

Use of teaching techniques that increase student interest and involvement in large classes to increase retention and learning.

Key words: large classes, use of technology in teaching, student involvement

Abstract

Lecturers are increasingly challenged with the task of teaching large classes where teacher–student interaction lessens generating a non-interactive environment. The attention span of students lowers rapidly and their brain engages in other interesting aspects of their lives. Here I'll present the technique I have been using successfully in large classes (~120 students) to keep students engaged in learning. I break my lecture into two parts of 20 minutes with a 10 minute interval. During the interval, students are challenged with short answer questions that are based on real life situations that require a good understanding of the subject material covered in the lecture. It usually generates a stimulating discussion among students. This technique (1) takes care of the low attention span, (2) involves students in learning and (3) provides me with feedback. The shortfall of this technique is that it leaves less time for the lecturer to cover the subject material. I am able to get around this by using technology that helps me in delivering the same or even more content in less time. The lectures are delivered through PowerPoint presentations and the notes are provided to students in their unit manual, so that they can concentrate in understanding the lecture without spending time in taking notes. The use of animations and short movies also helps in explaining the difficult concepts in a lesser amount of time. My experience is that students prepare for examinations by going through past examination papers and usually leave out the topics that they think are least likely to be asked in exams. I place sets of questions on WebCT with hints for answers. Answering these questions require a good understanding of the concepts covered in the unit. Student surveys and comments regarding the effectiveness of this technique will also be presented.

Presenter details

Dr Ravi P Tiwari

Lecturer, Molecular Biology

School of Biological Sciences & Biotechnology

Murdoch University

Murdoch WA 6150

Phone: 61-8-93602202

Fax: 61-8-93606486

e-mail: r.tiwari@murdoch.edu.au
