# 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](https://researchrepository.murdoch.edu.au/id/eprint/5756/1/implementing_authentic_tasks.pdf)). Challenging tasks might also help build an Inclusive Environment for students (see [*An Inclusive Environment*](#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.

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| **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**](https://teachlearn.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/the-learning-pathway/challenging-your-students/personalised-learning/) to [engage students who may be struggling](https://my.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/webapps/blackboard/execute/launcher?type=Course&id=_133474_1&url=)? How can we scaffold our support for different levels of students better whilst still maintaining a consistent approach to student instructions and criteria?
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**References**

References and further reading for this section can be found in the [Challenging and Authentic Tasks](https://rl.talis.com/3/beckett/lists/086BF37E-85D6-9E4A-D3A6-B7EA51D08C98.html?lang=en-US&login=1#98980310-A0A7-9ADE-BBE4-ABD42719CA86) section of the [Course Development Principles reading list](https://beckett.rl.talis.com/lists/086BF37E-85D6-9E4A-D3A6-B7EA51D08C98.html) on Talis Aspire.