

# Survival Guide

*A survival guide to teaching from someone who is still learning*

## **BE YOURSELF**

There is no such thing as a perfect teacher – we bring to teaching our own unique blend of abilities, attitudes and experience which are as valuable to students as the course content. Exposure to a wide range of teaching styles and content enriches the learning experience.

## **DON'T TRY TO GO IT ALONE**

Becoming a teacher means entering a world of fellow practitioners who are experiencing/ have experienced the same problems and successes that you have. Talk to colleagues – they are always willing to help.

## **DON'T TRY TO BE POPULAR**

Students will automatically like you if you give them what they need to get them successfully through their course. You will never please them all, but they will respect your professionalism if you do your job well and treat them with respect in return.

## **KNOWLEDGE OF YOUR SUBJECT IS NOT ENOUGH**

You must be able to transfer your knowledge, skills and experience effectively to students who will then own it

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themselves. Give them as much opportunity as possible to practise what you are 'preaching'.

### **BE PREPARED**

Assume everything will go wrong and work backwards from there. Double-check room bookings, equipment and materials availability, technician support, seating, AV aids etc. Have an alternative strategy / topic available which is not just sending them to the LRC.

### **COMMUNICATION IS EVERYTHING**

Make contact with your students from the moment you enter a teaching environment – eye contact, oral questioning (open), physical participation in activities. Get them talking to you and to each other. Encourage group learning not individual competition.

### **KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE**

Get a class list, check the course / module requirements for that group, locate your input in the context of their overall needs and immediate deadlines. When you meet the group, find out what previous experience they have of your subject area and what they want to get from your input.

### **DON'T DO IT ALL FOR THEM**

No matter how long you've spent preparing notes for the perfect lecture, engage your students in interactive, experiential learning – through questioning, open discussion, group work, handouts, visual aids, practical workshop activities.

### **DON'T PRETEND TO KNOW EVERYTHING**

Although we must have a good grasp of all aspects of our specialist subject area; the content, contexts and technologies in the 'creative industries' are constantly changing. If you don't have an immediate response, someone else in the group might. If the topic is obviously of general interest, get the group (and yourself) to research it and feed it back into subsequent sessions.

## MONITOR THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

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Even if students are producing work which is of good quality, question their understanding of the process. Pick up on and investigate signs of confusion, frustration and concern and rectify as soon as possible. Invite feedback from colleagues teaching the same students.