

BEL+T ESS Guidance

ESS Question 1: This subject was intellectually stimulating and engaging

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ESS Question 1: This subject was intellectually engaging and stimulating

Themes

Based on ABP student voices, the qualities associated with subject deemed intellectually engaging and stimulating include:

1. Curated

Students consider the subject content and activities to be sufficiently broad, varied and challenging.

2. Applied

Students provided with opportunities to deepen their knowledge of content through related learning activities and assessment tasks.

3. Relevant

Students satisfied that subject content and activities are relevant to their backgrounds, current practice and their possible futures.

4. Absorbing

Students engaged through the quality of content delivery, based on from whom, where and how delivery occurs.

1. Curated

Students consider the subject content and activities to be sufficiently broad, varied and challenging.

Tactic	Example	Things to Consider
Select content to cover a range of contexts and perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Choreograph a range of perspectives across lectures, guest lectures, tutorials, precedents and readings. – Signpost diverse perspectives within the subject's overarching narrative/theoretical framework. – Brief guest speakers, then ask closing questions and guide the discussion to ensure it aligns with subject aims. – Draw upon content from co-curricular events (e.g., Dean's lectures) to broaden content and situate within the Faculty's wider context. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Offer a balance of perspectives (gender, culture) – Consider diversity of students and student cohorts, in terms of their interests, expectations and backgrounds. – It may not be necessary to invite guests to include multiple perspectives—but do consider whether there is a 'guiding narrative' that ties all the perspectives together.
Offer a range of learning activities and formats to provide flexibility and variety to students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Offer a range of tutorial-based activities (e.g., site visits, drawing exercises, etc) as a way of engaging with theoretical concepts – Use tutorial as opportunities for students to make connections between delivered content and assessment projects. – Provide option for workshops/consultations outside of tutorials that focus on particular topics/skills/knowledge that students can select 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Consider how learning activities might align to various modes of assessment in the subject. – Be sure to highlight the type of knowledge/skills (e.g. ILO's, tools) that are relevant to the subject
Ensure that content delivered is at the appropriate level of difficulty for the cohort, with an awareness that students will likely have differing levels (i.e. competency)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Design multiple points of entry (e.g., written, visual or oral) for students to build a learning journey. – Use non-weighted quizzes as a way of establishing baseline knowledge across cohort. – Provide variety in how students engage with content (e.g., important ideas are repeated and reinforced, whereas more complex ideas are made available to students wanting to go further). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Consider student capacity and learning needs when designing activities to allow for various degrees of challenge. – Clarify to students the challenge involved in connecting various areas of content – When allowing flexibility within learning structure, ensure learning equity – May need to lead reflective exercises to show how existing skills can support individualised learning (while still being sufficiently challenging)

Related Student Quotations

“The variety of content and fields was very commendable and the local-global underpinnings of the material was illustrated well and in a thought provoking manner.”

“I found the breadth of lecture content impressive, and definitely helped with my learning.”

“The scope of the subject was very holistic in terms of covering different aspects of [the field].”

“The content was very broad and gave students a chance to expand on their learning.”

“The wide content range, exploring different times, cultures, geographies, and styles.”

“I appreciated the chance to look at a diverse range of cities and learn about them.”

“The variety of tasks we completed in each tutorial was good as it kept me engaged and the content was delivered well in each class.”

“I like the flexibility in lecture content, combining both online learning and in person learning coupled with insightful guest lectures in some weeks too.”

“Each class carefully considered to develop a students understanding of the fundamentals of composition, material, and techniques before progressing to more advanced levels.”

“I found the reading materials provided quite thought–provoking and hooked me into reading more about my global city region.”

“However some of the guest lectures were confusing, [...] simply because they may have been too advanced for me and others in the cohort.”

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2. Applied

Students provided with opportunities to deepen their knowledge of content through related learning activities and assessment tasks.

Tactic	Example	Things to Consider
Include experiential learning activities to provide students with opportunities to deepen their knowledge through application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Offer hands-on learning activities, even in the lecture session. – Incorporate site-based learning activities as opportunities for experiential learning. – Connect research-based tasks, like a public exhibition to add a celebratory aspect whilst implying minimum standards – Encourage students to attempt, test and try and making space for failure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Application requires basis (e.g., theory/concepts) and structure, otherwise the activity may not lead to learning – Consider including students in selection of site visit destination(s) – Consider activities/tasks that students can intentionally complete as part of the site visit (e.g., in the form of a guided tour) – Consider low-tech or ‘unplugged’ activities that physically engage students to learn by doing
Enhance engagement with delivered content by linking it to opportunities for applying knowledge through <u>interactive</u> activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Create list of interactive activities for tutors to use in tutorial time that links to lecture content. – Combine skills with interaction to enable different student capabilities to be strengthened, or different points of entry. – Design interactive activities to emphasise student diversity, promoting student agency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Clearly state expectations of students in terms of preparation and engagement in tutorial-based interaction (it may also be useful to explain to students the tutor’s role during these activities) – If the activity involves collaborative digital platforms, consider logistics (i.e. installation, downloading, access)
Enhance engagement with delivered content by linking it to opportunities for applying knowledge through <u>assessment</u> tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Offer a site visit early in semester with an explicit link to assessment task – Include peer assessment as a way of engaging students beyond their own assessment outputs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Consider the speed/intensity of activities in relation to the timing of assessments – Consider assessment is part of the learning experience. – Consider curating and designing lecture content to align with what is being assessed (i.e., scaffolding students’ cognitive development required to engage in assessment tasks)

Related Student Quotations

“Hands-on learning is the most effective way to retain knowledge and better understand what works, and what can be improved.”

“I liked how practical and hands on this course was, and that we were encouraged to dive in and try the techniques.”

“I really enjoyed how the assignments incorporated a 'fieldtrip' element which gave me purpose and motivation to go explore the neighbourhood around me.”

“The most enjoyable sections of the subject were the lectures, but that’s mostly because the influx of information is conducive to learning and then the challenge/fun of being able to apply that knowledge.”

“The engaging tutorials were the most helpful for my learning, as I get to share ideas with peers and tutor to boosted my knowledge.”

“The weekly readings were always relevant to the topic and helpful background knowledge for the lectures and tutorials which extended on this [...] Then, the lectures were helpful to understand the topics more conceptually. I found the tutorials helpful for understanding how to apply the theory.”

“I [liked] the group activities in tutorials, as it was a chance to talk with others about topics covered and content.”

“Our tutor giving everyone a chance to discuss about their thoughts on each reading responses was useful since I liked hearing about how other people approached the texts and their thoughts about it.”

“The readings and materials were really useful for the assignments and in line with the subject’s objectives.”

“I didn’t understand how the lecture related to what we learned in our tutorials, and certain ideas and subjects were never brought up again after the lecture.”

“It was slightly unclear what I was supposed to be taking out of each lecture, and unsure how some of the content in the course relates to the topic, so it would’ve been helpful to know exactly how I can use the information from the lectures in the exam, or what I am supposed to be analysing from the content.”

“The assignments are sometimes not directly related to the lecture materials.”

“Having all the aspects we were learning about applied to one project we tackled throughout the semester was great. Being able to morph and shape these ideas throughout what we learnt was a great way for me to remember everything.”

“More lectures focused on things we could actually incorporate into our assignment, I found those much more useful and interesting”

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3. Relevant

Students satisfied that subject content and activities are relevant to their backgrounds, current practice and their possible futures.

Tactic	Example	Things to Consider
<p>Communicate and/or demonstrate to students how subject relates to the rest of the pathway or program (past, present or future) and inform their imagined futures beyond the degree</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Call on guests to talk about their pathway (e.g., what motivates them and how they apply their degree to practice), showing students that there are multiple ways to build careers. – Design site visits co-led by ‘elder’ practitioner and emerging practitioner (often a recent graduate), allowing students to imagine their future selves – Highlight explicitly how and where the subject content and assessments link to other subjects and through the pathway/program – Frame first lecture discussion around ‘Why bother? Why is this subject relevant to the rest of the degree?’ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Consider whether tasks contribute to the relevance of the subject—and if not, whether they are necessary. – Consider mapping across subjects to ensure relevance is identified and thus realised – Consider ABP Strategic Priorities as touchstones of ‘relevance’ for curriculum (need not be explicit) – Industry connection can also be a means to validate the content and learning in the subject and enable students to see where they are going
<p>Communicate and/or demonstrate to students how subject is informed by current industry practice and/or non-academic contexts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Work with industry partners in an ongoing way, ensuring they are aware of the connection between their participation and the subject, its learning aims and outcomes. – Give students opportunities to speak with community members, past students and industry members—to help position their work/feedback. – Link to industry through emphasising tutors expertise and professional knowledge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Consider also contextualising subject content in a disciplinary and industry culture, creating a sense of disciplinary belonging and community – Be aware that academic research areas or approaches may be the outlier in practice—be sure to contextualise for students re: relevance – Consider that students can become ‘ambassadors of change’ for industry; either way, this needs to be communicated to students to set their expectations and help motivate them

Related Student Quotations

“This subject has allowed me to review more completely what I have learned over the past two years.”

“I loved the session where the tutors had called in students from the past year to share their experience. This made the whole process feel real and relatable.”

“I especially enjoyed the engagement with theories coming from a wide range of disciplines, from the arts to philosophy, social sciences, design and architecture. There is so much of what I have gained in this subject that I can see being directly applicable in other subjects as well as in the future practice.”

“The seminars from industry leaders and site visits were very insightful and aimed to help us gain practical knowledge of the industry. It made me very confident in my abilities as a construction management student and I am very eager and zealous to land a job very soon to showcase the knowledge I have gained in this subject.”

“It was nice to hear [the subject coordinator’s] professional experiences in the industry as it made me look forward to working in the [...] sector!”

“I found that the most helpful aspect was the abundant use of examples in the lectures. These helped me in remembering the lecture content but also connecting the learnt material with the real world.”

“The site was engaging [...] The on-campus and off-campus interactive activities were very helpful and informative. The external consultants brought in [...] were useful and reflected the type of information required of a real analysis and understanding of site.”

“The lecturer took us through [the subject content] using examples that can be found everywhere in life. Very enlightening. In addition, lecturers from different countries were invited to introduce the cities or countries they are familiar with, which helped us to understand [subject area] all over the world.”

“Lectures were really interesting to learn from, whilst the in-class group work tasks were also really helpful, particularly when we could relate it to our own experiences.”

“Realistic teachings and useful topics covered. Felt like we’re actually on a project working as a team to complete relevant documentation to a high standard.”

“[This subject] gives me a chance to learn a variety of essential skills for writing research and knowledge to do a fully appropriate PHD thesis for my future path.”

“[The subject could] provide more information for students who want to pursue a further academic journey.”

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4. Absorbing

Students engaged through the quality of content delivery, based on from whom, where and how delivery occurs.

Tactic	Example	Things to Consider
Display passion for content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Use lectures as opportunities to demonstrate your passion for the subject matter and/or discipline – Include yourself in a virtual site visit so that students can see your response to and insights of a place – Incorporate personal insights to situate content in a richer context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Sharing experiences can provide further layered richness in framing the subject content – Lectures are not just about delivering knowledge content to be tested, but also to inspire students and invite them to discover the discipline for themselves – Inspiring students through lectures does not necessarily align to assessment but can be useful in other ways (travel, career paths, etc.) – Give students opportunities to demonstrate their own passion
Demonstrate skilful delivery of content through clear, structured, concise and digestible manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Provide students with signposting and summaries of lectures – Combine and carefully sequence content through levels of complexity and media types. – Use different media (e.g., videos, student debates in the lecture theatre, pop culture) – Locate content in real-world contexts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Demonstrate care for students by being aware and considerate of their time and preferences – Consider quality of presentation images, graphics and multimedia and the way they integrate to provide a cohesive narrative
Encourage active learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Design interactive lectures that include asking students questions, raising thorny moral issues, bringing in contemporary issues – Invite students to contribute anonymously to a glossary of words that they find are ambiguous or confusing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Important to 'sit with silence' be comfortable waiting for students to think through and respond to questions. – Consider the time needed for students to absorb content that has been relayed through subject lectures and other modes.

Related Student Quotations

“The lectures were very interesting, the many different examples and images shown [...] kept it very engaging and real rather than just theoretical. His experience in having visited these sites on most occasions also offered what I felt was a more in depth and vivid insight.”

“[My tutor] was fantastic at providing industry insights and knowledge and was great at explaining things.”

“The lectures were also outstanding especially with amazing guest lectures giving me tons of knowledge and inspiration. One thing I noticed about this semester was that whenever I walk out of a lecture or a tutorial, I feel inspired and motivated which pushes me to keep working on my design and attending them.”

“The discussions in the tutorial were also stimulating, and helpful in understanding different people's ideas when it comes to certain theories, and how people from different cities understand and relate the ratings to their personal experiences.”

“[The subject coordinator] has rich teaching experience and research achievements. The many cases he explained helped me understand metropolitan city from different aspects.”

“The weekly fieldwork tasks were quite valuable, as they allowed me to observe the actual implementation of urban design theory in real-world contexts.”

“[The subject coordinator's] passion for the topic shines through in her lectures, making the content not only informative but also enjoyable to learn. She has a knack for breaking down complex concepts into easily digestible pieces, which was incredibly helpful for me as a student.”

“The layout/formatting of the lectures were consistent between weeks [...] There was also a good balance of text to talking to the slides. The pictures were generally of good quality and always relevant to the slides.”

“The lectures were extremely clear, and any information that wasn't provided were given clear instructions on how to search for it online.”

“I think the subject was well structured and well signposted. I knew what to expect before each lecture and was able to situate my learnings within the broader scope of the subject. The information on the weekly pages was especially helpful in guiding the use of the readings each week and in prompting some thought about the [...] exercise before class.”

“I personally think the lectures are too lengthy [...] I understand the content is very heavy, and there is much to be covered. It could be helpful to have multiple summaries of the important points and reduce the amount of slides [...] If the slides were more condensed and the lectures were shorter that could help with the impact of the content taught.”

“The lecture is a bit boring, hard to gain the main idea and key terms in the lecture.”

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