

Exploring Engagement: Active Learning in Practice

Project Team:

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Aim and Objectives

This project investigates how active learning is used and experienced across the university. By examining academic practices, student perceptions and shared challenges, the project will identify effective and inclusive approaches that foster collaboration in teaching. The outcomes will support the development of more resilient, evidence informed educational approaches that strengthen the university's commitment to educational excellence.



Research questions:

- To what extent do Warwick students experience active learning in their curriculum?
- What type of learning activities are used?
- Do students and staff perceive this pedagogy as engaging?
- What are the key enablers and barriers to active learning at Warwick?

Active Learning at Warwick

Active learning is an instructional approach that engages students directly in the learning process through purposeful, participatory activities. Rather than passively receiving information from an expert, students are required to undertake meaningful tasks. Examples of active learning activities include answering questions, problem solving, discussing concepts, presenting ideas, teaching peers and reflecting on action (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Prince, 2014; Nguyen et al, 2021; Betts, 2024)

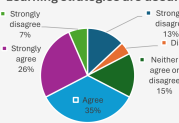
According to our surveys so far, at Warwick the most commonly used Active Learning approaches are simulations, flipped learning approaches and educational games.

Preliminary Results

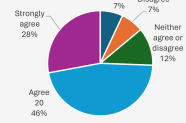
Students' Active Learning Value Perceptions

Impact on Engagement and Interactions:

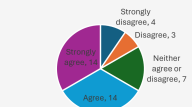
I feel more motivated to participate when Active Learning strategies are used.



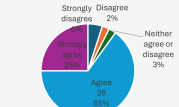
Active Learning activities help me stay more focused.



The use of Active Learning makes my learning experience more engaging than sessions using passive learning.

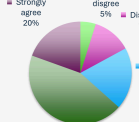


Collaborative tasks in Active Learning help me understand different viewpoints.

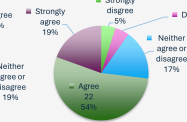


Impact on Academic Outcomes and Inclusivity:

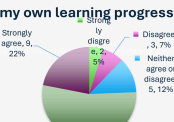
Active Learning techniques positively influence my academic performance.



I gain a deeper understanding of course content through Active Learning.



Active Learning helps me monitor and evaluate my own learning progress.



Active Learning is important for my long-term retention of information.



I feel respected and valued during Active Learning opportunities.



Students' Comments:

Comment 1: "From personal experience, I have seen that people are invested in what they are directly involved with. I have also experienced this myself as active learning such as collaborative activities and in-class discussions about syllabus material has helped me achieve great academic results by allowing easy memorisation through interesting activities and builds interpersonal skills."

Comment 2: "It makes me more engaged with my studies, and I can relate to them better. I come out of class with more knowledge because I can challenge ideas and perspectives through discussion."

Comment 3: "Active Learning has improved my learning experience by making modules more engaging and interactive, helping me better understand, retain, and apply concepts through discussions, problem-solving, and practical activities."

Barriers

From students' perspectives:

1. Feeling that Active Learning requires more preparation and higher cognitive load for me.
2. Feeling that Active Learning is not a productive use of learning time.
3. Feeling that the time available is too short.
4. Feeling discomfort during Active Learning activities is a barrier for me.
5. Feeling unfamiliar with Active Learning methods and needing more guidance.

From staffs' perspectives:

1. Feeling that in enhancing students' learning experiences through active learning are not sufficiently recognised.
2. Sensing student discomfort during Active Learning activities is a barrier for me.
3. Feeling that Active Learning requires more preparation and higher cognitive load for me.
4. Feeling unfamiliar with Active Learning teaching methods and needing more guidance.
5. Feeling that there is a limited range of technology tools available to effectively support active learning activities.

Staff comments:

Comment 1: "It's really difficult to gauge student understanding in passive learning environmentsattendance is so poor in lecturesthe lecturer is getting no real-time feedback in the form of questions or even facial expressions. In active learning contexts where students are attending in-person, we can get a feel for their understanding, where they're stuck, and what needs to be revisited in more depth...."

Comment 2: "The active learning through activities for students to undertake and problem-based learning are effective in engineering education. The greatest limitation is the higher academic interaction required for active learning to be successful. Small cohorts make it easier to fit into busy timetables and teaching loads. It is being scaled back due to substantial increases in cohort size. "

Comment 3: "Much of my programme depends upon students drawing on their own experiences in responses to course tasks - in doing so they are always going to be more inherently motivated, and the outcomes are more meaningful to them (and to me)."

Get Involved!

To take part in the survey, please use the following QR code provide:

Student Survey



Staff Survey



Focus Groups:

Join us to tell us about your experiences:
5 June 11.30-12.30 (online)
8th June 10-11am (online)
9th June 2-3pm (online)



Sign up here

Contact us: active.learning@warwick.ac.uk

References

Betts, T. (2024). *Should ABIL become the sector-wide standard for higher education teaching?* Gloucester: Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). Available at: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaas/enhancement-and-development/should-abil-become-the-sector-wide-standard-for-higher-education-teaching.pdf> (Accessed: 6 June 2025)

Bonwell, C.C. and Eison, J.A. (1991). *Active learning: Creating excitement in the classroom.* ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 1. Washington, DC: George Washington University.

Nguyen, K., Yu, J., Japutra, A. and Chen, C.-H.S. (2021). Active learning in higher education: A systematic review of empirical studies. *International Journal of STEM Education*, 8(1), pp.1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40594-021-00270-7>

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