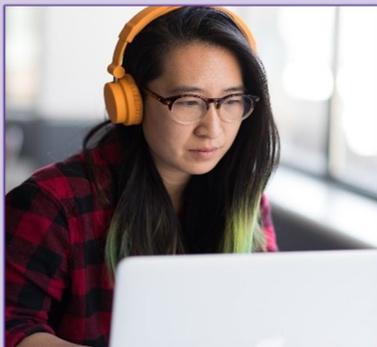


LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY

# UNDERGRADUATE COURSE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

Centre for Learning and Teaching

Dec 2020



## Contents

Academic Principles .....	1
The 9 Principles .....	2
Graduate Attributes.....	4
Support for Course Teams.....	5
Key Concepts (Conceptual Engagement) .....	6
Strong Course Identity (Behavioural Engagement) .....	8
Depth of Learning (Conceptual Engagement).....	10
An Inclusive Environment (Emotional Engagement) .....	12
Admissions .....	14
Assessment.....	14
Course Level Assessment Strategy (Behavioural Engagement).....	16
Personalised Student Support (Emotional Engagement).....	18
Challenging and Authentic Tasks (Conceptual Engagement).....	20
Activities Linked to Student Experience (Emotional Engagement).....	22
Vertical and Horizontal Integration of Learning (Behavioural Engagement).....	24
Acknowledgements.....	26

## Academic Principles

The following research-informed academic principles can be used to inform the design of our University's undergraduate courses. Course teams should refer to these principles when considering the design and review of their courses. These principles aim to enhance student progression and continuation rates, satisfaction, achievement and outcomes through maximising their engagement with the course. Course teams are responsible for adopting the academic principles and applying them to all aspects of their course design and delivery.

This guidance has been updated to reflect the changes we need to consider as we move towards even more blended, hybrid and online approaches to our teaching and course design. The resources and references linked with this document are included in the [Course Development Principles reading list](#) on Talis Aspire, which can be printed to show the URLs. Symbols (illustrated below) indicate things for course teams to think about or digital tools that can be used to support online learning.



Things for course teams to think about



Digital Tools to support online learning

The design principles for courses remain **the same** - it is just that now the pathway to generating aligned and varied learning activities is evolving to take account of the opportunities offered by digital tools and their influence on how students engage with each other, their tutors, and their learning.

The need to design in strategies for facilitating student engagement, active learning, independent learning, experiential learning and critical thinking remain fundamental, but the tools you now need to consider, to deliver them, may be different and more digitally based.

We need to actively build student engagement into our course design and delivery to grow community, support progression, prevent student drop out and isolation and maintain a high-quality learning experience. Now more than ever, we also need to think of sustainable ways to build course communities and course identity in an online environment. Remember, the student that you need to engage is not in front of you in a classroom, a predictable, well-organised, and understood space. They may be in a kitchen, at a desk, engaging on a mobile phone, and may be distracted.

Our course principles align with and underpin **LBU's Blueprint for Teaching Excellence** (Figure 1). Further information and curated resources are available at the [Centre for Learning](#)

[and Teaching \(CLT\) webpages](#). They are thematically grouped but closely interrelated and allow teams to think holistically about the nature of course design:

**Green** [Conceptual Engagement] principles will help you plan a coherent learning experience for your students and to build conceptual engagement through appropriate opportunities for development and challenge.

**Orange** [Behavioural Engagement] principles encourage you to strategically consider the core elements of your course and to build behavioural engagement through course planning and management.

**Blue** [Emotional Engagement] principles will help you develop a more inclusive and personalised course experience and to build students' emotional engagement through targeted support and developing a sense of community.

Course Development teams may find that they need to think more about some principles than others. A chronological order which course teams may wish to use as a basis for discussion is suggested below.

## The 9 Principles

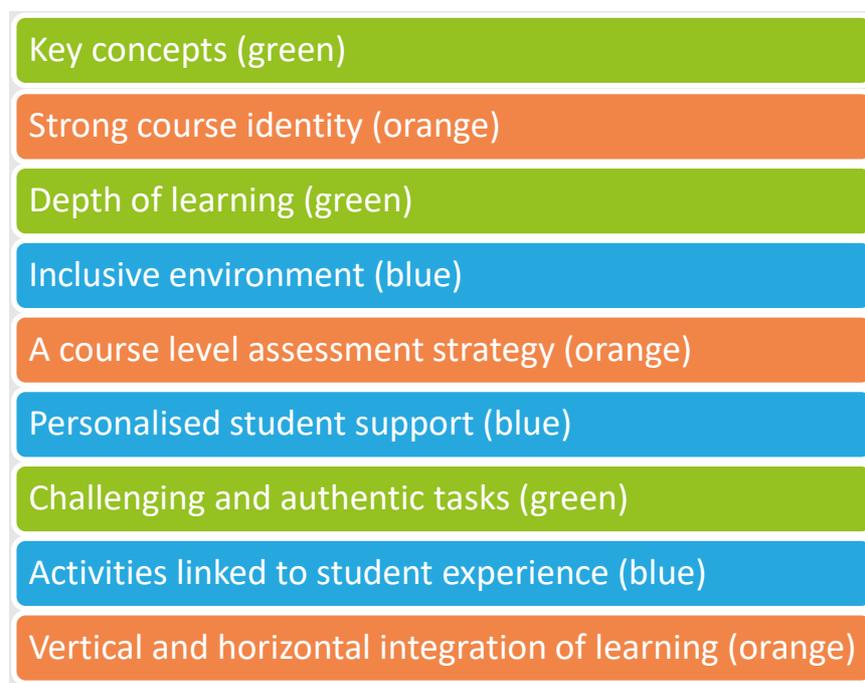
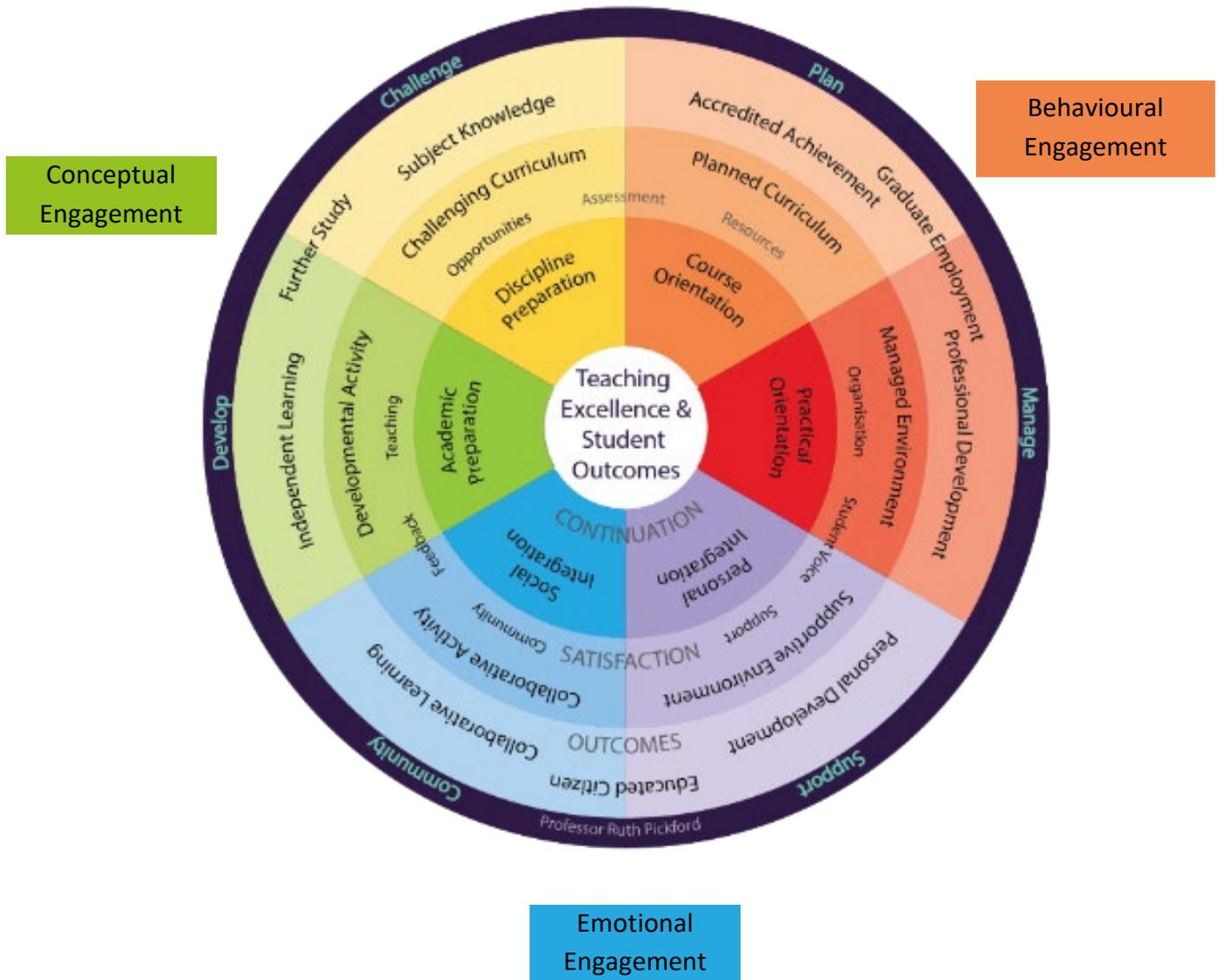


Figure 1 - The Blueprint for Teaching Excellence



## Graduate Attributes

Our University's three Graduate Attributes are integrated into the application of the Course Development Principles.

A graduate attribute is an amalgamation of skills, knowledge and attitudes, built up through a student's time at University. Graduates will be capable of articulating and demonstrating attributes to the wider world, for example, when seeking employment and when working. All Leeds Beckett undergraduate students will develop three graduate attributes:

- enterprise
- digital literacy
- global outlook

These attributes have been chosen in order to enhance a student's employability, graduate outcomes and provide skills for the graduate to thrive in the wider world in the future, as well as to enhance each student's satisfaction with their learning experience.

These attributes must be integrated into learning outcomes at all levels of all courses. Students will demonstrate achievement of them by passing module assessments at all levels.

Resources on using, embedding and delivering graduate attributes are available [online](#).

### References:

References and further reading for this section can be found in the [Graduate Attributes](#) section of the [Course Development Principles reading list](#) on Talis Aspire.

## Support for Course Teams

CLT will use our knowledge and resources to help you develop excellent academic practice to help you enhance your courses:

- Online resources and case studies including FAQs for you to browse or pose a new question can be found as follows:
  - On the University's [Teach/Learn website](#).
  - On the [Academic Continuity webpage](#).
  - In the University's [Taxonomy of Assessment Domains document](#).
- Details on the [Academic Approval, Periodic Review and Modifications Process](#) are available [online](#) along with [templates](#) to support this.
- The Distance Learning Unit (DLU) have produced a [curriculum design tool](#), for wholly distance learning delivery, which can help you think about which tools can be useful to support your aim or pedagogical approach.
- Information to identify which tools are recommended for different learning and teaching scenarios is located on the [Academic Continuity webpage](#).

### References:

References and further reading for this section can be found in the [Support for Course Teams](#) section of the [Course Development Principles reading list](#) on Talis Aspire.

## Key Concepts (Conceptual Engagement)

The idea of a key, or threshold, concept is that certain ideas are held to be central to the mastery of a subject (Meyer and Land, 2003).

### Overview

A threshold concept, once understood, changes the way in which the student views the discipline. It may be challenging to acquire but can bring together different aspects of the subject that previously did not appear to be related.

According to [Cousin \(2006\)](#), using threshold concepts can help overcome 'a stuffed curriculum', in which there is a tendency for academics to burden themselves 'with the task of transmitting vast amounts of knowledge bulk and their students of absorbing and reproducing this bulk'. She argues that focus on threshold concepts can enable teachers to make refined decisions about what is fundamental to a grasp of the subject they are teaching. If students can grasp and understand the key concepts it can help strengthen their sense of identity particularly with the subject discipline and on accredited professional courses ([Rodger et al, 2015](#)).



### Course teams could ask:

- What are the **key concepts** our students need to understand and internalise on the course? What are the core, important qualities, knowledge and skills the students need to develop to help with this? How do they relate to, and accommodate, the appropriate benchmark statements?
- How can you encourage the students to **engage** with and **understand** these concepts?
- How badly '**overstuffed**' is the curriculum? What content might be removed that could make threshold concepts clearer and give time and space to teaching related to them.
- How can you **use the new modified teaching weeks flexibly** post-Covid to provide the same number of contact hours? Think about the combination of large and small group teaching and how best to engage those not learning synchronously to grasp the key ideas.

- How can the way you design and teach your blended, hybrid, campus-based and online courses help the students really **achieve the learning outcomes** and **understand the fundamentals**?
- Which key concepts are most appropriately **developed at each level**?

### References:

References and further reading for this section can be found in the [Key Concepts](#) section of the [Course Development Principles reading list](#) on Talis Aspire.

## Strong Course Identity (Behavioural Engagement)

**Strong course identity manifests itself in clear and distinctive messaging about what it means to be a student on this course.**

### Overview

A strong course identity sends consistent early messages through course promotional literature, open days and induction, and builds on these throughout the course. It generates a shared understanding of the distinctive course aims, outcomes and expectations.

Course identity may be further strengthened when students are able to share experiences across levels and cohorts and with those working in relevant professional areas.

Course Identity is reinforced through student perception of the shared and clear expectations of the course team. Clear identity can enhance a sense of belonging. Campus-based courses often have a strong sense of belonging and identity helped by the physical environment, shared School and social learning space, course sports teams etc. Can you consider how a sense of identity can be strengthened online? Virtual course meetings, planned, regular online announcements, named level leaders, virtual social or course society activity and a visible Course Director may help.

### Course teams could ask:



- Do course and module titles support a **strong, distinctive course identity**?
- Is messaging and language consistent?
- Do you have a well-designed, consistent, set up as a 'home', **with one point of initial contact (a gateway)**, where students can access all their online materials, regardless of which tool or platform is used beyond that point?
- What encouragement and opportunities are there for all your students, on and off-campus and across all academic levels, to **develop supportive networks** with others on their course before their induction/at induction/throughout and beyond the course? Could you use [Microsoft \(MS\) Teams](#) to build a sense of belonging? Could you also engage alumni?

Tools such as [Blackboard Open Education](#) can be used to create open access pre-enrolment areas.



Interaction with pre-arrival cohorts could be done through emails, the welcome portal, social media or as the guest feature in [MS Teams](#).

- Is the course **planned and coordinated coherently**? Is there a strong course design and 'feel'? How do you demonstrate this in online environments? This should be a course level decision.
- Does the way you describe the course and its modules **encourage students' engagement**? Are you writing for students or fellow HE professionals?
- How do course and level learning outcomes build towards a **strong course identity**?
- What opportunities are there to **celebrate student achievement** on the course and [facilitate social integration](#)? Students can easily feel less engaged and more distant when working more online.



Tools such as School social media accounts and newsletters can be used to share successes and offer students an opportunity to contribute content to the community. [MS Teams](#) offers a 'social' channel and is a secure [General Data Protection Regulation](#) (GDPR) compliant space.

- When and how do tutors **share and develop their understanding** of the parts of the course in which they are not directly involved? Could you have team teaching and regular team meetings? Could you encourage collaborative course development and hold course design meetings with your Module Leaders/teaching teams?



If you need to have team meetings online, [Skype for Business](#) or [MS Teams](#) can assist in development and support of course identity and a sense of overall ownership of course content for staff. This can also help with consistent communication to students when their main communication channels are online.

### Key resources:

References and further reading for this section can be found in the [Strong Course Identity](#) section of the [Course Development Principles reading list](#) on Talis Aspire.

## Depth of Learning (Conceptual Engagement)

Deep learning is a slow growth of student development through the academic levels. Individuals engage with learning through three dimensions - reflective learning, higher order learning and integrative learning (Wang et al, 2014).

### Overview

Deep learning relates to the level of intellectual demand within what students are expected to be able to do. As such, the focus should be on educational gain, as well as educational performance. Capabilities that are associated with deep learning include reflecting upon, synthesising, applying, critically evaluating and analysing. These capabilities should be directly expressed in the module learning outcomes and aligned with the module activities. Our [LBU taxonomy of assessment domains](#) based on Bloom's original work (who extensively contemplated the nature of thinking) can support you with this.

Deep learning involves students participating in the construction of their own knowledge, and is fostered through active learning processes, and by creating a learning environment that avoids passivity, for example, problem solving, researching, appreciating multiple perspectives, and working collaboratively. It is unlikely to be promoted when assessment only requires reproduction of, and/or memorising, content.



### Course teams could ask:

- To what extent do the module and course content achieve **balance between breadth and depth of study**? Could we slim down content to facilitate greater depth of learning?

When adapting your pedagogy, and if your course is becoming more blended, don't simply take your traditional face to face approaches on-line. Instead, think about how you can facilitate deep learning in an online environment.

### For example:

Studio practice for **arts courses** where tutors might engage in a range of conversations about students' emergent work might work better as a series of very short focused synchronous sessions supported by asynchronous discussion/evaluation and critique;

Simply live streaming a lecture you would give in class may not work so well or effectively in an online environment. Instead, prepare a set of short presentations to play, and take questions in breaks or note down student comments in the chat facility.



- Students on more blended and online courses still need to be **engaged in deep thinking and deep critical learning**. How can you encourage engagement? What approaches do you use on this course to encourage student engagement via active, collaborative and applied learning?

What tools can best be used to support this collaborative learning? IT Services (ITS) has produced some [useful guidance on tool selection](#).

- How can your interactions **provoke deeper learning** during the time you are not in direct contact with the students? Can you flip lectures or require more prep before class with blended delivery? Provide more time for engaged students to discuss work? Ask groups to review journal articles and precis for a cohort or in an online journal club?
- Are there **opportunities for embedding research and practitioner-informed teaching**? Are there online and face to face opportunities for students to **explore ideas and concepts in depth**? Are the students being [challenged](#)?
- In what ways does the student experience involve **progressively deepening learning over the levels of the course**? Resources are available to help you [personalise learning for your students](#).
- Ensure all your **assessment methods and criteria require students to demonstrate deep learning**. Just focusing on the reproduction of module content does not promote deeper understanding of the subject. Are assessment criteria potentially unhelpful by (for example) requiring breadth at the expense of depth?
- Is there clear evidence of higher levels of **intellectual challenge and stimulation** in assessments and activities as students progress through the levels, and are [expectations consistent within each level](#)?

## References

References and further reading for this section can be found in the [Depth of Learning](#) section of the [Course Development Principles reading list](#) on Talis Aspire.

## An Inclusive Environment (Emotional Engagement)

**An inclusive environment is one that is (i) non-discriminatory, appropriate, and transparent to each student we recruit; (ii) respects and values the perspectives and experiences each individual can offer; (iii) promotes values and practices associated with inclusive attitudes and behaviours in others.**

### Overview

An inclusive environment involves tutors behaving in a non-discriminatory way and being respectful of others and it encourages students to do the same.

The legal obligations upon the University, and on individuals, (e.g. [The Equality Act, 2010](#)) taken alone offer a very reductive understanding of an 'inclusive' environment. A truly inclusive environment presents a community in which everybody can choose to be visible and is valued and respected for their unique individuality. It encourages and enables students to be curious about others and engage in respectful discussion, debate, collaborative work and research, with other people and to explore their ways of viewing the world.

Inclusive teaching within an inclusive learning environment means recognising, accommodating and meeting the learning needs of all our students. Flexible approaches to learning can enhance this ([Devitt-Jones, 2017](#)). Blended learning approaches, for example, have been shown to improve retention and engagement ([Holley & Dobson, 2008](#)), but it is important to remember that vulnerable students can feel even more vulnerable in an online environment and it is important to build in opportunities for engagement, kindness, community building and a social presence into online learning environments ([Hockings, 2010](#)).



### Course teams could ask:

- Do we ensure that all **students feel welcomed** into the course and do we work, as part of induction, to ensure that **all** students are welcoming towards 'others' on the course? How will you foster course identity and sense of belonging if delivery is **not** on campus?

There are digital tools that can help support online induction. A course level [MyBeckett](#) group for activities can be useful, or [MS Teams](#) where chat and sharing can take place, or by using social media channels to interact with students. Be consistent and simple with your use of tools to avoid overwhelming students. The [preferred tool is MS Teams](#).



- How do course materials and activities represent a range of **cultural, global and social perspectives and/or practices**, and allow all students to draw on prior experience and learning?
- Are you considering how to make remote/online learning as accessible and inclusive as possible, and what **reasonable adjustments** there might be where it is not fully accessible?

Are you, as a course team, familiar with “reasonable adjustment” for field trips, session planning, delivery and assessment? Are all your students able to access a range of opportunities? Can the activities be embedded within the daily standard timetable? Is there alternative provision? Support and advice is available from the [Disability Advice Service](#).

- Do we include pedagogies that contribute to **learner empowerment** such as co-creation, student choice within assessment and the decolonising of the dominant western-focused discourses ([Ryan and Tilbury, 2013](#))?
- There is some evidence ([Yan Yang et al, 2015](#)) that **different genders** perceive and experience the physical and online learning environment differently. Think about how you design your courses to appeal to all genders.
- How do you organise your large and small group activities to **enhance social mixing and learning** and expose them/students to culturally challenging views, opinions and contexts? Can you develop online action learning sets? If you are using digital tools to help you, you could use [MyBeckett sub-groups](#) or [MS Teams](#).
- When students are asked to work alone or in groups outside the classroom are the tasks clear and the students **made aware exactly what is required of them**? How do you ensure this works?
- How do you manage interaction, paired activity, **discussion and student participation** both online and physically to optimise engagement and inclusion?

If online only, how do you adapt your delivery models? Can you restructure large and small group work over different weeks to optimise contact hours and engagement and make sure those not engaging synchronously are supported?

[Discussion boards](#) can be used for students to post questions or respond to a discussion point. Channels within an [MS Teams](#) can be used in the same way.



- Students want to connect with a learning experience that resonates with their stories and histories and they want to feel they belong at Leeds Beckett University. The curriculum is an important artefact in their achievement of this sense of ‘belonging’. “**Decolonising**” is about us rethinking, reframing and reconstructing current curricula in order to make them better and more inclusive. Do your [reading lists](#) and resources reflect a diverse cultural range of authors which reflect a range of perspectives about issues discussed as part of the module content? This will help students feel that they are important, **belong to the learning community** and have a contribution to make (and bears strong links to developing key graduate attributes)?
- Do students have access to staff and external experts from a **range of communities and cultures**?

**Have you looked at the LBU [Inclusive Course Design Tool](#)?** This Tool will support you and your team to reflect on the design of your course and how to best support all students with opportunities to achieve their very best. It covers many of the questions addressed below and is a holistic way to address multiple areas relating to inclusive course design. You may also want to refer to our pages on [inclusive practice](#).

## Admissions



### Do your admissions criteria:

- Reflect the needs and **diversity** of potential students?
- Approach any requirement of the progression concerned positively with a view, wherever possible, of making suitable **alternative provision**?
- Ensure no section of the student community is automatically deselected by **particular requirements**?

## Assessment



### Is your student assessment:

- **Varied** in its method and written in a way that avoids jargon and is easily understood by a diverse group of students?

- Free of cultural and gender-biased assumptions, reflecting social and cultural **diversity** where possible?
- Able to take account of different learning **preferences** and **disabilities** when designing how a module/course is delivered, offered with a **choice** of titles/options if appropriate?
- **Scheduled and timetabled sessions** to consider, for example, part-time students, students with caring responsibilities, and religious calendars?

**Key resources:**

References and further reading for this section can be found in the [An Inclusive Environment](#) section of the [Course Development Principles reading list](#) on Talis Aspire.

## Course Level Assessment Strategy (Behavioural Engagement)

**This means considering how all assessments across your course relate to one another and to the course and level outcomes.**

### Overview

Assessment is a major driver of student learning. Designing an effective, well-aligned assessment strategy which supports a course's outcomes is key to a successful course design. This helps to underpin a coherent student learning experience.

It has been common in some parts of higher education to design and discuss assessment primarily at module level, often after the other elements of a course/module have been decided. This may lead to piecemeal assessment and overuse of particular assessment methods. Course teams should strike a balance between creating a variety of assessment methods (online and face to face as appropriate) and enabling students to progressively develop expertise related to those assessment methods. Course teams should also build in timetabled opportunities to build on feedback.

Different assessment practices have significant impact on students' approaches to learning ([Rust, 2002](#)). One of the most important things we can do when designing assignments is to regard assessment as being a tool we can use to support our students' learning, i.e. assessment *for* learning as well as *of* learning.

The methods of assessment and feedback, and the use of a good range of self-assessment and peer-assessment, is fundamental to student learning ([AdvanceHE, 2019](#)).



### Course teams could ask:

- What will a student's assessment experience or **assessment journey** through all modules and levels of this course be? Is student engagement core to the design of this experience?  
Is assessment varied across a level of study and designed to support progression towards learning outcomes? If you are interested in expanding the range of your online [assessment methods](#) then see the [Teach/Learn website](#).



- Where assessment is online, have you chosen **the right digital tool** to support the assessment outcome? Are the right digital tools and technological support available for the students to feel confident with the assessment method? The document [mapping assessment types to tools and feedback mechanisms](#) may be useful.



**When your assessment is robust, varied, supported by use of technology and possible in both face-to-face and online environments, also consider:**

- Are formative (assessment for learning) and summative (assessment of learning) assessment **deadlines sensibly spaced** across the course?
- Has the appropriate preparation for assessment been designed so that students feel supported and **scaffolded** when they meet a new assessment type, whether it be online or campus based?
- Does our approach to assessment support our students' **learning and development of life skills** e.g. leadership skills? How can the course assessment, whether it be online or face to face, help students to build these skills?



Students can be given access to [MyBeckett](#) areas for group work, using the online [MS office tools](#) to work collaboratively on a single document, or can a space can be created in [MS Teams](#) for students to work on group projects with oversight from academic staff?

- How are opportunities built in for students to **develop what they have learned** in one assessment in subsequent assessments?

## References

References and further reading for this section can be found in the [Course Level Assessment Strategy](#) section of the [Course Development Principles reading list](#) on Talis Inspire.

## Personalised Student Support (Emotional Engagement)

**This means ensuring students feel they are regarded and supported as individuals on their courses.**

### Overview

Opportunities for student-staff contact is a key factor in student motivation and involvement; knowing members of staff well can enhance a student's experience on their course and enable them to get the most out of university life ([Richardson et al, 2007](#)). Building a human social presence as much as possible into online courses is vital.

All our students need to know who they can turn to for help especially as the nature of their courses change. This might be [technical support](#) as our courses move more online, individual [academic advice](#) or [personal matters](#), e.g. relationships or personal circumstances affecting their University performance.

Students may feel they cannot approach the module tutor or their allocated [Academic Advisor](#) for some reason, in which case they need an alternative line of support. Positive, personalized, support may involve listening to and engaging with a students' concerns or just pointing a student in a certain direction; introducing them to the right people with the skills to better support them.

Fostering relationships between students and staff and between students and other students is particularly important in the first stages of a course. The move to becoming a university student can be an emotionally challenging, particularly if juggling a degree with a job and family caring commitments ([Tobbell et al, 2008](#)). A student may feel anxious about starting university learning and unsure of the academic expectations. The primarily independent learning required from university study can feel isolating and individual students may lack confidence with their academic work ([Richardson, 2007](#); [Al Zumor et al, 2013](#)). Attempts to address this through extra-curricular opportunities may have the unfortunate effect of further isolating those students who cannot participate or will not take advantage of them because they feel they don't belong.



### Course teams could ask:

- How can we design and structure the course to **foster a real sense of belonging** for the students? How can we build online relationships and a learning community with students? This may be more difficult in online environments particularly when students have been familiar primarily with campus-based learning.

- How can we help students who are working online or at a distance feel that they are not just one of a crowd? How are academic advisors **engaging with the students**? Do you have a proactive course contact strategy? Are the first years receiving meaningful contact swiftly on arrival, so they have an individual link to academic staff? How effectively are staff referring the student on for specialist help?



Are they using the online student support framework (available via [MyBeckett](#)?)

- How do you **build your social presence** in a course to convey a sense of your own engagement and personality? Could you use personalised student and [staff profiles](#), start each online session with a regular personalised check-in and disclose personal information snippets appropriately to build staff/student trust? Could you follow-up with individual students after the online session and design online “coffee shops”?



- What [online digital tools](#) might help you do a **one-to-one online session** with a student who may need individual academic support? Could you simply call them?

- How do we deliver our online activities in a **personalised**, individual, way? How do we know that each of our students is receiving the type and level of support they need?

This could be done by using [adaptive release](#) and rules in [MyBeckett](#), recording short update videos based on feedback or the previous activity to show the students their engagement is seen and that you are actively engaged in the content.

- Do we use **diagnostic assessment** at appropriate points in the course? How do you identify and support struggling students when they are working and learning online?
- Do you use [MyProgress](#) to access **student results, progress and profiles**? [MyProgress help and guidance](#) is available online.
- Do all new students **know who to contact** if part of the experience isn't working for them? Are they signposted to their Course Director as well as [Academic Advisors](#) for quick responses? Can you replace nameless institutional contact with a personal approach? The [Academic Advisor guidance](#) has ideas for how you can best link up with your students remotely.
- How might you **re-visit student support** in subsequent weeks?
- Can you use **student mentors or cross-level support** to build personal support between students as well as between tutors and students?

## References

References and further reading for this section can be found in the [Personalised Student Support](#) section of the [Course Development Principles reading list](#) on Talis Aspire

## Challenging and Authentic Tasks (Conceptual Engagement)

**This means providing practical learning and assessment tasks which require students to actively apply skills and knowledge appropriate to their area of study and future employment.**

### Overview

We aim to develop students who can perform meaningful tasks in the changing world. For a task to be authentic, students should be able to recognise that the tasks they are being asked to complete have relevance to their future and graduate employment, bearing in mind that the new changed workplace, for many, will require digital skills and working remotely.

Could you use the online/blended nature of delivery post-Covid to create authentic module and assessment tasks and activities that will be more relevant to the world of work?

Challenging tasks will stretch students' capabilities by providing "the opportunity for students to examine the task from different perspectives" ([Woo et al, 2007](#)). Challenging tasks might also help build an Inclusive Environment for students (see [An Inclusive Environment](#) section above).

Undertaking authentic tasks requires the kinds of activities which lead to deep learning. They develop in students the skills to perform similar tasks in the workplace and authenticate the application of theoretical knowledge to the learner's real world. Very often authentic tasks are complex tasks investigated by students over a sustained period of time e.g. undertaking a dissertation based on real practice or complex group activity involving multiple roles. Real life case studies from local employers also provide realism for learning activities.



### Course teams could ask:

- Is there a task appropriate to an **overall learning outcome** of the course that could be used in the very first session?
- What **learning activities** would be appropriate? How do you make them gradually more complex whilst letting the student work at their own pace and be appropriately challenged and stimulated?
- Do you ask local stakeholders and employers to work with you to design and devise **authentic learning** activities and assessment briefs? How are you contextualising the assessments to bring them to life?
- Is there a good **balance of activities** – not more of the same?

- Do some assessments involve **collaboration and interaction** with other students? If so, how do you formally organise this to ensure all students have the best opportunity to succeed?
- How can you best encourage student **motivation and engagement** by provoking online conversation to allow students to learn from each other?
- Is **challenge to existing perspectives** and the application of **new understanding** part of assessment? How are you supporting and assessing this learning?
- How can we make sure all students are challenged appropriately? How can we make sure that we **differentiate our learning** to [engage students who may be struggling](#)? How can we scaffold our support for different levels of students better whilst still maintaining a consistent approach to student instructions and criteria?

## References

References and further reading for this section can be found in the [Challenging and Authentic Tasks](#) section of the [Course Development Principles reading list](#) on Talis Aspire.

## Activities Linked to Student Experience (Emotional Engagement)

**This means making sure activities take account of students' diverse backgrounds, experiences, and intentions post-graduation.**

### Overview

Courses should include content and reflective activities that ensure students can value and relate their extra-curricular experience (e.g. social, cultural, and work- related) to academic and personal development.

A course should include opportunities for students to discuss their extra-curricular experiences as part of the learning activities and as part of their assessment. This will help them engage more deeply with their learning experience and students should be provided with opportunities to use appropriate reflective frameworks so that they can incorporate their own experiences into their learning.

Courses which link to the student experience empower students to participate actively in the development of learning activities and resources, for example, students could be encouraged to design and lead activities themselves and offer resources for those activities.



### Course teams could ask:

- How do students use **their own experiences** in the University and in their extracurricular life to strengthen their professional and personal development? And how do you scaffold and promote this learning on your course?
- How does our **course induction** (and “re-induction” or refreshers at higher levels) help value the students’ own experiences? Using ice-breaker activities in [MyBeckett](#) or live sessions through [MS Teams](#) can facilitate discussion and highlight the diversity in a cohort. Doing this through a discussion board may help support students who are new or unsure when speaking in a peer group.
- Are there engaging assessments for all learning environments that allow our students to **draw on and develop relevant experience**?





- How can tutors generate an environment where **students feel encouraged to share experiences**? What practical opportunities do we have in our courses to ensure that students respect and value their student peers' experiences and learn from them too? What techniques or strategies could we use to manage this?

Using **discussion boards**, or a channel in [MS teams](#), can support students to positively engage with peers.

[PollEverywhere](#) can be used anonymously and may support students to share when they are not directly identifiable by their peers.

The [peer assessment](#) option in [MyBeckett](#) can allow students to submit work but mark and feedback on their peers in a controlled environment.

## References

References and further reading for this section can be found in the [Activities Linked to Student Experience](#) section of the [Course Development Principles reading list](#) on Talis Aspire.

## Vertical and Horizontal Integration of Learning (Behavioural Engagement)

**This means that a course should be considered as a whole, rather than just a series of separate modular components. It means ensuring that there are course level learning outcomes. It also means ensuring that a student's learning at different academic levels can be linked (vertically) and also that there are opportunities for themes and modules within one academic level to be thematically connected (horizontal integration). This helps underpin a cohesive student learning experience.**

### Overview

A course is most effective when it has been holistically designed with the student's learning journey in mind. A student's understanding of their learning is deepened through this holistic approach.

Vertical connections are those that work up through levels of learning (Levels 4, 5 and 6 for undergraduates). These may be informed by themes within the course that connect the levels, whereby the deepening of the learning at each level is informed by our Undergraduate [Taxonomy of Assessment Domains](#).

Horizontal connections are those that interconnect within a level of learning (for example, just across Level 4). Ways to enhance horizontal connections might include mapping themes of learning and designing synoptic assessments. These can be implemented across modules within a level (see also [Course Level Assessment Strategy](#)). Module learning outcomes and assessments should therefore be written with clear consideration for other modules at that level.

This should help students to make the links and connections between their modules across the course at whichever level they are on.

Vertical and horizontal mapping must be considered as part of good course design and development and should be clearly documented so it is meaningful for staff and students.



### Course teams could ask:

- How do our course design and pedagogical approaches encourage development of **learning across each level** and as the level of study increases?

- How might the design we choose or the pedagogical approaches we adopt enhance **integration of knowledge and thinking** for student learning? For example, flipped approaches ([Jenkins et al, 2017](#)) can vary the levels of teacher presence to enhance student autonomy and problem based ([Yew & Goh, 2016](#)) design can enhance critical thinking, holistic thinking and inquiry.
- "Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" ([Kolb, 1984](#)), and can enhance the **synthesis and application of knowledge**. How is experiential learning threaded through your module design and learning activities at each level?
- If applicable, how have your **professional body requirements** and **subject benchmarks** informed the development of the course and how has this informed curriculum design?
- What opportunities do course teams have to ensure that the curriculum delivery is **effective and appropriate** for the needs of the student and avoids unnecessary duplication of learning activities and assessments? Is this delivery impacted by changes such as online teaching and assessment?
- Has the development and design of the course been **informed** by the [taxonomy of assessment domains](#) at each level?
- What **strategies** do staff use to explain horizontal and vertical integration to students? What are the best ways of doing this?
- Does the way you give [feedback](#) to students on their assessments give them the opportunity to **make links to content and ideas** addressed in other modules? Is the feedback phrased in a way that is [developmental](#) and encourages the student to think and improve?
- Have you devised and planned **learning themes** which entwine through every level which encapsulate the core nature of the course and can help with the application and integration of knowledge?
- Do the online and/or [flipped activities](#) you provide **complement and seamlessly link** with the activities you might provide in a face to face environment?

## References

References and further reading for this section can be found in the [Vertical and Horizontal Integration of Learning](#) section of the [Course Development Principles reading list](#) on Talis Aspire.

## Acknowledgements

The initial guidance was generated from a Steering Group of Teacher Fellows, staff from the Centre for Learning and Teaching, and Course Leaders from across the University.

This update, generated after the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 to emphasise a more blended approach to delivery and pedagogy, was written by CLT and the 2019-20 CLT Associates.