

## What makes a good lecturer?

There are various types of lecturer roaming our planet. Some are highly enthusiastic about their subject, some seem to be slightly interested in what they are teaching, and others would quite obviously rather be safely tucked away in their office with their nose in a research paper. It is, of course, the enthusiastic ones which we are interested in. The ones who could stand at the front of a lecture theatre and make explaining how to clean a toilet seem like fun. If the lecturer is passionate about the subject, they will encourage their students to love it too.

As a first year student, I had no idea what to expect of the lecturers I was to encounter at university. The teachers at my sixth form college were very much like my school teachers and I suppose I expected to find that lecturers would be similar again. Secretly I was hoping they would all be eccentric and maybe even slightly mad, an image which I can only think was influenced by the professor on the Weetos cereal packet. However, after arriving at university I was surprised to find that lecturers were actually quite normal people. Apart from being very intelligent and clued up on their subject, most of them were also very easy to approach if further help was needed. It is important that lecturers can be contacted outside of the set lecture times as this helps the students to clarify things they are perhaps unsure of, therefore enabling them to do their best in the module. Lecturers who make themselves available for one to one appointments throughout the week and respond quickly to emails from students are greatly appreciated. This makes the students feel like they matter as individuals even if the class size is quite large. A good lecturer is willing to give up his or her time in order to help the student.

To be fair, lecturers have a fairly difficult job. It is not easy to engage the student brain, which is in many cases soaked in alcohol from the night before and so tired that it could shut down at any moment. They need to fight to make sure that their lecture is interesting enough to hold the students' attention and prevent common occurrences such as incessant clock-watching and dozing off: the combination of a warm room and a monotone voice can be fatal.

Nowadays, most lectures are given as PowerPoint presentations. The good lecturers take advantage of this, not only using it for text but also diagrams, images and videos to help explain the point they are trying to put across. Handouts are useful so that the students do not have to frantically transcribe everything the lecturer is saying and merely need to add notes to the information that is already there. From my experience, I have found that the odd witty cartoon (relevant or not) inserted on a slide in the middle of a

presentation is guaranteed to hold my concentration. Good lecturers also understand that a double lecture should be split in two by a ten minute break, particularly if the subject is quite intense. This helps the students to remain focused and get the most out of the lecture.

Funny lecturers are always well received. When dreary facts about electronic information management are interspersed with anecdotes of Abi Titmus and Sonic the Hedgehog, you automatically pay attention to the lecturer, not wanting to miss the next story. A lecturer who can take little tales like this and make them relevant to what he or she is discussing shows particular skill. I have found that this technique also encourages students to turn up to the lecture for fear of missing out if they stay in bed. One of my lecturers for an English module once stood at the front of the class giving his lecture and then all of a sudden stopped what he was saying, moved to the side and began talking into a Dictaphone. "Diane, he lives in a pineapple at the bottom of the sea" he said. We had no idea who Diane was but recognised that the rest of the quote was referring to Sponge Bob Square Pants. What we were learning about had nothing to do with children's cartoon characters. After resuming his lecture he did the same again a few minutes later, with some equally ridiculous quote. This carried on for the whole fifty minutes and the only explanation we could think of was that the lecturer had lost his marbles. It was only at the end when we were all completely baffled that he explained he was demonstrating that random quotation was one of the features seen in the genre we were discussing. I know I will always remember this fact as the lecturer presented it to us in such a way that it is hard to forget.

Despite having a fun-loving side, lecturers should, however, not stand for any nonsense. There is nothing worse than when a lecturer is standing in front of a class giving a presentation, and is having to compete with ten other voices that are not even attempting to whisper. Background noise is both irritating and distracting, making it difficult to make out what is being said at the front of the theatre. The lecturer thinks he or she is being nice by not demanding silence but really the majority of the students would love for those chattering to be hushed.

Overall, a good lecturer should be enthusiastic, authoritative, entertaining and approachable. They should have the ability to explain themselves clearly and offer extra help to students who feel they need it. Of course, I would also recommend the giving of sweets instead of coursework but maybe that is just wishful thinking.

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