

Essentials of Being a Demonstrator in Informatics



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Schedule



- What are the responsibilities of a demonstrator?
- What are labs for? Advantages for students
- What should be the steps of preparing for a lab?
- What are the possible activities?
- Some practical suggestions
- How can we get a sense of how well we are doing as demonstrators?

What are the responsibilities of a demonstrator?



Take a few minutes to discuss your responsibilities in small groups...

What are the responsibilities of a demonstrator? (Inf Teaching Support Policy)



- Hosting lab session
- Answering to student queries
- Providing oral feedback to students/ feed forward during the scheduled lab session

Changes to University Documentation



- The “**Code of Practice on Tutoring and Demonstrating**” (CoP) included clear responsibilities for demonstrators
- CoP recently replaced by a “**Policy for the recruitment, support and development of tutors and demonstrators**”
- **This policy** focuses on university and school responsibilities, and has very little on your responsibilities
- The implementation of the policy will be phased, with full implementation expected in 2018/19
- The responsibilities from the CoP still common sense, so I will still describe them

What are the responsibilities of a demonstrator? (old CoP)



- Take teaching and related duties seriously
- Participate to **briefing sessions/training** that you and course organiser (CO) decided is appropriate
- **At the lab:**
 - **Be on time!** Notify if need to miss/rearrange lab
 - Take note of and report **attendance (now required for all years)**
 - Complete any **assessment duties** by agreed deadlines
 - Refer students who approach you for help on other course aspects to other members of course team (**know the team!**)
 - **Limited pastoral role** as convenient first point of contact
 - Familiarise yourself with lab **safety** profile, to know what to do in case of an emergency
 - No obligation to provide help outside formal contact hours

Safety related responsibilities (old CoP)



- You should know:
 - how to call for help
 - the location of the nearest First Aid cabinet and how to find a first-aider
 - how to evacuate the laboratory
 - the locations and mode of operation of extinguishers
 - the locations of the technical staff on duty.

Pastoral responsibilities (old CoP)



- Respond sensitively to personal matters, be discrete
- Do NOT promise absolute confidentiality, advise about need to consult other staff members (e.g. Personal Tutor-PT)
- If there may be implications on student performance, encourage him/her to contact the CO and/or PT.
- The CO/ITO will inform you about students with disabilities for whom additional support has been agreed
- Not appropriate to get involved with students on matters not directly related to coursework-> be aware of PT system and other available support
- direct students to more specialised sources of pastoral support

Relevant points in new policy



- You are expected to carry out work which is in line with your job description and pay grade
- CO may occasionally request you, for development reasons, to do limited tasks which are not applicable to your grade, in which case he/she will provide supervision and feedback
- **Pastoral support: direct students to more specialised sources of pastoral support**
- You must not start work until you were provided with formal induction on core aspects of your role
- You must attend mandatory training

What are labs for?



- In small groups, discuss the advantages labs bring (both in general and in comparison with lectures and tutorials) in terms of:
 - The type of learning
 - The social context
 - The available material/technology
 - The fit with course outcomes (e.g. assessment, learning, future prospects)
 - The relationship with the demonstrator

What are labs for?

- Some answers -



- **Differences to lectures:**
 - Practical and active learning
 - Learning by mistakes, discovery and practice
 - Chance to test theories, think critically, formulate questions
 - Chance to ask questions and get (more) feedback
 - Relationship with real-life practice (“real thing”)
 - Chance to try out technology
- **Differences to tutorials:**
 - More personal/ individual, focused on needs
 - More informal, using own style
 - Demonstrator focused on answering questions
- Demonstrator approachable (enthusiastic/close in age/ has time for questions), even role model

What should be the steps of preparing for a lab?



Take a few minutes to describe to your neighbour how you prepare/would prepare for:

- Your first lab
- Any other lab

Some steps for preparing for your first lab



- Understand the course aims, objectives and requirements from the course website
- Clarify your roles and responsibilities
- Participate to the initial briefing session
- Get to know the structure of the course team and who to approach for different problems
- Find out how to get in touch with technical support
- Identify fire exits/notices, emergency phone numbers, first aiders, rules and regulations, risk assessment forms and processes
- Check with the CO/ITO about students who may need special attention

Some steps for preparing for a lab



- Familiarise yourself with the tasks and any relevant material (lectures, other reading)
- Solve the tasks yourself before checking sample solutions!
- Participate to any briefing sessions or training
- Contact the course team with any questions
- Plan your support in the lab by:
 - Thinking of possible questions from students
 - Preparing different ways of explaining things (e.g. verbally, diagrams)
 - Preparing a set of motivating real-world examples
 - Thinking of resources that you may point the students to
 - Preparing for challenging situations (e.g. student taking too much of your time, student being disruptive)

What are possible activities in a lab?



Take a few minutes to describe to your neighbour the different activities that you may conduct in a lab

Possible activities in a lab



- Taking attendance
- Setting up computers
- Giving instructions on objectives, tasks to whole class
- Going round the room to identify students who need help
- Advising students working individually
- Advising a group of students
- Explaining a common problem at the whiteboard (planning required, do not overdo!)
- Solving technical problems (may need technical support)
- Tackling other emergencies
- Summing up to the whole class
- Feeding back any observations to course team

Some practical suggestions



- Actively identify students who need help
- Don't provide solutions, but guide students in reaching them themselves!
- Listen first! Wait for answers!
- Prompt to check understanding and progress
- Repeat, rephrase, break down questions/ ask students to explain or rephrase
- Use visuals/different material in explanation
- Treat students equally
- Try to encourage, motivate and inspire
- Be honest about not knowing the answer to a question, promise to look it up
- It's never a stupid question!

Some practical suggestions



- **Be friendly and approachable:** students should feel encouraged to ask you questions
- **Express enthusiasm** about the subject
- **Be understanding** if students tell you about their difficulties, relate them to your own
- Take time to chat informally with the students, to see how they are getting on
- **Show empathy to personal problems**, and direct students to their CO or personal tutor
- **Be strict about course requirements and ground rules!**

In case of an emergency...



- Remain calm!
- Take immediate action to remove danger and prevent further danger
- Avoid becoming a casualty yourself
- Summon help
- Note and report hazards and incidents for follow up

How can we get a sense of how well we are doing as demonstrators?



- Informal feedback can be obtained by:
 - Chatting informally with students before/after session
 - Scrutinising faces- have they understood?
 - Observing preparation, motivation, attitude
 - Checking attendance rates, coursework marks
- Formal feedback can be obtained from:
 - The students (questionnaires, quizzes, post its etc.) **BUT more difficult than in tutorials**
 - Colleagues (advice about sessions, how to explain, etc.)
 - Self (diary, notes, pro formas, etc.)
- Important to get feedback through different means, and not just once

MORE in 'Gathering Feedback' workshop in Week 10

In a future session (Week 4), we will...



- See examples of good and bad demonstrating
- Discuss tips and tricks for checking for understanding, providing explanations and feedback
- Discuss how you could tackle some frequent challenging situations

Resources



- UoE old **“Code of practice on tutoring and demonstrating”** and **“Policy for the recruitment, support and development of tutors and demonstrators”**
- **Informatics Teaching Support Policy**
- Resources on Informatics homepage – Staff Intranet – Student Services – Teaching Support – Training
- **“Tutoring and Demonstrating: a Handbook”** chapter 5 (“Demonstrating”)
- **“Laboratory demonstrating”** material on the **“IAD Resources on Tutoring and Demonstrating”** channel in Learn

Resources



- **IAD course “Introduction to Laboratory Demonstrating”, Wed 4 Oct**