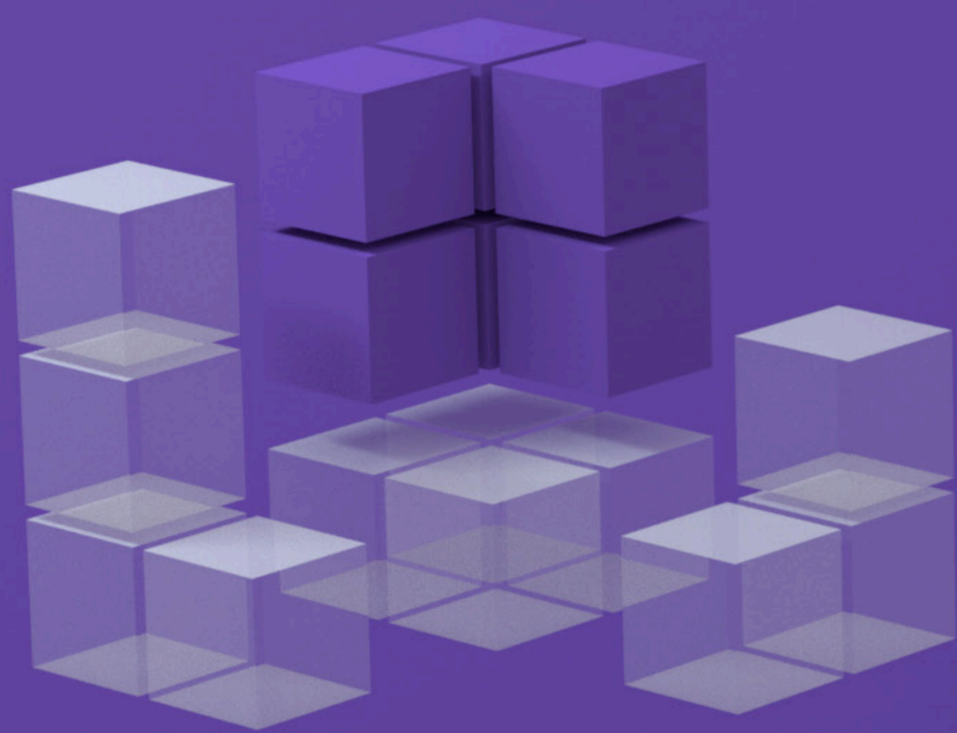


## 04

# Activating hard thinking



**Great teachers present content, activities and interactions that activate their students' thinking**

In many ways, Dimension 4 represents the heart of great teaching: getting students to think hard about the material you want them to learn. It may also be the hardest part of the job to learn, partly because it is rare to get reliable feedback about whether it is working: student learning is invisible, slow and non-linear, so how can we tell if it is happening?

**1** Structuring: giving students an appropriate sequence of learning tasks; signalling learning objectives, rationale, overview, key ideas and stages of progress; matching tasks to learners' needs and readiness; scaffolding and supporting to make tasks accessible to all, but gradually removed so that all students succeed at the required level

**2** Explaining: presenting and communicating new ideas clearly, with concise, appropriate, engaging explanations; connecting new ideas to what has previously been learnt (and re-activating/checking that prior knowledge); using examples (and non-examples) appropriately to help learners understand and build connections; modelling/demonstrating new skills or procedures with appropriate scaffolding and challenge; using worked/part-worked examples

**3** Questioning: using questions and dialogue to promote elaboration and connected, flexible thinking among learners (e.g., 'Why?', 'Compare', etc.); using questions to elicit student thinking; getting responses from all students; using high-quality assessment to evidence learning; interpreting, communicating and responding to assessment evidence appropriately

**4** Interacting: responding appropriately to feedback from students about their thinking/knowledge/understanding; giving students actionable feedback to guide their learning

**5** Embedding: giving students tasks that embed and reinforce learning; requiring them to practise until learning is fluent and secure; ensuring that once-learnt material is reviewed/revisited to prevent forgetting

**6** Activating: helping students to plan, regulate and monitor their own learning; progressing appropriately from structured to more independent learning as students develop knowledge and expertise