

*Book review***The lecturer's toolkit – A practical guide to learning, teaching and assessment (Second edition)**

BY P RACE

278 pp, Kogan Page, London, [[www.kogan-page.co.uk](http://www.kogan-page.co.uk)], 2001, ISBN 0-7494-3539-9, £19.99 (paperback)

*The Lecturer's Toolkit* should be on the desks of all lecturers, both young and old, and should be referred to regularly. In the *Toolkit*, Phil Race brings his extensive experience to bear in providing a guide through the problems of delivering effective teaching, supporting student learning and assessing it effectively. Key features of the book are that it is highly pragmatic in its approach, appreciating the increasing problems facing lecturers today in managing their time effectively and coping with increasing student numbers, and it is free of jargon. Most important of all, it drives the reader to reflect on how and why specific forms of delivery of material and assessment are used and how they might be improved.

The style of the book makes it very approachable: it is in a format that enables one both to read it through and to dip in to look at specific topics without necessarily having to read a significant amount of background material. Extensive use is made of bullet points to cover the main aspects of a topic quickly. Sometimes these leave the reader wanting more in the way of detailed consideration of the question being addressed but in the main this approach is successful, particularly, for example, where it is used to enable comparison of the different methods of assessment.

The book is divided into six main sections. The first chapter reflects on the learning process itself and, whilst the main messages might be considered self-evident, I still found the process of being reminded of them to be valuable. Chapters 2–5 then address the main problem areas experienced by many lecturers in Higher Education Institutions (universities and colleges), such as designing assessments and the process of feedback, not only to best match the objectives of the programmes but also to avoid lecturers being even more swamped with marking and feedback writing. There is also a very useful chapter on 'Making small-group teaching work', which includes discussion of the effectiveness of different ways of both constructing and managing such groups and how to cope as the small groups are rapidly becoming large groups!

The final chapter has the appealing title 'Looking after yourself'. This is not a guide to health and beauty but deals with the more down-to-earth issues of coping with stress and time management. On these topics, most of the answers given are well known but we tend to be bad at recognising the symptoms in ourselves and doing something about them, so a reminder is always timely. Perhaps of less value is the section on managing a QAA

subject review since the format described is unlikely to pertain to most departments in the future.

*The Lecturer's Toolkit* offers something for everyone who teaches in higher education, whatever stage they are at in their career. The concise style makes the information accessible and the whole approach is directed towards providing direct and valuable guidance for improving student learning. Reading through *The Lecturer's Toolkit* also repeatedly made me think about why I was trying to teach or assess material in certain ways: it has also given me the impetus (and courage!) to work on changing some of them.

**Reviewed by Jon Scott**

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