UNSW believes that learning should:

**Be engaging**

*Students are motivated to learn when they are engaged with exciting and stimulating ideas and experience.*

Dunne and Owen (2013) have compiled a highly relevant selection of contributions on student engagement in their volume *Student Engagement Handbook: Practice in Higher Education*. There are many chapters worthy of inclusion in this review, however Ratcliffe and Dimmock’s (2013) Chapter 4 explores what student engagement means to students themselves. The authors investigate one UK university’s student body to measure the student activities which motivate students. The authors suggest that student engagement comprises three factors which are: having a unique identity, group and peer expectation; and the desire to gain new skills and experiences.

Kahu (2013) examines student engagement from four perspectives; behavioural, psychological, socio-cultural, and holistic. The author establishes a framework as a tool to target interventions for increasing student engagement and acknowledges that student engagement is a complex process.

Solomonides, Reid and Petocz (2012) provide a model for student engagement (see fig 1.1 p. 19) which encompasses the sense of being a professional (eg students as initiates into a specific professional community), the sense of being, the sense of engagement (eg affording learners the opportunity to engage creatively), the sense of transformation, and the sense of discipline knowledge (eg the legitimate activities, skill and knowledge of the discipline). This book chapter is well-referenced, however the papers range from the early 1970s to 2009.

Trowler (2010) systematically reviews 30 years’ of predominantly US and Australian literature on student engagement from the 1980s and tables the findings in every conceivable dimension. The author notes that there was little, if any literature which captured the student voice on student engagement.

Subhash and Cudney (2018) detail innovations in learning through their systematic review (41 papers) of gamified learning in higher education. They found that gamified learning improved student attitude, engagement and performance.

Leach and Zepke (2012) describe student engagement in learning as facets of a complex interaction. The authors introduce a framework of six perspectives (motivation and agency, transactional engagement with teachers and with students, institutional support, active citizenship, and non-institutional support), then they investigate empirical findings, and finally detail implications for practice. They conclude by imploring institutions to question what they are doing and what more they could do to foster student engagement.

Zepke (2014) challenges existing literature on student engagement as lacking in consideration of individual contexts; as also focusing on pedagogy rather than curriculum; and he discusses student engagement in the context of neoliberal ideology.
References


Trowler, V. (2010). Student engagement literature review, Department of Educational Research: Lancaster University. https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/6d0c/5f9444fc4e92cca76fe9f9f426bd107e837a9f.pdf

UNSW believes that learning should:

**Be active**

*Learning is an active process involving a conscious intention on a student’s part to make sense of new ideas or experiences. Learning involves action (the trying out of new ideas) and reflection (based on feedback). Learning should develop a student’s capacity for independent thought and action. Whether working individually or in groups, a student should become increasingly autonomous in their scholarly endeavours.*

Billett (2014) conceptualises lifelong learning through a holistic ‘person-particular’ approach in contemporary society. The author challenges the preconception that ‘lifelong learning’ is applicable to later learning or professional development rather than enveloping early higher education experience with ongoing curiosity, interests, and relevant professional experience and accreditation. He outlines a five point framework for lifelong learning and education which addresses preparedness for societal roles, transitional roles, unexpected professional outcomes, and the abolition of discrimination.

Murphy (2020) contextualizes active learning and a philosophy of education through three threads of Giorgo Agamben’s radical Italian theory. These are: ‘whatever’ which encapsulates identity as endorsement of the individual; ‘potentiality’ or forced actualization imposed through the institutionalized and systematized formal educational system; and, ‘study’, whereby the desired outcomes of personal study leading to prescribed testing and political hierarchy are rejected in favour of self-imposed autonomous learning. Murphy describes the shift from passive learning to active learning by stating “small group discussions (temporarily) dissolve the immediate power of the lecturer” (p. 10), where, in a reversal of classroom hierarchy, both active learning, and active learning pedagogy prevails.

Active learning can be realized through self-regulation and critical thinking. Vardi (2015) dissects what it means to be a critical thinker; the role of goals and beliefs in becoming a critical thinker; self-regulation in the context of becoming a critical thinker; environmental impacts on becoming a self-regulated critical thinker; implications for critical thinking pedagogy in higher education; goals and beliefs, opportunity, and competence. The author mandates these as developmental attributes for graduates entering society.

Williams (2012) views the student as social actor through the lens of Peter Jarvis’s lifelong learning perspective and Margaret Archer’s realist social theory. The author emphasizes personal agency and proposes a modification to Jarvis’s definition of learning (outlined in a table on page 320) and also states that “learning emerges through work, practice, on our part” (p. 320).

Freeman et al. (2014) undertake a metanalysis (225 papers) of undergraduate science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) examinations to determine outcomes for traditional versus active learning teaching practices. After analyzing their results, they formulated the following definition: *Active learning engages students in the process of learning*
through activities and/or discussion in class, as opposed to passively listening. It emphasizes higher-order thinking and often involves group work (pp. 8413-8414).

References


UNSW believes that learning should:

**Be situated and authentic**

*Learning is situated and authentic when students develop their knowledge and capabilities in meaningful disciplinary, professional, and personal contexts.*

Herrington (2014) acknowledges the disparity between formal learning situations and future applications of learning by outlining a framework of innovative authentic learning design. Based on the theory of situated cognition, or situated learning, the nine key elements include: an authentic context to applying knowledge to life; authentic tasks; access to expert performances and modelling of processes; multiple roles and perspectives; collaborative construction of knowledge; reflection; articulation; coaching and scaffolding; and, authentic assessment.

Van der Walt (2016) investigates the feasibility of grafting self-directed learning theory onto the capability theory. The author gives a brief summary of capability theory, then contextualizes with ontological and cosmological preconditions; philosophical anthropological underpinning; assumptions about societal relationships; assumptions about axiology (value) and morality, and other ruminations on the ‘self’ and the ‘directedness.

Grosemans, Coertjens and Kyndt (2017) undertake a systematic review (45 papers) exploring learning and fit in the transition from higher education (HE) to the labour market. The authors segment their findings into learning outcomes, basic competences, business competences, conceptual competences, personal competences, people competences, transfer of learning outcomes, and learning at work. Their results have implications for the role of learning in the transition from institution to the workplace and the role of fit (educational) background and the job.

Watagodakumbura (2013) emphasises the need for a deeper perspective of education to make way for an authentic learning experience by acknowledging the diversity in neurological learner characteristics among cohorts. The author elaborates by discussing how not to expect the presence of idealistic learning in the learning environment; by addressing issues related to assessment; by excluding non-educational organisations setting the agenda; by balancing theory and practice; by avoiding being predominantly didactic; overcoming a lack of focus in higher order learning; by overcoming a lack of attention to the time factor in learning; by overcoming the lack of focus in learning motivation levels; and, by avoiding an over-reliance of education on socio-economic conditions.
References


UNSW believes that learning should:

**Build connections**

*Learning experiences should connect new ideas with students’ existing knowledge, skills and values, while extending and challenging their current ways of thinking and acting. Learning should build connections between teachers and students and between students themselves.*

Nortvig et al. (2018) review the literature (93 papers) examining the factors influencing e-learning and blended learning in relation to learning outcome, student satisfaction and engagement. The researchers found that there were no discernible differences to the outcomes from the three modes of face-to-face, online, or blended course delivery, however the online platform provided enhanced connectedness for student-teacher interactions, and for student-student interactions. The enhanced connectedness promotes trust and engagement in the learning process. This research is supported by the findings from the *Digital Experience Insights Survey 2018* (Beetham, Newman & Knight, 2018) which states that students felt more independent in their learning when using digital technologies in higher education environments.

Bridgstock and Tippett (2019) examine connectedness as an approach in dimensions of health and wellbeing, career development, learning, and employability. In this introduction to their published volume of Higher Education and the Future of Graduate Employability, in addition to their proposed model (figure 1.1, p. 14) they articulate three connectedness capabilities, seven connectedness pedagogies, and eight enabling strategies.

Conradi (2014) offers a pedagogical approach to ICT students in his case study of 76 learners. This empirical paper has helpful tables which detail the factors measured (motivation, engagement, collaboration, self-actualisation), and the strategic approaches to ensure trustworthiness (credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, authenticity). The connectivist approach to learning in this study’s findings, emphasizes the need to ensure students have the right skill-sets to maintain self-regulated learning, as the inevitability of educator-regulated learning diminishes over time.

Nobre and Nobre (2018) exemplify connectedness in their project a-REAeduca which is an online journal for collaborative learning and collaborative writing. The target participants are Masters students in an open education environment in Portugal. Although an empirical paper, the success of the project provides evidence for an alternative educational paradigm.

Huggins (2018) explains how prior learning assessment fits into today’s education landscape using data collected from a 2010 CAEL study. The experience of connectedness is realized through the recognition of prior learning (RPL) and the application of the learning to a new educational environment. The author highlights the graduate success rate of RPL students and recommends change in how to look at the assessment of learning.

Anderson (2019) uses Connected Learning methodology to conduct fieldwork as a teaching tool. Here the connectedness applies to the acquisition of knowledge from theoretical understanding to workplace application in a Peruvian case study. The author promotes the use of the methodology not just across disciplines, but especially for business students.
References


UNSW believes that learning should:

**Be guided by clear expectations and academic standards**

*Learning is effective when it is purposeful, when the reasons for study are explicit and attractive, and when students understand what is expected of them.*

Kahn (2014) theorises student engagement in higher education and elucidates the student experience of the unknown. He proposes pedagogical strategies to avert students’ evasion of learning and fractured reflexivity, which may be attributed to uncertainty. The author states, “A learning environment that encourages students to take responsibility in the face of uncertainty and that integrates supportive social relations offers scope for reflexivity that promotes learning.” (p.1014).

Henderson et al. (2018) collaborate in a multi-institutional investigation on feedback for learning. Their report details the four-phase approach of identifying feedback practices and experience; case studies of when feedback works and why; framework for effective feedback; and, working with institutions. The findings include encouraging students to engage with all feedback resources available; highlighting innovative and highly effective feedback design, providing educators with a clear vision of effective feedback; and reflection on feedback from the educators’ perspective.

Wimpenny and Savin-Baden (2012) undertake a literature review (56 papers) on alienation, agency and authenticity. Their findings articulate attributes of the students’ sense of self and their place within educational institutions; their persistence and resilience; study approaches; autonomy, and expectations about their chosen discipline. The authors highlight that more understanding is required about personal and psychological responses towards engagement in order for students to maximize their learning potential.

**References**


UNSW believes that learning should:

**Be challenging and supported**

*Effective learning is supported by a climate of enquiry where students feel challenged, while being supported to take sensible risks in their learning.*

Cranton and Taylor’s (2011) excellent chapter on transformative learning is not limited to building authentic and supportive relationships, but it also encompasses holistic orientation, individual experience, critical reflection, the role of dialogue, rational, extra-rational, and social transformation, and how educators can foster transformative learning in practice. The authors state that a shift to transformative learning occurs “through reflection, imagination, intuition, emotion, and engaging with symbols and myths” (p. 201).

Effective learning challenges students in contexts of experiential learning where theoretical knowledge is applied in the workplace. Shepherd, Leigh and Davies (2019) revisit the impact of education philosophies and 10 theories in two scenarios (international business, and policing) as they acknowledge that many employers are concerned with the ill-preparedness of graduates. Although this paper has a learning design focus, it nevertheless encapsulates the challenges students desire in order to remain engaged and invested in the learning process.

Another area where students routinely encounter stimulating challenges is through online learning platforms. Chakraborty and Nafukho (2014) undertake a literature review on engagement strategies in online courses and identify the following primary factors which are: creating and maintaining a positive learning environment; building learning community; giving consistent feedback in a timely manner, and using the right technology to deliver the right content. The researchers also note that online courses can benefit the instructors in addition to creating an online community of support (or practice) amongst the students themselves where virtual learning enhances interaction.

Zhoc et al. (2019) present student engagement through the lens of the Higher Education Student Engagement Scale (HESES). There is no explicit mention of being challenged and supported, however the five-factor model of student engagement in HE of 1) academic engagement, 2) cognitive engagement, 3) social engagement with peers, 4) social engagement with teachers, and 5) affective engagement, clearly demonstrates the social interactions encountered by the learners, and the results prove that the HESES is a reliable measurement tool.

Similarly, Olesen (2018) takes a psycho-societal approach to learning and experience. This theoretical paper describes learning as directly related to experience, societal structures, and everyday life history of learners. The author views potential practical applications of scholastic knowledge complemented by abstract competencies acquired outside of formal learning environments.
References


UNSW believes that learning should:

**Be inclusive of diversity**

*Learning is enhanced when students feel valued and respected, and engage with, and are challenged by, a diversity of ideas and perspectives within an environment that is respectful of this diversity. Students learn in different ways and their learning is best supported by the use of multiple teaching methods and modes.*

Cognitive styles and approaches to learning can differ greatly among students. Evans et al. (2010) and Richardson (2011) explore the impacts of these within the higher education setting. Richardson explores the relationship between the conception of learning itself which is stable, and how this is manifested in individual approaches to learning, which fluctuates. Evans et al. (2010) probe how cognitive and learning styles matter by identifying trends within styles and citing data from the European Learning Styles Information Network (ELSIN). The authors claim that a heightened awareness in instructors of their own cognitive style(s) will enhance student learning.

O’Shea, May and Stone (2015) report on evidence from their project to break down the barriers of ‘first in family’ to attend university. This OLT report emphasizes the importance of institutional support for students who may lack their own support network, and details resources and networking opportunities for student cohorts and for institutions themselves.

Respect for Indigenous knowledge in the built environment is articulated in Jones et al. (2018) which represents a guide for tertiary educators. Primarily this report serves as a cultural awareness tool to non-Indigenous populations and highlights the chasm between existing Western knowledge domains and those of Australia’s first peoples. Perry and Holt (2018) continue this trajectory in their search for Songlines of Aboriginal education and culture within Australian Higher Education. They provide the Indigenous perspective as an alternative epistemology and formulate a framework to address the incongruity of conflicting educational offerings through the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium (WINHEC) accreditation handbook.

**References**


