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, PGTAs, 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

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V1</td>
<td>Respect individual learners and diverse learning communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>V2</td>
<td>Promote participation in higher education and equality of opportunity for learners</td>
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<td>V3</td>
<td>Use evidence-informed approaches and the outcomes from research, scholarship and continuing professional development</td>
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<tr>
<td>V4</td>
<td>Acknowledge the wider context in which higher education operates recognising the implications for professional practice</td>
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**References**

