A Guide for Presenting an Effective Workshop at the Graduate Student University Teaching Conference

Presenting a workshop at the Graduate Student University Teaching Conference (GSUTC) is an opportunity to contribute to the graduate teaching and learning community at the University of Guelph. As exciting as it sounds to design and deliver an effective workshop, it can be a daunting task when you are considering all the aspects that need to be addressed, such as the topic, outcomes, learning activities, resources available, time constraints and administrative responsibilities. But we’re here to help!

**Goal of the guide:**

The goal of this guide is to describe basic principles and strategies that will ease your process and make your workshop an effective learning experience not only for you, but also your participants.

Let’s start by first understanding some basic **differences between a workshop and a seminar**.

Seminars and workshops are ways for the participants to gain information; however, there are some basic differences in their design, purpose, number of participants and role of the instructor and the participants. A seminar is designed more like a traditional classroom lecture where the instructor is the speaker and shares information with the participants. On the other hand, a workshop is an interactive experience where a facilitator first shares information and then, to drive the point home, organizes an engaging activity that empowers the participants to apply the skills, learn from each other’s experience and receive feedback. (1,2)

In short, a workshop is defined as “A usually brief, intensive educational program for a relatively small group of people, in a given field, that emphasizes participation in problem solving efforts. (3)

**Getting Help:**

If you have any further questions and suggestions about the guide, please contact a Graduate Teaching Community Coordinator at:

gtc@uoguelph.ca
Step-by-step guide to designing an effective workshop:
This guide outlines some tips for developing your workshop. These are simply guidelines and please do not feel restricted by the guide. If you have creative ideas to improve the learning experience of your participants, please do not hesitate to try them.
1. Defining your Topic
2. Determining overall goals and outcomes
3. Determining and organizing the content
4. Determining time-frame and the number of participants
5. Aligning content with the Teaching and Learning activities
6. Identifying resources required and available to conduct activities
7. Organizing workshop schedule/setting order for content, activities and allotting time
8. Designing evaluation/feedback forms
9. Determining budget, venue and layout of the room
10. Recruiting additional facilitators/volunteers and explaining their roles
11. Determining Marketing Strategies
12. Final check list
13. On the day of the workshop
14. Post workshop responsibilities
Step 1 – Determining your topic

There are many ways of deciding your topic, such as brainstorming, asking for suggestions from peers, identifying your audience, setting up a poll for the prospective audience, looking up the workshops previously offered and identifying the gaps or looking for topics suggested by conference organizers.

Below are few questions you might want to ask yourself before deciding on your topic.

1. Why is the topic important and what impact will it have?
2. Does the topic address an identified issue?
3. What would your audiences be interested in knowing?
4. What do your audiences already know?
5. What is the background of your audiences?
6. What resources are available for you to prepare and conduct the workshop?
7. What could be the possible expectations of your audience?
8. How do I make my title catchy?

Below is a list of suggested areas/themes of interest for abstracts for GSUTC:

Preparing for a lecture/ tutorial
- Lesson planning
- Active learning
- Developing facilitation skills/Leading discussions
- Providing effective feedback
- Assessment: Marking and grading
- Understanding how students learn

Presentation Skills
- Enhancing presentation and communication skills
- Accessibility – making education accessible
- Communication strategies for international graduate students

Professionalism as a TA
- Conversations to have with your course instructor before you start your TAship
- Professionally maintaining relationship with the students
- Holding office hours
- Time Management: Balancing TAship and Research

Teaching with Technology
- Developing and teaching an online course
- Developing and facilitating engaging online discussion
- Using technology in classroom effectively

Classroom Management
- Dealing with ethical issues and disruptive student
- Resolving conflict in classroom
- Fostering inclusivity in classroom
• Teaching in Canadian classroom: International TA’s

Preparing a career in teaching
• Skills required for a career in teaching (faculty/ sessional/ college)
• Overview of T&L resources available on campus
• Practicing Self-reflection: Improving my teaching
• Critical Pedagogy
• Inquire
• Teaching Dossier Basics
• Teaching Philosophy Statement Basics

Health and Wellness
• TA health and Wellness – managing stress
• Working with SAS student
• Working with students in distress

Note: Please do not feel restricted by the above suggested themes, feel free to present on any teaching and learning related topics that would benefit new and experienced TA’s.

Step 2 – Determining goals and learning outcomes of the workshop
This is one of the most critical steps and will determine the format of your workshop.
A goal is a broad term which can be defined by asking – What do you want to achieve and why is it important to do so?
Learning outcomes describe what you intend your participants to gain from the learning experience or instruction provided to them. (4)
   1. Knowledge: What will the participants know?
   2. Skills: What will the participants be able to do?
   3. Values: What will the participants value or care about?

It is important that learning outcomes should be SMART
Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Realistic
Tap into the knowledge or skills

You can simply define your objectives by completing the statement below.
‘By the end of the workshop, the participants will be able to’:

  o
  o
  o
  o
Additional Information:
To help you define your learning outcomes you can also refer to ‘Constructive Alignment’ - a theory of lesson planning recommended at the University of Guelph. Constructive alignment is a teaching approach that begins with the learning outcomes students are expected to achieve before the process of teaching takes place. The learner is provided with specific learning outcomes, purposeful learning activity associated with the intended outcomes and a well-designed assessment criteria.
In short, you define your outcomes by referring to what you intend your participants to achieve by the end of the workshop.

In addition, you can also refer to Blooms Taxonomy of Levels of Educational Objectives for knowledge based goals. Blooms taxonomy is a multi-tiered scale. It allows instructors to clearly define or organize objectives for themselves and learning outcomes for their students. The performance at each level depends on the skills acquired at a level prior to it. Each level in Bloom’s taxonomy must be completed prior to moving to a higher level. The top level, evaluation, is the most complex and the bottom level, remembering, is least complex. Once you have decided the performance level you intend your participants to acquire by the end of the workshop, you can use the verbs aligned with each level to create activities aligned with your outcomes.
Levels of Educational Outcomes

Educational Scaffolding

Alternatively, you could also break your workshop into manageable steps, each step described by a learning outcome. Learning outcomes at each step should encourage progressive learning, eventually leading to the final goal of the workshop. This will help participants to move gradually to a higher level of comprehension and skill acquisition and by the end of the workshop participants will be able to independently create ideas, analyze and evaluate situations to make critical judgements. (9)
**Step 3: Determining and organizing content**
Once you have determined the learning outcomes, your next step is to lay out the content that you intend to cover in the workshop. Then, associate your content elements with your outcomes. Workshop content here describes the knowledge, skill and attitudes that will be conveyed to the participants. You could use the table below to align your outcomes with the content of the workshop.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop Goal:</th>
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<tr>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Content</th>
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**Step 4: Determining the number of participants and time-frame**
Once you have defined your outcomes and content associated with it, the next step is to determine the number of participants (minimum and maximum) and time required to effectively run your workshop.

The following questions can help you define step 4.

- How much time do you have to deliver the workshop?
- How much time will you allot to achieving each learning outcome?
- What is the max or min number of participants needed to carry out learning activity effectively?
- What are pros and cons of having different group sizes?
- Will the participant need to move from one room to another?
- Will participants need a break?
- What day, or time of the day will your workshop take place?

**Step 5: Aligning learning activities with the content**
“An adult enters a learning situation with an intent of change in their skills, behavior, knowledge level and even their attitude.” (10)
Before you plan your teaching and learning methods, it is important to understand key principles of adult learning. (11)
- Adults are motivated for learning when they understand the benefits of learning.
• Adults come to learning situation with varied experiences and can be motivated to learn if empowered to share their experiences and knowledge and build upon what they know.
• Adults can be motivated to learn if learning is based on real-life applications and benefits.
• Adults are self-motivated and show interest in learning if it enhances problem solving skill or leads to professional and personal development or improving quality of life.
• Adults learn best when they are given an opportunity to practice a skill and receive feedback before they leave the workshop.
• Adults are self-reliant, they require information, not instructions. They like to explore options based on their needs without relying on others.

Based on the above stated principles of adult learning, it is important that you should incorporate interactive learning techniques into your workshop.

Below are some examples of active learning techniques commonly used in workshops:
• group discussion (small and large)
• skill practice (role-play)
• case study
• laboratory
• panel/guest expert
• games
• structured note-taking ("accelerated learning")
• individual coaching
• question/answer
• demonstration
• technology (media, video, computer, interactive)

Use the following table to match the content with the active learning technique you will use:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Active learning technique</th>
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**Step 6: Identifying resources required and available to conduct activities**

It is important to use a combination of a variety of teaching and learning aids and align them with your active learning technique(s).

Below are some teaching and learning aids you could use:

- Hand outs
- Worksheets
- Bibliographies
- Slides
- Flip charts
- Videos
- Online discussion

Use the following table to match the active learning technique with teaching and learning aid you intend to use:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active learning technique</th>
<th>Teaching and learning aid</th>
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**Step 7: Organizing your workshop schedule**

The next step is to determine the order in which you would present the content and amount of time allocated to each learning activity. It is important to consider your pace and focus. Wherever possible, be flexible and allow some extra time or even be prepared to abandon a prepared agenda. (12)

Use the following table to outline your workshop schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome/Content</th>
<th>Teaching and learning activity</th>
<th>Time allocated</th>
<th>Min and Max number of participants required for the activity</th>
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Step 8: Designing evaluation/feedback forms
Evaluation will enable you to determine if intended learning outcomes were achieved and if any further improvement is required in the quality of the workshop. Evaluation forms can have questions about the delivery of the workshop content, teaching and learning techniques, administrative arrangements and physical environment. The content delivered can be evaluated for its level, its relevance to the intended outcomes and its suitability to the personal or professional development of the participants. (13)

NOTE: You are not required to evaluate your workshop at GSUTC. An online survey will be sent to the participants to get feedback on the conference.

Step 9: Determining venue and layout of the room
You will be notified via email about the room allocated to you for presenting your workshop. It is a good idea to find out the details about the set-up of the room and the technology available in the room.

Step 10: Recruiting additional facilitators/volunteers and explaining their roles
If you need to recruit additional facilitators/volunteers to help you facilitate discussions or activities during your workshop.

  o Contact them and find out their availability.
  o Confirm the time and date of the workshop.
  o Determine if you need any experienced facilitators to help you during the workshop.
  o Prepare material you would need to provide to the facilitators.
  o Arrange a time to meet with the facilitators/volunteers to discuss objectives, content and process (a dry-run) and make necessary adjustments.
  o Some written guidelines on how to conduct a session can also help in ensuring uniformity and success.

Step 11: Determining Marketing strategies
If you are delivering a workshop at GSUTC, your workshop will be advertised through OpenED.

Step 12: Final Check List
Make a checklist of the materials required to deliver your session.

Step 13: On the day of the workshop
Hopefully you rested well the night before your workshop!
Arrive 5-10 mins early to the workshop venue and organize yourself.
Workshop itself:
  • Welcome the participants and introduce yourself
  • Outline the outcomes of the workshop
  • Start with an ice-breaker or any activity that allows the participants to introduce themselves
• Try to create a friendly and comfortable environment
• Encourage active interaction and participation
• Summarize the session
• Request feedback

Enjoy yourself and have fun!
References


