

Starting & Finishing Lectures

Lecture openings lay an important foundation for the subsequent teaching process. On a personal level, they are relevant to establish a foundation for the upcoming collaboration – both between lecturers and students, but also among the students. On a content level, openings can serve to structure topics, arouse interest and activate students. Furthermore, effective closures of lectures consolidate the learning. This ensures that students leave with a cohesive understanding and are prepared for the next steps in their learning journey.



Opening a Lecture Sequence

The introductory session to a course can relate to the following dimensions:

- The people involved with their competences, concerns, feelings, etc.;
- The relationships and interactions between the people involved (incl. work structure);
- The learning objectives and learning content to be addressed;
- Framework conditions, context and influencing factors of the environment.

According to the model of theme-centred interaction, optimal cooperation or lively learning requires a balance between the dimensions stated above. In general, lecturers tend to pay most attention to the learning content. However, especially during the first contact with students, it is equally important to explicitly address individual concerns and the organization of group processes respectively to create clarity, transparency and trust in this regard. This can relate, for example, to the role of the lecturer or behaviour in the classroom (such as active participation, collaboration in group work, etc.).

(see Keller, 2020, p. 19-23 & Ruth Cohn Institute, 2015, p. 8)



Opening a Lecture Unit

There are no one-size-fits-all rules for designing the introduction to a lecture unit.

However, this does not mean that the opening of a lecture should be organized arbitrarily: it is determined particularly by the learning objectives, the students and the lecture content that has been worked on so far or is to be worked on in future units. The following considerations can support lecturers in organizing their openings:

- Raising stimulating theses, cases or problems awakens in students the desire to resolve the situation. Such an "imbalance" can generate attention and initiate thought processes. The basic principle is that *learning begins with questions, not answers*.
- Pointing out concrete lecture objectives and their relevance can also help to sharpen the students' attention and interest in the topic. Such objectives can relate to answering the questions raised. Please note that learning objectives should be communicated, formulated and embedded in a language appropriate to the students, but not necessarily at the beginning of lectures.
- Introductions to teaching units offer the opportunity to activate students' prior knowledge – for example through surveys, think-pair-share, or brainstorming with reference to the questions raised.

(see Keller, 2020, p. 23)



Closing Lectures

Similar to the design of introductions to lecture units, there are no one-size-fits-all rules for designing closings of lecture units. They can relate to the following aspects or combinations thereof:

- **Recapitulation:** Summarizing key content and highlighting a common thread in the teaching material can help students to consolidate content / connections and identify gaps in their understanding. At this point, for example, the questions raised at the beginning of the lecture can be answered conclusively. References to the learning objectives and/or to appropriate examination tasks (in the sense of constructive alignment) further emphasizes the importance of the learning content discussed.
- **Learning assessment:** The (regular) review of students' learning progress is essential for both lecturers and students. With the help of Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs), this can be done easily and quickly. Common forms are the Minute Paper, where students summarize the most important insight for them and formulate an open question, and the Muddiest Point, where students formulate the point that is most unclear to them. Further CAT can be found [here](#).
- **Teaching evaluation:** Feedback from students can relate not only to the content and their understanding but also to the organization of the lecture. Common methods for this are flashlights or, especially in online teaching, the evaluation wheel. Further methods for non-institutional teaching evaluation can be found [here](#).
- **Outlook:** In addition to localization in the lecture structure or the subject area, questions can be raised at the end of a lecture unit based on the content covered. This serves as an invitation to students to further engage with the materials and builds a bridge to further learning units.
- **Organization:** Information on dates, deadlines, materials, availability, etc. informs students about organizational aspects.

Similar approaches and considerations can be used to organize the conclusion of teaching sequences. In addition, this "final" closing could be used to support students in taking examinations / assessments and to gather starting points for the further development of one's own teaching by understanding students' learning processes in greater depth. A possible method to cover these objectives is the [market walk](#).

Sources

- Angelo, T.A. and Cross, K.P. (1993). *Classroom Assessment techniques: A handbook for college teachers* (Second Edition). Jossey-Bass.
- Euler, D., & Hahn, A. (2014). *Wirtschaftsdidaktik* (3., aktualisierte Aufl). Haupt.
- Keller, M. (2020). *Didaktischer Transfer III* [lecture slides]. Institut für Wirtschaftspädagogik.
- Ruth Cohn Institute. (2015). *Was ist TZI? Themenzentrierte Interaktion*. [Link](#)

Further Resources

- Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching. *Classroom Assessment Techniques*. [Link](#)
- Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching. *First Day of Class*. [Link](#)