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From the Editor:

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*'Learning Matters at Lingnan' are short papers that aim to promote a dialogue on teaching and learning. I encourage all staff to consider this as a vehicle for sharing thoughts on educational issues as they might affect us at the University. If you feel you have something which might be appropriate for inclusion in an issue of this publication, then please forward it to the TLC. I would be delighted if staff (and not only academic staff) from outside the Teaching and Learning Centre were to be prominent or even occasional contributors.*



## Watching Yourself on Videotape

For many aspects of teaching, video recording of lessons will provide a basis for reflection. Recording helps to capture the moment to moment process of teaching and learning, therefore, is a powerful tool for reflective analysis and critical self-evaluation. Watching a videotape of yourself is an extremely valuable experience. Videotaped teaching sessions offer you the opportunity to view yourself as your students see you. The use of videotape recording and playback allows you to scrutinise your students' reactions and responses to your teaching. By analysing a videotape of the dynamics in your classroom, you can examine teaching and learning closely to help identify those strategies that work and those that need improving.

Instructors at all levels and in all disciplines will benefit from seeing videotapes of themselves. The suggestions below are designed to help you use videotape to gain insights that will help you improve your teaching.

- **Arrange for videotaping through the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC)**  
A technician, positioned in the back of the room, records the class using a small unobtrusive video camcorder and a wireless microphone. The technician usually focuses on the instructor but can also capture a record of student actions during class if instructed to do so. At the end of the class, the technician gives the recorded cassette to the instructor, who can ask a consultant from TLC to view the tape or seek feedback from a colleague or view it alone.
- **Let students know in advance that the class will be videotaped**  
Explain that the taping is a way for you to review your performance – not theirs – and improve your teaching. Assure them that no one will see the tape except you, unless you choose to invite others to view it with you.
- **View the tape as soon as possible**  
Plan to view the tape on the day it is made or the next day so that your memory is fresh and you can readily recall what you were thinking or feeling during class.
- **First viewing – getting the overall picture**  
First watch the tape for an overall picture of the lesson without making any mental or physical notes, i.e. simply observing without comment or judgement. Avoid fixating on small, and often insignificant gestures and actions. Concentrate on the larger picture. Play the role of student. What are you learning from this class? Participate mentally as a student, rather than as an observer.

- **Second viewing – asking specific questions**

When you are ready to observe the tape in greater detail, rewind it to the beginning and start there. As you watch the tape, try to answer the following questions:

- What are the specific things I did well?
- What are the specific things I could have done better?
- What do students seem to enjoy most?
- What do students seem to enjoy least?
- If I could do this session over again, what three things would I change?
- How could I go about making those three changes?

- **Use checklists to focus your analysis**

Create your own checklists that reflect your particular areas of interest or select items relevant to your teaching style and subject matter. The checklists that you develop may cover the following six general headings:

1. *Classroom climate*

- What kind of relationship do you have with the students?

2. *Organisation*

- How well organised was the class in terms of telling students the aims, what content would be covered and ways in which this class was linked to previous and future classes?
- How well organised was the class in terms of the flow of ideas and emphasis on the most important ideas?
- How well organised was the class in terms of your time management?

3. *Clarity of presentation*

- When you are making explanations, have you thought about the level of understanding of your students, selecting words and illustrations that will make sense to them?

4. *Questioning skills*

- What kind of questions are you posing? Do you ask different levels and kinds of questions to challenge and engage students? Do you pause sufficiently after all questions to allow students time to respond?

5. *Student interest and participation*

- Have you created a comfortable environment for discussions? Have you generated curiosity and a sense of anticipation? Have you allowed students to discuss in pairs or small groups before speaking in the larger class?

6. *Classroom management*

- Is your presentation interesting enough to command the attention of your students? Do you give feedback, encouragement, criticism, and praise evenhandedly?

These are some of the questions you might pose about your videotaped class. They do not suggest a formula you can follow to achieve success. No recipe will always work. If you want more advice or assistance in videotaping your class, please contact the Teaching and Learning Centre.

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#### *References*

Davis, B.G. (1993) *Watching Yourself on Videotape, Tools for Teaching*, Jossey-Bass: San Francisco.

Bain, K. (2000) *Viewing Guide for Videotaped Classes*, Northwestern University, Searle Centre for Teaching Excellence.

*This issue and the back issues of 'Learning Matters at Lingnan' can be retrieved from the following URL – <http://www.ln.edu.hk/tlc/level2/td.htm>.*