

## What makes a good teacher?

This document brings together a summary of the discussion outcomes from the session on 'What Makes a Good Teacher?', led by Anne Tierney at the event 'Teaching in the Biosciences: an Introduction for Postgraduates and Postdoctoral Teaching Fellows'.

### What skills do you as a Postgraduate demonstrator or new teacher bring?

- Enthusiasm
- Knowledge
- Experience
- Support
- Different ways of explaining
- Affinity – close to students in experience / age

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### Teaching Types – Strengths and Weaknesses

Delegates considered the strengths, weaknesses, and for some the relationship between the teacher and the student, for each 'type' of teaching.

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#### Project supervision

##### Strengths

- One to one
- Research experience (for both parties)
- Makes you more aware of why and how. Also Health and Safety!
- Feedback – constructive

##### Weaknesses

- Time consuming
- Narrow focus
- Depends on the student – personality / relationship
- Feedback – hard to give

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#### Seminars

##### Strengths

- Topical discussion – more open than tutorials
- Instant feedback – finding weaker areas in students understanding
- Problem solving
- Less embarrassing to ask questions
- Broader opinions
- Less formal

##### Weaknesses

- Intimidating? Less structure
- Favours extroverts?!
- Time consuming

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#### Lab practicals

##### Strengths

- Small groups – easy to control
- Skills to learn
- Two way communication and input

##### Weaknesses

- Divided attention
- Few weaknesses if organised

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## Tutorials

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### Strengths

- Personal – small group
- Interactive
- Problem solving based (set work, work sheets, "home work")
- Raises discussion
- Access to a teacher
- Support / back-up lectures

### Weaknesses

- Narrow subject
  - Confrontational
  - Time consuming
  - Can lose focus
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## Field Courses

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### Strengths

- One of the first times a student develops their own project
- Good student to teacher ratio
- Experience of science in the field

### Weaknesses

- Potential for lack of focus
- Fun may take over learning objectives

### Relationship

- Informal and relaxed
  - Interactive and personal
  - One to one teaching
  - May be quite stressful for teaching staff (taking on extra roles)
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## Lectures

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### Strengths

- Large audience – lot of information to a lot of people
- Different learning techniques can be used – can make them interactive – visual cues
- The lecturer

### Weaknesses

- One way
- Large audience – impersonal
- Not kinaesthetic
- The lecturer

### Relationship

- Depends on the lecturer
  - Lecturer is informer – just providing the student with information
  - The sponge – student soaks up all the information
  - Formal relationship
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