Introduction

Welcome to the Department of Politics and International Relations at Oxford.

This handbook is addressed to new members of the Departmental teaching staff and to others about to begin teaching Politics in the University. Existing members of the Department should also find it useful as a summary resource.

New appointees will also receive current editions of the following:

- the *Departmental Staff Handbook*
- the *PPE Undergraduate Handbook*
- the *Modern History and Politics Undergraduate Handbook*
- the *Notes of Guidance for Graduate Students and Supervisors in Politics*, or the *Notes of Guidance for Graduate Student sand Supervisors in International Relations*
- the *Notes of Guidance for Supervisors of Graduate Students in Politics*
- the year's programme of courses organized by the Institute for the Advancement of University Learning (IAUL).

All members of the Department are encouraged to consult one or both of the following two books:

John Biggs (1999) *Teaching for Quality Learning at University* Buckingham, Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press

Paul Ramsden (2nd Edition 2003) *Learning to Teach in Higher Education* London, Routledge

Four copies of each are available in the Social Science Library, located in the Manor Road building.

If you spot any errors, or have suggestions for improvements to this *Guide*, please contact the editor: bridget.taylor@politics.ox.ac.uk.

The Departmental Staff Handbook contains a lot of useful and important information; please use it alongside this Guide. The Department's website contains the most up-to-date versions of Departmental information together with news and announcements.

Part III: Teaching

5. Overview

Politics teaching at Oxford can be classified into five types:

- Lectures
- Tutorials
- Classes
- Workshops
- Examinations

5.1 Lectures and Lecturing

Lectures are the Department's main method of presenting basic material for the five core courses (*Comparative Government; Political Sociology; International Relations; British Politics and Government in the Twentieth Century; Theory of Politics*) in the undergraduate Politics syllabus. While student attendance at core course lectures is not compulsory, the Department strongly recommends that students attend the full cycle of lectures for the core courses they choose to take. Lectures are also provided for most optional courses. Other lecture courses are intended to provide interest and stimulation beyond the immediate confines of the syllabus. Lectures begin five minutes after the hour and finish five minutes before the next hour.

Most courses are of eight lectures, although the core courses usually comprise at least sixteen lectures over two terms. Many lecture series are 'circuses' given by a number of people. Lecturers consult the Chair and other members of the Panel covering the subject of their proposed lectures and discuss precisely what they propose to lecture on so that coordination can be maintained.

5.1.1 Organization

The Department devolves to Panels responsibility for ensuring that the lecturing and class teaching needs of the courses within their jurisdiction are met; to that end, Panels invite lecturers to give particular courses of lectures or hold classes for the coming year. New lecturers are encouraged to consult their Departmental mentor and the Head of Department about what lectures they might give in their first year or two.

The Department follows the general practice at Oxford of encouraging colleagues to give lectures, classes, and seminars which reflect their own research activities. You can, therefore, reasonably expect that part of your University teaching obligation will normally be discharged by the holding of graduate classes, or by specialist lectures. In such cases, you should liaise with those colleagues in the Department who have similar research interests but you should coordinate with the Head of Department, the Chair of the Panel and the course provider(s) covering your major research and teaching interests in order to ensure that the lecturing which you do is appropriate to the Department's needs with regard to level, area and subject.

The teaching timetables and room bookings are organized by the Department's administrative staff, primarily the Courses Manager, in consultation with the Director of Undergraduate Studies, the Director of Research Methods Training, the Directors of Graduate Studies and the Masters Course Directors. Each June and July the schedule of lectures and classes for the whole of the following academic year is planned, and days, times

and room bookings firmly established for Michaelmas Term. The detailed arrangements for Hilary and Trinity Terms are made in the second half of the preceding term. All academic staff are asked to reply to email circulars from Departmental staff giving details of courses they are participating in or organizing. The Department has a Lecture Timetable setting out the times for the core lectures for core and optional courses to avoid clashes between Politics lectures and those organised by other departments. If your lectures are core provision -- that is essential for those taking a given course -- they must be held at the time set out in the Lecture Timetable. The Director for Undergraduate Studies is responsible for organising the lecture timetable. Any invitation to lecture extended to non-members of the Department must be approved by the Department in advance via the Academic Administrator.

The *Politics and International Relations Lecture List* forms part of the *Social Sciences Lecture List*, which is published termly both in paper copy and on the web. In addition to showing the lecture programme for a given term, the lecture list also includes a provisional "General Forecast" for the whole academic year, which is of help in planning the year's work for both students and staff. Copies of the Lecture List are circulated to colleges the week before lectures start, and are also available in the Department of Politics and International Relations in Manor Road. The authoritative and most up-to-date version of the lecture list is that published on the Department's website. Each college's Politics Tutor should brief their students on the way the lectures are related to each other and to the tutorial programme.

5.1.2. Planning and preparing a lecture course

Time: Allow plenty of time. A rough rule of thumb is to allow 1 - 2 days per lecture for preparation, if these days are completely set aside for this purpose. If you are doing other things as well, you may need to think several months ahead.

Designing the lecture course: The basic requirement is to cover the syllabus (printed in the *PPE* and *MHP Undergraduate Handbooks*) at a level which will assist students in preparing adequately for examination, and to do so in an intelligible and accessible fashion. The lecture content must therefore be prepared with careful attention to the printed syllabus and previous examination questions. The existing *Course Outline and Bibliography* will help, especially in the case of lectures for core courses. Ask the person who has given the course, or a related course, previously if you can consult his or her lecture notes and/or overheads. Go over them carefully, and then discuss the organization of the course with your colleague. Note links with earlier and later courses, and explore the standard sources.

Structure: One of the most frequent—and quite thoughtful—complaints from students is that they find it difficult to follow either the structure of the course of lectures as a whole, or that of an individual lecture, or both. It is essential to decide upon a clear and logical line of development to the course of lectures as a whole, to emphasise it in the synopsis, and to keep referring to it as you proceed through the course of lectures. You might consider dividing a long course (anything over 8 - 12 lectures, say) into several parts, each containing several lectures, and each dealing with a reasonably self-contained block of knowledge.

5.1.3. What you need to produce

A short statement of the aims and objectives of the course of lectures. The first is what you are trying to do ("provide an introduction to the main aspects of the Israeli party system, with special reference to explaining party system change since 1970"), while the second is what your listeners should be able to do after having attended the course ("to enable

students to understand elementary problems about the Israeli party system and its place in Israel's political development"). You may of course quote directly from the printed syllabus.

A synopsis. Ideally, a synopsis should be in lecture-by-lecture format. Such a format is standard in respect of lectures in the core series. For other lecture courses, such a format is good practice: it helps students to know exactly where they and you are, and where they are going; and it assists college tutors in phasing and shaping tutorials. Where appropriate, the synopsis can be very closely similar to --- even identical to --- the printed syllabus.

May we change all uses of hyphens to dashes where appropriate—as in this case.

A reading list: This should preferably recommend several books as basic texts, and a number of more advanced treatments of aspects of the course, or contributions to academic debates about them with brief indications of their relevance.

Lecture handouts are essential. You might consider providing handouts covering those purely factual matters (such as an outline chronology of events) that are presented in a lecture only at the price of tedium and inefficiency; or perhaps some outline notes which can be added to by the students; or handouts which reproduce any complicated diagrams. If you use a lot of transparencies or PowerPoint slides (see the following Section) you should consider providing copies of them. The Department encourages lecturers to make their handouts / presentations available on the Department's website.

5.1.4. Giving lectures

You are recommended to attend one or more of the courses on teaching run by the Institute for the Advancement of University Learning (IAUL). Further details can be found on the IAUL website (www.learning.ox.ac.uk). The *Designing Lectures for Learning* course would give you an opportunity to present and discuss your plans for a lecture course.

Enthusiasm: You will have it, so make sure that you communicate it. Students can be genuinely inspired by an enthusiastic lecturer, and turned off by an unenthusiastic one.

Audibility: Some of the lecture theatres (especially in the Examination Schools) are large, and you need to be sure the back row can hear you—find out early on if they can. Consciously address those at the back of the theatre. Don't shout, but try to use a voice that carries; don't speak too fast, or drop your voice at the end of sentences. The IAUL (see Section 7) puts on a course to help with voice production techniques. Many people are helped by the use of a microphone, which is simple to use (ask in the Examination Schools). Look at your audience: talk to them and build the impression that you really are conversing with them as individuals. If you avoid their eyes by gazing at the far corners of the ceiling, you will disconnect from them and fail to communicate.

Legibility: Whether using the white board, the overhead projector (OHP)/data projector, make sure that what you are asking the audience to look at really is legible, in full detail, from all seats in the theatre. Practise yourself with the same information, and slides. Think about the sides and back of the theatre especially. Remember that some students may have poor eyesight, or be colour-blind.

Lighting: If you dim the lights to make slides and slides show up better, make sure it is still bright enough to allow note-taking. Practise controlling the room lights, and the blinds, etc.

Pointing: You need to be able to point at items on the board or screen without obscuring either from any seat, and without making yourself inaudible.

Structuring: The simplest advice is: 1. Tell your audience what you will say. 2. Tell your audience. 3. Tell your audience what you have said.

Use headings, sub-headings, sub-sub-headings. Delimit beginnings and ends. Emphasize key points by asterisks or boxes. Point out links to other parts of the same lecture, to other lectures in the course, and to other lectures they have had or will have.

Verbatim notes or not? Some people go into a lecture armed with a complete text version of what they want to say: if you are an inexperienced lecturer, you might be especially inclined to do so. However, the lecture is unlikely to succeed if the text is simply read out: try organizing your lecture around an oral development of key summary points, diagrams, or bullet-points, keeping essential information and references to hand. Slides helpfully provide the fixed points around which a more discursive—and often livelier—presentation can be built (but be sure the students have been more than just entertained).

Writing on the board is rarely helpful for most subjects in Politics: that which might be conveyed on the board is generally conveyed rather better in a hand-out or on a slide. If you do need to work through a sequence of propositions on the board, be careful not to talk with your back to the audience. Introduce the topic verbally, with eye-contact to the audience, then say you are now going to go through something on the board, and at the end of that section turn back to the audience and say (perhaps slightly differently) what you've done—remember: 1. Tell your audience what you will say. 2. Tell your audience. 3. Tell your audience what you have said.

Use of OHP or data projectors: Many new lecturers are used to giving conference talks, which are typically done with slides. However, the technique is generally unsuitable for a large undergraduate audience. The temptation to include too much material is great, with the risk that insufficient time is left for the audience to assimilate it. Use slides for illustrative material --- figures, graphs, tables, headings. Remember to be careful if you make a slide of a diagram in a book-- - the labelling may be too small to be visible at the back of the theatre and so needs to be re-printed in a larger font.

Pace: Lecturing too fast is the commonest error of novice lecturers. Your audience will take time to write useful notes, whilst novel or difficult concepts have to be spaced thinly if they are to be digested. *Always* make sure the audience is not falling behind: be prepared to ask, and to wait.

Final preparation: Oxford lecture courses are generally shorter than those at most other universities. There is little opportunity to repeat any material, or to spend time going through many illustrative examples, if the syllabus is to be covered; and most lecturers like to include some beyond-the-syllabus topics to stimulate interest. In consequence, a single lecture is likely to be concentrated. *To deliver it successfully, you need to have it absolutely clear in your own mind before you start.* You should plan on doing some final preparation the night before, and/or in the hour before the lecture.

Density: Although you will be going into the lecture ready to talk for 50 minutes while maintaining your concentration throughout, your audience will not be similarly focussed and resolute. Research shows that your audience's concentration span is likely to be closer to 20 minutes than to 50. Accordingly, the audience's receptivity and alertness will have decayed significantly after half an hour (as is also true of their tutors' receptivity and alertness in research seminars). However highly skilled and well-prepared the delivery may be, if the sheer density of information is too long sustained, the lecture might well fail. Try to find ways of introducing less dense parts, such as the following:

Variations within a lecture: You can reset students' attention clock by stopping and introducing a short diversion --- e.g. a slide; a demonstration; a discursive detour; or an appropriate, relevant (and preferably funny) joke.

Buzz groups can be helpful, even in a very large theatre. Try circulating everyone with a sheet of paper at the start of the lecture, and then ask them individually to answer a simple question (e.g. on what you have been talking about for the last 20 minutes). Then ask them to confer with their neighbours and answer the question again. Gather up the papers and look at them in the privacy of your office later --- the results may surprise you.

After these kinds of planned interruptions, the lecture can be resumed with a renewed high level of attention from the audience. Consider making at least one such break per lecture. It is often a good idea to stop half-way through and invite questions. If none are immediately forthcoming, just wait and say they can relax for a few minutes. A question or two might then appear, and the clock will have been restarted.

Equal Opportunities: The University and the Department are committed to equal opportunities in all aspects of our activities. Ensure there is nothing in your lectures that may be regarded as hostile or offensive by women, minority ethnic or disabled students to whose *individual* needs you should at all times be sensitive.

Mistakes: It is disconcertingly easy to make mistakes on the board, which is another good reason for committing as much of the essential information as possible orally, or via handouts or slides. Try to encourage an atmosphere in which mistakes are easily detected, acknowledged, and corrected. If you are challenged about a detail and are unsure, it is always best to acknowledge your uncertainty and to defer the point until the next lecture, to be quite certain you don't make everyone's confusion worse. Do not be afraid of the possibility of making mistakes – everyone does.

5.1.5. Video and taped material

Where appropriate to a lecture's purpose and structure, students appreciate the insertion of audio or video taped material in lectures. They can catch and sustain an audience's interest; provide excellent variations to make a lecture more digestible; and can be memorable. It is, perhaps, regrettable that lectures in Politics and International Relations should not immediately lend themselves to the techniques employed in one famous Oxford Physics lecture as a result of which a rocket became lodged in the ceiling of the Lindemann Lecture Theatre. Nevertheless, taped conversations of President Kennedy reviewing options for action in October 1962 can dramatically enhance a lecture on decision-making in conditions of crisis. Most students sit up and take note of tangible visualisations of what actually

happens but do ensure that your audience can actually see a video showing and hear an audio tape. If you are unsure whether they can see or hear, *ask them*.

5.1.6. Student feedback

Feedback on undergraduate tutorial teaching is organised by colleges. Feedback on lectures, seminars, classes and workshops is organised by the Department. It is vitally important that an as complete as possible set of feedback forms is collected for each course of lectures, seminars, classes and workshops. These are analysed in the Department, and the results considered and followed up by the relevant Panels and Course Directors as necessary.

The Department produces standard questionnaires suitable for lecture and seminar series presented by one or a small group of staff; and others suitable for lectures and seminar series presented in a 'circus' format – i.e. where different lecturers appear in different weeks. The Department should send these forms to lecturers automatically. If they do not arrive, please be in touch with the Department. Usually it will be desirable to make some changes to the form to reflect the exact structure and nature of the course. It is also vitally important that *before* you photocopy and distribute the form you fill in the title of the course and the name(s) of the academic staff as our experience is that students frequently don't supply this information. It is best to hand out these forms during the penultimate session of a course. Experience shows that the procedure that maximises returns is as follows:

- Hand out the questionnaires at the beginning of the session;
- Announce that time will be left at the end of the session for students to complete and hand in the questionnaires;
- Ask one member of the audience to take responsibility for collecting up the questionnaires and delivering them to the Department. Give this person a large envelope which you should take from them once forms have been collected;
- Ensure that you finish the session five minutes early;
- Ask audience members once again to complete the forms and hand them to the nominated person;
- Leave the room

The questionnaires are sent to either the Politics of International Relations Graduate Studies Secretary or the Secretary for Undergraduate Studies for consideration by the Director of Undergraduate Studies and the Panel chairs, in the case of undergraduate teaching; and the Director of Graduate Studies, and by the Directors of the Masters degrees, in the case of graduate teaching. Feedback on lectures is also reported and discussed at Panel meetings and in turn reported in summary to Sub-faculty meetings. In the case of poorly-received courses, the relevant officers will discuss the problem with the lecturer, with the aim of suggesting improvements.

The rate of return of questionnaires is usually low, and the results may be a long time in coming. It is essential to get an early indication of how your lectures are going from someone after the first week or so - perhaps from colleagues who are tutoring your course for the students in their college, from your own college undergraduates or graduates, or by asking your audience directly. Feedback is best when it arises as part of frequent exchanges between lecturers and audience members; that requires the cultivation of an informal, friendly, and non-intimidatory atmosphere. Some tools for seeking your own feedback from students can be found in IAUL's introductory booklet for new academic staff. All new staff receive a copy of this in September. It is also available on the IAUL website (www.learning.ox.ac.uk).

New members of staff have a mentor (see Section 6) who can provide feedback and support, as may Panel Chairs, the Director of Undergraduate Studies, the Director of Graduate Studies, and by the Directors of the Masters degrees.

5.2. Tutorials and tutoring

5.2.1. Introduction

Lectures are complemented by tutorials (at which student attendance is compulsory). A tutorial comprises a regular structured meeting between a small number of students (usually two) and one tutor for one hour. In PPE, undergraduate students typically have two tutorials per week; in MHP, they typically have three tutorials per fortnight. Unlike lectures, tutorials are *interactive*: they provide an opportunity for tutor and tutees jointly to examine the character, significance, and implications of a particular problem at the heart of each weekly essay read (or, sometimes, summarised) by the tutee to her/his tutorial partner and tutor. Tutees need to be taught that an essay is intended to be a structured analysis of a specific intellectual problem falling within a larger subject area. It should not, therefore, comprise a narrative or a discussion of a general subject, but should consider the implications of the particular question for that larger subject.

Graduate students on taught courses also have tutorials – fewer than one a week. These supplement the work done in seminars, classes and attendance at lectures, and give graduate students the opportunity to develop essay writing skills.

New members of staff are normally required to attend the Tutorial Teaching course run by the IAUL. A Tutorial Teaching course specifically for Politics and International Relations is usually run in the Department with IAUL in 0th week of Michaelmas Term (7th October in Michaelmas 2004), contact IAUL for further details. Other general courses are run during the year.

Graduates wishing to teach undergraduates must apply for inclusion on the Department's 'Tutorial Register' of graduate tutors and must be supported by their supervisor with an indication of the areas in which the student is qualified to teach. Acceptance on the Register is conditional on students taking a specified course from the IAUL. First-year graduate students and those on MPhil degrees are not normally accepted onto the register. Information about the Tutorial Register appears on the Department's website.

5.2.2. What tutorials are, and what they are for

A tutorial usually consists of a meeting between two students and one tutor for an hour; but sometimes there can be one, or three, students present - and sometimes they can go on for more than the hour. Tutorials serve many purposes, among them (from the tutor's point of view) being:

- to provide an opportunity for students to be questioned on the material they should have heard in lectures, thereby aiding the understanding and retention of the material;
- to stretch the students' understanding of the material, by questions which probe the limits of that understanding and seek to extend and broaden it;
- to help students develop critical habits of thought and study, by submitting their work to rigorous but friendly criticism;

- to provide an opportunity for students to put their own questions to their tutors, and to test their own understanding in discussions;
- to refine students' written and oral communication skills;
- to help students overcome misunderstandings and misconceptions, and to give them confidence in tackling problems;
- to encourage good habits of working to deadlines, and of punctuality;
- to provide students and tutors with excellent and almost instant feedback;
- to encourage students to work with and help each other.

5.2.3 Planning and preparing tutorials

Both in the arts and in the social sciences in Oxford, lectures have become much more important in the last decade. In the five core undergraduate subjects within Politics and International Relations, the lectures cover the main elements of the syllabus. Students are expected to attend lectures provided for the core courses and optional courses. For graduate students on taught courses, seminars are the most important form of teaching for core courses, while many options are also taught in seminars or classes.

Nevertheless, tutorials continue to lie at the centre of teaching provision for undergraduates and graduates in Politics and International Relations as they do in other arts and social sciences subjects. Undergraduates continue to depend heavily upon their college tutors for overall guidance through the course (as well as for much else besides --- see below). You need, therefore, to consider the progress of your students through the course(s) for which you are tutoring them and ensure that, as far as possible in the case of Prelims and core courses, your tutorials follow the plan of the lecture courses. As with a lecture course, students should be encouraged to see each course (and the entire pattern of courses that they intend to follow within Politics and International Relations) as a whole. Undergraduate and graduate students often acknowledge by the mid-point of their final year that they appreciate the relationships between the various courses that they have taken. But it is good teaching practice to help students gain some sense of these relationships throughout their time at Oxford. The point is no less important in the case of taught graduate courses.

5.2.4. What happens in a tutorial?

A good way of finding out is to ask a colleague if you might sit in on one or more of their tutorials - provided the students are warned in advance, and agree to the proposal. If you take this step, it's a good idea to have some pre-established focus for your observation and to arrange to talk to the tutor before and after the observation.

A tutorial typically comprises a meeting between the tutor and two students, both of whom arrive with completed essays; it ideally comprises a structured dialogue about one of those essays. One student typically then reads or summarises her/his essay, whose key claims, assumptions, logical rigour, and evidence are then discussed; the other student's essay is then typically taken in for marking: students greatly appreciate pointed and particular feedback, whether given orally in tutorials, in the form of marginal comments upon the essay itself, or in the form or a typed supplementary report. Students are, moreover, *entitled* to such feedback. They are also entitled to receive it *promptly*: essays should usually be returned within a week of being handed in or, at most, two weeks. Prompt return of essays is not a tutee's privilege, but a tutee's right and a tutor's obligation. Whether essays should be given a mark is a matter best dealt with jointly by the tutor and tutee concerned. The dominant view at Oxford is that the giving of a numerical grade may be helpful in the third year, but is

often harmful in the first year before many students have become fully accustomed to the experience of finding that they are no longer the A-level stars for whom academic work was unchallenging, but ordinary Oxford students trying to make progress in explaining problems that are complex, novel, and difficult.

Good tutorials result in clear recommendations made for improvement and in the raising of additional questions both about the problem examined and the wider subject. It is important to try and help the students themselves to see how to reach an answer, by building on the knowledge they in fact have (but may not realise). Tutors will also probe students' understanding of the material by questioning them; here it is important to provide clues, give them plenty of time, and wait for the answer. A good check on the effectiveness of your tutorial style is to see who is doing most of the talking: *you should not dominate the tutorial*, but instead aim to guide the students towards thinking through the analytical, conceptual, theoretical and empirical difficulties themselves.

College tutorial fellows will frequently be taking their undergraduate students for several subjects (following several lecture courses) during the year, and can make connections between them. This is very important in the Oxford system, which aims to develop an integrated understanding of the course as a whole—for example by the way the exams are organized in a linear rather than modular fashion. Tutors who may be teaching only one subject may also try to introduce useful connections and applications to other areas in the course.

Students need to be encouraged, especially during the first year. Many undergraduates will have been outstanding pupils at their schools, and may not have been stretched by their A-level courses. They may, accordingly, be dismayed to discover that there are aspects of their tutorial work that they cannot immediately and easily do. Tutors need to be sensitive to the different levels of preparation which the students will have received at school, and to reassure those with less that they are not expected to make rapid and flawless progress.

Some students face particular problems—for example dyslexic students, disabled students, and those whose first language is not English. Tutors should discuss such cases with appropriate authorities in the student's college (usually a senior PPE or MHP Fellow in the first instance) or, in the case of graduates, with the relevant Course Director or the Director of Graduate Studies. Information on special needs and support is given in *Essential Information for Students*, published annually by the Proctors and Assessor. Advice may also be sought from the University's Disability Office, on 80549 and at www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/disab or disability@admin.ox.ac.uk

Under-performance may occur for a variety of reasons, but lack of ability is rarely one of them: the median three A-level score of PPE and MHP Politics entrants is 30 points (AAA) and our graduates have the equivalent of top 2.1 or 1st class degrees. Sometimes it is a question of serious loss of confidence which a few single tutorials can help to rebuild. It can also happen that students become mildly, or even seriously, depressed. The University Counselling Service is very experienced and skilled in helping students with various problems. All colleges have various officers concerned with student welfare (Deans, Junior Deans, College doctors, nurses, chaplains) who may be consulted by tutors, with a view to referring their students to them. In case of uncertainty, you should consult your immediate colleagues in the PPE or MHP School or the College Secretary. Professional counselling

should not be thought of either by tutor or by student as a last resort, or as a mark of personal failure. On the contrary, it can clear away impediments to progress, and allow the student to perform to her or his intellectual potential: it is much better sought and given at an early stage when a problem may be more tractable than if left to fester.

5.2.5. Expectations

Good tutorials are interactive and cooperative, they should *not* be confrontational or intimidatory. Although informal and enjoyable, good tutorials are, intellectually serious. Given proper preparation both by tutor and tutee, they sharpen analytical awareness and skill, and build confidence. However, good tutorials do not just happen: they have to be created. That obliges both tutor and tutees to prepare thoroughly for them.

The tutor should work from the Department's *Course Outline and Bibliography* for the course being taught and provide helpful guidance at the end of the weekly tutorial on the subject, problem, and reading for the following week. S/he must also be open to questions from tutees who should receive their essays back from the tutor, with helpful comments, promptly.

The student must have acquired a good general knowledge of the subject within which the particular problem raised by the essay falls, have gained an appreciation of the scholarly debates about it and related problems within the subject, and have thought carefully about the interpretation which s/he wishes to advance about the problem in the essay. Students need to be taught that if all three stages are completed before beginning the essay, writing will be more straightforward and focussed than if they are not: before writing the opening paragraph, it is important for the writer to know what she intends to say in the closing one, and to know what argument will comprise the essay's core.

Tutors need to show and encourage students to demonstrate independence of thinking. At all three stages of essay preparation, reasoned resistance to the authority of the printed word is essential if the recycling of received wisdom is to be avoided – as it certainly should be after the first year if not always during it. That does not call for flippancy, or the mere offering of opinions. If the argument which a student presents in an essay is to be intellectually interesting and persuasive, she or he must read the set material in a thoughtful, critical and careful manner. Such a standard may seem too high to set for students approaching a subject area with little previous knowledge but the sooner they can be taught how to adopt a critical attitude to reading, the more profitable the series of tutorials is likely to be.

Students at Oxford need to come to understand that their task is to learn how to think, not what to think: their reasoned interpretations of questions about political concepts, institutions, or history are for them to determine. Students fresh from A-levels, or from education in some other systems, may also need to have explained to them the risks of plagiarism. One way to do so is to impress upon students that while intellectual freedom is important, so is intellectual honesty. Tutors need to show students how to support their own arguments about specified problems with accurate and honestly-obtained evidence.

In their first term, undergraduates tend to worry most about the aspect of their tutorial essays which matters least: their length. Essays should be as long as is necessary to provide a reasoned answer to the question set; as a rough guide, however, it is usually possible to write

such an essay in about 2-3,000 words. (In Prelims examinations at Oxford, most will have time for no more than 1,200 words for each answer.) Students need to be encouraged always to consider the problematic concepts in the title and to appreciate that no question is ever straightforward. They will need to be encouraged to appreciate that all questions contain and raise conceptual and methodological problems which require clarification before a structured, reasoned, argument can be thought through and written.

5.2.6. Feedback

During the tutorial itself, tutors should encourage tutees to take only a few summary notes; in the main, good tutorials should comprise a focussed dialogue. The best time for note-taking is *after* the tutorial when students can be encouraged to think through the tutorial with their tutorial partner, reconstructing notes of the key aspects of what has been said, assessing those parts of the subject and problem that are clearer and those that are not. Focussed conversations between tutees before and after the tutorial about the questions under discussion are vital to a tutorial's success. Outstanding questions arising from such conversations should be raised with the tutor at the beginning of the following week's tutorial (a phase of the tutorial for which tutors should explicitly make provision). Tutorials work best when tutors and tutees work together to ask new questions about difficult problems and try to find better interpretations of them. As with lectures, so the conveying of enthusiasm about teaching and research helps encourage students to build confidence about their own work.

Since good tutorials are interactive and not mini-lectures, they should provide excellent running feedback - not only for tutees but also for tutors who can learn from tutees about what constitutes effective teaching techniques. Most tutors will find themselves giving their students almost continuous advice on study skills, including the art of reading critically: opportunities for further exploration of tutorial teaching are offered by the IAUL.

It is important to keep a record of the students' performance so that progress can be judged. At the end of term, colleges have a reporting system, frequently in the form of written reports (especially in the case of tutoring done by other than tutorial fellows). You can also discuss your estimate of their achievements, and likely future results, with the students directly. Written report forms are generally issued by the Senior Tutor's Office in your college and are returned to that office.

Colleges encourage student feedback on tutorials through the use of a tutorial questionnaire. Tutorial questionnaires are generally returned either to the Senior Tutor or to the Head of the College, who may then discuss any relevant points with the tutors concerned. You should establish from your colleagues in the PPE or MHP School what the precise arrangements are in the college for which you are teaching. College Politics tutors are required to report annually to the Director of Undergraduate Studies on the feedback they receive on tutorials given by out-of-college tutors, and also on any wider issues relating to the courses and their delivery.

5.3. Classes

The Department provides classes for certain FHS courses to complement tutorial provision. Information about these is provided in the course outline for the course concerned and is communicated directly to college Politics tutors and to undergraduates at the appropriate time.

Many tutors find class teaching useful especially for revision purposes because it can build confidence and ease in presentation of their own arguments and reviews of debates in the literature. Many graduate students on taught courses will experience class teaching for optional courses. Careful thought needs to be given to the distinctive challenges which classes present for tutors and tutees. The IAUL runs a series for four lunchtime seminars on Small Group Teaching in Hilary Term.

In certain respects, running a one-hour class of eight students successfully is more difficult that taking a tutorial. Involving all students is necessary, but not easy. Long monologues by the class teacher are best avoided; interaction with members of the class should be the norm. One way to stimulate interaction might be to break off from consideration of the particular problem and set up 'buzz groups' to discuss different aspects of the problem (e.g. about how the discussion relates to some current research; to current political questions or problems in the real world; or about how it relates to other parts of the course in question or another course where parallel questions have arisen) before returning the class to its plenary format.

You can ask a student in a class on a rotating basis to make a brief presentation (for example of the outlines of a scholarly debate) perhaps with the aid of a whiteboard. This provides students with an opportunity to develop their presentation skills. It needs to be handled with great care. It is usually best to keep such presentations short and reasonably simple. Students may be extremely good at explaining things to other students but can often make errors in their presentation through inexperience or ignorance, which you will need to correct carefully. It is important to assure that students have equal opportunities to make presentations. Try to involve students in the class as fully as possible. Revision classes are particularly suited to asking two or three students in advance to present brief arguments in support of different approaches (rational choice / culturalist / institutionalist, for example) to a problem with the aim of building students' confidence in their own and each other's capabilities and knowledge.

Where students are performing as they should, always encourage them and show them that their efforts and thoughts are valued. It is essential for the health of the class and of the individual students comprising it that the tutor works hard to overcome any feelings of personal isolation and intellectual insecurity: to that end, fostering a class spirit is good practice. A number of tutors have found that encouraging the students to meet with each other for informal self-help sessions can be immensely productive. Such informal meetings are usually more relaxed in the absence of a tutor; enhance the students' learning and understanding; build their confidence; give them practice in the skill of working in a group; and can contribute to creating a lively intellectual culture in which discussion of academic work is regarded as normal and enjoyable.

If a student fails to hand in work, or is absent for a class without giving prior reason, alert your college colleagues in the PPE or MHP School, the Senior Politics Tutor, or in the case of graduate students, the particular student's University supervisor, Degree Programme Director, or Director of Research Training immediately by email or in writing.

5.4. Seminars

Seminars form the major teaching medium for graduate students on taught courses; and, of course, advanced research is also discussed in seminars. Tutors on taught graduate courses

will usually direct specified students to prepare and deliver seminar papers in specified weeks in such a way that each student in a seminar group makes a presentation at least once a term. Students should be encouraged if not required to make use of a projector or the whiteboard appropriately, and to supply appropriate handouts as an aid to their presentation. In some cases it may be most appropriate for the tutor to respond to the seminar paper(s) delivered; in others to ask another student to respond.

Research seminars, with papers given by members of the Department, academics from other Oxford departments, or visitors to the University are central to the intellectual and research life of the Department. Good practice is essential in these seminars; the Department's and the University's reputation can be severely compromised if graduate students or visitors have bad experiences.

If you are organising or hosting a research seminar it is vital to pay attention to the following points:

- ensure that the term's programme is accurate and published well before the first session;
- ensure that room furniture is suitably organised with good lines of visibility, that the overhead or data projector is working, that whiteboard markers are working, and so on;
- ensure a supply of water and drinking glasses for speakers;
- when chairing or conducting discussion, ensure that everyone in the room feels able to participate if they wish to do so – don't just jump straight in with the first question when the paper giver finishes, but pause, invite everyone to respond, and indicate as appropriate how the discussion will be conducted;
- encourage speakers to identify themselves (first AND second names and affiliation) before speaking. Do not use only first names as this can mystify as well as exclude audience members;
- keep looking around the room, and note who seems to wish to speak; ensure from time to time that everyone in the seminar is aware of how many people are waiting to speak, and don't be afraid to time limit speakers as necessary.

5.5. Workshops

Workshop teaching is important both for undergraduates and graduates. Undergraduates are required to complete a Data Analysis and IT project in their first year. Undergraduates are instructed in the use of software packages for the analysis of datasets in workshop settings. The graduate research methods training programme is delivered largely in workshops.

Workshop teaching emphasises practical work by students in a classroom or computer room setting under the eye of and with the help of a tutor. The aim is the acquisition of skills and the practical understanding of methods and techniques, and the theory that underlies them. Workshop teachers need to pay particular attention to the following:

- Devise exercises that are engaging;
- Be very clear what skills and techniques the exercises are designed to foster – put a short description of these on a handout;
- Give very clear instructions so that groups and individuals can get straight into the work without having to spend too much time trying to understand the task and its aims. Put these instructions in writing on a handout;

- Think out in advance how you are going to organise the process of breaking into groups or teams or partnerships so that this occurs smoothly;
- Give adequate time for the task, but not too much time – timing should be designed so that participants have to work hard for the whole duration of the exercise;
- Think very carefully about how to organise the feedback and debriefing function. Asking groups and individuals to comment on their experience, report on what was difficult and what was not, is useful and engaging techniques. But as the teacher you are aware of aspects of the work that participants might not be aware of. You can draw these out of or put them into the discussion – it is best to supplement the workshop discussion with handouts;
- As with all teaching, make sure the room furniture is organised so that it helps not hinders the session;
- Ensure that projectors, board and cleaners etc. are working so that the impression of professionalism not shambles is maintained.

5.6. Supervision of graduate students

The Department appoints a University supervisor to each graduate student. He or she is responsible for giving specific instruction and advice, has a broad responsibility for each student's course of study, and monitors overall progress. Further details can be found in *Notes of Guidance for Students and Supervisors in Politics* and *Notes of Guidance for Students and Supervisors in International Relations.*

The Social Sciences Divisional Board has agreed that, in respect of supervision of research studies the norm is for University Lecturers to supervise four students, and CUF and faculty or department lecturers to supervise three. Post holders in established chairs are expected to supervise four students. The normal maxima are eight students (for holders of established chairs and University Lecturers) and six (for CUFs and faculty or department lecturers).

In addition staff should expect to supervise one or two MPhil students at any one time.

For the purposes of these norms MSc students count as research students.

5.6.1 Responsibilities of the University Supervisor

The University supervisor for students on taught and research courses has ***principal responsibility for the student's academic and intellectual progress***, although other members of the graduate studies team (course providers, the Course Director, course tutors) are also involved with this. Note that the following refers primarily to Politics. There are some differences in the supervisor's role in International Relations. These are detailed in *Notes of Guidance for Students and Supervisors in International Relations.*

The University supervisor is responsible for:

1. **Meeting the student at the beginning of every term to ensure that the timetable for the term is clear and that the student has a clear plan of work;**