

Galvanising Transition and Success for Underrepresented Students: Five Conditions for Enhancing Online Student Engagement

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Abstract

The Australian Universities Accord's (Department of Education, 2024) focus on expanding underrepresented groups' access to higher education underscores an on-campus-online paradigm shift, or post-pandemic digital transformation, to address students' flexibility and accessibility needs. The shift identifies that online student engagement, and students' learning outcomes, need to be effective and fit for purpose if students are to succeed. Conducted as one phase of a longitudinal project (2017-present), this research investigated the approaches and strategies that could be incorporated to facilitate students' online engagement. Findings suggest that these strategies could be encapsulated under five key conditions: fashioning a strong teacher presence; crafting an inclusive and safe online learning environment; creating well-structured and interesting content; forging explicit expectation management; and ensuring students have time to engage. This article argues that if educators are purposeful in applying these conditions, employing targeted, specific strategies in their curriculum design and teaching, students' online engagement, and their learning outcomes, will be enhanced.

Keywords: Online student engagement; student transition; student diversity; student inclusion; unrepresented students; online learning.

Introduction

While online learning may be pivotal in re-shaping the higher education space, it presents challenges for both students and educators (McKay et al., 2021; Stone, 2017), particularly in relation to online student engagement. Online learning elevates the profile and role of online engagement, defined as the regular and ongoing synchronous and asynchronous formal and informal activities, actions, energy, and behaviours that involve the learner within their learning environment and broader learning community, where the end goal is to enhance and achieve learning (Bond et al., 2020; Remond et al., 2018).



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Various challenges in building online engagement have been well-documented. These challenges include those associated with ensuring appropriate online design (Devlin & McKay, 2016) for both educators and for institutions themselves, those involved in understanding who the students are and their specific needs (Crawford, 2021; Stone, 2017), and those demanding that a strong teacher presence is created in the online learning and teaching space (Lambrinidis, 2014; Stone & Springer, 2019). Online learning has been shown to present fewer opportunities for shared understandings to be developed, with some assumptions unspoken, even unconscious, constituting a hidden curriculum, and potential ambiguities or blocks in meaning and intention generated, affecting educators' and students' social presence (Brown et al., 2023). Students may also experience feelings of disconnectedness or isolation or may be more easily distracted. They may also experience self-regulation difficulties, due to the complexity of online learning contexts, with the need for increased student self-efficacy advocated in the online space (Kumar et al., 2023; You, 2016). Dumford and Miller (2018), focussing on self-regulated learning, argue that in online environments, learners need to undertake goal setting, self-motivating, self-monitoring, self-adapting, and self-reflecting in their own learning which requires high levels of self-automation and self-regulation. Educators may also add multiple resources which may overload students cognitively (Garnett, 2020), leaving them with limited time to engage and impeding their capacities to manage their learning.

In response to such challenges, useful frameworks for building online engagement have emerged over time, such as those by Salmon (2014) and Redmond et al. (2018), as well as several standards and guidelines for good practice in online learning and teaching (Kahu, 2013; Salmon, 2014; Stone, 2017). Frameworks and guidelines such as these acknowledge that engagement online is different from classroom-based engagement and therefore needs a different approach to that of face-to-face teaching if student engagement is to be achieved. The common elements in each of these frameworks and guidelines include the needs for: an awareness and understanding of the online student body – their demographics and particular needs – both at institutional as well as individual educator levels; flexibility in terms of delivery and student policies (such as regarding extensions etc.); specifically designed online curriculum and courses; strong and engaging teacher/educator presence in the learning space which includes being present at the same time the online students are, which is often after hours; strategies to build student-educator and peer-to-peer relationships, hence developing learning communities; and systems that appropriately monitor student progress and involvement and provide clear direction for educators on the engagement intervention strategies required. The research findings outlined here are informed by the common features delineated in these frameworks and practice guides to present conditions useful for enhancing online engagement.

Methodology

The purpose of this research phase was to undertake a qualitative process investigating the use of the Framework for Online Engagement (Redmond et al., 2018), utilised as a reflection and planning tool for teaching and learning. The project had two layers: a) the educators' learning, and b) how the participants applied the framework's elements/practices to their learning and teaching. The first layer of analysis, investigating the educators' learning, have previously been presented in an article by Brown et al. (2023). This article explores the findings from the second layer, participants' application of their learning from the framework to their teaching.

The methodology for both layers entailed four phases: (1) recruitment; (2) orientation /learning and application; (3) data collection; and (4) analysis. Participants were recruited through three webinars exploring the Redmond et al. framework and through information disseminated through professional networks and social media. The ten participants were located across five locations (England, Scotland, Wales, Nigeria, and South Africa) and included five novice participants, two participants with minimal experience and three participants working in learning design supporting academic staff. Limitations emanated from the small sample size and the potential for self-selection bias, but these are offset by acknowledging that the participants embodied different course levels, disciplines and institutions, possessed varying experiences in online teaching, and were all motivated to understand more about online teaching.

In the orientation/ learning and application phase, two members of the research team conducted three webinars for international audiences, presenting the framework as an auditing/ planning tool for thinking about how student engagement might be enhanced (stimulated by the COVID-19 pandemic). Data collection involved semi-structured interviews (Barbour & Schostak, 2005) with questions exploring participants' experiences as online educators, their use of the framework and its perceived utility in planning for learning, building competence in online pedagogy and strategies supporting student engagement. Data analysis began with a priori coding of the transcripts using the Redmond et al. framework (2018). This filtering process fortified the utility of the framework's five conceptual elements – cognitive, social, behavioural, collaborative, and emotional elements (documented in Brown et al., 2023)

This article extrapolates the findings from the second layer of investigation. This layer analysed the observations participants made in talking about their students: about how the students engaged with course materials and activities and how they responded to specific aspects of course design. This layer included comments made by the students themselves. In discussing students' engagement for example, participants emphasised the importance of establishing an environment of trust and building a sense of belonging, while others instigated strategies to build rapport and model behaviours for engaging (Brown et al., 2023). By giving purpose and value to emotional and personal connections, the participants felt they helped build emotional engagement. Participants also disclosed strategies aligned with directly teaching and modelling skills and behaviours to build belonging, trust, and rapport, and to develop relationships (Brown et al., 2023). This led the research team to extrapolate whether the presence of overarching conditions could be identified or even, warranted. The team contended that the findings outlined above could be subsumed under a condition classified as *fashioning a strong teacher presence*. In a similar way, four additional conditions were delineated: crafting an inclusive and safe online learning environment, creating well-structured and interesting content, forging explicit expectation management, and ensuring students have time to engage. This article endorses these conditions by documenting additional literature to fortify their presence and applicability as well as augmenting them with the strategies emerging from participants' responses in the second layer of data analysis.

Fashioning a Strong Teacher Presence

Research themes underpin the critical nature of a strong teaching presence in the online space and its positive impact on online student engagement. The Redmond et al. framework used as a reflection and planning tool for teaching and learning, provides the context for this condition with two of its elements embracing social (building community) and emotional engagement (creating a sense of belonging), both promoted by a strong teaching presence. Researchers highlight the role of the teacher in enhancing students' social and emotional engagement. Kahu et al. (2022) discuss purposefully assisting students to gain familiarity with place, practice and people while Crawford (2021) observes that in online pedagogy it is important to recognise that educators' virtual presence is also a social presence that builds a sense of community among students and one that, in turn, helps to maintain students' engagement and interest. Verification also stems from research on belonging (Ahn & Davis, 2019; Kahu et al., 2022), pedagogical practice and interaction styles (incorporating enjoyment and shared focus, support, responsiveness, directiveness and verbal praise) (Khalid & Quick, 2015), and the research on educators' behavioural and academic expectations (Stone & Springer, 2019). Table 1 illustrates the research insights, strategies and the participants' evidence associated with fashioning a strong teacher presence.

Table 1

Supporting a Strong Teaching Presence

Research insights	Strategies and participants' evidence
<p>A strong teacher presence can combat social isolation and ensure that students/staff maintain sense of belonging online (DiGiacomo et al., 2023; Judd et al., 2021).</p>	<p>Adopt inclusive language when communicating online and use “us” and “we” and refer to students using first names to convey shared purpose.</p> <p>Use breakout rooms, where students are likely to operate their cameras.</p> <p>A participant described, <i>intentionally and frequently mixing student groups and allowing additional time in their small groups and pairs to establish rapport. They've often come to me, saying over the weekend somebody asked about this and we're all struggling with this.</i></p>
<p>Regularly communicate and interact with students (Garrison et al., 2017). Relationships include student/student, student/educator and student/institution (Brown et al., 2023b). Crawford (2021) argues that teaching approaches can foster (or undermine) students' motivation.</p>	<p>Build in routine/ongoing opportunities for student-to-student, student-to-teacher interactions, group activities/group work/ social events to connect in and out of class.</p> <p>Invite students to continue conversations using WhatsApp or WeChat to build community online and where Internet is limited provide online spaces for students to compare experiences and find commonalities.</p> <p>One participant <i>uses class forums to amplify student contributions while modelling how students make connections: This is your answer, and this is good for these reasons, but look at this, see how it could be more in-depth.</i></p> <p><i>I want learners to be able to respond honestly without fear of embarrassment, so I use anonymous polls encouraging honesty in misconceptions, confidence levels & formative feedback.</i></p>
<p>Understand & value students' goals, backgrounds, and experiences, (Stone & Springer, 2019) Assist students to develop rapport and belonging, a sense of purpose and a community of learners are sustained (Redmond et al., 2018).</p>	<p>Incorporate getting-to-know-you' and social forums & listen to and ask students about their needs and to respond to other students' forum posts.</p> <p>Provide opportunities for students to share their lives and cultures.</p> <p>Invite students to bring their personal learning materials (e.g., photos childhood stories and memories) in introduction forums or online tutorials.</p> <p>A participant used the first 10 minutes of online tutorials to simply ask students: <i>Where are you at?</i></p> <p><i>To engage students in online learning, with no reference to feelings, values or motivations, is to assume students are dispassionate thinkers, where head and body are separate and not part of a mutual and systematic process of learning. That's why harnessing emotional engagement in my courses is so important!</i></p>
<p>Transition is positioned as a “socio-psychological process of becoming, in which emotion, social connection, efficacy and wellbeing are key elements” (Hughes et al., 2022, p. 88) Tharapos et al. (2023) commend the critical role of the educator in providing affective support to students.</p>	<p>Build community using words such as “We're in this together”; “Hi team”; “Welcome colleagues” and integrate in welcome video and forum posts.</p> <p>Provide students with space to talk openly during online classes.</p> <p>Exercise the twin capabilities of actively seeking students' opinions and ideas of others and giving them due consideration.</p> <p><i>I emphasise the personalised part of the [students'] journey as an important aspect of emotional engagement.</i></p> <p><i>I come on 15 minutes early to zoom tutorials as those that want social contact always to arrive early for a chat, thus developing a warmer environment and 'bringing the familiar' into learning.</i></p> <p><i>I have 'no qualms about turning my camera off, telling students and leaving for 10 minutes, so that students know that I'm not there spying on them, & when I come back, tell me where we need to do more work in what areas.</i></p>

Crafting an Inclusive and Safe Online Learning Environment

Crafting an inclusive and safe online learning environment is contextualised in Redmond et al.’s (2018) framework, principally through its emotional element, including articulating assumptions, recognising motivations, and committing to learning, and its behavioural element, in developing agency, upholding online learning norms, and supporting peers. An inclusive and safe environment is significant given the increasing diversity of the student population and the Australian Universities Accord’s (Department of Education, 2024) intention to expand underrepresented groups’ access to higher education. Several research strands underpin it: the spotlight on sexual safety (National Student Safety Surveys and Reports, see Heywood et al., 2022); the growing importance of students’ mental wellbeing (Baik et al., 2019); and the need for inclusivity (Crawford, 2021), both generally and in focussed areas, embracing First Nations students, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, students with disabilities, and international, LGBTIQ, rural and isolated and mature age students. Additionally, those who are first-in-family often question their ability to succeed, or their right to attend the institution in the first place (O’Shea, 2021).

Participants’ evidence coincides with the online pedagogy of care proposed by Burke and Larmar (2021), which incorporates a teaching orientation that challenges dominant, often reactively driven learning and teaching practices to overcome the facelessness of online learning. Burke and Larmar advocate for a model incorporating four components: 1) modelling (demonstrating through their own behaviour what caring in action means, 2) dialogue (intentionally engaging students in open-ended and genuine dialogue centred in caring), 3) practice (providing opportunities for learners to practice caring in a supportive environment) and 4) confirmation (finding opportunities to provide specific feedback about the individual’s responses, including the effects of such responses on others). The research also advocates that creating a safe and inclusive learning environment is important. For example, Broadbent and Poon (2015) pinpoint self-regulated learning strategies that can lead to academic success, including ‘time management, metacognition, effort regulation, and critical thinking’. Further research insights are delineated in Table 2 along with their associated strategies and the participants’ evidence.

Table 2

Crafting an Inclusive and Safe Online Learning Environment

Research insights	Strategies and participants’ evidence
<p>Burke and Larmar (2021) define an online pedagogy of care as one that is emotionally safe and supportive, and where there is evidence of high empathy, warmth, responsiveness, and affirmation of students’ multiple perspectives and needs.</p> <p>Brown et al. (2023) promote opportunities for students to learn health promoting knowledge and skills – such as resilience, conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, mindfulness as well as time and task management</p> <p>Student’s assumptions impact on satisfaction levels, ways of working online, the time it takes to commit to online course content and topics (Brown et al., 2023b).</p> <p>Inclusive practices in teaching and support cater for the needs of mature-aged students in regional/ remote areas, proactively supporting and enhancing their mental wellbeing (Crawford, 2021). The capacity to recognise if and when students need support is critical, particularly online where self-regulated learning, and self-</p>	<p>Be explicit about the role/ benefits of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeking help and developing resources of support • Developing social contact and networking • Accessing support facing roles/sections in the university • Promoting health knowledge and skills, e.g., resilience, conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, mindfulness & time and task management <p>Invite or link to student support services into your online spaces.</p> <p>Demonstrate own behaviour to model caring in action.</p> <p>Provide opportunities, in asynchronously (forums, word cloud, polls and Padlets®) and synchronously (online tutorials), for students to articulate their assumptions, values, opinions// feelings on the topic and share their perspectives on the relevance and value of the topic and whether it adds to their learning or professional application.</p> <p>Illustrate appropriate behaviours for inculcating ways to be safe, respectful, and responsible in the online learning environment.</p> <p>Understand that the often new, unexpected, and unfamiliar commitments in online learning can overwhelm and frustrate students and put in place strategies that can help to ameliorate these.</p> <p>Participants emphasised: <i>the importance of highlighting the benefits of seeking help when required and publicising programs and opportunities useful for supporting students, such as peer assisted study advisers and mentoring opportunities, are beneficial.</i></p> <p>Another quoted a student: <i>I love the flexibility of setting my own agenda with my study, and structuring my study around my life, work, family, and leisure time (yeah right! 😊). But most of all, I love the fact that my teachers really consider my circumstances and ensure that there</i></p>

<p>efficacy, is more difficult (Kumar et al., 2023). It is important to directly teach and model skills and behaviours that build belonging, trust, and to develop relationships (Redmond et al., 2018).</p>	<p><i>are opportunities for us to connect and learn from and with each other. They ensure that we all feel like we are in this together, and in doing so help break down the barriers of isolation. Participants observed that, it was pivotal that learning has an emotional connection and is personally relevant – where learning draws on students' lived experiences, memories and affirms collective intelligence.</i></p> <p><i>Negative experiences can be ameliorated if educators anticipate them and link students to accessible academic and wellbeing support resources, normalising help-seeking behaviours in a safe and inclusive way. Help students break out of subject silos to increase their sense of engaging with the program as a whole. Such sites can be good places for promoting social and professional events, volunteering and work placement activities, etc.</i></p>
<p>Tai et al. (2023) introduce the idea of assessment for inclusion, which seeks to ensure diverse students are not disadvantaged through assessment practices.</p>	<p>Avoid making negative/deficit judgments about student capability by questioning assumptions and who and how they impact assignment decisions:</p> <p><i>Asking assessment questions on Moodle can support students and encourage them to answer questions and have agency in their own learning and assessment.</i></p>
<p>Developing relationships and networks that support wellbeing, e.g., collaboration with peers, instructors, and the institution and connecting with others for both educational and non-educational activities develops academic, social and emotional perspectives (Redmond et al., 2018); Tuckman's (1965) stages of group development: forming–storming–norming–performing, helps students be less shocked when the storming begins online.</p>	<p>Use intentional design strategies to ensure students are engaging with others in forums and online activities.</p> <p>Highlight the benefits of working with peers virtually through building transferable skills - communication, teamwork etc.</p> <p>Include online spaces to connect informally, e.g., participating in a virtual Quiz night.</p> <p>While discussion forums support peer to peer learning, when there is limited buy in, reinforce the purpose and reason for contributing.</p> <p><i>It is important that forums are structured and that students are aware of the type of 'behaviour or way of working'.</i></p> <p><i>Respond and build onto other students' posts with a supporting statement.</i></p> <p><i>Start a forum with a provocative statement, ask for responses and enable forums only to be added to after answering a question.</i></p> <p><i>Hold virtual weekly well-being check-in and also share where you are on the emotional scale and why.</i></p>
<p>Students who perceive their university as benevolent, may feel a stronger sense of belonging and connectedness, leading to higher levels of academic achievement, retention, engagement, and loyalty (Snijders et al., 2021). Flexibility is advantageous for students with work or family obligations that make it difficult for them to attend traditional in-person classes. (Brown et al., 2023b).</p>	<p>Turn up early to online synchronous lectures, tutorials, or workshops, and leave late, as in face-to-face classes, to be able to answer questions.</p> <p>Connect students to other educators in the discipline, e.g., online co-teaching or webinars.</p> <p>Engage in Students as Partners initiatives, including online peer tutoring. Promote virtual events (such as staff and student clubs, career fairs, open days, sporting days) to students, staff, the public and industry.</p> <p><i>Ask online students to co-design campaigns, course content, services, and resources for the university. Include activities that enable testing in their own life, and what they have learned to provide a useful framework for making successful decisions in their own life and share in forums.</i></p> <p><i>A flexible instructional approach is a key factor in promoting students' feelings of inclusion and belonging and helps students to learn at their own pace, and on their terms and schedules.</i></p>

Creating Well-Structured and Interesting Content

Creating well-structured and interesting content surfaced in participants' data as fundamental to encouraging students' interpersonal and academic belonging and fostering online student engagement. It is present in the Redmond et al. (2018) framework's cognitive element, in terms of thinking critically, activating metacognition, integrating ideas, justifying decisions, developing deep discipline understandings, and distributing expertise and is associated with the active process of learning (see Brown et al., 2023b). Lock et al. (2021) found that student engagement was negatively influenced by difficulties of both

material and teacher guidance, but argued in response that instructional practices that include choice, flexible or negotiated assessment, facilitation of reflection, learner confidence development, and the involvement of the learner in designing their learning can increase student engagement and lifelong learning capabilities. Table 3 documents the research insights, strategies and participants' evidence supporting the design of well-structured and interesting content.

Table 3

Creating Well-Structured and Interesting Content

Research insights	Strategies and participants' evidence
<p>Brown et al. (2023b) maintain that online engagement depends on sound content, pertinent to students' needs and requirements, personally and professionally, and relevant to students' employability and careers.</p> <p>Tharapos et al. (2023) argue that course design is the cornerstone of online education with educators' skills and knowledge and delivery facilitated by technology being essential for continuous improvement.</p> <p>The Community of Inquiry instructional model (Garrison et al., 2000) appreciates that learning occurs through educational design where learners and teachers interact through exhibiting three forms of presence – cognitive, social, and teaching – in combination.</p>	<p>Integrate cognitive junctures in ebooks/study modules, forums and online classes that pose questions, “time for reflection”, “stop and think more about.”</p> <p>Embed feedback literacy, self-regulated learning and lifelong learning skills to reduce affective learning loads.</p> <p>Incorporate low stakes learning activities early (not assessed but interesting and motivational). Preliminary/draft assignment submissions are useful as are staff grading and feedback that signpost student capabilities, teaching practices encouraging participation, and staff interest in piquing students' attention.</p> <p>Encourage interaction among peers in apps, forums, and online classes.</p> <p>Design tasks that require students to work collaboratively with students from other schools or disciplines, enabling interprofessional learning activities, team teaching, group project assessment tasks and work integrated learning activities.</p> <p><i>Online student engagement can be achieved through working and learning in pairs and group work, providing opportunities for students to work with others from their course or across disciplines, as well as interprofessional learning networking.</i></p> <p><i>I ask students to add a slide to a presentation that captures something missing from my presentation and why they think it should be added.</i></p> <p><i>Provide opportunities for peer and educators' online feedback in pair activities and group work and by supporting and encouraging peers.</i></p> <p><i>Incorporate activities that require students to use multiple perspectives to solve tasks.</i></p>
<p>Building and maintaining relationships with individuals and organisations can benefit students' career development & job opportunities. These networks can include colleagues, supervisors, mentors, alumni and can help with mentoring, coaching, career advice, guidance, and feedback on their skills and abilities and understanding industry trends, and a sense of the culture and atmosphere of different workplaces (Brown et al., 2023b).</p>	<p>Host online communities of practice and link to online professional networks.</p> <p>If working in an asynchronous learning environment, consider interviewing the guest speaker and sharing the recording.</p> <p>Include video messages from the industry in short 5-minute recordings.</p> <p>Provide visual and verbal opportunities for students and educators to link theory with practice and link course content with the profession.</p> <p>Invite guest speakers, or incorporate pod or vodcasts, so that different perspectives are integrated into the teaching and class resources.</p> <p><i>Have students attend online networking opportunities outside the course.</i></p> <p><i>Invite online guest speakers/ lecturers/tutors outside the institution who can affect students' feelings about the value of professional networks.</i></p> <p><i>Promote relevant organisation online talks/social events and forward informal staff/student collaborative online spaces event invitations to relevant talks or social activities being held by professional organisations.</i></p>

<p>Burke and Larmar (2021) note that technology use can help audit the curriculum to ensure flexibility in course-load and progression pathways, review assessment policies/ practices to ensure students receive regular, informative feedback on their learning and progress and designing learning experiences that enable students to work together to achieve goals. Educators need to identify students' online learning behaviour patterns and foster their learning engagement to achieve the maximum functionality (Broadbent & Poon, 2015).</p>	<p>Teach online learning processes and help students understand the psychology of learning.</p> <p>Use interactive online technologies to exponentially increase teachers' capacities to engage students in interactive, practice-centred learning thus enhancing learners' capacities to "workshop" their content knowledge and skills using discussion boards, synchronous tutorials, educator-facilitated group work, and interaction in shared online documents (Google Docs, Teams®, Padlet®, Miro®, Creatly®, Flipgrid®, SeeSaw®, Mentimeter.</p> <p>Incorporate branching scenarios that encourage students to design a scenario in an online collaborative space based on key understandings.</p> <p>Incorporate reflective activities using an ePortfolio.</p> <p>Participants recommended: <i>clarifying commonly used operational definitions of SRL variables that include frequency of reading and posting messages, assignment submission, course material viewing, quiz engagement, blog updates, web links viewed, total time spent online, and access to grade tool.</i></p> <p><i>Use alternative forms of digital communication tools for collaboration: Skype, WhatsApp, text messages, email, and digital collaborative tools for group tasks and assessment.</i></p>
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Forging Explicit Expectation Management

Expectation management surfaced as a key condition assisting participants to align their expectations with those of students, ensuring mutual understanding and optimum learning. It emerged in Redmond et al.'s framework under the behavioural engagement element and is supported in research which prioritises expectation management with educator wellbeing (Johnson & Lane, 2023) and which points out that congruence around role expectations, held by both educators and students, is central to student success in a changing university environment. Table 4 depicts the research insights, strategies and the participants' evidence presented to support forging explicit expectations management.

Table 4

Forging Explicit Expectation Management

Research insights	Strategies and participants' evidence
<p>Pace (2017) refers to decoding the disciplines where unfamiliar students may perceive they are not communicating with academics who, immersed in the discipline, fail to identify bottlenecks to students' learning and neglect to systematically outline the steps needed to overcome these unfamiliar literacies.</p>	<p>Embed, scaffold, and model key academic and information literacies within eBooks, forum posts and online tutorials.</p> <p>Be explicit about the crucial role of academic integrity and integrate these expectations into Assessment eBooks.</p> <p>Integrate online links and teach referencing techniques and expectations.</p> <p>Incorporate explicit assessment expectations into Assessment eBooks and Modules and by providing samples and templates of assessment tasks.</p> <p>Ensure marking rubrics are clear and ideally of a consistent format across courses.</p> <p><i>Do not assume that students know what is required of the expected ways of working and learning relevant to the discipline.</i></p> <p><i>Modelling is important in showing what academic writing looks like and how ideas are developed through a paragraph.</i></p> <p><i>Instigate formative/preliminary essay/assignment planning & or peer review of assessment within a virtual classroom. Provide a consistent message about assessment requirements.</i></p>
<p>Kong and Lin (2023) found that self-regulated learners possess more self-control, confidence, and a greater</p>	<p>Identify and publicise online programs and opportunities: applying for support facing roles in the university, peer assisted study advisers, volunteering, mentoring peers, international exchanges, sporting groups, English conversation groups, etc.</p>

<p>sense of responsibility in learning than others. Kleimola and Leppisaari (2022) note four sets of future-facing competences considered important and associated with the subject development: reflective competence, self-awareness and self-management, learning literacy, and personal agency and self-efficacy, all of which require students having the time to build.</p>	<p>Identify challenges for students, or student nonengagement, by viewing course analytic data such as activities or assignments completed; frequency of logins to website; number and frequency of postings, responses, and views; number of podcasts, screencasts, or other website resources accessed; time spent creating a post; and time spent online to link students with appropriate support services.</p> <p>Provide opportunities to help students identify and enhance their learning skills through forum contributions and online tutorial sessions.</p> <p>Provide opportunities for peer and educators online to share feedback in pair activities and group work to support and encourage peers.</p> <p><i>It is important to provide explicit expectations of key ways of working in the online space, upfront and early in the semester to reinforce online learning norms.</i></p> <p><i>Be direct about expectations and offer verbal praise wherever possible.</i></p> <p><i>Initiate routines that make it easier for students to stay on track with their studies (e.g., posting initial contributions to discussions on the same day each week and deciding when to respond and when you will give feedback on readings, etc.).</i></p> <p><i>Encourage students to respectfully question, challenge and communicate with educators and their peers, to help them to develop agency, engagement, learning presence, self-regulating behaviours, and skills engagement.</i></p>
<p>When expectations of behaviour are made explicit, students are more likely to develop their learning self-awareness and professional identity and understand the conventions essential in professional communities, e.g., online learning contexts (Brown et al., 2023b). Students' active participation in course based/extracurricular activities is enhanced by adhering to norms and rules and can be seen as skills, agency and academic engagement, & self-regulated behaviours (Redmond et al., 2018).</p>	<p>Be explicit about online course requirements, expectations, etc., as well as course and online discussion protocols and clarifying boundaries. Provide explicit expectations of key ways of working within the online space, up front and early in the semester such as providing explicit information on where materials are accessed, using the study schedule as a "one stop shop" that links to eBooks and resources, clarifying expected time commitments, and the importance of the weekly classes.</p> <p>Model expected behaviours for students to replicate and guide their behaviour.</p> <p>Be supportive and responsive in reinforcing normalisation of behaviours, and validate, reaffirm, and encourage acceptable behaviours.</p> <p>Remind students at the beginning of synchronous class sessions about the course's purpose and protocols for ways of working in these classes.</p> <p>Clearly state and uphold online discussion and learning norms.</p> <p><i>Provide productive strategies such as accurate information about assignments and study schedules, complemented by personal guidance and advice to assist students to manage their time more effectively and increase their engagement with learning resources. Adopting these expectations early on also increases participants' capacities to monitor students' progression, be mindful of students' personal study plans & institutional requirements, & help them communicate with students.</i></p> <p><i>Provide explicit information on where materials are accessed, using the study schedule as a 'one stop shop' that links to associated ebooks and resources, time commitments for study, and the importance of weekly online tutorials.</i></p>

Ensuring Students Have Time to Engage

While there is limited research explicitly exploring the provision of enough time for students to engage, participants' data in both layers of analysis reveal the significance of this condition. For example, participants observed that utilising LMS based learning analytics assisted them to ascertain just how many, or how few, resources are being used by students. This data substantiates the literature noting that learning and teaching have different temporal dimensions online, a circumstance exacerbated by the recognition that students are increasingly time poor, accepting more work and have family responsibilities with many undertaking three or four online courses simultaneously (Kahu et al., 2022). Educators therefore need to strategically consider how to present required learning content in *manageable chunks*. Brown et al. (2023) argue that because online learning is a different learning space, there are two inherent risks: (1) spending too little time for planning and teaching, leaving students with insufficient guidance and support; and/or (2) spending too much time over-designing and over-resourcing content, thus overwhelming students with too many and non-aligned learning resources (the pedagogical version

of digital hoarding) along with providing too many tasks and assessment accompanied by unrealistic expectations. While ensuring students have time to engage is the final condition documented here, it is of equal importance, as without the time to engage, learning is likely to be hindered along with student retention and success. Table 5 offers the evidence to support this contention.

Table 5

Ensuring Students Have Time to Engage

Research insights	Strategies and participants' evidence
<p>Incorporating a lot of content and multiple resources online may also impede students' capacities to manage their learning, potentially overloading them and leaving them with limited time to engage (Lawrence et al., 2021).</p> <p>It is important that students actively participate in their own learning by managing their cognition, metacognition, motivation, and behaviour (Kong & Lin, 2023).</p> <p>Cognitive overload (Lopez, 2024) contributes to students' feelings of being overwhelmed or daunted, especially in the first weeks.</p> <p>Providing students with time to engage is also important in helping to mitigate against online engagement fatigue, defined by Maloney et al. (2023) as the "reduction in online students' enthusiasm and motivation for engaging in course activities as a result of overexposure to online coursework and associated interactions" (p. 2).</p>	<p>Calculate the time it takes for students to engage with resources and activities to prevent overloading students with too much content.</p> <p>Incorporate peer reviewing strategies into curriculum design.</p> <p>Use touchpoint surveys and learning analytics to identify commitment/engagement in learning.</p> <p>Provide an online progress bar so students can identify their learning progress and monitor achievements.</p> <p><i>Utilise the student voice to seek feedback about how well students are coping with the work.</i></p> <p><i>Differentiate between required and additional interest tasks. Scaffold the online experience to reduce students' cognitive loads.</i></p>

Conclusion

This article described the literature and the methodology employed to overcome the challenges to students' online learning outcomes. Together, the literature and research findings verified five conditions which could assist educators to improve students' online engagement. Contextualised by the intentional use of effective learning pedagogies, these conditions inspire educators to reflect about what constitutes a strong teaching presence and the strategies that could be implemented to develop an inclusive and safe online learning environment cultivated through well-structured and interesting learning content. These conditions also highlight the importance of ensuring explicit expectation management along with deliberating carefully about how to organise course time to enable students' effective self-management. The research findings, together with the literature and strategies reviewed and discussed, strongly indicate that incorporating these five conditions in curriculum design and delivery can enhance online engagement, facilitating students' transition, achievement, retention, and success.

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