

# Learning and Teaching

## A Best Practice Guide on Evaluating Teaching

**John Dallat**

**March 2013**

The best kind of teacher is one who helps you do what you couldn't do yourself, but doesn't do it for you (Child, Aged 8).

## Evaluating Teaching

The evaluation of teaching and the development of teaching effectiveness are processes which go hand in hand.

Self-evaluation may be carried out by:

1. Keeping a reflective diary (on selected classes rather than all)
2. Obtaining anonymous feedback from students, for example:
  - ❖ What did you most enjoy about today's class?
  - ❖ What could be improved in future classes?
  - ❖ Was the input helpful?
  - ❖ Were there any particularly difficult areas?
  - ❖ Other comments/suggestions.
3. Using an evaluation schedule: Figure 1 below.
4. Collaborating with a colleague / "critical friend".
5. Benchmarking findings to a Teaching Standards framework. **(see page. 5 below)**

In the evaluation schedule provided below, central aspects of teaching effectiveness have been brought together in order to highlight their importance.

The Schedule has three sections, the first dealing with learning outcomes, explaining skills and aspects of stimulus variation such as voice usage, the second with interaction, and the third with resources and [the management of risk](#).

### Figure 1: Teaching Evaluation Schedule: An Example

❖ Were the learning outcomes clear and appropriate?	Yes/No
❖ Were students informed about them at the outset?	Yes/No
❖ Were they discussed?	Yes/No
❖ Were the concepts to be developed clearly set out?	Yes/No
❖ Was their relevance established and links made to prior content?	Yes/No
❖ Was content well explained?	Yes/No
❖ Were concepts and new information clearly developed?	Yes/No
❖ Were points clearly sequenced?	Yes/No

❖	Was the pace of teaching effective (neither too rapid nor slow)?	Yes/No
❖	Was voice intonation varied and interesting?	Yes/No
❖	Were the students involved in discussion?	Yes/No
❖	Did they engage in active learning?	Yes/No
❖	Was learning formatively assessed?	Yes/No
❖	Was there interaction between tutor and students?	Yes/No
❖	Was there balance between teacher input and student activity?	Yes/No
❖	Who asked questions? Who responded? How often?	Yes/No
❖	How effective were student responses?	Yes/No
❖	How effective were tutor responses?	Yes/No
❖	Was there awareness of individual differences?	Yes/No
✓	Were resources suitable and effectively used?	Yes/No
✓	Was classroom management generally effective?	Yes/No
✓	Were any risks apparent? If so, were they effectively managed?	Yes/No

On obtaining feedback from an evaluation schedule such as this, it is then important to ask how, in the light of reflective practice, [future teaching could or should be different](#). Consideration may need to be given to:

- ❖ the learning activities and outcomes
- ❖ the level(s) of concept development
- ❖ the levels of understanding: content too difficult/not difficult enough?
- ❖ knowledge assumed by tutor
- ❖ student motivation
- ❖ student activity
- ❖ assessment strategies
- ❖ type of learning ("deep" or "surface"?)
- ❖ learning styles and learning needs

### Effective Teachers-Effective Teaching

From all the research available, it is possible to state that effective teachers:

- ❖ Show enthusiasm for their subject

- ❖ Encourage active, student-centred learning and assessment
- ❖ Are [empathetic](#) towards their learners
- ❖ Are good communicators
- ❖ Have extensive subject knowledge which is updated as necessary
- ❖ Embrace reflective practice
- ❖ Have a clear professional values that are put into practice
- ❖ Research the scholarship of learning and teaching
- ❖ Assess understanding and teach accordingly
- ❖ Encourage students to take responsibility and show initiative
- ❖ Employ new technologies
- ❖ Vary the stimulus during teaching
- ❖ Adapt their teaching to student levels
- ❖ Use inclusive strategies
- ❖ Provide opportunities for application of knowledge
- ❖ Assess understanding [diagnostically, formatively, summatively](#)
- ❖ Set high standards and help students attain them
- ❖ Create a positive climate for teaching

### Definitions of effective teachers include:

1. The best kind of teacher is one who helps you do what you couldn't do yourself but doesn't do it for you.  
(Child, aged 8, quoted in Robert Fisher, "Teaching Children to Think", 1990).
2. Knowing what kind of people your learners are, and having some understanding of what they are thinking, is essential for effective teaching.  
(Scottish Curriculum Council, 1996, p.16).
3. If the teacher is unenthusiastic ... this attitude is likely to rub off on students. Teachers who enjoy teaching and their subject and can put their enthusiasm across are more likely to motivate their students, and research has found a positive association between teacher enthusiasm and student involvement.  
(Muijs and Reynolds, 2001, p.16)

Conversely:

4. If good communication, presentation and de-centering skills are positive aspects that may attach to the notion of the teacher as charismatic subject, possible negative aspects might include:
    - ❖ An over concern with one's performance rather than with the progress and development of students.
    - ❖ An over-reliance on high profile 'personal' attributes rather than on less visible aspects of pedagogy to do with such things as planning, assessment and evaluation.
    - ❖ A reluctance or inability to provide teachers new to the profession with constructive, practical advice on how to develop their own practice.
- (Alex Moore, Teaching and Learning: Pedagogy, Curriculum and Culture, 2000, p.122).

A Framework for Effective Teaching is now provided as a guide to future professional development:

### A Framework for Effective Teaching

Subject development and the development of understanding

#### Effective teachers:

- ❖ Assess students' prior learning and academic needs
- ❖ Build on each of the above to create new learning and deepen understanding
- ❖ Develop and appropriately assess precise, attainable and measurable learning outcomes
- ❖ Design their learning outcomes in collaboration with students (where appropriate)
- ❖ Ensure that both their chosen teaching strategies and assessment strategies, including those used formatively in the classroom, are closely aligned
- ❖ Have deep knowledge and critical understanding of their subject, the content of which is regularly updated
- ❖ Liaise, where appropriate, with external bodies and agencies in developing curricula
- ❖ Understand the relationship between own discipline, other areas of the curriculum and students' career expectations and opportunities
- ❖ Demonstrate understanding of the relationship between learning theory, learning styles and teaching

## Flexible and creative teaching

### Effective teachers:

- ❖ Develop and employ a range of active and interactive student-centred strategies
- ❖ Provide opportunities for students to collaborate and learn from each other
- ❖ Use a range of assessment strategies matched to student learning styles and preferences
- ❖ Foster student self-assessment and independence
- ❖ Develop 'deep' as opposed to 'surface' learning
- ❖ Employ flexible and blended learning approaches, including e-learning

## Planning

**Effective teachers** plan their teaching systematically and creatively through

- ❖ Careful prioritising of the knowledge and skills students should have
- ❖ Knowing how knowledge is constructed, connections made between different areas and misconceptions corrected
- ❖ Integrating (or constructively aligning) learning outcomes, teaching content and assessment strategies
- ❖ Managing class teaching time effectively
- ❖ Applying different models and styles of teaching in the interests of diversity, enjoyment and need
- ❖ Selecting appropriate resources/evaluating their use

## Essential Skills

**Effective teachers** employ **and** evaluate essential teaching skills including those of:

- ❖ Set induction and closure
- ❖ Questioning and discussion
- ❖ Explaining and demonstrating
- ❖ Communicating and interacting
- ❖ Forming and evaluating groups

## Professional development and self-evaluation

### Effective teachers:

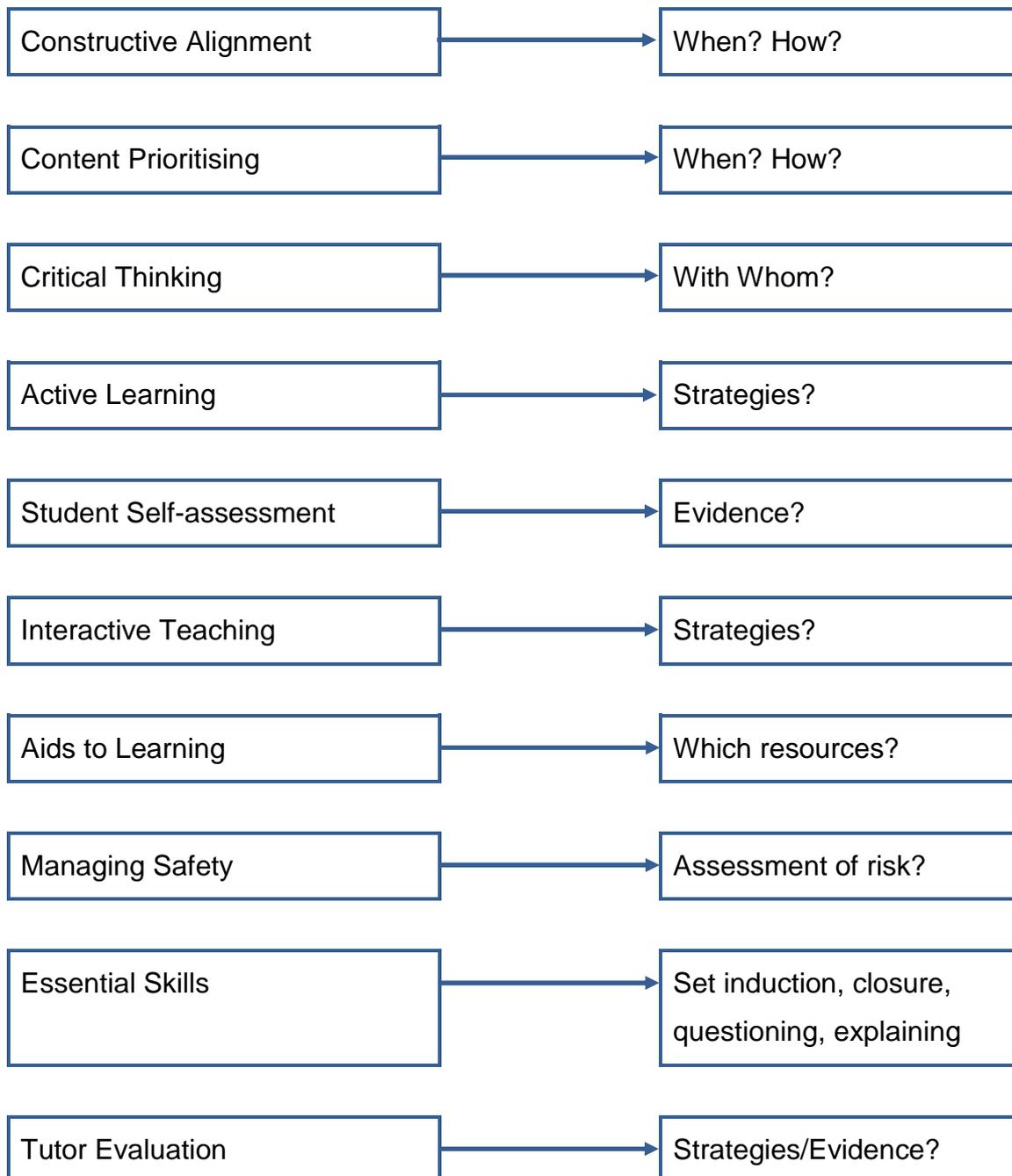
- ❖ Engage in the process of self-evaluation and self-review
- ❖ Apply insights and findings from the scholarship of learning and teaching/educational research to their work with students
- ❖ Update knowledge of their subject area through continuing professional development
- ❖ Demonstrate critical understanding of the processes associated with curriculum development and evaluation
- ❖ Share and disseminate knowledge about their work with colleagues and peers
- ❖ Appreciate the importance of team work and of collaborating with others in own personal/professional development

## Values

### Effective teachers value:

- ❖ Student-centred approaches
- ❖ Self-evaluation
- ❖ Equality
- ❖ Diversity
- ❖ Integrity
- ❖ Empathy
- ❖ Collaboration
- ❖ Commitment to excellence

## Critical Underpinnings to Planning and Teaching: A Summary



## References

Alex Moore, Teaching and Learning: Pedagogy, Curriculum and Culture, 2000, p.122.

Child, aged 8, quoted in Robert Fisher, Teaching Children to Think, 1990.

Muijs, D and Reynolds, D (2005): Effective Teaching: evidence and practice. London: Sage.

Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum (1996): Teaching for Effective Learning. Dundee: SCCC.