

## ARGUMENTATIVE TALK

Put the sections of an argumentative talk below in a proper order and match each of them with the corresponding paragraph from the extract:

Talks which contain argument usually have the following sections:

discussion + conclusion  
arguments against  
author's argument  
rejection of arguments against  
arguments for  
background

### Student evaluation of lecturers.

Anyone who has ever attended a university knows that the quality of lecturers varies greatly. A few are very effective communicators: they convey the substance of their lectures clearly and interestingly and inspire students to want to know more about the subject. Others produce dull, and sometimes even incoherent lectures and the students learn little from them. These are also likely to kill any interest the students may have in the subject.

It is my contention that a lecturer's performance in the lecture hall should be regularly evaluated and that the best people to carry out this evaluation are the students.

You could, of course, argue that students are not competent to evaluate the academic quality of lectures. They may know little of the subject and have no means of judging whether a particular lecturer is giving them outdated or irrelevant information and or whether he or she is accurately reflecting the current state of the discipline. If anyone should evaluate lecturers, the argument goes, it should be their colleagues.

However, I am not arguing that students should be asked to comment upon the academic content of lectures. We can still assess the academic calibre of lecturers in the usual way through their qualifications, publications, course outlines, performance at staff seminars and so on.

What students are best placed to do is to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching which goes on in a lecture. Students know perfectly well when they are learning something and are normally quite clear about which lectures are interesting and give them a clear understanding of the subject and which are boring.

Another common objection is that the students do not know what is good for them. They are likely to rate highly lecturers who do not demand much of them, who keep their lectures very simple, give few assignments and award good grades for average work. They might even be influenced by such irrelevant factors as whether a lecturer is good looking or friendly.

This argument assumes very low levels of maturity, motivation and intelligence among students. University students, after all, are no longer school children. They come to the university to learn and normally expect a certain amount of stimulation and challenge.

I suspect that many of the objections to student evaluation of lecturers rise from the fear some lecturers have of being subject to criticism by their students. However, lecturers should see such evaluation as an opportunity to become aware of defects in their lecturing techniques and thus to become better lecturers.