

## Tips for GP trainees interested in medical education

### INTRODUCTION

Teaching is a fantastic way to add variety to your job and to brush up on your own knowledge and skills — you need to have a good understanding of something to be able to teach it. It is also part of the RCGP curriculum and a requirement of the GMC. Most doctors will have had some experience of teaching but many will not have put much thought into how they teach, or how they could improve their teaching. This article provides some simple tips on planning, delivering, and evaluating a teaching session, and will also highlight some of the teaching opportunities available.

### PLANNING

1. *Who?* Know your audience. It is important to have an understanding of what your students already know and what is expected of them so that you can pitch the session at the right level. Make it relevant to their profession and learning needs. For example, if you are teaching at a multidisciplinary team meeting, try to include cases and aspects of care that are relevant to the different health professionals.
2. *What?* Identify aims and objectives. Aims are broad statements that outline what you want to achieve during the session. Objectives are more precise statements of what you hope the students will learn. A good acronym to use when writing objectives is 'SMART'. Each objective should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-framed. Use the phrase 'by the end of the session the students should be able to ...'. This puts the emphasis on the student's learning rather than your teaching.
3. *Where?* Check whether your teaching venue has the resources you need (for example, flip charts and pens) or whether you need to bring them with you. Think about things like toilets and tea-making facilities. It sounds simple

but concentration spans will wane if physiological needs are not met.

4. *How?* Be creative. We have all sat through countless PowerPoint presentations. Try something different. Think about balancing teacher and student activity — you should not be doing all the work.
5. *Plan.* Use a lesson plan (online Box 1). This is a great way to work through the who, what, where, and how. It will also help you to be realistic about how much you can fit into the session in the allocated time.

### DELIVERING

6. *Consider different learning styles.* There are four main learning styles: visual, aural, read/write, and kinaesthetic (VARK).<sup>1</sup> Students will have individual preferences for each of the learning styles. Learning the same topic with different styles can improve learning so you should endeavour to include a mixture of all of the styles in your teaching. Examples include videos, group discussions and practical exercises.
7. *Engage the students from the start using an 'ice breaker'.* This is a short introductory activity that can be used to establish prior knowledge or familiarise the students with each other. The opening activity in (online Box 1) is an example of this.
8. *Use interactive methods.* Most people's concentration span ranges from 5–20 minutes so try to avoid long lectures and instead vary your teaching using, for example, role-play, quizzes, and brainstorming exercises. Observing other teachers is a good way to pick up new teaching techniques.
9. *Give constructive feedback.* Reflecting on the students' performance has been shown to have one of the biggest impacts on learning. Good feedback

**P Duncan**, BMedSci, BMBS, academic clinical fellow in general practice; **V Boon**, academic clinical fellow in general practice, University of Bristol, School of Community and Social Medicine, Canynge Hall, Bristol.

#### Address for correspondence

**Polly Duncan**, University of Bristol, School of Community and Social Medicine, Canynge Hall, 39 Whatley Road, Bristol, BS8 2PS, UK.

**E-mail:** pollyduncan@doctors.org.uk

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should include three different aspects: what has been done well, what could be improved, and clear goals on how to achieve this.

## EVALUATING

10. *Reflect on your teaching session.* Good teachers learn from both successes and mistakes. Use your lesson plan to record comments on each of the different aspects of your session. Did you meet your aims and objectives? What was it about a particular activity that the students liked? What would you do differently next time?
11. *Get feedback from students.* Rather than using a standard individual feedback form encourage more meaningful responses by using novel methods. For example, ask students to write a strength and a weakness of the session on different coloured Post-it® notes, or ask the group to discuss the session and give collective feedback.
12. *Ask someone to observe you teaching,* or video a session — this can offer an invaluable insight into your interaction with the students.

## HOW DO I GET INVOLVED?

13. *Teach your colleagues.* VTS teaching sessions are a brilliant non-threatening environment to try out new teaching methods. There is often scope to teach during hospital and GP posts too. For example, at journal clubs or clinical meetings.
14. *Teach medical students.* There are often opportunities to help facilitate problem-based learning groups or communication-skills sessions, or to run small group teaching sessions in general practice. Contact the head of primary care teaching at your local medical school and check the university websites. Your local GP deanery and GP trainer may be a useful source of knowledge too.
15. *Examine for medical student clinical exams.* This can be a useful way to find out what level of knowledge is required of students.
16. *Apply for study leave* so that teaching sessions are protected and free from clinical distractions.
17. *Go on a teaching course.* Various courses are available. For example, 'Teach the Teachers' is a two-day course aimed at improving doctors' teaching skills.<sup>2</sup>

Masters level courses are also available. For example, the 'Teaching and Learning for Health Professionals' (TLHP) course in Bristol. Students can choose how many modules they complete and graduate with a Certificate, Diploma or Masters qualification.<sup>3</sup>

18. *Attend a conference.* The Association for the Study of Medical Education (ASME) has an annual UK conference ([www.asme.org.uk](http://www.asme.org.uk)). There is also a trainee branch of ASME called TASME<sup>4</sup> — both have regional divisions and these are another great source of information about medical teaching opportunities. The Association for Medical Education in Europe (AMEE) is an international organisation, which has an annual conference offering opportunities to find out about teaching methods in other countries. The Society of Academic Primary Care (SAPC), UK Conference of postgraduate Educational Advisors in General Practice (UKCEA) and Committee of General Practice Education Directors (COGPED) are all organisations that specifically relate to General Practice teaching.
19. *Apply for an education fellow post.* If you enjoy teaching this can be a great way to make teaching part of your career as well as developing your skills.
20. *Teach.* The best way to become an effective teacher is to get lots of practice. If you have had a bad experience of teaching don't let it put you off. We all have bad days and some types of teaching will be better suited to you than others.

## REFERENCES

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## Provenance

Freely submitted; externally peer reviewed.

## Discuss this article

Contribute and read comments about this article on the Discussion Forum: <http://www.rcgp.org.uk/bjgp-discuss>

## Box 1. Example of a lesson plan

Date	Venue	Number of students	Level of students
17 January 2013	GP surgery	Four	Third-year undergraduate students
<b>Aim</b> To improve the student's knowledge of diabetes		<b>Objectives</b> By the end of the session the student should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take a history from a patient with diabetes in a systematic way</li> <li>• Give three examples of how the diabetes has affected the patient from a psychosocial point of view</li> <li>• List five complications of diabetes</li> <li>• List five other risk factors of cardiovascular disease</li> </ul>	
<b>Opening activity</b> Students should be split into pairs, asked to find out one interesting fact about the person they have been paired with and to share this with the group		<b>Closing activity</b> Students to be given a Post-it® note and asked to write down one thing they have enjoyed about the session and one thing that could have been done better	
Time	Teacher activity	Student activity	Resources
9:00–9:15	Introduction: Set out the aims and objectives of the session	Opening activity: Invited to add any other topics relating to diabetes they would like to cover	Flip chart, pens
09:15–10:00	Facilitate discussion about diabetes	Students split into pairs and asked to make a mind map of what they know about diabetes	Paper from chart, pens
10:00–10:15	Break	Break	
10:15–11:00	Observe students taking history from the patient	Students take it in turns to take different parts of the history	Patients with diabetes. Consultation room with no interruptions
11:00–11:15	Break	Break	
11:15–12:00	Give feedback to students and facilitate discussion about what they have learned	Students to be involved in the feedback process. Students to be tested against the objectives. Closing activity	Flip chart, pens

*Adapted with permission from a TLHP lesson proforma.<sup>4</sup>*