

Sharing of Good Practices in other Nominated Courses

Common Core courses aim at broadening students' horizons beyond their major discipline of study. Instructors often face the great challenge of how to explain the concepts to students who have not been exposed to the subject before, and to arouse their interest in studying the subject, which to some students may look useless, difficult or incomprehensible. The Selection Committee has the pleasure to share the following good pedagogy as noted from the nominated courses that could deal with this challenge effectively.

Videos: One of the courses produces a series of micro-movies (videos) to help explain the subject knowledge through everyday life examples collected by senior-year students. Students become interested in learning more about the subject as the materials in these micro-movies are interesting, easy to understand and highly related to their real-life experiences.

Group Projects: Some courses use group projects to help students connect lecture materials to the real world, to promote teamwork and collaborative learning, and to empower them to take initiatives throughout the learning process. To be effective as a student learning activity, these group projects often exhibit these characteristics:

- The group has a deliberate mix of students from different academic disciplines, years of study or countries
- There are clear guidance and instructions on the group project
- Students are given the flexibility to choose their own topics
- The course has measures to check and reduce free-riders, such as clear guidelines for intra-group peer evaluation; a timely schedule for self and peer assessment; a feedback process for teams and individuals on issues uncovered during the assessment

Peer Tutors: One of the courses selects students who demonstrated excellent performance in the same course in previous terms to be peer tutors to support student learning. With appropriate training from the instructors, these peer tutors offer useful assistance to current students based on their experiences, and to the instructors based on their close observations of students' progress.

Visualizing Abstract Concepts: Some instructors find it easier to explain very abstract theories and imaginative concepts by giving a clear physical picture of these concepts:

- One instructor collects physical pictures through a wide search for online multi-media materials to supplement lecture notes to explain or enrich the concepts.
- Another instructor uses visualization tools that are often used in research to show to students the different forms of a structure in the 3-D space. This helps to answer students' puzzle about dramatically different forms of the same structure they would often see in textbook.