BEL+T ESS Guidance

ESS Question 4: The study resources and materials provided were helpful in my learning

Built Environments Learning and Teaching Group

University of Melbourne

Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning

https://msd.unimelb.edu.au/belt

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Based on student feedback and a series of conversations with ABP teaching staff, BEL+T has produced a set of **Tactics for Study Resources and Materials**. The objective of this process was to identify the characteristics that students attribute to subjects with useful resources and materials. In addition to student commentary, the following guidance includes tactics used by subject coordinators as well as things to consider for their application.

Themes

ABP student voices described the qualities associated with helpful study resources and materials as being:

1. Delivered in an Engaging and Accessible Format

Study resources and materials are delivered in a format (or combination of formats) that students find engaging and easy to access.

2. Aligned to Learning Activities and Assessment

Study resources and materials are designed within the broader subject design such that students perceive their utility and relevance.

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1. Delivered in an Engaging and Accessible Format

Tactic	Example	Things to Consider
Ensure delivery format(s) that maximise student engagement with content.	- Formats deliberately chosen to align to those used in industry (e.g., feasibility studies). - Recap videos that summarise key points of text-based resources or preview upcoming synchronous session. - Specific sections of longer readings emphasised to focus students' attention, then time set aside in synchronous session to review key sections as a group/cohort. - Use of virtual site visits or gamified platforms to engage students in real-world scenarios and/or uncertain futures.	- Consider intellectual property issues when recording content delivered by guests, noting there may be unique considerations around content delivered by Indigenous stakeholders. - Consider learning resources in relationship to in-class activities and assessment tasks (see Theme #2).
	- 'Map' provided to students (e.g., in subject guide) that conveys subject delivery formats across the semester. - Use of video captioning and/or transcripts to allow multiple modes of engagement with the same resource.	- Complementary delivery formats (i.e., synchronous, asynchronous or both) may need to balance self-directed learning with cohort-wide interaction, and to accommodate diverse learning needs. - Students may need flexibility rather than compulsory plus optional content – consider how this may align with ILO priorities for the subject.
	- Periodic check-ins with teaching team to gauge student needs for resources (e.g., what kind and when?). - Periodic review of how/how often students are applying resources in assignments to gauge their engagement. - Resource delivery designed in a way that allows for varied student journeys (e.g., through redundancy of content) rather than a set path.	- How might feedback be collected from students on timing and mode of delivery formats to ensure their needs are being met effectively? - Project-based subjects like studios and/or subjects with larger cohorts may make use of a broad 'library' of resources for students to draw on, but may not anticipate all students to access all of these. How might this approach be clarified for students?

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1. Delivered in an Engaging and Accessible Format (continued)

Ensure expectations of time spent engaging with resources and materials is appropriate and aligns with approved subject credit hours.	- Weekly Canvas announcements that provide students with clear time expectations around open-ended tasks like self-guided learning activities or resource 'mining'. - Content clustered into blocks of reasonable time expectations (e.g., one hour of engagement).	- Beware of overwhelming students with online content; consider suggesting strategies for how to prioritise content, manage engagement, etc. - While considering overall time commitment for a subject is important, assigning time to each asynchronous task may be problematic if it assumes that every student will spend the same time. - Consider students' responsibilities outside university that may impact engagement with content.
Structure the LMS for effective navigation to resources and materials.	- Time in timetabled/synchronous sessions (e.g. lectures or tutorials) dedicated to demonstrating how/where to access Canvas-based resources. - Resources shared in consistent Canvas location, with consistent formatting and predictable timing of release. - Semester overview included on homepage to help students navigate to relevant weekly pages. - Use of video timestamps to assist in retrieval of key content.	– Team-based activities can help to locate resources with students themselves as resources! – Consider pros and cons (for students) of releasing resources week-by-week or all at once. – Avoid sharing resources in ways that require too much scrolling or complex navigation – communication design can maximise the time students commit to engaging with the content itself. – Consider coordinating with colleagues to apply consistent Canvas design across pathway/program for improved navigation – the BEL+T templates provide a faculty approach that can be tailored.

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Related Student Quotations

Online learning material gave a great overview which was supported by the lectures […] The short videos included [on the LMS] were incredibly useful and I enjoyed all of the guest lectures. All provided material was helpful and useful.

I enjoyed the virtual site visits. They were quite engaging [and] allowed me to visualise certain concepts which again allowed me to understand them better…

The rewatchable video format of the guest lectures are very useful when searching for in–depth discussions about certain topic areas.

The online recorded lecture were informative and engaging. Having the flexibility of when to watch the lectures is extremely helpful.

I appreciated being able to do the lectures at my own pace online. They are jam–packed with information!

I didn't find the online learning super engaging, I more so relied on the lectures so I think there could have been a better way to make students engage with that content so they don't miss out on important information as at times there was a lot to go through.

The online learning was useful but in some cases could be a little confusing at times, it may have been better to step through these things in a lecture format.

Online learning […] is quite overwhelming with the amount of information and not being explained in the subject context creates a lot of confusion.

Overwhelming and unconcise amount of information [on the LMS], which was hard to read through to find what was needed. Ended up being easier to just google the information. This could be improved by organising the information better. Contents pages, formatting consistency, hyperlinks, etc.

Timestamps in each workshop/lecture video would make it easier to find specific points. Would save time scrolling through the videos to find the skill I forgot how to do.

Only some of the lectures slides were made available on LMS. Making all of them easily available in the same place would have made taking notes in the class easier.

I would suggest creating slide shows or notes on tutorials and how to access certain materials that were introduced for easier access.

References

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2. Aligned to Learning Activities and Assessment

Tactic	Example	Things to Consider
Map subject resources against learning activities and assessment to confirm constructive alignment.	– Rubrics designed to clarify (to staff, firstly) which resources are most relevant to each assessment. – Semester broken into 'modules' or weekly themes, to link resources to specific assessment tasks. – Students provided with explanation/demonstration of how resources can be applied to assessment. – Weekly tabs on Canvas pages show link between activities/resources and intended learning outcomes.	– Varied assessment formats (e.g., essays, exams, design-based projects) may offer students different motivations for engaging with resources. – Some subjects are designed around semester-long tasks, challenging presentation of 'modules'. How else might resources be categorised for access? – More senior students may desire or need more agency in deciding which resources to utilise. – Consider highlighting resources relevant to broader learning experiences but not directly to assessment.
Scaffold resources to support learning towards assessment.	– Use of links on Canvas to align resources to relevant assessment tasks. – Weekly study guides that indicate relationship between (and timing of) activities and expectations. – Past student work shared to establish standards by grade bands. – Students provided with assessment templates to prioritise their efforts on content over formatting.	– Prior knowledge/backgrounds of students can impact equity – consider this when designing resources. – Consider best timing of releasing resources, noting that complex and/or group-based projects may require more time prior to submission. – Type/level of resource-based guidance should vary depending on whether tasks are open-ended or follow a step-by-step process.
Optimise the relationship between synchronous activities and asynchronous materials.	– Communication to students clarifying expectations re: engaging with resources before vs after sessions. – Lecture slides/notes reviewed to ensure these align to content delivered. – Lecture slides include signpost to online resources (links, quotes, directions on Canvas, etc.). – Pre-recorded videos include built-in Q+A (e.g., H5P) that informs upcoming synchronous interaction. – Use of pre-recorded videos to free up time in synchronous sessions for more interaction.	– To design delivery modes equitably, consider varying learning needs across the cohort. – It can be tempting to assume *interaction* is the core purpose of synchronous activities and *delivery* the core of asynchronous resources, but keep in mind that either mode can include a mix of delivery and interaction. (Please refer to the DIA section of the BEL+T website for more on this)

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Related Student Quotations

My tutor was very kind to upload many related information on the Miro board to help us do the project.

Useful readings were provided that were in accordance with the subject's assessments.

Make the lectures, readings and tutorials more linked.

Videos are provided however the assumption is that students undertake these 4–5 hours worth of videos outside of the required class time. It would be more beneficial to run this unit as a learning unit where skill is the focus each week and practical tutorials are undertaken to understand the programs and the content.

The slides on canvas are good but they don't have the same depth of information that is discussed in class.

I would prefer to have some of the tutorial contents documented for future reference.

It would have been useful if the workshop slides were made available as a resource to refer back to.

We […] got a run through of how to use the canvas for the subject too late in the semester so I feel like some information that would have been very useful in the first assignment was missed.

The readings are too complex to be understood [and] the lectures are not helpful for assignments. It would be better if lecture explains the theory in the readings.

Adobe Illustrator or related application tutorials should be provided if renders and illustrations are recommended.

References

Biggs, J., Tang, C. & Kennedy, G. (2022). *Teaching for Quality Learning at University*. Open University Press.

Biggs, J. Enhancing teaching through constructive alignment. *High Education 32*, 347–364 (1996). https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00138871

Biggs, J. (2003). Aligning Teaching for Constructing Learning. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/255583992_Aligning_Teaching_for_Constructing_Learning