

BEL+T ESS Guidance

ESS Question 2: The expectations, including assessment requirements, were clear

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Based on student feedback and a series of conversations with ABP subject coordinators, BEL+T has produced a set of **Tactics for Assessment-Related Expectations**. The objective of this process was to identify the characteristics that students attribute to subjects with clear expectations to inform teaching practices. 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 they associated with clear expectations, including for assessment requirements, as:

1. Clearly Communicated

Communications prepared by teaching staff around expectations are clear and effective.

2. Supported by Interaction

Opportunities are available for students to clarify expectations with staff and peers.

3. Reliable

Student expectations are confirmed through summative assessment procedures (i.e., no surprises).

4. Consistent

Expectations are consistent over time, and across communications and teaching staff.

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1. Clearly Communicated

Communications prepared by teaching staff around expectations are clear and effective.

Tactic	Example	Things to Consider
Setting clear expectations, including deliverables and deadlines, in subject documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Concise summary or checklist at beginning of subject guide (e.g., what, how, when, why?) – Timeline shows assessment tasks with links between various assessments – Criteria in assessment rubrics reiterate expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cohort-wide interactive opportunities to clarify expectations – Open-ended and/or creative tasks may call for multiple approaches to expectation-setting – Group work may demand an additional layer of expectation-setting about collaborative processes
Breaking down expectations along the way through supplemental channels of communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Weekly signposting in lectures or Canvas announcements recap expectations – Examples of past student work are provided alongside explanations of grading (i.e., as a graphic rubric) – Screenshare recording of practice exam with voice-over commentary – Assessment-related Canvas FAQs share and reframe individual student queries (e.g., from Q+A sessions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Mid-semester communications around expectations can be informed by ongoing interaction with students – In some studio subjects, expectations may differ between individual studio groups with different projects – Alert students if/how their current assignment brief differs from past student work examples
Designing the LMS site for straightforward navigation and access to resources that clarify expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Assessment-related information is located in a central and easily accessed part of Canvas site (i.e., directly from homepage) – Canvas site structured around weekly pages of learning resources aligned to in-class activities and assessment tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Student expectations for Canvas site design may differ between subjects or subject types

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Related Student Quotations

Announcement summary after each week were great! I think it's a good way to gain where we should be sitting after each week and what we will be looking at in the coming week.

The introduction to the modules were very helpful as it helped let us generally know what the upcoming assignment is about.

Having lectures explaining assignments thoroughly was really helpful as it gave clear expectations.

The tutor actually went through examples for the assignments and went through good examples of answers. This was so helpful in understanding how to answer a question and I get that it really helped me with not just this subject but other subjects too. More teachers should do this!

I really liked how the Canvas page broke down what was required for preparation, the tutorial etc.

All the assignments were done by looking at the examples provided yet the examples were not the top examples and sometimes only "Pass" quality without clear indication.

Week 5, 2 weeks before our midsem crits, our tutor finally gave us a deliverable list for our assignment. This is way too late in the semester, we basically had a week to get it ready.

Maybe a more clear/accessible set of instructions for assignments because sometimes it was difficult to find clear info in the subject manual.

It was often unclear of what was expected of us during assignments. Information was not all in one place and it was easy to miss a requirement.

For every assessment, the information is spread out over multiple pages in Canvas, making it hard to look at assignments as a whole. This info should be added to one page in the relevant assignment page.

References

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2. Supported by Interaction

Opportunities are available for students to clarify expectations with staff and peers.

Tactic	Example	Things to Consider
Organising (synchronous) time to discuss expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dedicated time for Q+A with teaching staff, with peer-to-peer opportunities to identify questions or confusion - Past students invited to discuss their working process vis-à-vis expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Whole-cohort versus small-group (i.e., tutorial-based) discussions may offer different benefits - Discussions at the launch of assessment tasks can clarify expectations - Activities designed for students to <i>demonstrate</i> their understanding of expectations can be more effective than open Q+A sessions
Managing open and effective asynchronous communication channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Canvas discussion board or MS Teams channel dedicated to assessment-related queries - 'Treasure hunt' activity on cohort-wide Miro board to clarify assessment task requirements and elicit points of confusion, collective wisdom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Separate discussion boards for each assessment task may avoid overloading - Peer-to-peer platforms may require staff moderation to ensure accuracy of information - Stated cohort preference for synchronous versus asynchronous interaction, or hybrid (i.e., recording of synchronous session)
Encouraging teaching team to communicate their availability to receive assessment-related queries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students provided with timely communication as to when/how assessment-related questions will be answered and by whom - Tutors encouraged to proactively invite student queries - Clear guidance for tutors to know when/how to pass student queries to subject coordinator and/or senior tutor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Budget implications for tutor time for responding to student queries (e.g., moderating discussion boards)

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Related Student Quotations

The studio had a lot of time to ask questions, to clarify what needed to be done for each week.

Having smaller breakout rooms to discuss certain things about the assignments with other students.

There were plenty of opportunities for asking questions and seeking help, whether it was via the discussion board or after the live Zoom, so I always felt that I could address a problem fairly immediately.

Cross-pollination sessions and reviews before every submission definitely helped me to develop a better understanding of the expected outcome for each task.

Tutor was very helpful, very responsive to questions, respectful and clear about what is expected in assignments.

It was easy for me to get in contact with my tutor regarding issues or questions related to the class topic.

This is a very complex and demanding subject but it has been very well-presented, with multiple supports provided to assist students including studios, workshops, peer-learning sessions and Teams help channels.

Students keep getting confused by the requirements and have to keep clarifying with each [other] in the group chat.

It would be better if the subject was managed better in terms of being specific about assignment information, having more time dedicated towards clarifying questions in live lecture.

References

Bloxham, S. & Boyd, P. (2007). Preparing students for assessment. In [Developing Effective Assessment in Higher Education: A Practical Guide](#) (pp. 66-80). McGraw-Hill.

O'Donovan, B., Price, M. & Rust, C. (2008). [Developing student understanding of assessment standards: A nested hierarchy of approaches](#). *Teaching in Higher Education*, 13(2), 205-17.

Steel, A., 2013. [Clarifying Assessment: Developing Typologies for Forms of Assessment in Law](#). *Journal of the Australasian Law Teachers Association*, pp.2014-39.

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3. Reliable

Student expectations are confirmed through summative assessment procedures (i.e., no surprises).

Tactic	Example	Things to Consider
Ensuring rubric aligns with expectations communicated elsewhere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Weightings of rubric criteria match relative emphasis in activities and communications - Past student work used to illustrate distinctions between marking bands - Input gathered from teaching team to iteratively improve language and structure of rubrics, thereby clarifying expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rubrics that outline the <i>values</i> to be applied in assessment of submitted work, but not necessarily specific deliverables - Students may become reliant on rubrics as a prescriptive guide – consider the right balance for this cohort
Outlining marking/moderation procedures to students for transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marking and moderation procedures presented during lecture session (e.g., to explain staff use of rubrics) - Hypothetical marking and/or moderation demonstration to provide students a ‘behind the scenes’ look at these processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A dedicated discussion on the distinction between rubrics, deliverables, feedback, etc. - Whether ‘justification of mark’ details should be communicated to entire cohort or only those students with queries
Ensuring consistent marking/moderation procedures are applied across cohort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pre-marking meeting with tutors to review submitted examples relating to each criterion - Feedback provided to students on common issues observed across the cohort, providing context to individual students - Prepare a strategy to deal with marking discrepancies efficiently and fairly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student and staff numbers may impact concerns around marking consistency and how to approach these - Sharing anonymised examples of submitted work alongside collective summative feedback

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Related Student Quotations

Assessment rubric was very good as it created transparency in marking.

The rubrics were excellent. They gave a strong understanding of the task requirements and clear parameters.

Assessment outlines were unclear and led us down a path of writing in a style that was not correct. Not being told this until the assessment feedback.

The marking scheme and requirements on the assignments can be much more clear, so the mark in every studio can be more objective and equal to everyone in the subject.

I found the rubrics for this subject very vague and could be improved for greater clarity for how we are to be assessed.

After the assignment results become available, I found that the areas unmentioned/less focused became were marked heavily, whereas the areas I worked hard on and was told to focus on were worth less and even disregarded.

I would have appreciated greater clarity on the assignment marking guidelines in order to direct my output.

Marking for assessments is not transparent because the assessment rubric (score for each category) was not given in feedback. It is confusing how marks are broken down.

The content sometimes seemed more surface level and less technical which often didn't align with the expectations of the submissions.

References

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4. Consistent

Expectations are consistent over time, and across communications and teaching staff.

Tactic	Example	Things to Consider
Confirming assessment expectations are consistent across all subject documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pre-semester meeting for teaching staff to cross-check subject guide, timeline, and support resources - Common vocabulary for assessment aligning to language in subject documentation - Content on Canvas site checked against subject handbook entry to avoid discrepancies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Canvas site as a 'single source of truth' (including links to single assessment page to reduce risk of discrepancies) - Assessments and expectations may need to change due to unforeseen circumstances, with potential for inconsistency or flow-on effects - Have a 'fact-check buddy' to offer a fresh set of eyes on subject content (and vice versa)
Ensuring all staff have a shared understanding of expectations before each assessment launches, and again prior to marking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preparatory meeting with teaching team to emphasise use of assessment briefs/rubrics to support a shared understanding - Input invited from all staff and students to inform future brief/rubric revisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Open-ended tasks and/or diverse cohorts, as well variation in tutor experience levels, can complicate achieving a shared understanding - Use coordination meetings to confirm shared understandings amongst teaching staff and resolve competing perspectives
Developing a strategy in the event of mixed messages around assessment expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tutors encouraged to urgently raise issues about inconsistencies with subject coordinator - Canvas announcements used to communicate any mid-semester changes to expectations; 'flow-on' implications of changes reviewed for consistency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consider how much variation/flexibility is appropriate for tutor expectations, modes of communication, etc. - How will you make any mid-semester changes to documentation clear to students? (e.g., using highlighting, strikethrough text, etc.)

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Related Student Quotations

Instructions was well–outlined for lectures, tutorials and assessments. Tutors are also well–equipped with the knowledge of what needs to be addressed on a weekly basis.

Consistency between subject guide and assignment requirements in assignment resources.

Deliverables were often not explained properly or wrong information was given by my tutor during class. In regards to assignments, I'm not sure whether a different tutor would have made it more straightforward but I was often confused about what exactly was due and whether it was going towards my final grade.

Studio information was disconnected to clear expectations given in lectures, which created confusion and led to incorrect outputs for many students listening to tutor, but then being marked based on subject guide.

Consistency of expectations and requirements for assignments; my tutor, lecturer/coordinator, rubric, past work examples for guidance, all had different standards and expectations.

There needs to be more information provided about what we need to produce to meet the evaluation criteria, particularly as it seemed that these expectations differed across the different tutorials as different tutors had specific ideas of what should be included.

Subject had no subject guide, meaning no one knew what was going on or knew the structure of the subject, everything we heard was from the tutor directly during class. This wasn't exactly confidence inspiring as we would receive conflicting information each week or our Tutor would tell us he didn't know either, meaning we'd just be left in the dark about certain topics. There was a scenario where three students tried to squeeze an answer out of the tutor about the assignment, but he danced his way around them and it was pretty clear he didn't exactly know what was going on either.

References

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