

Active and Transferable Teaching Approaches for Student Engagement, eg. FYHE ‘Speed Dating!’

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Abstract

Participants of FYHE Fremantle! Straighten your jacket! Collect your ‘FYHE Speeding Ticket’! Go! In this highly interactive session, audience participants will engage in ‘Speed Dating in FYHE Fremantle’ – one example of a fun and engaging teaching approach intended to achieve student engagement in first year and beyond.

In this ‘nuts and bolts’ session, participants will be provided with some practical suggestions intended to achieve student engagement through involving students in active approaches to learning. These 3 suggestions are based on the key literature on student engagement. The teaching approaches in this presentation are intended to assist in scaling up student engagement within an entire curriculum, as they are easy-to-adapt and transferable between colleagues within a course.

In higher education, the *most* important factor in improving the quality of higher education is ‘student engagement’ (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Astin, 1993; Kuh, 2001; Hu & Kuh, 2002). The quality of education received should be measured by the experience of the students within a course (Keyes & Johnstone, 2004). Yet, often students are *only* engaged in one or a few units or subjects, and then usually by only some teachers or activities. Student engagement is at best periodic and not translated across the entire experience. Transforming an idiosyncratic adoption of engaging teaching techniques from one individual approach to a broad and effective implementation across an entire course can be complicated, not to mention tiring for its proponents.

The purpose of this presentation is to provide some active and transferable teaching approaches to facilitate student engagement. This presentation will involve participants in an interactive task, ‘FYHE Fremantle Speed Dating’, to provide one example of these approaches. Participants will also be provided with a takeaway ‘teaching strategies’ booklet with further examples to try and share with colleagues.

This discussion is based on the literature of student engagement in higher education, including the seven engagement indicators to influence student learning by Chickering and Gamson (1987) and Astin’s model of inputs-environments-outcomes, used to assess the impact of various institutional practices and environmental experiences on student outcomes (Astin, 1993) and Tinto’s research on student engagement within the first year (Tinto, 1993). Active learning, as presented in this session, is a key underlying principle of student engagement and states the proposition that students learn by being involved in their learning and their institution (Astin, 1993). To engage with students using active learning, effective

teachers should take an approach to teaching that influences, motivates and inspires students to learn, for example, by stimulating curiosity and independence in learning, or by encouraging student engagement through the enthusiasm shown for learning and teaching, presentation and interpersonal skills (Australian Learning Teaching Council, 2011).

On leaving, participants will be provided with a takeaway published booklet on successful teaching strategies, including adapting and translating the principles of active learning in a simple to apply way (publication by Macken, Claire and Dupuche, Madeleine).

Session Plan

This session will first be informative, and then highly interactive, with active participation from the audience. Participants will first be taken through the meaning of active learning, one of the underlying principles of student engagement. Active learning will be explained by reference to several key examples of engaging teaching approaches for the first year. The examples chosen are interactive active learning approaches to teaching and were chosen for the reason of transferability – they can be easily adapted to other years and subjects within a course, both for curricula and co-curricular activities (**the first 12-15 minutes**).

Participants will then engage in *one* of these teaching approaches as an interactive activity **for 15 minutes**. This activity is called ‘Speed Dating in FYHE Fremantle’ and is intended to model an approach to teaching that encourages active learning. In this activity, the presenters will first distribute to conference participants a brief extract of approximately 500 words to read (**3 minutes**). Extracts given to participants will differ. The extracts will be taken from the literature on FYHE or student engagement in higher education by a key authors (for example, Kuh, 2001; Kift, 2009; Krause and Coates, 2008; Yorke, 2006 or Tinto, 1993) and participants will be asked to write one summary point from the extract on a ‘speeding ticket’ (**2 minutes**). For the next five minutes, participants will ‘speed date’ around the room sharing their summary points on the literature of student engagement and FYHE with other participants, ticking off the summaries they have heard from other participants on a ‘speeding ticket’ (**5 minutes**). After speed dating, the presenters will ask for reflections on the task in terms of active learning approaches to teaching first year, as one way to successfully scale up curricula and co-curricular approaches to teaching (**5 minutes**).

Key Questions

This activity is designed to be informative, demonstrate active approaches to teaching and strategies that are transferable across a course. Key questions to be answered in this session include:

- Do you have further examples of active and transferable teaching approaches for student engagement?
- Could you transfer and/or adapt the suggested active learning teaching approaches from this session to scale up curricular and co-curricular activities for student engagement in your own practice?

Description of Expected Impact

Participation in this session should enable attendees to:

- be informed as to the principles of student engagement in higher education, based on the literature and demonstrated in a practical and hands-on session linked to a real ‘nuts and bolts’ example;
- engage with an easy-to-implement teaching practice that can be shared with colleagues and that encourages active learning, as well as the opportunity for self-reflection as to existing practice; and importantly, how to make learning enjoyable;
- discuss in an informal setting assessment practice and start a dialogue with peers.

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