

Seven Suggestions from Professor Tips

For Faculty Members



How to develop your teaching

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Preface

This booklet was originally written in Japanese and compiled by the Center for the Studies of Higher Education (CSHE) at Nagoya University. This English edition aims at showing the status of Japanese practices on higher education to researchers, practitioners and trainers in the world, which would facilitate further discussion.

Seven Suggestions from Professor Tips

The *Seven Suggestions from Professor Tips* is a series of booklets compiled by the Center for the Studies of Higher Education (CSHE) at Nagoya University. The series aim at improving the quality of teaching and learning at the university. Quality of education would be stepped up with tiny improvements of everyday practice by stakeholders, such as students, faculty members, academic and student affairs staff members, university executives, etc. Therefore, each booklet offers each stakeholder suggestions for daily practice categorized by purposes. Moreover, the quality would be much enriched when efforts towards it by different stakeholders are integrated. Accordingly, all the booklets use the same framework of purposes, that is, the seven suggestions for better teaching and learning at university. We named the person who gives the suggestions as Professor Tips, a fictitious character who was first featured in the book, *Learn with the Professor Tips: How to Develop Your Course Design*, authored by members of the CSHE.

For Faculty Members

- How to develop your teaching

This booklet offers suggestions and specific ideas by which faculty members of Nagoya University can realize quality education.

The faculty members of Nagoya University have long practiced various ways of good teaching. Examples of such good teaching practices, identified through surveys - mainly on campus - were compiled in a database and organized on the basis of achievements in the study of teaching methods and learning theory. This booklet presents these examples in simple expressions.

The aim of this booklet is not to provide criteria for educational evaluation, but to identify good teaching practices and knowledge at Nagoya University, and offer a framework for sharing such knowledge among all university

members. To enhance the educational benefits of good teaching, efforts by all parties of students, faculty, staff and the executives must be integrally directed toward the same objective. Teaching cannot be effectively improved through the efforts of faculty members alone. Support from the university administration is also important, as is students' active participation in class.

To take the Office Hour system as an example: the system has been introduced in many universities, but students do not use it to the extent expected. To increase the system's educational benefits, the university administration should not just set up the Office Hour system, but should also provide a forum where instructors and students can freely talk to each other. As well, instructors should not only write their office hours in the syllabus, but should also welcome students by saying during class "feel free to visit my office" or by leaving their office door open. Similarly, students must have a positive attitude toward learning. If they have questions that are unresolved in class, they should visit and ask the instructor. The goal of quality education can be achieved by mutual interaction of efforts by all parties.

The basic concept of this booklet comes from the *Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education*, which was developed by the American Association of Higher Education. On the basis of these principles we developed this booklet by combining samples gathered at Nagoya University with the results of our own research and achievements in the study of teaching and learning theory, which effort we believe has resulted in a highly original work.

We hope that this booklet will prove effective for good practice in teaching, as well as for reflection on their practice by other stakeholders.

How to use the *Seven Suggestions from Professor Tips*

You can use this booklet as follows:

1. The seven suggestions are written in simple and easy-to-remember sentences. You can use them as a framework to organize and systemize what you usually keep in mind and try to do.
2. The 49 ideas presented in this booklet may include ideas that you have never tried. If you are interested in any of them, why not try them out at your teaching? In particular, the ideas mentioned towards the top of each list are the ones most staff chose as the easiest to implement.
3. There are some other versions published in volumes of this series. Please also take a look at the separate volumes for students, executives, academic and student affairs, and IT-enhanced teaching. These separate volumes all contain tips on what students, staff, and university executives can each do to achieve the same goal.
4. This booklet contains just a small selection of ideas. You may have better ideas than those contained in this booklet. Please let us know at the Center for the Studies of Higher Education about what you think is important, or what you find effective in your teaching. Your ideas will be helpful for future revisions of this booklet.

Suggestion 1

Increase opportunities to contact students

Students tend to feel a stronger sense of belonging and greater responsibility toward their classes when they are seen as individuals rather than as members of the class. To encourage their participation in class, try to increase your opportunities to contact your students. Because it takes courage for students to contact their instructors, it is important for instructors to act first.

- Greet your students when you see them.
- Encourage students to make active use of the Office Hour system.
- Tell your e-mail address to students and accept questions via e-mail.
- Stay in the classroom for a while after class to answer students' questions.
- Talk about your research.
- Hold a small party for students to familiarize them with you.
- Join study sessions or events held by students.

Suggestion 2

Encourage cooperative among students for learning

It is easier for student to participate in class if they are on good terms with their classmates. By mutually accepting and complementing their differences in learning styles and ways of thinking, students' understanding of the course content can be deepened. But cooperative learning cannot easily occur spontaneously. Therefore, instructors are encouraged to facilitate an atmosphere or system that promotes cooperative learning.

- Tell your students the importance of cooperative learning.
- For the first class, initiate an activity that helps students get to know each other.
- Give assignments for inside and outside of class that require collaboration among students.
- Divide students into small groups to encourage discussion.
- Prepare mailing lists or electronic bulletin boards that can be used by student groups.
- Let all students in the class share reports or papers submitted to the instructor.
- Introduce activities that encourage students to mutually evaluate their assignments.

Suggestion 3

Encourage active student learning

Good study results can't be expected from passive learning. In undergraduate education, it is important to encourage students' in active learning. In your teaching, try not only to improve the content of your lessons, but also to promote students' active learning of the content.

- Tell your students the importance of active participation in class.
- Offer every student opportunities to speak and ask questions in class.
- Have students present their assignments in class.
- Introduce activities that encourage students to teach what they have learned to other students.
- Offer opportunities for students' individual research activities.
- Welcome students' suggestions and ideas for better teaching.
- Introduce workshops and internship programs relevant to the course subject.

Suggestion 4

Encourage students to review their study progress

For students, confirming the extent of their progression toward the goals of the course provides them with important information regarding their subsequent progress. It also provides instructors with a good opportunity to check their own teaching pace. Immediately after teaching an important matter, give a small test or other material, to give students an opportunity to review their progress.

- Encourage students to tell you if they cannot understand the matters being taught.
- Continuously confirm your students' progress by giving them small tests or assignments.
- Appreciate students' good points, while also offering constructive comments.
- Have students write questions and opinions on their attendance cards; respond to them in the next class.
- Return test papers and reports within a week.
- Give students sample answers immediately after a test.
- Give detailed comments on each student's learning performance at least once a semester.

Suggestion 5

Emphasize time on task

While the importance of study outside of class seems to be widely acknowledged, many students find it difficult to arrange time for study. Effective use of time is an extremely important factor that affects students' achievements. Instructors are encouraged to show students how to manage time for study, through instruction regarding student attitude toward participation in class and assignments.

- Convey the importance of studying every day and making a study plan.
- Start and end every class on time.
- Tell students the amount of time required for preparation, review and assignments for class.
- Ask students to attend every class and concentrate in studying.
- Set step-by-step deadlines for large assignments.
- Ask students to rehearse before a presentation.
- Provide students with important reference literature in the early stage.

Suggestion 6

Communicate your high expectations to your students

Students are sensitive to expectations from their instructors and others. When they sense no expectation, they lose their motivation for learning, resulting in diminished study benefits. Try to stimulate students' motivation for learning by taking every opportunity in class to communicate your expectations to your students, or by offering specific goals that seem achievable if the students make the effort.

- Encourage students to think about the significance for their future of what they are now learning in class.
- At the beginning of every class, write the goal of the day on the board and explain it verbally.
- Prepare tasks that cannot be achieved except by working very hard.
- Prepare advanced reading materials or assignments for highly motivated students.
- Offer opportunities to observe graduate school classes.
- Introduce cutting-edge studies in the field relevant to the course.
- Introduce examples of good test papers and reports and explain specifically the aspects in which they are good.

Suggestion 7

Respect student diversity

A university can be invigorated by accepting students with various learning styles and characteristics. Instructors must respect such diversity, and demonstrate that respect to the students. Instructors are also advised to view student diversity as a means of broadening students' views and enhancing the benefits of study, rather than as a hindrance to teaching.

- Convey to students the importance of respecting ideas and backgrounds that differ from their own.
- Try to understand the difference in experiences, interests and learning styles among students.
- Prepare supplementary materials for students who lack background knowledge.
- Accommodate disabled students with supportive devices and special teaching methods.
- Offer various forms of learning activities, such as videos, discussions and group studies.
- Instruct students not to use discriminatory terms or take offensive actions against other students.
- Try to be aware of any bias or stereotype you may have.

Notes

The original Japanese edition had notes as shown below;

1. Your feedback regarding impressions of this booklet, suggestions for improvements, or important ideas not included in this booklet, is always welcome.

E-mail info@cshe.nagoya-u.ac.jp

2. A website (in Japanese) is available for those who are interested in ideas that could not be included in this booklet and the contents of the other booklets.

URL <http://www.cshe.nagoya-u.ac.jp/seven/>

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