

The Issue

Students will be motivated to learn and invest effort in courses they are enthusiastic about. This guide offers advice on how to enthuse students.

Teachers' questions and what we learnt

Some students are just not interested in learning. Can we really enthuse students?

Teachers strongly influence students' perceptions of a course and their motivation to learn. Students come to a course not really knowing what they will learn. If you are very enthusiastic about your course, they will catch some of your excitement. You are a powerful role model.

How do you make students enthusiastic about a course?

Students are enthusiastic about topics they approach with **confidence** and which are **important and relevant**. You can help students relate what they will gain from your course to things that are important and relevant to them. Anticipating failure drains students' enthusiasm. Work hard to build your students' confidence.

What if they will never use my topic in their futures?

Make it interesting, tell stories, set exercises, engage their emotions. Every course contributes to building a range of capabilities. Alert students to the generic capabilities taught in your course and how useful they will be.

What if they do not come to class and just focus on getting assessments out of the way?

Design your assessments so students are learning and doing interesting tasks. Let students choose or co-design aspects of their assignments.

What if students are not enthusiastic about my course because they do not like my teaching style? I'm a researcher, not a teacher.

Teachers need to match their approach to their students and topics. It is very easy to learn new teaching techniques. Teaching enthusiastic students does not take any more time than teaching miserable students and it's a lot more pleasant.

What if I am told what to teach and there is a lot of (boring) content?

Try to prioritise content that is essential. Make other material available, but not focal. Face the fact that strong deep learning takes time. Surface and rote learning might be retained for a test, but is unlikely to be retained into the next semester let alone into the workplace.

Analysis

Read these questions to see if you are likely to enthuse students.

Questions for teaching staff

- Are you enthusiastic about your teaching?
- Do you teach content AND develop important and relevant capabilities in your course?
- Do you help students discover why your course is important and relevant?
- Do you have high expectations of your students and show confidence in their ability?
- Do you relate the learning in your course to students' futures?
- Do you bring in real-life examples and make your course as interesting as possible?
- Do you make students feel safe, but also challenged?

Questions for programme leaders

- Have you looked at course outlines and session plans to ensure students' enthusiasm is likely to be captured?
- Do you help your staff think about the capabilities they will develop?
- Have you checked that each course explicitly teaches capabilities students need for their futures?

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This guide was made possible by funding from AKO Aotearoa and the University of Auckland. The project was executed by partners from the University of Auckland, the University of Otago, Auckland University of Technology, and the New Zealand Association of Graduate Employers.