



## Developing your skills



# Engaging with Students

Engaging students depends on connecting with them, both personally and intellectually. The first challenge is discovering who students are - their interests, values, and goals. What, for example, are their expectations about your course or the purposes of learning? Second, what are students prepared to learn? What do they know? What experiences have they had? What background can they connect with as the course progresses? Connecting with potential students happens when you recognise and value their ideas. Asking the right questions communicates your concern for students and their learning and the information can provide you with invaluable information about their particular situation. These notes aim to give you some examples of questions that are appropriate to ask.

## ENGAGING WITH STUDENTS

When engaging with potential students, you do not always need to be giving your "sales pitch". With a smart use of questions, you can get the potential students to see the benefits of formal education for themselves. Using some of the issues discussed earlier, here are a few ways you can use questions.

### Learning questions

First of all, questions give you useful information. Information is power, of course, and can offer you all kinds of ways to engage with students. Frame questions to find out more about the potential students and their personal situation. Find out their needs and possible barriers to progression.

### Bonding questions

Questions can also help to create bonding between you and the student. Show an interest in them by asking them questions to

demonstrate that you care, personally, about them. So encourage them to like you.

*What did you do at the weekend?  
I saw the game, too! Wasn't it great?  
You look sad, what's the matter?*

### Teaching questions

Questions can also be used to teach them about the your organisation, eliciting opinions or perhaps asking rhetorical questions that require no real answer. Teaching questions get the person to think and draw conclusions for themselves.

*Did you know X about our organisation?  
Can you imagine taking this course now?*

### Clarification questions

Get students to think more about what exactly they are asking or thinking about. Probe the concepts behind their argument. Basic 'tell me more' questions that get them to go deeper.

*Why are you saying that?  
Can you give me an example?  
Are you saying ... or ... ?  
Can you rephrase that, please?*

### Probing assumptions

Probing of assumptions make students think about the presuppositions and unquestioned beliefs on which they are founding their argument. This is shaking the bedrock and should get them really going!

*You seem to be assuming ... ?  
Please explain why/how ... ?  
What would happen if ... ?  
Do you agree or disagree with ... ?*

### Probing reasons and evidence

When they give a rationale for their arguments, dig into that reasoning rather than assuming it is a given. People often use



## Developing your skills



un-thought-through or weakly understood supports for their arguments.

*Why is that happening?  
How do you know this?  
What do you think causes ... ?*

### Questioning viewpoints

Most arguments are given from a particular position. So, show that there are other, equally valid, viewpoints.

*Another way of looking at this is ..., does this seem reasonable?  
What is the difference between... and...?  
What if you compared ... and ... ?*

### Probe implications

The argument that they give may have logical implications that can be forecast. Do these make sense? Are they desirable?

*Then what would happen?  
What are the consequences of ....?  
How could ... be used to ... ?  
Why is ... important?*

### Questions about the question

You can also get reflexive about the whole thing, turning the question in on itself. Bounce the ball back into their court.

*What was the point of asking that question?  
Why do you think I asked this question?  
What does that mean?*

### Closing questions

You can also ask questions to move a customer towards closing. Closing questions encourage the potential students to decide that they want to enrol in a particular course.

*So, when would you like to start the course?*

### FURTHER INFORMATION

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- [Learn Direct](#)
- [Changing minds](#)
- [Mind Tools](#)
- [Scottish Gov - Effective Questioning Techniques](#)