

8 Situational Lenses

S1. Students and S2. Staffing

Overview

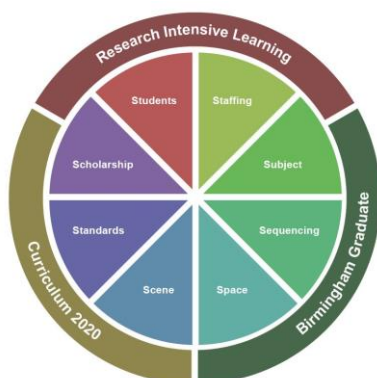
When designing or redesigning learning, whether small scale (course sections), medium (a course, module or MOOC) or large scale (programme or MOOC) the first step needs to be a careful review of the situational factors that may affect your key decisions. The situational lenses include:

1. **Students**
2. **Staffing**
3. **Subject**
4. **Sequencing**
5. **Space**
6. **Scene**
7. **Standards**
8. **Scholarship**

These all sit within the wider University of Birmingham priorities of

- Research-Intensive Learning,
- Curriculum 2020 and
- Birmingham Graduate Attributes.

You may find some lenses to be more important than others. By exploring them all you will identify the factors that are important to creating a robust learning design.



Students

Start by summarising the characteristics of your module, course or workshop learners.

- **Numbers** (average or expected) for cohort as a whole plus any subdivisions (eg. for seminars)
- **Level of study** – will issues of transition (UG / PG) impact?
- **Mode of study** – are students full-time, part-time, working, dealing with additional responsibilities (family, caring & working)

It is worthwhile creating a number of **pen portraits** giving you an opportunity to sketch out the various types of students you normally enrol, expect to enrol or aspire to enrol. You might want to consider some or all of the following:

- Range of **experience, knowledge, capabilities and skills**
- Particular **motivations, needs and preferences**
- **Life situation or world** that the student brings into the classroom (including social, political, cultural, historical and economic)
 - Students **social location**, defined / informed by their gender, race, social class, age, ability, religion, sexual orientation, and geographic location
 - **Life or professional goals** students bring with them
 - **Reasons** for enrolling, including the impact of compulsory enrolment
 - **Knowledge** including preconceptions
 - **Expectations** of what is learning, university, the discipline, the classroom, career trajectory
- What **prior experiences, knowledge, skills, and attitudes** do students bring with them



Staffing

In regards to your learning design, make yourself a list of all those who are involved in teaching (yourself, colleagues, PGAs, associates etc) and supporting learning (admin team, eLearning, careers, library etc) along with their roles and relevant responsibilities. Now ask yourself, how might each team member's **confidence levels, interests, skills and experience** impact on:

- particular pedagogies, subject topics or techniques utilised
- situations encountered
- technologies used or considered for use
- their developmental needs

You are encouraged to revisit this lens as your learning design develops.

Everyone involved in teaching and learning can also benefit from creating a **philosophy of teaching statement**. We grow as educators through regular reflection, conversations and development of our personal and professional assumptions, beliefs and values. The following questions may help trigger your thoughts:

- What do you think is the purpose of teaching?
- What do you think are the characteristics of an effective teacher in your disciplinary and departmental context?
- What are the features of an effective learning experience for the students you work with?
- How do you want your students to learn?
- What are your aspirations for your students?
- In the context of teaching, how do you hope you are seen by your students and / or your colleagues?
- What is the role of assessment in the courses that you teach?
- What personal values and beliefs underpin your practice?
- Can you identify any key formative experiences which have shaped your view of teaching? Often, for example, our experiences as a student influence our perspectives on what a good teacher is.

Make sure to examine and critically reflect on your **teaching related values**, from the perspective of the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF), **University of Birmingham's** values and your own **disciplinary** values.

UKPSF Values Dimensions

V1 Respect individual learners and diverse learning communities

V2 Promote participation in higher education and equality of opportunity for learners

V3 Use evidence-informed approaches and the outcomes from research, scholarship and continuing professional development

V4 Acknowledge the wider context in which higher education operates recognising the implications for professional practice

References

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Fink, L.D., (2013) Creating significant learning experiences: An integrated approach to designing college courses. John Wiley & Sons.

Higher Education Academy (2011) The UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/downloads/UK%20Professional%20Standards%20Framework.pdf>

