

## Lecturing Observation: Olaf Let'ssay

### Department: Blinded

**The Course:** Blinded

**Lecture Topic:** Blinded

**Date and duration:** Blinded

**Students:** Final year, 4, Masters and PhD, about 35 students

#### Context from pre-observation discussion:

It is important to Olaf that he provides a competent, caring and engaging learning environment for his students. He has had considerable success by paying attention to students and responding to their feedback; opening communication networks between students, tutors, course coordinators and others; reflecting on teaching and actively learning how to teach better by taking the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice. In a course that he has inherited, he is concerned that he covers enough material while at the same time ensures student engagement.

Olaf finds these students attentive and intelligent, and he has a high attendance rate at his classes.

#### Part 1: Running record:

Time	What I saw	What I thought
10 am	Circular room, Olaf arrives early and steps forward, answering student questions. "We will start at 5 past Small announcement—I've put up more info in Cecil," adds a few thoughts to previous class.	Looks good—class talking, nice feeling with interaction  Explains the <i>purpose</i> of what is on Cecil

	Then he organises group work, in different groups from last time Olaf gives out a questionnaire	I like this—the students seem in accord with the principle of group work and happy with it being different groups (which breaks up cliques)
10.10	Spells out how this lecture fits into term’s work, and recaps what has been covered. “Today we bring all this together in two ways. You will be involved—it won’t be me speaking and you listening” Latecomers directed into groups Complete part one of the questionnaire... Olaf moves round as students signal that they want his help He reiterates for latecomers, “all the questions are for this system that we are designing” Emends language and there’s a class murmur that this is better Seeks an answer to question 1 –class is not listening, they are still talking. Opens it slightly by asking “anyone else with a different answer?” Olaf has quite a soft voice “Say something like this turns up in the exam, you must justify your answer, usually there is no right or wrong, you choose and have to defend”	This is strong teaching, showing logic of course overtly, advising them in advance of what is expected.  Boys next to me engaged in really animated argument about the challenges of the question—good student engagement!  Could be more forceful in pulling class together—they are missing good stuff, and Olaf’s voice is soft when he is talking.  Great to link to exam assessment and then give tips as to what is expected, this really strong making explicit what the discipline does and what is expected
10.20	Move on, ‘this happened to me when I was...’  Boys next to me talk quietly to each other, missing good things  Explains, “I am moving on to lecture 2,	Nice use of real situation and narrative Good crossing between real life and abstract model—explaining explicitly what is challenging Good pace

	<p>don't get out your notes, it is on the power point"</p> <p>"Can anyone remind me...?" "I can hear the right answer but they're too..." He waits, and gets a clear answer from the back, and says," I am sure that you knew that but were too shy"</p> <p>"The thing to appreciate here is that each of these clients is a process..." Pulls out two big challenges</p> <p>"That word 'service,' anyone familiar with this term?" Describes a set of services in Amazon</p> <p>"Anyone use Java Applets?" One student has, and Olaf explains</p> <p>"They're pretty cool because..."</p> <p>Two students arrive at different sides of the room at about 10.27</p> <p>Good use of diagram, and well explained</p> <p>"This makes our life very easy, all we need to focus on is the right applications" "Any questions about this?" "People who came late join a group, Peter just move one chair"</p>	<p>Strong to insist that questions are answered, and to show empathy by excusing them for not being more forthcoming</p> <p>Good emphasis on what is important and might be overlooked</p> <p>Good to define terms and give an example</p> <p>Very good pp, nice pace, thoroughly logical</p> <p>Links material to practice</p>
10.30	<p>Asks question, gets a short answer from Kenny and prompts further, getting the full answer</p> <p>"We don't need to worry about this, it is handled by the tool itself, we just have to..."</p> <p>Explains context of this material to course again, and then tells them to start on question 2</p> <p>Student next to me with laptop seems to be looking at advertisements for headphones and computers, and</p>	<p>Knows students' names, and models discipline by insisting on full description</p> <p>Consistently making links with actual tasks these guys will be doing</p> <p>Thoroughly logical contextualisation</p> <p>Very good to require all groups to</p>

	<p>distracting guy next to him. The other students with laptops have moved away from them for the exercise. Moves round asking different groups At group 6, these guys by me, the guy getting distracted answers—he’s trying to stay engaged while still keeping up with his friend. Slide: start with a bird’s eye view A success story...</p>	<p>contribute something</p> <p>Could watch for students who regularly consult laptop or phone and hover by them to see what they are up to</p>
10.40	<p>“Imagine that I am doing this from above, you might be designing from scratch” “Which part forms the core?” Gets an answer This system allows logic about plant module and something visual Good diagram that Olaf talks through, carefully Class is quiet, watching closely, “Any questions so far?” Next slide, another diagram, explains carefully, good sense of the real world and need for care, moves to show formula slide and talks through Begins to break down this process</p>	<p>Very good use of diagrams—they are visually logical and then Olaf also talks through them</p>
10.50	<p>“Back to this application, I’ve given you the tools to different parts” Moves to white board again and draws diagram—marker not strong, back to pp diagram “You just hover your mouse” “Now we’ll quickly run this thing, remember I have several things running, I just want device zero and one” “When I move this button, both cylinders collide because...”</p>	<p>Does it matter? Maybe not, but could take one in if this happens often. Good tip for using software This feels like the crescendo to the demonstration</p> <p>Not sure about this—it felt like an anti-climax, but might be strong in also showing</p>

	<p>“Final part of class is for you to complete question 3” A few more points first: “What is coming in the course for the next two and a half weeks....” “You can give me your sheets, and I can go through them and give them back to you” Olaf moves to the back of the class to answer a question.</p> <p>Guy next to me is now on Trademe, but he may be hunting for his friend next to him, who gets interested when something is found. Not sure I have caught the dynamic there. Olaf moves and talks to each group He tells them they must stop there right on the hour and with his students leaves the class at 5 past 11 as the next lecturer comes in and sets up.</p>	<p>that even experts sometimes have to back up and take a few more steps.</p> <p>Really good use of handout with 3 questions</p> <p>This is a generous offer—maybe could have told them at the outset so they knew to keep it tidy.</p> <p>I’m always cross and unsettled if another academic does this to me, because most of us, like Olaf, have slightly more to squeeze in than is quite possible—I think that Olaf should have told them to do the last question in their own time and got them packed up ready to go at 5 to 11 so that they were out of the room by 11.</p>
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**Part 2:**

**Olaf’s reflection on the class:**

I was fortunate to be able to create this lecture from scratch. I could include stuff that I find helps students engage: in-class exercises, discussing with each other, and applying what we learn to real problems (case study, questions). I think the class went pretty well overall. I was able to integrate bits of the previous lecture that I had to finish today within the context of today’s lecture. Also, students could interact with me more freely, especially when they were discussing the questionnaire, and get instant clarifications. I also liked the fact that I could teach newer concepts by building upon the learning from previous lectures. Overall, I felt that the questions challenged most students well enough to appreciate, learn and apply the concepts learnt in class.

On the down side, I noticed that some groups that comprised of students who found the questions easy (like group 7) could've been challenged more. There were also students trickling in after the lecture had started, and settling them in made me lose a bit of time.

Going forward: the material for the lecture (slides, case study) could be honed more based on the feedback I received in class – like groups asking me to put up the case study overview slide while doing parts 2 and 3 of the questionnaire.

### **Concluding remarks:**

Olaf Let'ssay is clearly committed to teaching for student learning, and designs his classes to ensure that this is facilitated. This was strong teaching in many ways. Olaf showed logical structure with the lecture content and with each slide and stage of the lecture. He took care at several transition moments to contextualise the class logically in relation to the overall course. He also showed strong use of power point as a tool for teaching, with clarity of slide order, the right amount of material on each, and visual diagrams giving good cognitive traction. Talking through the diagrams, he made the point that solving actual problems is different from solving them abstractly, and regularly drew attention to the actual practice of this work.

The class had a visible sense of being a functional community of practice. Olaf asked questions that required answer from students and made opportunities for them to ask questions. He had a comfortable expectation of interaction and group work, and shifted students into new groups to avoid them settling in always with their mates. By working on a case study in class, he was able to give immediate feedback on their problem solving.

Olaf is also aware that teaching is always a work in progress, and that he fine tunes his material after each class.

I would recommend quite strongly that he should have his class out of the room by on the hour at the latest; it is discourteous when others are following to take 5 minutes of their limited time. With each class, Olaf should plan the final ten minutes so that it could be cut short and he should dismiss students earlier.

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