



Excellence in Student Engagement: It's the Small things that make the Difference



Drawing upon three years of student feedback to course representatives, my own student experience and analysis of Good Practice Exchange videos from the Centre of Excellence in Learning and Teaching at Manchester Metropolitan University, this research presents students' perspectives on the small things that make the biggest difference to their learning experiences and engagement with their courses.

What lecturers do to keep students engaged:

- Encourage Dialogue
- Use a range of resources and teaching styles
 - Engage with different levels of ability
 - Offer challenging / dynamic work
- Be memorable / fun / interesting / creative
 - Let their subject passion shine through
- Share their energy and enthusiasm about topic
 - Offer encouragement
- Create practical / relevant contexts to material

Practices which make a difference to the learning experience & engagement with content:

- Converting theory to practice
- Being on hand during office hours / approachable
 - Helps academic development
 - Is kind / supportive / understanding
 - Values and respects students
 - Inspires / motivates / gives meaning
 - Evokes belief / gives confidence
- Provides timely, detailed / constructive feedback
 - Takes an interest in students

Implementable practices for all staff that could enhance student engagement:

- Treat students as individuals
 - Respond to students
 - Listen
 - Be non-judgemental
- Offer guidance / good advice
 - Share knowledge
- Encourage discussions and interactivity
 - Know students' names

Whilst every student is an individual undergoing a learning experience that is unique to themselves, with different needs and interests, each with their own personal and social characteristics (Wilson, 1981); many points presented in this cross-analysis are supported Gurung and Schwartz's (2009) concept of the 'master teacher' and are often cited at student led teaching award ceremonies (The Union MMU, 2016).

References:

- Wilson JD, (1981). *Student Learning in Higher Education*.
- Gurung RAR and Schwartz BM, (2009). *Optimizing Teaching and Learning: Practicing Pedagogical Research*.
- The Union MMU, (2016). <https://www.theunionmmu.org/your-voice/teachingawards/2016-winners/>