# 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.



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| **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](https://teachlearn.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/guides/mybeckett-and-digital-learning-guides/microsoft-teams/) to build a sense of belonging? Could you also engage alumni?

Tools such as [Blackboard Open Education](https://teachlearn.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/guides/mybeckett-and-digital-learning-guides/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](https://teachlearn.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/guides/mybeckett-and-digital-learning-guides/microsoft-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**](https://teachlearn.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/the-learning-pathway/building-your-course-community/)? 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](https://teachlearn.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/guides/mybeckett-and-digital-learning-guides/microsoft-teams/) offers a ‘social’ channel and is a secure [General Data Protection Regulation](https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/partners/compliance-legal/data-protection/) (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](https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/staffsite/services/it-services/it-help/skype-for-business/) or [MS Teams](https://teachlearn.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/guides/mybeckett-and-digital-learning-guides/microsoft-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.
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**Key resources:**

References and further reading for this section can be found in the [Strong Course Identity](https://rl.talis.com/3/beckett/lists/086BF37E-85D6-9E4A-D3A6-B7EA51D08C98.html?lang=en-US&login=1#9B8A6AF8-0BB4-659A-2C73-238698888014) section of the [Course Development Principles reading list](https://beckett.rl.talis.com/lists/086BF37E-85D6-9E4A-D3A6-B7EA51D08C98.html) on Talis Aspire.