7 Key Teaching Methods in Masters Education

The Masters degree uses many approaches to attain effective learning, but when it comes to key teaching methods, seven have become universal.

Since most Masters courses last only one year, the academic experience can be quite intensive compared to an undergraduate degree. As a Masters student you will begin to specialise in topics that interest you, or explore a particular area of research which you may wish to undertake for further study. The more specialised nature of a Masters qualification provides students with the precise academic and theoretical framework to tackle a specific area. Therefore, unlike an MBA where having an undergraduate or similar degree in the same or similar field is not required, in Masters programmes that is often obligatory, because studies are based on the presumption of previously acquired knowledge.

Curricular approaches

Teaching and learning methods at postgraduate and undergraduate level can be very different. How you are taught will largely depend on your course content, level of study and your academic tutor, although in all cases you will be required to undertake a significant amount of independent study.

Studying at Masters level involves a greater emphasis on self-directed study than at undergraduate level. You will need to think and study independently, conduct more extensive background reading and defend your ideas in seminars and tutorials.

Independent study is a key element of a Masters learning process. You will be expected to take responsibility for your own learning and you will need to manage your time effectively to fit this around your academic timetable, and all your other activities.

Independent study does not necessarily imply solitariness because there are plenty of opportunities to study in groups, and many courses actively promote peer mentoring and peer-assisted study schemes.

Learning support

Faculty and staff, at any university, have appointed office hours when you can ask for their help in transitioning to postgraduate study. You can get help developing your skills in academic writing or research, or any other skills specific to your degree programme. An essential advantage of a good Masters programme, that you should actively look for, is that you can build a lasting relationship with your teaching and academic staff during your time there. You should be able to approach your professors and university staff with any questions about your course, your study or any aspect of your work.

Peer support

Peer support schemes are support structures led by students, for students. They aim to give you a sense of belonging and identity with the university and, ultimately, to enhance your student experience.

Check out: Reasons to do an International Masters

Many subject areas have dedicated postgraduate drop-in sessions and there are frequent opportunities for Masters’ students to network with their peers.

Your personal academic account

Nowadays it has become a staple that all universities have their own information management systems where students log in with their own accounts. There, you will usually have access to your schedule, workshops and online support on academia, employability and well-being. Such programmes can help you hone the skills you’ll need to successfully complete your degree programme, including how to research, reference and write in an academic style.

The seven key teaching methods
But how exactly is the Masters taught? What are the tools and methods used to confer knowledge and skills? Here are the “holy seven”:

1. **Discussions**: Students are encouraged to discuss any theory that they have read in class or independently, weighing its merits or considering its application in the professional world.

Discussions are an important part of the overall Masters experience, giving you not only access to other viewpoints on the same subject matter, but also enabling you to consider different rationale and to become familiar with psychology and logic, hugely important elements of professional post-study life.

Classes sometimes include students hailing from more than 40 countries, thus forming a group of multicultural participants which makes exchanging and working in groups all the more enriching.

2. **Laboratory and practical learning**: Learning by doing is an essential part of many courses, particularly if you are studying for a science, engineering or health-related degree. These sessions aim to give you an insight into a working environment, knowledge of experimental methods and techniques and an understanding of the academic material taught on the course. You may be asked to work independently, in pairs or as part of a small team and for most courses, where a practical element is incorporated, you will be required to submit a piece of work which will count towards your overall result.

3. **Field trips**: Fieldwork or field trips are a compulsory element of some courses. Similar to laboratory and practical work, fieldwork can help you put your theoretical knowledge into practice. Trips can range from one-day sessions to longer, more in-depth expeditions, both domestically and abroad, that allow you to explore specific areas or learn particular techniques.

Each course differs but you may need to pay extra for your field trips, so keep that in mind when budgeting for the year.

4. **Problem-based/Enquiry-based learning (PBL/EBL)**: PBL or EBL groups are presented with a real-life problem or scenario and you will need to work as a team to investigate potential solutions while identifying what skills or knowledge you need to effectively manage the situation.

5. **Projects**: You will be asked to complete a final project. You will normally be able to choose, within the parameters of your project, how much time to spend on it. In some cases you may be asked to give a formal presentation of your project’s results.

Check out: [The Value of Masters Education](#)

6. **E-learning**: Many courses include online components, which can be an assessed part of your degree.

Many schools now have a virtual learning environment of some sort. This means you might study online, using material created by your lecturers, download papers and take online tests, or access relevant audio and video material. In this technical age, many schools around the world are creating technology-rich learning spaces across campuses, including access to a wide range of digital resources available only at postgraduate study level.

7. **Co-curricular activities**: According to the 2015 Global Management Education Graduate Survey M by the Management Admission Council (GMAC), involvement in co-curricular activities is another way for students to build upon the knowledge, skills, and abilities they are developing in their graduate management programmes and further develop their soft skills. Student, career and professional clubs, internships, voluntary activities, work projects, diversity and multicultural events, and academic competitions are the most common co-curricular activities in which students are involved. The survey shows, for example, that a whopping 61% of Master in Management students opt to participate in internships, 40% in diversity and multicultural events, 36% in study-abroad programmes, and 30% in student career and professional clubs.

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