

What we've learned about running teachers' courses

Practical tips on setting up courses for teachers at your museum

When you're planning the course content...

Set out clear **aims** for the course – one main objective and **three or four key learning outcomes** that will also help you evaluate your success.

Offer tools and activities that are **relevant** (curriculum-linked and adaptable to students of differing abilities) and **available** to take away and use immediately.

Plan a programme with about 60% teacher talk and 40% facilitator talk on the course. Teachers want opportunities to **share their own practice** and hear from peers.

Include activities that appeal to different learning styles, with a chance to try **activities their students will be doing**. Plan an 'energiser' activity straight after lunch.

Pilot your course with teachers – and provide evidence that the activities you suggest during the course have been tested with students.

When you're marketing the course...

Schedule courses later in the week, avoiding the start of term and exam preparation time (e.g. May). 10am-4pm timing works well and 15-20 participants is optimum.

Show how **relevant and vital** the course is with a few key points in marketing materials to help teachers persuade their department to release them for the course. A good time to market courses is before March when school budgets are set, or in the summer term when teachers plan the year.

The best way to get hold of teachers is via a **personal phone number**, so email as many people as you can, and ask them to email back with a phone number and a good time to call.

During the course...

Give early arrivals a **questionnaire** capturing details such as how they heard about the course, what they hope to gain from it, their job role and length of time teaching.

Establish at the start of the day why you are a credible facilitator. You don't have to be a teacher but you need to show you have **practical and relevant experience**. Reiterate and recap course aims throughout the day.

Many secondary science teachers regard themselves as **scientists first** and teachers second, so don't imply that things are otherwise.

Use **ice-breaker activities** at the start to encourage active participation, even if people know each other. Mix up participants during the day to allow **networking**.

Define key terminology (informal learning, open-ended questioning) to avoid confusion. Explain the **purpose** of activities before you begin, so no one misses the point. Encourage everyone to **try the activities**.

Keep participants **physically happy** with tea and coffee to start the day, a scheduled morning break; a good lunch, plus water and sweets throughout the day. A horse-shoe-shaped table in a room that's not too hot helps people concentrate.

After the course...

Keep in touch with teachers to sustain their interest and cement the practice, and to offer booster courses if possible.

Further resources:

Find out about teachers and CPD in museums through our summaries of key findings from Science Museum Research reports:

- Science Museum Research Summary: Providing effective Continuing Professional Development teachers' courses in museums
- Science Museum Research Summary: Creating content for Continuing Professional Development teachers' courses in museums

Find out about running teachers' advisory panels at your museum through the sheet:

- What we've learned about running teachers' advisory panels