

# Teaching for Learning in China - teacher guide and quality resources

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This guide has been developed to complement the DEST-funded report *Quality Matters*. The report explains some of the background behind these suggested activities and the two documents inform each other. This guide is not intended as a general 'how to' teachers' manual. Rather, it intends to address issues that are of specific concern to teachers teaching in China. It is divided into 5 broad sections and appendices:

1. Teaching
2. Culture
3. Policy, procedures and VET context
4. Professional development questions/activities
5. Quality support documents.

This guide provides additional information about quality and professional development issues to the report *Quality Matters: promoting quality improvement for offshore VET programs*. Victoria University teachers should read this guide in conjunction with VU's *Promoting and Advancing Excellence in Learning and Teaching (The Blue Guide)* as well as any relevant Teaching and Learning policies. They should also undertake the Induction to Teaching at VU program and/or *Teaching for Learning in China* program – both of which will be available through WebCT.

This collection of resources contains several different sections and themes – some sections are for teachers to read and think about; that is, they are intended to promote self-reflection on what it means to teach offshore and what, more broadly, it means to teach diverse student cohorts. Other sections are intended as professional development activities for groups. There are also documents, checklists and diagrams that are intended to help teachers and managers understand their responsibilities and the context of their teaching, prepare for teaching or evaluate teaching many of which are specific to VU but which could be customised by other institutions.



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# Teaching

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While the nature of *onshore* teaching has changed in ways that could make offshore teaching less different, there are still major differences between teaching on- and offshore (specifically between teaching in Australia and teaching in China) and, unless staff are intensely reflective and have time to act on their reflections, have TESOL qualifications, or some formal professional development (including mentoring and collegial support), the quality of the learning for students offshore can be unpredictable.

International students onshore have gone through IELTS testing or equivalent and have achieved either a minimum score of 6 if they are in higher education or a 5.5 if they are in TAFE. Many onshore international students at VU have also done English courses onshore - some through English Language Institute (ELI). These students are living in Australia, are more exposed to English and have had some time to adjust to the 'methodology shock' of Australian teaching styles.

VU's offshore students do not necessarily have the equivalent English levels of their onshore counterparts. Some VET programs require that international students both on- and offshore have an IELTS of 5.5; however, offshore cohorts do not have an equivalent cultural and educational environment. Offshore students' exposure to Australian teachers is usually in burst mode with very little time adjust to differences in language, accent and methodological approaches. Even students with high English language proficiency are not accustomed to English-only delivery and Australian teaching styles are radically different to anything most Chinese students are used to. Further, most Chinese students have little opportunity to hear or speak English outside of class.

So, keeping in mind that many lecturers are only in China for a week or two and that they are often forced to work in a lecture situation with large classes – how can Australian teachers make sure that Chinese students get the most out of the brief face-to-face contact they have? The key messages for teachers is that you need to:

- Foreground language in your teaching – general English, discipline-specific language and academic language
- Be explicit about your teaching strategies
- Have a range of quick ways to assess if students are learning *while* you teach – not after when it's too late
- Be knowledgeable about the context (including quality context) in which you are operating and the students you are teaching. (Appendix 18)

All teaching staff should know VU's Student Charter: [www.vu.edu.au/studentcharter](http://www.vu.edu.au/studentcharter). VU also has a set of **Teacher capabilities** (Appendix 1). VU expects that its teachers know their students, know how they learn and how to teach them effectively.

“Teaching is... a process for working co-operatively with learners to help them change their understanding. It is making student learning possible. Teaching involves finding out about

students' misunderstandings, intervening to change them and creating a context of learning that encourages students to engage with the subject matter" (Ramsden, 2003: 110). Teachers cannot teach in the same ways in different contexts and to different cohorts. They cannot duplicate what they do onshore in an offshore setting and they need new strategies in order to "respond to the cultural and linguistic diversity of their students." You cannot just go to China and talk and assume anyone will learn – and, really, you shouldn't do that onshore either!

Teachers need to be knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subject area. Teachers should be able to make topics relevant to students and should ensure information is accessible to students whose first language is not English and whose cultural frame of reference is different to students in Australia. Irrespective of your subject area, you need to be mindful of language and culture – and you need to become a language teacher as well as a discipline expert.

### **Before you teach**

- Find out about your students - what else are they studying, what are their English levels?
- Sit in on local teachers' classes to better understand how your teaching style is different to what students are used to.

### **In the classroom**

#### *Students as individuals*

Teachers have been heard to comment along the following lines, "I can't remember all their names, I'm only there for 2 weeks...". You should be able to identify students by name in class. Create a seating plan, use sticky labels or other recyclable name tags. Ask students to write their name on folded A4 paper (what they would like to be called, not necessarily what their last English teacher named them!). In crowded computer labs, use sticky labels on the monitor or the students themselves. Using students' names will be much appreciated.

#### *Introductions*

Draw a mind map on the board. Write your name in the middle, say it and get students repeat it. Tell students how you want them to address you. If your students have had 'foreign' teachers before, they will probably feel quite comfortable calling you by your first name. You could have 5 – 6 other circles around your name with titles like 'family', 'travel', 'movies', 'books', 'sport', 'food' – and introduce yourself to the class both verbally and visually. You could do this in PowerPoint with photos and you can reinforce it through WebCT – it all contributes to creating a sense of relationship with students.

Verbal introductions in large groups can take up too much of your precious class time; however, if you strictly limit students to ONE sentence and make it a game (speed is important), you could ask them to respond to such questions as: Who would they most like to meet? What is their favourite breakfast? What is the worst item of clothing they ever saw? Show students how to start off their response in writing on the board: "I would like most to meet...", "My favourite breakfast is...". You can both liven up the class with a frantic icebreaker and get a glimpse of English language proficiency and confidence levels. If students speak early, it helps them to ask questions and participate later in the class. (See Appendix 2 for a diagnostic exercise that will help you to get a glimpse of English levels.)

### **Teaching to support student learning**

- The spoken word presents the most obvious difficulty in China. Students have difficulties understanding a lecturer's accent (whether this is 'Australian', Indian, Sri Lankan or Filipino accented English) and lecturers have difficulties understanding students' responses to questions and in discussion. Some ESL teachers say that it takes Chinese students months to even *hear* us – so keep that in mind when you are racing through your first offshore lecture!



- Speak slowly. Do not speak at your normal pace but do not break words up into syllables: this makes words even less recognisable! While you are doing an introductory exercise, check with students if you are speaking loudly enough or at the right pace – can they understand you, can they hear you?
- Tell students that you know that they will find your accent different, that you might use words that they don't know and that you might speak too quickly for them. Tell them if they don't know a word, a concept or if you speak too quickly for them, to please put up their hand and ask you to explain, to repeat and/or to give an example. As a rule, Chinese students are very reluctant to do this, but you should encourage it and there is usually one student who is prepared to be brave!
- Introduce yourself. Tell students what you would like to be called. There are many variations on self-introduction. For example: students could ask you questions and you answer them. They can then summarise an introduction to you - an easy diagnostic.
- Do vocabulary work before a lecture starts to familiarise students with both new words and your way of pronouncing them. Long words can be difficult for Chinese learners of English – so make sure they know the word, can *say* the word, can use the word... All important or difficult words or concepts should be introduced before you start so that students will recognise words when they hear or see them. You should not only introduce discipline-specific terminology to students but also any idiom, cultural references or academic terms you intend to use. This could be done as a handout, by board work and/or via WebCT before class. The important thing is for you to say the words, hear that the students can say the words, explain the words, give an example, etc. (encourage students to add these words to their glossary - see Appendix 3).
- Increase handouts – provide before class if possible. Encourage pre-reading of materials (Appendix 4).
- Use the whiteboard/PowerPoint to introduce the session clearly both verbally and in writing. Students report that it is invaluable to **see** key words as well as hear them.
- Tell students what the session will achieve and how.
- Explain how you teach and why you teach the way you do. Tell students what you expect of them – and why.
- Keep your teaching structured so students can follow what you are doing. Chinese teachers and students have described the Socratic method of some Australian teachers as “unorganised” and teachers as “unprepared” – so be aware of how your “facilitative” teaching style may appear to others.
- Give students extra time to take notes.
- Explain any slang and abbreviations (govt, NZ, dept). One teacher reported using less formal terms such as ‘times’ for ‘multiply’ and ‘by’ for ‘divide’ and students were confused.
- Define any acronyms – ask students to give examples of acronyms (WTO is well known).
- Provide or, better, encourage students to develop, glossaries: discipline-specific terms, academic terms and general English should all be a focus of your teaching and student learning (see Appendix 3 for a simple glossary that all units of study could use).
- Tell students they can tape lectures if they want to help with note taking. (Video recordings might intimidate some teachers!)
- Summarise key points throughout your class – or check student learning with one-sentence summary, paraphrasing or quizzes (see CATs).
- Use diagrams, tables, examples and pictures to support your teaching. But make sure any illustrations or graphs are understood – they are culturally read objects, too, and their meaning is often not as obvious as you think.

- Long sentences can be confusing to even native English speakers as the subject gets lost. Keep it simple and keep sentences short – repeat key terms and points and paraphrase using appropriate connectives: that is to say, to restate the point, in other words...
- Have a glossary list on the board for new terms and phrases and add to it throughout the class.
- Use local examples and case studies to illustrate the point if possible.
- Evaluate student learning and your teaching with Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs): muddiest point, application cards, one sentence summary – or even a quick quiz. Don't wait until the class is over until you find out that students don't understand the key idea.
- Make sure you set reading, self-tests, practice exercises, in short, homework – most of what a student learns is probably not in your class!

**In the last 10 minutes:**

1. Summarise your class and pre-empt the next class.
2. Connect your class to the learning outcomes, the reading, the subject and/or the assessment.
3. Evaluate your class (see Quality in the Classroom).
4. Suggest further resources but don't be too general – see Hidden curriculum.
5. Set homework – possibly in groups – including readings that should be read aloud for English practice activities that involve speaking in English – eg developing a dialogue or an interview.

Check your own teaching – see Appendix 5 for a quick Teacher Capability checklist.

## Idioms, colloquialisms and other cultural matters

While some experts say that you should avoid colloquialisms and idioms, perhaps what would be better is to keep them to a minimum and when you do use them, explain them. Explain to students what idiom and colloquialisms are with some examples and ask them to stop you if they think you are speaking in terms they don't understand.

Also, let students know how tricky idiomatic speech is – they can practise for fun on a number of self-assessing websites devoted to idioms. Put 'idiom' and 'test' in a Google search – there are plenty of sites:

- <http://www.world-english.org/englishidiomstest.htm>
- <http://esl.us.com/LESSONS/IDIOMS/idiom.htm>
- <http://www.english-test.net/esl/learn/english/grammar/ii014/esl-test.php>

Everyday language is riddled with colloquialisms, Australian references and Eurocentric references. Be mindful of this and adjust your language for offshore students who have never lived in Australia and who, very often, have not moved beyond their own province in China.

You might refer to a comment made by Alexander Downer at the last Commonwealth Games and then make a reference to crowds parting like the Red Sea... Biblical references, references to politicians and events or popular songs that you assume are unproblematic because 'everyone knows' these things can mystify Chinese students. Can you name China's Foreign Policy Minister? China is one of over 40 countries participating in the 15<sup>th</sup> Asian Games in Doha – where's Doha? You've heard of San Francisco's earthquake of 1906 that had between 500 and 3,000 casualties...but what about Tianjin? As recently as 1976, 25,000 people were killed in an earthquake there. Cultural asymmetry in assumed knowledge is a huge obstacle to communication. So find out about China before you go...or ask Chinese students or teachers to provide local examples.

The following English language websites have current news and information about China that you could use in your teaching:

- China Daily News is good for general news: <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/index.html>
- China Daily Business: [www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/bw/bwtop.html](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/bw/bwtop.html)
- Beijing Weekend [www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/bjweekend/bjweekend.html](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/bjweekend/bjweekend.html)
- Inside China Today: [www.einnews.com/china/](http://www.einnews.com/china/)

Jokes and cultural references don't always translate in intercultural situations but Chinese students are very ready to laugh so do take your sense of humour with you and be ready to make fun of yourself.

If you assume students are the same, you deny their difference – and a great opportunity to learn.

## Hidden curriculum

Whether teachers are aware of it or not, they often have a ‘hidden curriculum’ – that is, they include or refer to extraneous or just extra material, they set more readings than some students need to read to adequately cover the topics, they go over the same idea in different ways, they set classroom activities that might be good for developing communication skills but which aren’t on the test. Sometimes the really important things that students absolutely have to know are implicit – hidden in all that busyness and curriculum. It is difficult enough for some local students to figure out what the hidden curriculum is in any class – but for offshore students, it can be even more obscure.

Successful students can see the hidden curriculum; that is, they know what they need to know to do well. But this is heavily coded – and students offshore (despite their previous success in Chinese education systems) have particular difficulty discerning what to study and what not to worry about in Australian educational programs. For example, if you set a book, a few successful students might read the whole thing – but most will not. They will simply skim the book for the bits they need in order to understand the topic and to do the assessment. Chinese students find skimming in English very difficult. In order to skim, you already need to know what is important and what is not – and for second language learners, this is complicated by the difficulties around translation and new language.

## Cue giving

Given the extent of hidden curriculum, teachers must make important information explicit. If there are 3 types of teachers – cue givers, hinters and poker-faced – then you need to be a cue giver – both on- and offshore. Try to avoid having a hidden curriculum at all.

For native speakers who are also cue seekers, a cue giver might just need to raise an eyebrow and give a ‘knowing look’ about a certain topic to stress its significant link to summative assessment. A shift in tone and/or pace could also signify that the next point should be written down. But for Mandarin speakers, tone is culturally a very different phenomena and your pace of speech or even those all important ‘pregnant pauses’ in which students are supposed to be collecting those pearls you’ve tossed out may not mean the same thing as it does for cue conscious native speakers onshore. You need to be explicit, to translate your cues into plain English and to give students time to note them. You need to be a cue giver. Cue givers

- clearly state what is important – not just by their tone, or a particular ‘look’. They say: “The next point is important, please write down the following” – they will say WHY it is important and how it links with other aspects of the subject/course.
- clearly introduce a lecture/class – in writing and possibly with handouts.
- highlight which readings should be prioritised – eg particular chapters or pages.
- provide students with guidance on how long to spend on any tasks and/or what to prioritize.
- model the behaviour they expect of students - don’t leave them guessing!
  - If you quote someone in a lecture, show how to reference and comment on that quotation.
  - If you have a particular report style you prefer, give students an example.
  - Provide models of essays and practice exams.
  - If group work is an expected class activity, explain how to work in groups.

## Flagging

The following is an excerpt from Gibbs, Habeshaw and Habeshaw (1984) 17–18 and it continues the discussion of cue giving:

Flagging is explaining what you are doing, and why. Teachers often introduce an activity or the next stage of a session without flagging it, assuming either that students already know what it is they are supposed to do and what they are supposed to get out of it, or that students don't need to know: all they have to do is follow instructions. But people's ability to undertake tasks depends crucially on their understanding of the task...

If you wanted to introduce buzz groups you might say, "Now in pairs, I want you to look at the map I'll project up on the screen and decide what Christaller's theory would have to say about the location of the towns."...To flag might involve explaining, "It's important that you are able to apply Christaller's theory to specific places and I need to know whether you are able to do this before I continue...It might be difficult to get going on your own so work together with your neighbour".

## Reading

It is clear that students in China have difficulty understanding spoken English when it is not supported visually. But students also have difficulty reading some academic (and not so academic texts). You should check readings for unfamiliar terms, cultural references and assumed prior knowledge. Scaffold other smaller and/or simpler readings to prepare students for reading complex texts. If you are using photocopied readings in class activities, number each paragraph for easy reference. Provide summaries or glossaries to accompany readings. See Appendices 4 and 6 for more strategies to support students in their reading.

## Lectures

We often associate lecturers with one type of teaching that happens in higher education. However, VET programs both on- and offshore, particularly in Business, use lectures because there can be over 100 students in a class. How appropriate this is for competency-based training is debatable; however, if lectures are a dominant mode of teaching, they need to be good! As Borland and Pearce remind us, the usefulness of the lecture format "is based upon the existence of certain skills in students: the ability to understand spoken English, to relate what they hear to other material and, in particular, to take notes" (83). Many Chinese students do not have these skills in English so teachers need to select some of the strategies suggested throughout the guide to ensure that lectures are not a waste of time for students in China – particularly given that most of the lectures occur in 'burst mode' conditions. In particular, provide handouts, put as much as you can in print, use strategies for checking student learning (including using class monitors or more proficient English speakers). Even in lecture mode, it is vital that students be doing something (a quiz, an example, some directed reading). See Appendices 4 and 6 for more on supporting students in lectures. If you use PowerPoint, be careful not to have too many words, small font and obfuscating colour schemes (see Appendix 7 for PowerPoint tips).

## Questioning as a teaching practice

Many teachers say that they use discussion and questions as key teaching strategies – even in large classes. There can be several issues with these approaches in an offshore setting: Chinese teachers and students do not generally use the same techniques and are unfamiliar with the codes of behaviour involved in communicative pedagogies. In fact, one Chinese teacher who had sat in on an Australian teacher's class considered his use of questions to be evidence of a lack of preparation. If you do ask questions of a group, be sure to let them know why you do it and how you expect them to respond. Also tell students it is a good opportunity to practise speaking English and that it will help them prepare for IELTS.

### Do

- Give students time to reply
- Allow students to discuss bilingually before replying
- Rephrase your question if no one answers
- Provide extra information to help students formulate a response
- Have questions in writing if possible
- Encourage participation of all students
- Ask open-ended questions – examples, an opinion, other positions on a topic, etc.

### Don't

- 'Pick on' individuals – unless students are used to being asked questions, it can be a terrifying experience
- Allow the same students to answer all the time
- Allow students to read answers verbatim from notes
- Ask closed questions (yes, no, a fact) if you are after discussion!

Some teachers report that there can be one or two students who are expected by the group to answer questions – that is, there does seem to be a collective approach whereby more capable and confident students answer for the group – and save face for all. You may need to be creative to get *everyone* talking but it can be done.

Online discussion can also encourage the participation of students who don't usually speak...

Two techniques to encourage everyone responding and practising speaking and critical thinking skills:

1. Ask everyone to respond anonymously to a question on a scrap of paper. Hand in the paper and redistribute. Choose a few people to read out the answer and ask other students to comment on that response.
2. Give everyone 3 matches which can be used to secure 3 turns in the discussion.

## Differences in teaching and learning: China and Australia

Current Australian research into quality and quality teaching and learning are predominantly Western in assumption, purpose and outlook. Gibb's otherwise helpful study on quality reveals his cultural bias with such glib platitudes as "Failing is a learning experience. Fear and humiliation inhibit learning..."(52). In China, failing is a sure bet to lead to fear and humiliation, possibly of a very public nature.<sup>1</sup> And as for the culturally loaded suggestion that "Learning seems to occur when students have a role in planning the learning..."—most students in China (and certainly managers and teachers in China) see planning the learning as the role of the teacher. Any suggestion that it should be done by students would be regarded as an abrogation of duty. So the idea that "Responsibility and accountability no longer lie solely with the teachers and have been transferred appropriately to the learner" is premature indeed for a global context.

Even a basic understanding of the dominant modes of education in China is needed by staff teaching transnationally. Chinese students certainly know how to study and, at levels where VU staff are teaching them, most have studied very successfully in their own education system. But many of the skills that educators expect of students in Australia have not been either developed or valued in these students' educational upbringing and need to be explicitly taught, developed and practised:

- Reflective practice
- Critical thinking
- Questioning
- Commentary on original texts
- Scenarios and case studies
- Original research

While it is common to hear Australian teachers complain that Chinese students are passive, are quiet, 'learn by rote', won't ask questions in class, seem to agree with everything we say, will not guess and do nothing but absorb the information we present and **either** plagiarise **or**, if attempting originality, write badly in written assignments, it is important to seek a more sophisticated explanation for these behaviours. These educational cultural stereotypes are dangerously simplistic and yet are commonly heard. All need some comment in professional development programs.

Brick's chapter on "Learning and Teaching" in *China: a handbook in Intercultural Communication* (2004) is useful and has been cited by several teachers at VU as instigating a change in their teaching practice. In particular, it is important to discuss cultural attitudes to teaching and learning – including the quite different roles of teacher and student in Australia and China. These different attitudes do not just have implications for student learning and successful outcomes of a program – they also have implications in the evaluation of a program by students and partner staff, especially peer feedback on teaching.

Consider these typical responsibilities of students in China outlined by Brick (151–152):

- Master knowledge that teacher presents
- Accurately recall knowledge
- Do not argue with teacher
- Do not present own ideas
- "Good students know the answer..."
- Preview and review lessons
- Be ready for tests.

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<sup>1</sup> Evans and Tregenza (2002) cite a local tutor who comments on the Chinese fear of failure and the dominance of education as the transmission of knowledge to explain the prevalence of plagiarism.

All too often, assessment set by VET providers does little to either develop the critical thinking, research or communication skills that teachers say they want students to demonstrate. If assessment drives learning, multiple choice tests will do little to encourage critical thinking skills and an essay that precisely covers issues in the text book will limit the reasons students have to research other texts. In fact, the work that is set and then assessed often suits the characteristics of the stereotypical Chinese learner depicted by Brick. It seems that often, it is the classroom activities such as discussion, role play and group activities that are often not assessed but which are highly regarded by teachers. It is these activities that would help students to develop the critical thinking, group work and interpretative skills they will need to succeed in higher education programs in an Australian context.

## Role of the teacher

Brick discusses ideas of the role of the teacher in China: “If learning involves the mastery of a body of knowledge, then teachers are people who have already mastered that body of knowledge and are prepared to hand it on to learners” (150). Teachers select what is to be taught, how and when it is taught. That teachers might ask students what they want to learn (negotiated learning; student-centred learning) may well be regarded by Chinese learners as a dereliction of duty and the idea that a student could ask a question to which a teacher has no “correct answer” could reflect poorly on the teacher’s competence. In Australia, teachers are more likely to be seen as experts in their field (with industry and/or research interests sustaining that expertise) and facilitators of student learning. In Australia, there is a fair amount of responsibility on the student (particularly at AQF IV and above) to learn.<sup>2</sup>

## Plagiarism

A local tutor explains the prevalence of plagiarism in programs in Hong Kong: “...schools in Hong Kong prepare students...by reproducing the work of the masters. You don’t change their words. Also the Chinese fear of failure plays a part so the safest option is to give back the standard text given” (Evans & Tregenza: 6). Some students grappling with the acquisition of discipline-specific and academic English who have specific cultural attitudes to failure may well see plagiarism as a viable option.

To avoid students resorting to or inadvertently committing plagiarism, there are several things teachers can do. When explaining the need to reference, the emphasis should not be on ‘cheating’ and ‘dishonesty’ – at least not in the first instance! Rather, the focus should be that

- Through written texts, much knowledge in a discipline area emerges.
- Students are entering into a research community.
- Students need to show readers who has informed their work – ie that they have read widely

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<sup>2</sup> Independent learning is encouraged in most Certificate IV courses. Certainly the AQF descriptors denote the distinguishing features of a qualification at this level to require an individual to “demonstrate understanding of a broad knowledge base incorporating some theoretical concepts; apply solutions to a defined range of unpredictable problems; identify and apply skills and knowledge areas to a wide variety of contexts with depth in some areas; identify, analyse and evaluate information from a variety of sources; take responsibility for own outputs in relation to specified quality standards; take limited responsibility for the quantity and quality of the output of others’ (AQF 2002: 27). In addition, “Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas prepare candidates for self-directed application of skills and knowledge based on fundamental principles and/or complex techniques. These qualifications recognise capacity for initiative and judgment across a broad range of technical and/or management functions” (see AQF website: <http://www.aqf.edu.au/dips.htm>).



- Students also need to provide details (ie references) so that others can build on their work and follow up references if they require further information.

Model referencing your own sources – in handouts, in PowerPoint. If you quote someone while you are talking, put the source details on the board. In other words, show students *how* to reference and tell them why they need to do it. Referencing is basically good academic practice in the West and provides an effective demonstration of students’ research skills and knowledge. It is also a means of distinguishing between a students’ original work and the work of others. Getting students to do referencing exercises in class (and to peer correct them) is another way to encourage confident referencing practices. Many Chinese teachers have said that they didn’t have to reference until they were engaged in postgraduate study so it is not something that many students in China at that level are used to doing.

Set assessment tasks that are reflective, that require original research or commentary on original documents. Design tasks based on current events or which ask students for their opinion. Ensure students and teachers know the university’s Plagiarism Policy and the consequences of plagiarism. Provide copies of the library’s referencing guide:

<http://guides.library.vu.edu.au/referencing> and a visual copy:

<http://snap.vu.edu.au/vutube/step-step-visual-guide-harvard-referencing-system>. Also available

on the library website is this teaching resource that you can use with your students:

<http://w2.vu.edu.au/library/referencing/files/Refjustice06.ppt>

If assessment tasks are to be marked by local teachers, those local teachers need to have professional development in how to assess such attributes as reflection and critical thinking and how to identify and respond to plagiarism.

#### **Learning activities to scaffold referencing practices**

- Ask students to summarise or paraphrase a section of text. Ask them how much is verbatim and how much is paraphrased and get them to indicate with quotation marks any verbatim material. Now ask them to reference this. You could also model this. Get students to peer correct.
- Ask students to reference ideas and comments in discussion, “As Smith says...”.
- Ask students to submit a draft of their work through Turnitin and write a reflection on what they learnt.

Referencing techniques and other study skills should be embedded into your classes. There are some fantastic websites that help students in developing study skills, including this one in Mandarin: <http://www.studygs.net/chinese/>

## Using WebCT offshore

Make sure your Chinese counterpart has access to WebCT and is familiar with all of the functions of WebCT. Make sure that students also have adequate Internet access. WebCT access should be arranged at contract stage.

### Using WebCT for teaching

Provide lecture notes and/or videos of lectures so you can use face-to-face time in going over the lecture material.

If you can't have a transcription of your lecture available, at least have a summary of the key points available online before the class.

Distribute other notes, handouts, and readings before and after class

Introduce any important or difficult words or concepts before you start using the Glossary and/or discussion so that students will recognise words when they hear or see them. Have students add them to their personal glossary.

Use Flash to create an audio glossary of new words.

Ask students to create student homepages addressing particular criteria well before you arrive in China. Use discussion to encourage interaction and check literacy levels and background knowledge before you arrive.

Evaluate your classes and student knowledge using WebCT to ask students to respond to CATs such as the 'Minute Paper' or 'Muddiest Point' or to complete a quick quiz.

Have an onshore mentor in a higher year level responsible for a small group of offshore students. Have offshore students ask such questions as, "What was the most important thing you learnt in this subject and how did you learn it?"

Direct students to useful websites each week – including language websites – where they can:

- Practise idioms
- Use connectives
- Compare and contrast 2 articles on the same event in *The Age* and *China Daily News*
- Use Wikipedia to get background knowledge.

Ask students to post a website in Discussion.

### Using WebCT for assessing

Quizzes, short answer questions, multiple-choice tests and self-assessment tools are easy to develop in WebCT.

### Using WebCT for administration and AQTF compliance

- Students can submit assignments through WebCT – you can have not only a record of assessment, but of your feedback to students as well.
- Student participation/attendance through WebCT can be easily monitored.
- Evaluation of both face-to-face and online activities is easy to document.
- Support of offshore staff – Training Packages, organisational charts, etc. available online.

## Common problems and suggested strategies

Problem	Strategy
<p><b>Males in back row sleeping, texting, etc</b></p>	<p>You can go into high school mode quite easily with some students – resist the temptation to re-seat them, confiscate their mobile phones and ask them why they bother to come at all. Make it clear what sort of behaviours you expect from students and check that you understand what students expect from you. Have specific tasks that <i>everyone</i> will need to complete, comment on, participate in. These students (males in the back row) generally know a lot about computer games, especially online strategy games. If possible, work some learning activities in that build on that particular expertise. It can be relevant for Business Management.</p>
<p><b>More general lack of attention – chatting, texting, etc.</b></p>	<p>It is particularly important to know students’ names and to have meaningful tasks for students to do – including CATs - so you can check understanding. Some inattentive students do not have enough English to make the class comprehensible – so help them out.</p> <p>Other strategies for engaging the distracted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specifically ask their opinion on the topic being discussed.</li> <li>• Ask talkers to share their ideas (do not attempt sarcasm).</li> <li>• Move around the room – routinely move towards chatters and texters.</li> <li>• Make eye contact with the disengaged.</li> <li>• Stop and wait until the talking abates.</li> </ul> <p>Remember, these students probably would not behave like this in their regular classes, so don’t tolerate it. Do work on positive outcomes.</p>
<p><b>Lack of preparation (haven’t done set reading, etc)</b></p>	<p>Explain what academic skills successful students have – self-directed, prepared, can read and comprehend academic texts, can paraphrase and/or summarise key points of text. In other words, explain why it is important to do a set task. If it is reading that has not been done, summarise the key points for students – model what you want them to do for the next class.</p>
<p><b>Dominating students (these could be aggressive, rude or just keen – the result is the same!)</b></p>	<p>One or two students who answer everything – usually too quickly for anyone else to understand and usually from a memorised answer – are not what you are looking for when you ask a question of the class.</p> <p>Acknowledge their input with: “That’s an interesting point. Now let’s see what other people think.” Make it clear to students that you want:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• everyone to contribute</li> <li>• everyone to practise speaking English</li> <li>• students to listen to others’ opinions</li> <li>• students to comment on others’ opinions – not just talk to the teacher.</li> </ul> <p>Answering a teacher’s question is really about participating in a dialogue. Questions should be thought provoking and should leave space for more than one response.</p> <p>Some ideas to get others speaking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For every question answered, you expect another student to comment on the answer.</li> <li>• Divide class into buzz groups to develop a group response to questions (all chat to be in English). One person per group to report back to class.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Late arrivals</b></p>	<p>In Australia, lateness tends to be a personal issue. Some teachers model and expect punctual behaviour and others believe that, in keeping with their interpretations of adult learning principles, students have lives and multiple commitments and sometimes lateness cannot be avoided. For serial offenders, however, go over ground rules and remind students that they are responsible for their own learning, they have a responsibility to the group not to interrupt and that they have limited exposure to English, and that their English skills will suffer. Remember, those ironic comments, “Welcome!”, “Glad you made it” and (for a latecomer in a morning class) “Good afternoon” are likely to mystify students.</p> <p>In China, there is another layer to the problem of tardiness. Some Chinese teachers think that if Australian teachers do not strictly enforce punctual behaviour, it is a dereliction of duty. Permissiveness around arrival times can signal a lack of care. Students, too, are reported to regard start of class icebreakers, for example, as trivial and somehow optional. Be explicit about why all class time is important and what your expectations are about attendance and punctuality and why opportunities for practising spoken English are valuable (IELTS testing looms large in most students’ minds – so exploit it). Most students in VET programs in China do not have the work commitments of many Australian students, they tend not to be mature-age students with family commitments and, arguably, have fewer reasons to be late.</p>
<p><b>A silent response from a group</b></p>	<p>General questions like, “Is everything clear?” or “Are there any questions?” can be met with silence and blank stares in China. Teachers need other strategies to encourage discussion and feedback:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buzz groups</li> <li>• Icebreakers</li> <li>• Quizzes</li> <li>• Peer corrections</li> <li>• CATs</li> </ul>
<p><b>A silent response from individuals</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small group activities can encourage students to speak – appoint quiet students to be a small group leader.</li> <li>• Talking with a student privately can help build trust and confidence in class.</li> <li>• Accent and language issues can intimidate students so be prepared to rephrase your question or to have it in print.</li> <li>• Use other students to bilingually rephrase a question.</li> </ul>

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>How to respond</b>
<b>Run out of time</b>	Due to the need to re-teach some concepts, explain content, etc you can easily run out of time – do not rush through material – chances are students will not understand your hurried gabble. Often, you will not cover the same amount of material as onshore – so focus on the most important points.	<p>I will send out notes <i>before</i> class.</p> <p>I will follow up next class.</p> <p>I will email out the rest of my notes.</p> <p>I will provide the class monitor with copies of my notes and we will discuss in the next class.</p> <p>I will use WebCT to cover additional points.</p>
<b>Individual students want consultation</b>	Students often ask for teachers to read over an essay, to explain their comments, etc. To ensure that you are available to all students is a big ask, but this often means that a few privileged (or pushy!) students get individual attention and the rest don't. Many teachers complain that they have a stream of visitors to their office – you need to decide how much, if any, classroom assistance you are prepared to offer and how to do this equitably and efficiently.	<p><b>Individual</b> Publish a time/s when you are available for consultation, have a list of 10 – 15 minute appointments. Students can only see you within the prescribed time.</p> <p><b>Group</b> Rather than deal with individual students, you could organise an extra class time in which you are prepared to answer individual student questions which may well benefit others.</p> <p>Use WebCT discussion to address students' questions.</p>
<b>Perceived favouritism</b>	Individual attention to any student or group of students may be regarded as discriminatory. Be wary of accepting expensive gifts or spending time with individual students outside of class including at lunch time. Other students may perceive this as favouritism. (Sometimes coordinators arrange for students to assist with sight seeing – ask advice on this.)	<p>Use the Staff Code of Conduct as the reason why you cannot accept hospitality/gifts from students, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain professional approach</li> <li>• Do not discuss other students or teachers</li> <li>• Do not blur private and professional activities.</li> </ul>
<b>Students don't get to practice English often</b>	The English levels of some students can make it more difficult for English speakers to teach a discipline...	<p>Encourage students to speak English in all class activities.</p> <p>Suggest students have at least one day a week where they try to speak English to each other at lunch times!</p> <p>Encourage students to watch the English language news on CCTV International everyday or read China Daily News.</p>

<p><b>You don't know an answer</b></p>	<p>In China, teaching tends to be regarded as mastery of knowledge and teachers are supposed to know their discipline and to be able to pass that knowledge on to students. In Australia, while teachers need to be experts in their field, teachers tend to think of themselves as facilitators of student learning. Especially with common ideas that 'knowledge' as such is a changeable entity and that it is just as important to be able to find out as to 'know', most Australian teachers are comfortable with the idea that they don't know something. This is not the case in China. So, what do you do if you don't know the answer to a question?</p>	<p>I will follow up and get back to you next class, in an email, in discussion posting...</p> <p>Ask students how they would find that out – and set it as homework.</p> <p>Ask students what they think: "Can anyone answer this question?"</p>
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## Quality in the classroom

Quality is not just an administrative or management issue "but should be integrated into the core business of teaching and learning" (Gibb, 2003, cites Guest 1997). Quality should change the teaching strategies of teachers and the professional development opportunities for teachers. Teaching and learning is the core business of VET and quality should concern "the way in which teachers monitor their own performance, the way in which teachers gather feedback from students and make improvements to their courses and lessons" (13). This section includes a range of evaluation methods including Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs), to Mandarin/English Learner Evaluation of Teaching (LET) and peer review.

For more ideas about collecting information from students to improve teaching, consider the techniques described by Angelo & Cross in their book *Classroom Assessment Techniques* (1993). It is not about tests and assessment but about tools for getting feedback on student learning:

Through close observation of students in the process of learning, the collection of frequent feedback on students' learning and the design of modest experiments, classroom teachers can learn much about how students learn and more specifically, how students respond to particular teaching approaches. Classroom Assessment helps individual college teachers obtain useful feedback on what, how much, and how well their students are learning. Faculty can then use this information to refocus their teaching to help students make their learning more efficient and more effective (Angelo & Cross: 3).

Here are two of the many CATs that Angelo and Cross describe:

### Minute Paper

To the best of our knowledge, no other Classroom Assessment Technique has been used more often or by more college teachers than the Minute Paper. This versatile technique – also known as the One-Minute Paper and the Half-Sheet Response – provides a quick and extremely simple way to collect written feedback on student learning. To use the Minute Paper, an instructor stops

the class two to three minutes early and asks students to respond briefly to some variation of the following two questions: “What was the most important thing you learned during this class?” and “What important question remains unanswered?” Students then write their responses on index cards or half-sheets of scrap paper – hence the “Half-Sheet Response” – and hand them in (148).

## Muddiest Point

The Muddiest Point is...the simplest Classroom Assessment Technique imaginable. It is also remarkably efficient, since it provides a high information return for a very low investment of time and energy. The technique consists of asking students to jot down a quick response to one question: “What was the muddiest point in...?” the focus of the Muddiest point assessment might be a lecture, a discussion, a homework assignment, a play, or a film (154).

For both of these CATs, students hand in anonymous responses which are not marked but quickly scanned to pick up common problems. One VU teacher uses Post-It notes in his large class for Muddiest Point feedback. He asks the students to stick their responses to a sheet of newsprint while he leaves the room. On return, he collects the notes, scans them as he walks back to his office and responds to any problems in the next class.

There are many simple, effective methods such as these for collecting feedback on student learning and they don't have to be paper-based. Some teachers have found it useful to have a suggestion box in the room. Others use WebCT to evaluate their teachings. You can even combine evaluation with some physical activity.

If there is room, you can indicate a spot on the floor and say, “Today's learning outcome was X. If you feel as though we've achieved that, you can stand on the dot. I'd like you all to position yourselves in relation to the dot depending on how close you think we are to achieving this outcome”. Hopefully, no one will try to leave the room!

Draw a line down the blackboard/whiteboard and say, “I am leaving the room for 4 minutes”. On each side of the board, you should encourage the students to say something both negative (but constructive) and positive about the class. For example:

Write one thing you understand from today's class	Write one thing that is not clear from today's class
Write one thing that you would like to know more about	Write one thing you've heard enough about
Name one thing I should do more of	Name one thing I should stop
Name an activity that worked well	Name an activity that made no sense

Make sure there are a few tools to write with and that everyone contributes – leave that to the class monitor to organise! These sorts of activities can be used to supplement and extend the more general feedback you get from LET.

Open-ended questions either on paper or online can also provide interesting results:

- What went well? What went badly?
- What were the best things? What were the worst things?
- What (if anything) was particularly memorable?
- What change(s) would you suggest?
- If you had to choose 25% of the classes to miss, what would this include?

When to evaluate

- Do not wait until your last class.
- Do not necessarily wait until your class is over. Use 'application cards' after 15minutes.
- Evaluate half way through – to see if anyone's learning!

## References

- Angelo T A & Cross K P., 1993, *Classroom assessment techniques: a handbook for college teachers*, Jossey-Bass: San Francisco.
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- Brown, S., Race, P., Smith, B., 1997, *500 tips for quality enhancement in universities and colleges*, Kogan Page: London.