

TQFE Pre-service course 2017/18

Micro-teaching week overview

The TQFE pre-service course is made up of the following modules:

Link Practice	SEP 2017 – MAY 2018	Graded on a PASS / FAIL basis
Learner Diversity	SEP 2017– OCT 2017	Graded using 'common marking scheme'
Teaching and Assessment 1	NOV 2017 – DEC 2017	Graded using 'common marking scheme'
Teaching and Assessment 2	JAN 2018 – FEB 2018	Graded using 'common marking scheme'
Professional Development	MAR 2018 – APR 2018	Graded using 'common marking scheme'

Further information about each of the above modules is available within the 'Programme Summary' document. Additional information (including assessment task details) will be available, online, once you have completed enrolment/registration (at the end of August).

The first module of the course is the Link Practice module which 'runs' from the start of the course right through to the end of May. This document is intended to provide some guidance in relation to the micro-teaching element of the Link Practice module. A Link Practice module study guide will be made available on the enrolment/registration day.

The Link Practice module contains the following elements:

1. Micro teaching week
2. Additional on-campus days throughout the academic year
3. Placement in a further education college

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Micro-teaching week

This runs from Monday 4-SEP 2017 to Friday 8-SEP 2017.

Successful completion of the micro-teaching week is required before you can formally commence your college placement.

During the micro-teaching week you will be required to undertake three 'simulated teaching' (micro-teaching) activities as part of a small group of pre-service students. Each group will be supported by a tutor.

The three 'simulated teaching sessions' will take place as follows:

Session 1 Monday 4-SEP 09:00– 12:30

Presentation on a topic of your choice, presentation to last 10 minutes.

This session is NOT video-recorded.

Session 2: Wednesday 6-SEP 09:30 – 13:00

Facilitating a discussion to last 15 minutes.

This session is video-recorded for self and peer evaluation purposes.

The focus of the session should be relevant/appropriate to your 'teaching subject'.

Some information in relation to 'facilitating a discussion' is provided on pages 4 to 6 of this document. Further guidance on facilitating a discussion will be provided on Tuesday 5-SEP.

Session 3: Friday 8-SEP 09:30 – 13:00

Facilitating a learning activity other than a discussion.

This session is video-recorded for self and peer evaluation purposes.

The focus of the session should be relevant/appropriate to your 'teaching subject'.

Some information in relation to 'facilitating a learning activity other than a discussion' is provided on pages 7 to 9 of this document. Further guidance on this session will be provided on Wednesday 6-SEP.

You may find the following resources will help you in your thinking about sessions 2 and 3:

1. Chapter 11 'Pedagogy' in 'Reflective Teaching in further, adult and vocational education' (Gregson and Hillier, 2015)
2. Section 5 'Learning and teaching methods that work' in 'How to teach vocational education: A theory of vocational pedagogy'
Available online at:
<http://learning.gov.wales/docs/learningwales/publications/140814-how-to-teach-vocational-education-en.pdf>

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Schedule for micro-teaching week

MON 4 SEP	09:00	Initial meeting
	AM	Micro-teaching in small groups
	PM	Lecture/tutorial - Lesson Planning
TUE 5 SEP	AM	Lecture/tutorial - Facilitating a discussion
	PM	Self directed study / preparation
WED 6 SEP	AM	Micro-teaching in small groups
	PM	Lecture/tutorial – Facilitating a learning activity (other than a discussion)
THU 7 SEP	AM	The Digital Practitioner 1
	PM	The Digital Practitioner 2
FRI 8 SEP	AM	Micro-teaching in small groups
	PM	Summary/review

Locations for all of the above sessions will be confirmed during the enrolment/registration session on WED 30-AUG.

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Further information – ‘facilitating a discussion’

In the second micro-teaching session you are invited to include time for a group discussion activity. This self-study section will give you some ideas about how to conceptualise the facilitation of groups and give some pointers as to how practically to go about facilitating a discussion.

Facilitation

The word facilitate means to “make easier”. It is a method of interacting with students that enhances their learning. A variety of techniques are used including gaming, role playing, discussions, coaching, mentoring. Facilitation is understood as the process of enabling groups to work co-operatively and effectively. Group facilitation is likely to be most challenging in circumstances where people of diverse backgrounds, interests and capabilities try to learn or work together.

Why Group Facilitation?

It has been argued that adults are generally thought of as relatively autonomous and self-directed. Because of this they are thought to function best in a student-centred environment instead of a teacher-centred environment (lecturing for example). Creating a more democratic learning environment is important to some while developing team membership and communication skills is important in many FE contexts.

Small group activities are student-centred because learners can be free to direct themselves to varying degrees with tutors' inputs through facilitation. Working in groups can afford you as educator the chance to hear what the learners see as problems, what they would like to cover and in what order. It gives respect to the learners and invites them into the programme planning process in a proactive way. Group processes also allow facilitators to draw on learners' own life experience which can be vast and relevant. Some of the other benefits of facilitating smaller groups include the increased levels of involvement, opportunities for learning from each other (rather than just from the teacher), the chance to address a problem or task as a group, the chance to get to know people and create networks.

Organising Group Discussions

Brookfield and Preskill (1999) have summarised some key pitfalls and considerations when using this teaching strategy. We should remember that many students are uncomfortable or unfamiliar with discussion or may have had terrible experiences of this form of teaching and learning in the past. Others are simply introverted and will need time for reflection rather than talking. Often, students are not sure what the teacher expects from a good discussion because this is not communicated. They may worry that the teacher has a hidden agenda or that what they have to say will be of no interest. Other students may see no reward for taking part because it is not assessed for example. Teachers themselves may be in the habit of using very verbose or complex language and so they put students off speaking.

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Steps You Might Take:

1. Have a purpose or agenda and a time limit

It is important that all participants are aware of, and agree with, the purpose of the session. The purpose should be worded clearly and simply. Ideally it should be visible at all times so that participants can be reminded of it if necessary. A clear agenda helps focus participants on the work at hand, and helps the facilitator enforce time-keeping. Prepare the discussion by orally briefing the students but always use a written form too (either on an acetate, handout or flipchart for example)

2. Introductions

Make sure that all participants know each other by name. Use name tags if appropriate. Have participants introduce themselves at the start of a session. As facilitator, introduce yourself first; this helps others decide what they will say. To be effective at facilitation you need to know and understand your audience.

3. Ground rules

Another reason for discussions to flounder is when ground rules are not developed or adapted in line with group needs. Write a set of ground rules for yourself and communicate these to students by the way you engage in discussions yourself and by making statements about these at appropriate times. It will be important to ensure that all participants generally agree to them and that they change and evolve over time to reflect changes in the group. Sometimes your learners will be very able in this activity and need little guidance; at other times you may need to be much more proactive. Sometimes it is useful to have the group appoint a scribe or recorder of the discussion and / or to appoint a person who will later present the group's ideas to the whole class in a plenary.

Some rule examples:

- All ideas are valid
- Have your say, and listen to others
- All participants are equal
- No mobile phones
- Keep to time
- Agree some form of participation rule, for example, 'Everyone gets to speak once before anyone speaks twice'.

4. Atmosphere / Climate / Environment

Encourage all participants to listen to what others are saying. If a session is splintering into separate discussion groups, halt them politely - perhaps by using body language or moving round the room so that you get closer to those that are having a side-conversation or ask them to deal with one discussion at a time. Watch out for signs that people are not involved. Be aware of any student showing lack of engagement but be aware that this may reflect their learning style or personality or be as a result of something that happened that day to them. You may want to invite or encourage some people, ask them for their opinions and comments. This is a subtle and delicate skill however and students may not like being placed 'on the spot' especially if there are norms that see not taking part as 'cool'.

Make sure participants feel free to open windows, can feel free to go for a break, etc. if the session is long. If you are providing food, check whether there are any specific dietary requirements. Arrange the timing of breaks in advance.

Create expectation in students that they have to take part in an active manner by telling them in advance what will be happening. Be aware that some will continue to want to be passive learners despite your best efforts – do not be discouraged, eventually they may participate or other students may influence them to participate.

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5. Your Behaviour

Avoid lecturing or talking at length in preparation for a discussion. You can encourage co-operative behaviour by behaving in an honest, open, respectful way. If a disagreement arises, facilitators mostly do not take sides. Instead, you might encourage the group to resolve things giving them some feedback as to how you see their problem. As facilitator, you must be attentive to what is happening in terms of time, task and atmosphere at all times in so far as you can. Try not to get off topic unless this is seen as a worthwhile deviation from your plan.

6. Think about the Space and the Materials

Think about the furniture and seating arrangements. Changing the layout can mean the focus is taken off you and placed on the group. If the discussion is likely to be quite personal, allow for private spaces or breakout rooms. Use a variety of visuals and or writing tools (post-its, markers, acetates, flipcharts).

7. Forming Groups

Form groups quickly – time is precious. There are some common ways to choose groups:

- Random
- Students choose
- Interest groups - (those taking the same assessment for example)
- Use the whole class (if small enough)

8. Debriefing

It may be very important to allow some time for sharing of the outcomes of the group discussion. There are ways of making this happen quickly or in more depth. It depends on what learning you think can be gained from this important phase. It may not be possible to have time for all groups to share everything, however, so some recording (on paper or tape) might be appropriate especially if the group needs the outcomes for another time. If groups ended up in deadlock or with an individual member being isolated or bullied perhaps you may need to deal with this in a very head on way or more subtly by chatting to students after class. Try to avoid endless repetition of the same ideas by asking that new ideas get more focus. You or others may want to sum up what it is the group has learned, gained or explored. Sometimes debriefing can be very open-ended, personal and informally organised, sometimes it can be structured and formal.

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Further information – ‘facilitating a learning activity other than a discussion’

In session 3 you are required to prepare a session that includes a group activity that is not a discussion. Presenting information and involving students in group discussions are common components in lessons, but there are many other activities that may take place in a two or three hour session. Even if you only have to teach for half an hour, there are a number of reasons why you need to do more than simply explain a certain aspect of your subject or involve them in a group chat:

- You need to find out if the students have understood what you have tried to get across
- You need to find out how different students have understood the topic differently
- You need to provide an opportunity for them to demonstrate what they can do with the information
- You need to provide the chance for them to ask questions
- You need to change the pace to provide variety and stop people getting bored

One way of doing some of these things is to change the focus of the session from what you want the students to hear or understand, to listening to what they are talking about as they work in small groups on various tasks. You can, of course, invite questions during or after your presentations, and sometimes these can generate a good large group discussion. However, often such discussions will be dominated by one or two students, and, as you are involved in the discussion, it can be difficult to analyse the nature of student questions. Quite often the discussion doesn't even get going, and the presenter is faced with silence and stony faces in response to the request for questions.

Moving to a task carried out by small groups changes the pace of the session, takes the pressure off the teacher to perform, and provides the chance for shy or under-confident students to explore their ideas in a less public forum. In addition, task-focused group work can in part at least be conducted without that much talk and this may allow for the participation of the less vocal. Small group work also allows students to work with the ideas and information you have given them, and to see if they can use and apply this. This allows you to walk around as the groups are working, to watch groups in action, hear the kinds of issues they are dealing with, and to analyse the nature of the teams. This can lead to some surprises, as it is very easy to misjudge what may be easy or difficult for students to understand. For the students, working in groups can be more involving and interesting than listening to the teacher, and can also allow the class to have more control of the direction of the discussion (group representatives can feedback to the larger group without the interference of the teacher, for example).

Some ideas for what is meant here by task-focused group work include problem solving tasks, evaluation activities, role-plays, and matching, sorting and prioritising activities. These are explored below.

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Task-focused Group Activities

With some practice you will find that you can generate an endless supply of ideas for interesting and varied group work that goes beyond simple discussions. These activities are useful for developing students on a number of levels. The focus here may on one level be to do with a simple task - for example, sorting cards into ascending order of priority or put activities in the right sequence. At another level, you might be getting students to think about how they participate as members of teams. Some ideas are provided below but readers are reminded that any number of variations on these is possible:

Matching/ordering/sorting

Here one might provide students with a set of key concepts, definitions, dates, principles etc. that you have been teaching. By getting groups to order these materials, you are using the exercise to consolidate what they have learned and to explore any confusion.

True/false, multiple choice, gap-filling

As with the previous exercise there is opportunity here for consolidating learning. You may also use the exercise as a dry run for an assessment (for example a multiple choice exercise) they are to take. The task may mirror the formal assessment but the informal context can allow for useful learning in preparation for the real thing.

Sequencing key aspects of a process or procedure

If there are important sequences to be learned you can get students to spot errors in badly formed sequences you devise or ask them to set out the right sequence of a muddled set of cards.

Summarising (one sentence summary; three sentence summary, diagram summary)

If students have done some preparatory reading, they might, for example, be asked to write a four-sentence summary of a text they have read. Diagrams are also useful for those who prefer visuals.

Categorising

If there are a lot of disjointed ideas floating around (perhaps on post-its) then groups may be invited to order this information into categories. Afterwards, students may find it interesting to then walk around and look at each others' rationales – usually groups all do it differently and students can learn a lot by hearing them explain why.

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Jigsaw Activities

Sometimes different groups have part of the information required to do a task, so have to interact with others to complete it. This can be explicitly part of the game or it might be you want them to work across teams in a way that unsettles their expectations.

Debate

Traditional debates go beyond simple discussions because students have to take up positions with respect to arguments. In 'Revolver' debates teachers may say 'change' after a period of time requiring teams of students to suddenly start arguing for the opposite side.

News report, press release, advertisement

Students may be invited to create or devise a design or an advertisement related to the topic in hand. This can be a fun way of exploring popular beliefs and stereotypes too.

Poster, mind-map, collage representing key concepts

Using the quite specific tools of mind mapping and concept mapping, teams can be asked to create a shared understanding of quite complex schemes of concepts.

Using Art Materials

More commonly used when art is the subject being taught or in personal development courses, art materials can free up students to work in less rigid ways. Creating shared art works for example using clay or papier maché can add to the challenges for groups. These can also be used to celebrate the ending of a course or become a living representation of what has been happening in the class.

Warmers / ice-breakers

The very beginning of a lesson is another time for involving the class in an interactive way. This can be achieved through warm up exercises which are similar but usually shorter than the task-focused group work (above).

Many people may have had bad experiences with 'ice-breakers', perhaps because these involved an activity apparently unrelated to the topic of study, or because they involved some kind of game-playing or self-disclosure which made participants in the session feel uncomfortable.

Used properly, however, a brief 'warmer' at the start of a session can be very effective for relaxing people and getting them to start talking, and also for providing a starting point for the topic of study. They can also be important for getting people to find out more about each other, and contributing through this to the gradual development of a positive and productive atmosphere for learning.