# **Key steps for planning effective tutorials**

Planning a tutorial means not only planning the aims and content of the tutorial but also what the students will do, the resources they will use and how they will work together.

These seven steps cover the key areas that need to be addressed in a tutorial plan.

## Identify your aims and learning outcomes

Learning outcomes describe what students should be able to do by the end of the tutorial and so will help you to plan the session. They are related to, but different from, teaching aims, which instead describe broadly what the tutorial is about and its overall purpose. You can learn more about learning outcomes in this [guidance](https://ctl.ox.ac.uk/effective-learning-outcomes).

## Allocate (flexible) time for each tutorial activity

Have a plan for what activities will take place during the tutorial, who will be actively involved (individual students/small group work) and approximately how much time each activity is likely to take. This might mean identifying essential discussion questions, short exercises, setting aside time for summaries, student questions, and introducing the next tutorial. Allow time to draw things together at the end of the tutorial. However, it is best to be flexible as tutorials won’t always follow your plan. Having a tutorial plan that identifies essential topics and any that can be skipped or added if necessary is a useful way to ensure key content is covered, whilst allowing some flexibility for the unexpected.

## Identify how students will actively participate

The best way to avoid tutorials turning into ‘mini-lectures’ is to plan in opportunities for students to actively contribute to discussions. When planning the tutorial, try designing exercises for students to work through in groups or pairs, structuring the tutorial around discussion prompts, or asking students to come prepared to present or explain an aspect of their tutorial work. This will encourage all students to participate in the tutorial and to learn from each other as well as the tutor.

## Factor in student diversity

Students will bring different prior learning experiences, interests, confidence and motivation, amongst other things, to tutorials. Actively recognising this diversity is important and it can be achieved in numerous ways, for example, by providing different ways for students to engage in tutorial discussions (eg individual/pair/group work), by using a range of learning resources to support tutorial work/discussions and activities, by providing opportunities for students to pursue topics of particular interest to them, and so on.

## Identify resources needed and how these will be used

Include in your plan any details of resources that will be needed to support the tutorial. This includes resources that students are expected to use in preparation for the tutorial and those that will be needed during the tutorial itself (eg whiteboard, flipchart, video, models/artefacts, diagrams). Where appropriate, consider using a range of learning resources. [Oxford Reading Lists Online (ORLO)](https://www.ctl.ox.ac.uk/oxford-reading-lists-online-orlo) enables you to create digital reading lists linking to a range of resources and improves accessibility for students.

## Identify how feedback on submitted work will be provided

The quality of tutorial work submitted by your students will tell you something about their understanding of the tutorial topic, concepts or problems and will provide a baseline for your tutorial planning. When planning, it’s important to also include how and when you will provide feedback to students on their tutorial work. For example, this may be provided in the form of written/typed comments on students’ work and/or verbal feedback during the tutorial. Ensure your feedback clearly identifies strengths, prioritises areas for future improvement and is articulated in ways to motivate and encourage your students. Bear in mind the differences between giving written feedback to a student compared with providing them with verbal feedback in front of their peers. [Giving effective feedback](https://ctl.ox.ac.uk/giving-effective-feedback) has further ideas on ways to structure written and verbal feedback.

## **Factor in student learning requirements**

Check with the organising tutor whether students have specific learning requirements, as this may mean that teaching adjustments are essential which could impact your ideas for the tutorial plan. Some students may have a [Student Support Plan](https://academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/disability/student-support-plan) outlining the adjustments they require to teaching, and this should be shared with you by the Disability Coordinator in their college, although in some instances students may wish to share their plan with you themselves. [The guide to supporting disabled students](https://academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/supporting-disabled-students) includes details of common reasonable adjustments. Ensuring that your tutorial handouts and materials are in an accessible format can reduce the need to retrospectively make individual adjustments to your tutorials and will benefit all students.

**You may find it helpful to use a planning template to design your tutorial(s). An example of a tutorial planning template is provided on the next page.**

## Tutorial planning template

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Tutorial context** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Term and date of tutorial: | | |  | | | | Type of tutorial (revision; 1st year; problem-solving etc.) | | | |  | |
| Tutorial length (mins): | | |  | | | | | | | | | |
| Mode (online/face-to-face): | | |  | | | | | | | | | |
| Focus of tutorial (eg topic(s) to be covered): | | |  | | | | Are you using your own teaching materials or those ‘inherited’ from a colleague(s)? | | | |  | |
| **Your students** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Number of students: | | |  | | | | Year group: | | | |  | |
| Student diversity:  Existing knowledge of topic(s)?  Home/international students?  etc | | | How will you create an inclusive learning environment for these students? | | | | | | | | | |
| Do any students in your tutorial group have a [student support plan](https://academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/disability/student-support-plan)? If so, how will this influence your tutorial planning? | | |  | | | | | | | | | |
| **How will you make use of students’ submitted work to inform your tutorial plans and feedback provision?** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| * What are your tutorial aims? * What elements of the work did students find easy and/or problematic? * Did their work meet your expectations? * How do you plan to provide your students with feedback? | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1. **Briefly describe what your students should be able to do by the end of the tutorial – these are often expressed in the form of ‘intended** [**learning outcomes**](https://www.ctl.ox.ac.uk/learning-outcomes)**’ (ILOs). A small number of ILOs is appropriate for an individual tutorial:** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ILO1  ILO2  ILO3 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1. **What types of activities do you have planned for the tutorial? How do these relate to your students’ learning needs and the tutorial ILOs?** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Activities:  Approx. timings:  Resources needed: |  | | | |  | | |  | | |  |
| 1. **Use the space below to make notes during or after the tutorial (you may find these notes useful to inform your termly OxCORT report, for example, comments on the quality of students’ submitted work, their level of engagement during the tutorial etc)** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Student 1** | | **Student 2** | | **Student 3** | | **Student 4** | | | **Student 5** | **Student 6** | | |
|  | |  | |  | |  | | |  |  | | |