intended session outcomes? |  |  |  |  |
| **Bringing the session to a good conclusion** | | | | |
| Have plans been made so that the session can be adjusted if necessary so that it will end on time? |  |  |  |  |
| Has it been decided what the most appropriate ‘ending’ activity will be for the session? |  |  |  |  |
| **After the session** | | | | |
| Is there a process for dealing with students’ questions arising from the session? |  |  |  |  |
| Have decisions been made about adjustments to make to future sessions in the light of students’ feedback? |  |  |  |  |

***Reflecting on your session***

It is very valuable to reflect on each session you lead, and to learn from things which went well, and of course to think about what could have gone better. The main problem with reflecting is that unless some *record* of reflection is made at the time, one’s best ideas can just evaporate away again. The following table can be a starting point for reflecting after running a teaching session, and for capturing your reflections so that you can put them to good use when planning and running future sessions. Of course, it would be quite impracticable to use a table like this for reflecting on more than a few sessions, and you may wish to use just a few questions to reflect on the average session. However, doing a fairly comprehensive reflection now and then is a useful way to build up a collection of evidence of reflection, to allow you to look at the bigger picture of your teaching as it continues to develop.

The questions below are just indicative ones; you may wish to use these as a starting point towards developing your own personal checklist to use after a session from time to time.

*Table 7.2: a starting point for reflection on an element of teaching*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Reflection checklist questions** | **Your responses and action-planning ideas** |
| What particular aspect of this session was the thing that worked best of all?  *Why* did this element work really well?  How can I make sure that I capitalise on this in my future sessions? |  |
| What *else* worked really well at this session?  How best can I build in similar features into my future sessions? |  |
| What worked *least* well at this particular session?  *Why* was this?  What can I do in future sessions to minimise the chance that similar things will happen again? |  |
| What surprised me most at this particular session?  Why was this unexpected?  What would I now do, with hindsight, to address this, if it were to happen again at a future session? |  |
| How well do I now think that I *started* this particular session?  What have I learned about how best to start this particular kind of session?  How will I now fine-tune the beginning of a future similar session? |  |
| How well did I explain the intended learning outcomes to students?  Which of these outcomes seemed to be most important to them?  Are there any I might miss out next time? |  |
| How best can I, with hindsight, adjust the intended learning outcomes to be more relevant to future students at similar sessions? |  |
| How much did the students turn out to know already, on average?  Was this more than I expected or less than I expected?  How would I adjust the content of a future session to fine-tune it better to what the students are likely to know already?  How best can I find out from them more about what they already know at the start of a similar session in future? |  |
| What was the best thing about the teaching room at this particular session?  Why did this really help the session?  What can I do to try to ensure that this kind of venue feature will be put to good use in future sessions? |  |
| What was the worst thing about the teaching room at this particular session?  What can I do in future to minimise the risk of similar things spoiling a session? |  |
| What was the best thing about the actual students at this particular session?  How can I build on this to make future sessions with the same group of students work well?  How best can I try to make use of similar strengths among future students? |  |
| What behaviours did the most difficult student show at this particular session?  What can I do to address such behaviours at future sessions, if they occur again? |  |
| What was my own best moment at this particular session?  Why do I feel good about this particular aspect?  What can I do to lead to more such moments at future sessions? |  |
| What is the single most important thing I wish I *hadn’t* done at this session?  Why do I feel badly about this? How best can I avoid doing this in future sessions? |  |
| What was the most important thing I learned about the topic of my session on this occasion?  How best can I make use of what I learned on future occasions? |  |
| What, with hindsight, would I now miss out of the session?  Why would I now choose to miss this out of similar sessions in future? |  |
| What else, with hindsight, do I wish I had been able to include in this particular session?  How best can I make time to include something along these lines into future similar sessions? |  |
| What was the most unexpected happening at this session?  How well do I now think that I handled this?  How might I handle the same sort of thing differently at a future session? |  |
| How well do I think I closed the session?  Did I end it with a whimper or a bang?!  Was I rushed towards the end of the session, trying to get through everything on the agenda?  What would I do next time round, with hindsight, to make sure that a future similar session ended really positively? |  |
| What do I feel about the feedback I have received from students at this session?  What will be the most important thing which I will do differently next time as a result of this feedback?  What will be the most important thing I will do in exactly the same way because of this feedback? |  |
| What was the most hurtful comment or grading in students’ feedback?  Why do I find this hurtful?  Was it justified?  Is it really important considering the feedback as a whole?  Would it be useful for me to do something different next time round to address this particular aspect of critical feedback? |  |
| What was the most pleasing comment or grading I received in students’ feedback?  Why does this please me so much?  Will it be possible for me to aim to get further similar feedback in future, and how will I adjust a future session to do so? |  |
| What turned out to be the most revealing question on the feedback questionnaire?  Why was this?  How could I develop the questionnaire to get better feedback next time round? |  |
| How well did students feel that they had achieved the intended learning outcomes at the end of the session?  Which outcomes had they achieved best?  Were any of the intended outcomes less important than others?  How would it be useful, with hindsight, to adjust the intended learning outcomes for a similar session next time round? |  |
| What is the most important thing I have learned about teaching sessions of this kind from this particular experience?  How will I put this learning to good use at future sessions? |  |