



MPLS PLTO Training: Some ideas for follow on provision

The most effective way to learn to teach is to do it, and then reflect on and perhaps discuss with others what happened, what worked and what you might change. For this reason departments are expected, as part of their PLTO provision, to ensure that there are appropriate activities available in the department.

These activities should be available to those new to teaching after they have had some teaching experience. They will be designed to support and encourage reflective practice, discussion with peers and more experienced colleagues, and so further enhance the development of teaching skills and confidence.

Many departments already have such mechanisms in place and the following are some examples of what is being done. If they are not already doing this, departments should establish such mechanisms as appropriate to their context. If you would like further details or to be put in touch with the relevant departments, please contact Alison.trinder@mpls.ox.ac.uk.

- The Head of Teaching holds regular one to one and group meetings with the researchers who are delivering teaching. This provides opportunities for individuals to discuss their teaching practice and any challenges both in private and in a context that enables wider discussion and practice sharing.
- Mechanisms and processes to support observation and feedback. For example
 - the Head of Teaching or the person responsible for the particular lecture course observes at least one class per teacher and provides feedback.
 - New teachers are paired with a buddy for peer observation and feedback
- The provision of a departmental session later in the year, when individuals have gained some experience that explicitly requires them to reflect and write about their teaching. This session could also take the form of a de-brief at the end of term, providing the opportunity to reflect on and discuss teaching experiences.
- More experienced staff co-teach with less experienced teachers; and in general more experienced staff are available to offer advice, hints and tips
- The PLTO session – and generally the overall approach to and culture around teaching – explicitly invites and encourages those new to teaching to ask questions and seek support. There is also considerable encouragement those new to teaching to form support groups, including ‘buddying up’ for peer observation and feedback; and in the case of lab demonstrators, encouragement for them to take time to familiarise themselves with the relevant experiments
- Mentor schemes are available. These might be formal or informal and can be organised in a variety of ways. In some departments a specific Teaching Mentor has been appointed - an experienced member of academic staff who observes and provides feedback. Elsewhere the Head of Teaching, course lecturer, senior demonstrator, class tutor or similar is available for questions and discussion.