

# Teaching Tips

A Forum for discussion and tips for advancing teaching and learning at Mona

Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, The UWI Mona



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## Special points of interest:

- The **Teaching Tips Newsletter** is a publication of the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) at the UWI, Mona.
- The newsletter is published three times during each semester and once during the summer. It provides tips for improving teaching and learning in higher education and is available online (<http://myspot.mona.uwi.edu/cetl>) as well as in the office of the CETL.
- If you need additional teaching tips on specific classroom practices, please contact us.

## Welcome

It's a new semester and the CETL takes this opportunity to welcome all faculty to this new and very promising semester. We wish for all returning faculty and new faculty a most engaging teaching and learning session and to this end, we pledge our assistance.

## The Flipped Classroom

This month we revisit one of the hottest new pedagogical arrangements in higher education, the flipped classroom. Maybe you are thinking about using the flipped classroom in your course. We encourage you to do so.

### What is the flipped classroom?

It is an instructional arrangement that provides for the content to be taught in a class (usually by the lecture method) to be engaged outside the classroom making the face-to-face period become a highly interactive and engaged learning session. Oftentimes, this is done by providing short mini lectures as video presentations or creating other pedagogical arrangements using some recording device and distributing these to the students for listening and/or viewing before coming to class. Students are expected to watch and listen to these presentations and come to class to engage meaningfully in the academic work that advances understanding of the content, usually, through active learning strategies.

### Why use this pedagogical arrangement?

This pedagogical arrangement is highly recommended by the CETL and faculty are using it because of its numerous benefits, but mainly because it advances learning. It reverses a long standing traditional pedagogical arrangement where a lecture is usually presented in the classroom and students are expected to do work outside the classroom (homework/assignments), to advance understanding of the content covered in the lecture. By providing the content, in usually interesting ways, the flipped classroom arrangement encourages greater exploration of the material outside the classroom and this approach has the capacity to push students to develop new skills on their own so that the face-to face class can become more focused on applying the knowledge through various active learning exercises.

In contrast, in the traditional arrangement, the lecture or some kind of presentation is usually supported with a tutorial session. This is used to assist with developing understanding of the content covered in the lecture. In this traditional classroom, the teacher/lecturer is often called on to dispense loads of information. Students sit and listen. They also make notes and opportunities are created for questions to be asked by the students and answered primarily by the lecturer. Of course, in large lecture rooms with many students, only a few persons are actually engaged in asking questions. The vast majority of students sit and listen. In many cases, they do not even understand much of the content being discussed. Undoubtedly, the teacher/lecturer is the central focus and in this traditional classroom, the major concern is on explaining content using the lecture style of instruction.

### How is content covered and disseminated in the flipped classroom?

In the flipped classroom pedagogical arrangement, the lecture might be heard or watched online. It might also be made available to students by way of brief podcasts or vodcasts. There might also be planned teaching and learning sessions outside the formal classroom creating opportunities for students to collaborate in online discussions or engage in research or some other learning activity to cover major portions of the content.

As indicated above, the flipped classroom normally makes use of 21<sup>st</sup> century technologies and once videos or audio recordings are involved, students can pause, rewind, and replay their lessons. These presentations would have to be carefully developed to deal with the content to be covered for a particular lesson. Further, video-lectures can be portable/mobile, students can download them and take them with them on their mobile devices. In this regard, they can be viewed at any place, at any time, unlike the traditional face-to-face lecture format.

### What happens in the face-to-face classroom within the flipped classroom pedagogical arrangement?

The flipped classroom is a superior learning arrangement since the content is engaged before the actual taught face-to-face lesson. Once the classroom session is convened, the focus is on developing meaningful understanding and applying the knowledge. There is an intentional shifting of the teaching-learning model to learner-centred approaches. Strategies employed are activity oriented. These learning activities usually employ problem-based learning and inquiry-oriented strategies and are approaches known to promote engagement between student and student, student and lecturer or student and content. As the preferred pedagogical arrangements, there is a clear objective to create learning opportunities to deepen understanding and create knowledge with the assistance of the teacher and of course, through collaboration with peers. The lecturer's interaction with students in this flipped classroom learning environment is oftentimes more personalized and therefore, opportunities for meaningful interaction leading to the challenging of assumptions and increased learning are magnified.

### Learning Spaces: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Classrooms/ Smart Classrooms

Many universities are using technology to enhance more and more of their classrooms and advance learning. In these universities across the world, outdated classrooms have transitioned into 21<sup>st</sup>-century learning spaces. There is a major movement on many campuses (particularly in North America) to transform the physical campus and classrooms into spaces that attract and engage learners. Hence, learning spaces or

spaces are about creating new 21<sup>st</sup> century classrooms.



A smart/21<sup>st</sup> century classroom

At the UWI, we have a plan to transform some of our classrooms into 21<sup>st</sup> century classrooms or smart classrooms. However, this will take time and of course, much financial resources. These classrooms will be installed with modern mobile state-of-the-art technology to make them smart classrooms.

Many smart classrooms are based on a 360 degree classroom concept so that there is no front, back or sides of the room. In this scenario, all the walls are used for active instruction and the teacher is able to move freely round and about the room. There is no restriction to the front of the room and hence, the smart classroom nullifies the concept of the 'sage on stage'. Students participate meaningfully as they can share activities and approaches to work from their desks since, the classroom utilises advanced technology enabling them to beam their work onto the screens or walls to share their learning. Since mobile furniture is the preferred choice in these spaces, these classrooms can be easily reconfigured to suit the chosen pedagogical arrangement for a particular teaching and learning session.

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which features our monthly *Teaching Tips*, *The Mona Teaching*, *Assessment Handbook* etc.

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