

## Alternative ways of organising medium-sized and large seminars

| Organisation   | Activities   |
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| <b>Individual work</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Silent reading</li> <li>• Calculations</li> <li>• Preparing individual answer to question set</li> <li>• Recalling; thinking; working on own ideas</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Working in pairs</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare answer to a question</li> <li>• Clarification of ideas</li> <li>• Compare individual answers and arrive at a joint answer</li> <li>• Marking each other's work</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Working in threes</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As with pairs</li> <li>• Speaker/listener/observer</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Working in fours or fives</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debating topic and arriving at a team view</li> <li>• Preparing answer for plenary session (use of flip-chart paper)</li> <li>• One or more members present team view to whole seminar</li> <li>• Project team with division of labour</li> </ul>                                   |
| <b>'Pyramid' or 'snowball group'</b><br>(combining groups or adding individuals to groups one-at-a-time) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group problem solving</li> <li>• Bringing together and comparing work/answers/views of small groups</li> <li>• Getting the different constituent groups to focus on a particular aspect of a topic and then bringing the aspects together to form an overall view/report</li> </ul> |
| <b>'Fishbowl'</b><br>(the 'fish' discuss an issue, while outside observers note criteria used etc)       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group problem solving &amp; discussion</li> <li>• Exploration of an issue</li> </ul>  |
| <b>'Envoys' or 'crossover groups'</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One person from each group joins a different group to inject new ideas into discussion.</li> <li>• Groups are split up and re-formed to share ideas.</li> </ul>   |

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| <p><b>Formal debate</b><br/>(four speakers, formal debate rules, contributions from floor, vote at the end, possibly vote at beginning also and then two votes compared)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals assigned roles in advance, so that they can prepare their speeches.</li> <li>• All students required to prepare the topic in advance. Then groups assigned to each side and prepare their speeches.</li> <li>• Individuals then chosen by tutor or by lots to make the speeches.</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>'Your witness'</b><br/>(modelled on Radio 4 programme)</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A panel of students is chosen, primed to represent different views on a topic. Other students are given a specific part of the topic to prepare and to be the 'expert'. They are called upon one-at-a-time and the panel quizzes them. Tutor chairs the proceedings.</li> <li>• Seminar split into several panels and the 'experts' move from group to group. Each group then prepares short report in the light of the evidence it has gleaned. Reports are then presented to the whole seminar or handed in to the tutor for marking.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Quiz show</b><br/>(individuals or preferably in teams)</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are many shows that could be copied or adapted, such as University Challenge, The Weakest Link, Who Wants to be Millionaire? or Brain of Britain.</li> <li>• Students could prepare specific topics</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Presentation with primed respondents</b></p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An individual student is assigned to prepare a short presentation/paper and one side of A4 of key bullet points/diagrams/ equations, which are distributed to the rest of the group in advance or tabled. Another student is assigned to be the respondent. The rest of the students are assigned to particular aspects of the topic and asked to prepare one question.</li> <li>• Two or more students are assigned to prepare particular aspects of a topic, and then as above.</li> <li>• Advance reading is done, and then the final draft of the paper is prepared in small groups, and one student is allocated to make the presentation.</li> </ul> |

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| <p><b>Role playing</b></p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students allocated specific roles and given a scenario. (Examples of role playing include: price setting under oligopoly, wage negotiations, international trade negotiations, pre-Budget ministerial/interest group negotiations.) The tutor can introduce new evidence as the exercise progresses.</li> <li>• Watch a video with at least two points of view. In small groups, students each take on the role of someone in the video and debate the issues.</li> </ul>                                     |
| <p><b>Game, simulation or experiment</b><br/>(there are many games or simulation exercises available)</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole class games (single session)</li> <li>• Games in small groups (single session)</li> <li>• Games played lasting several weeks, where a round is played either weekly or at less frequent intervals. The time taken playing a round in class may be only a few minutes. Much of the playing/negotiation can take place outside the class.</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Computer lab session</b><br/>(using instructional software, such as WinEcon or the Virtual Economy, or using data sets and/or statistical packages: see Economics Network site for details of software)</p>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tutor led. Tutor introduces the software (maybe using a data projector) and then students work on an assigned task, individually or in pairs.</li> <li>• Tutor supported. Students work at their own pace and the tutor is available or provide support of the student is stuck or has questions.</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Virtual seminar</b><br/>(distance-based learning, using chat room facilities of a virtual learning environment/conferencing system, such as Blackboard or WebCT: students contribute from a terminal on site or at home)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tutor led, real time. Students log on at a particular time and then the tutor leads a debate, with students contributing on-line. Can be done anonymously, with students identified by number or fictitious name. Seminar can last for a normal period of time.</li> <li>• Tutor led, open time. Student log on when they please and contribute postings to a debate.</li> <li>• Student led (no tutor present): either real time or open time. Tutor can come online afterwards to post comments.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Video</b><br/>(preferably not longer than 20 minutes)</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students then prepare answers to set questions and report on them.</li> <li>• Quiz on video material</li> <li>• Debate (whole or small groups) on issues raised. Students can be allocated specific roles.</li> </ul>   |

## Tasks for individuals followed by work in groups

- read short case study
- mark off checklist
- study data; rank, rate or compare values
- construct a model / hypothesis, etc.
- use model to demonstrate scenario
- observe group processes
- make decisions / proposals about a case
- make choices between policy alternatives and write brief justification
- analyse text or compare opposing extracts
- work on allocated individual task
- suggest thesis / proposition and prepare the case for it
- solve a problem
- work through written mathematical proof/calculation/problem with one or two mistakes, spotting mistakes.
- write a summary of something
- consider a scenario that can then be analysed by the group

## Tasks for groups or sub-groups

- debate with the tutor, other students; argue the relative merits of a proposition
- make / discuss a presentation
- prepare a case in sub-groups for presentation to whole seminar group, perhaps with different sub groups preparing opposing cases, followed by a formal debate
- share anxieties; clarify misunderstandings
- list similarities and differences (items from reading, from observation in groups, from relevant experience); rank and relate items
- work through exercise and compare individuals' answers
- give students an answer and get them to derive a question, drawing on lecture material
- establish criteria for marking work
- discuss essay plans; study methods
- mark own or each other's essays or other work
- generate ideas; question them; categorise them
- clarify problem; solve problem; evaluate problem
- read and evaluate a piece of text/data set/newspaper article
- watch a video with prepared focal questions or tasks
- report back on a previous session