

Using discussion in classes
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The main points from the discussion for me surrounded:

- putting discussion as one of a range of responses.
- thinking more carefully through the ethical issues of encouraging students to explore and communicate personal experiences.
- thinking about circumstances in which students might not be capable of engaging with a discussion exercise, including how much preparation they might need.

The session began with the presenter proposing that class discussion can be used to:-
facilitate reflection – encourage self assessment about why, what, how students can learn from the past,
facilitate an assessment of the challenges faced by students and to
allow students to share their experiences and practices in a way that encouraged each individual to action plan their own way forward, drawing support and ideas from the group discussion.

Key points included :-

- putting discussion as one of a range of responses.
- thinking more carefully through the ethical issues of encouraging students to explore and communicate personal experiences.
- thinking about circumstances in which students might not be capable of engaging with a discussion exercise, including how much preparation they might need.

It was suggested that a key to student development was meta-cognitive processes – a capacity to recognise what is required to perform in higher education and how that may differ from students' experiences pre-university. Group discussion was offered as an opportunity for students to construct and reconstruct their own perspectives, but that tutors needed to be able to adopt different (possibly more didactic) approaches for less confident students who may find open discussion too inhibiting.

The session concluded by briefly considering case studies, including one based on supporting students preparing for their dissertations. In these sessions there is no fixed agenda, students decide on the content themselves and openly talk about topics that were of concern to them and how they dealt with them e.g. what worried them the most about approaching their dissertation, their biggest challenges and how they dealt with them (sharing ideas about time management etc)