



Encouraging active learning by students USE item 9

“Learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much just by sitting in classes listening to teachers, memorizing pre-packaged assignments, and spitting out answers. They must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences and apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves.”

Chickering, A & Gamson, Z. 1987, *Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education*, [viewed 25th March 2009](#)

If your students highlight this as an area of concern in their Unit of Study Evaluation you might try the following:

- **Create learning activities where students work interdependently** in groups to understand materials/develop solutions/create a product etc. For ideas see the Faculty [Teaching with Groupwork](#) and [In-class groupwork website](#).
- Provide opportunities for students to **debate issues**. Debating provides an opportunity for students to take a particular instance and gather information to support their view. Structuring the process of the debate is important
- Use **guided brainstorming sessions to introduce or reflect on a topic**. This creative problem solving technique involves recording ideas on a topic initially without evaluation or discussion. Ideas are recorded (by the teacher or a student) and then analysed by the group to determine which ideas should be considered further. Students could be asked to write down a few thoughts on their own first before sharing their ideas with the rest of the group
- Use open ended **questions to promote discussion and encourage debate**. Provide opportunities for questioning, including giving students the opportunity to answer each other's questions
- Promote **discussion about the subject outside the classroom**. Incorporate tasks that involve students engaging with people about the subject matter outside of the classroom e.g. conducting an interview with a family member, or contacting someone in the industry
- **Use role-play exercises**. Use case studies that can be “role-played” by students rather than asking them to read the case study independently
- **Have students keep a journal** for the duration of the course. Students could be asked to record issues and ideas, and to reflect on their learning throughout the unit
- **Use class experiments**. For example, let students bid in an experimental auction when auction theory is covered.
- **Provide opportunities for students to acquire “hands-on” experience**
- **Problem solving** - let students discover information. Try asking students to state a proposed method for solving a problem rather than asking them for the solution to a problem. For example, ask "how should I begin to work on this problem?"
- **Organise students into small groups** and ask them to answer a question or make a decision
- **Create different ways for students to interact and engage with people other than their classmates** who have an interest in or know about the current subject being taught (live, by email or on the web)
- **Encourage your students to build a learning portfolio or keep a journal** to record their own thoughts, feelings and learning experiences
- Discover ways to help **your students observe**, either directly or indirectly, **the action or subject you are teaching**
- Find ways that allow students to **actually do what they need to learn to do** (directly, indirectly, using simulation, case studies or role play)