

KEY DIMENSIONS OF PRACTICAL WORK

1. Equipment and Facilities

- Is the best use being made of the space available?
- Are adequate amounts of the appropriate equipment and materials available?
- Is the equipment well set-up and working properly?

2. Health and Safety

- Are health and safety guidelines explicit and understood by all staff and students involved?
- Are all necessary safety measures observed at all times?
- Is everyone aware of emergency procedures and how to obtain first aid or other assistance?

3. Aims and Design

- Are the aims of the practical session(s) explicit and clearly articulated?
- Do knowledge and skills focused on in the practical(s) complement and extend those acquired by the students in the rest of the course?
- How in step with one another are the lecture(s) and practical session(s)?
- Is there a clear structure with well-sequenced activities for the practical(s)?
- Is the allocation of time for the different elements of the practical(s) realistic?

4. Preparation and Briefing

- Are both demonstrators and students given enough advance information for preparation?
- Does the written guidance help students achieve the objectives of the practical(s)?
- Do students understand how to carry out any follow-up activity and/or assessed tasks?

5. Interaction

- Are staff sufficiently competent to help students acquire the specific knowledge and skills entailed in the practical(s)?
- Is there an adequate staff-student ratio during the practical(s)?
- Are student groupings flexibly organised (size and composition) to suit the tasks?
- Are there opportunities for students to review outcomes and /or any unexpected results?

6. Assessment

- Are any assessed tasks well-matched to the overall objectives of each practical?
- Is marked work appropriately weighted in terms of the time and effort students need to give to the task?
- Is assessed work returned promptly?
- Are students given adequately detailed feedback which shows them how to improve?

7. Monitoring

- Are demonstrators encouraged to reflect on their own practice and effectiveness?
- Is there a system for staff to relay any difficulties encountered by students?
- Do you take stock periodically and identify what improvements can be made?

Figure 5.1