

Thinking about tutorials and marking

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Outline

What are tutorials and what are they for?

Before, during, and after tutorials

- ▶ Some more detailed (and opinionated) advice.
- ▶ Feel free to question and/or disagree!

FAQs and advice handout

Coffee break (1030–1100)

Marking: an exercise for you...

Summary and questions

Some questions for you

Think about the tutorials you had in first year.

- ▶ Size: small (1–6); medium (7–25); large (>25)?
- ▶ Type: example class; exercise class; homework; lab...?
- ▶ Individual work; group work; free to choose?

- ▶ Were there tutorials you looked forward to? Why?
- ▶ Were there tutorials you dreaded (or skived)? Why?
- ▶ Did everybody else in the class feel the same as you?
- ▶ Were the tutorials you enjoyed the ones you learned most from?
- ▶ Can you remember a tutorial that went really badly?

Some possible purposes for a tutorial

- ▶ Provide students with **formative feedback**:
 - ▶ on their understanding of concepts;
 - ▶ on how they're doing relative to expected standards.
- ▶ Give students the opportunity to:
 - ▶ **practise** applying ideas introduced in lectures;
 - ▶ ask **questions** and take responsibility for their learning;
 - ▶ **learn from each other** (successes and failures).
- ▶ Illustrate **how an expert thinks** through a problem.
- ▶ Build students' **confidence** — not always monotonically!
- ▶ Find out about the students:
 - ▶ their **expectations** and **prior knowledge**;
 - ▶ what they're finding difficult or easy.

In the classroom: asking and answering questions

Good questions get students to participate.

- ▶ Do you want questions to:
 - ▶ make the class **fun** or **challenging**?
 - ▶ give the students **something to ponder** later?
- ▶ More **specific** questions get better answers.

Think carefully about how to answer students' questions.

- ▶ Some good responses to a sensible question:
 - ▶ go through a **similar example**;
 - ▶ **Socratic** questioning;
 - ▶ admit you need time to think about it.
- ▶ Some traps to avoid:
 - ▶ **doing the work** for them;
 - ▶ sounding **patronising** ('clearly', 'trivially', etc...);
 - ▶ treating **very stupid questions** with contempt.

In the classroom: teaching style

“Teach the students you have, not the ones you want”
— but don't let them pull your expectations down.

- ▶ If students are struggling, you may need to:
 - ▶ **commiserate** (but be clear they can succeed in time);
 - ▶ **explain** (possibly several times in different ways);
 - ▶ take a **step back** and look for the root of the problem;
 - ▶ be **patient** and save your **frustration** for later.
- ▶ Watch out for the quiet strugglers in a large class.
- ▶ If students are doing well, you may need to:
 - ▶ **praise** them (but beware of establishing favourites);
 - ▶ **challenge** them with something extra.
- ▶ Try not to reinforce a smart-versus-stupid mindset.
- ▶ Beware of **unconscious bias**.

Students will rapidly pick up whether or not you **care**.

In the classroom: coping with problems

Most successful classroom management relies on:

- ▶ clear **ground-rules**, enforced **consistently**;
- ▶ making sure you set a **good example**;
- ▶ **back-up** from the lecturer in charge and the department.

If students misbehave:

- ▶ **address individuals** and get the class behind you;
- ▶ be **polite** but not hesitant;
- ▶ if you issue a **warning**, always follow it through.

When you make a **mistake** in your own working:

- ▶ **acknowledge** this and **correct** it;
- ▶ use it as a chance to teach **self-correction**.

Don't panic... and don't take things personally!

FAQs and coffee break

The handout contains:

- ▶ a check-list of information that lecturers ought to give you before a tutorial;
- ▶ answers to questions that PG tutors have asked me;
- ▶ some suggestions for further reading.

Marking: general principles

All feedback should help students to **improve**.

- ▶ Make clear on each script:
 - ▶ what they've got right and wrong (use **ticks** and **crosses** to indicate this);
 - ▶ what they should focus on next time (use **written comments**, perhaps beside the grade).
- ▶ Marking in **red pen** is fine.
- ▶ Give summary **grades** or marks iff you have to.
 - ▶ Grades often displace all other feedback.
 - ▶ Tell students what their grades mean (if anything).
 - ▶ Deal with **complaints** courteously and individually.
- ▶ Avoid the temptation to write anything rude.

Marking: an exercise for you

On the handout you have two students' submissions for a first-year maths homework question.

The correct answer is $x_1 = -1$ and $x_2 = 4$.

Stage 1. Mark Keith's submission (without consulting) (a) in the range 0–9, then (b) on a scale A–D.

Stage 2. Now mark Keith's submission using the marking scheme.

Stage 3. Now do the same with Kylie's submission.

Take-home messages

Teaching can be great — even when it's challenging!

With any luck, all of the following seem obvious.

- ▶ **Prepare** thoroughly, especially for easy material.
- ▶ Consider how what you do and say will help the students to **improve**.
- ▶ Be firm about **behaviour**, esp. at the start of a course.
- ▶ Sometimes things screw up. This happens. It's not necessarily your fault.

Now: what have I forgotten?