Promoting Student Attendance

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Introduction:

How do you feel about attendance on your course(s)?

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What do you think explains low attendance?

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What do you think explains low attendance?

Do you see patterns in attendance across a term/year?

Plan:

Consider five types of factors affecting attendance, and discuss what we can do to positively influence attendance with regard to each type of factor:

1. Personal Issues
2. Workload/time management
3. Motivation
4. Technology
5. Community

REASONS FOR ABSENCE

TABLE I.

Reasons for missing:-	TUTORIALS: % agreeing or strongly agreeing with these statements	LECTURES: % agreeing or strongly agreeing with these statements
I can get the tutorial/lecture material in other ways	15%	38%
Tutorials/lectures are not worth attending	4%	6%
Times are not always right	38%	50%
Illness	45%	72%
Transport problems	44%	61%
Work commitments elsewhere	26%	14%
Poor content of tutorial/lecture	20%	23%
Poor tutor/lecturer	19%	23%
Tutor/lecturer has disregard for the student	10%	14%
Have to work on other assignments	28%	61%
Cannot be bothered	9%	15%

"The most prominent reasons given for missing lectures were illness, transport problems and inconvenient lecture times. Sixty-one percent of students also claimed to miss lectures because they were working on other coursework assignments…

About one-third (38%) of students claimed that they would miss a lecture if they were able to get the lecture handouts and materials in other ways."

(Kottasz 2005, p. 10)

Sample of ~150 UG marketing students. (Kottasz 2005, p. 10)

REASONS FOR ABSENCE

"[L]ifestyle factors had the most influence on [attendance] while motivational factors had the most influence on depth of learning (i.e. participation at tutorials)"

Sample: 172 UG Commerce Faculty students

(Massingham and Herrington 2006, p. 92-3)

		Attendance		
5b. Attendance at lecture	All	Good (n=35)	Satisfactory (n=50)	Poor (n=30)
I was genuinely sick	2.45 (2.13-2.77)	*1.66* (*1.23-2.09*)	2.41 (1.87-2.96)	*3.48* (*2.91-4.06*)
Too busy	2.6 (2.29-2.91)	*1.63* (*1.23-2.04*)	2.93 (2.38-3.47)	3.39 (2.85-3.94)
Had to work	2.24 (1.93-2.55)	*1.32* (*1.01-1.63*)	2.63 (2.06-3.21)	2.91 (2.29-3.53)
Subject clash	1.39 (1.21-1.58)	1.24 (0.99-1.5)	1.54 (1.17-1.9)	1.39 (1.04-1.75)
The lectures were boring (process)	1.75 (1.53-1.97)	*1.37* (*1.07-1.66*)	1.61 (1.27-1.95)	*2.39* (*1.91-2.88*)
The topic was boring	1.6 (1.41-1.79)	*1.27* (*1.03-1.5*)	1.59 (1.25-1.92)	*2.03* (*1.62-2.44*)
I didn't like the lecturer	1.61 (1.4-1.82)	*1.32* (*1.04-1.59*)	1.41 (1.17-1.66)	*2.21* (*1.68-2.74*)
I don't like the subject	1.43 (1.28-1.57)	*1.17* (*1-1.34*)	1.39 (1.17-1.61)	*1.79* (*1.44-2.14*)
I couldn't be bothered	1.58 (1.39-1.78)	*1.27* (*1-1.53*)	1.56 (1.22-1.9)	*2* (*1.59-2.41*)
I can get the lectures on eduStream	1.65 (1.44-1.86)	*1.27* (*1.01-1.52*)	1.71 (1.3-2.11)	*2.06* (*1.64-2.49*)
I can pass the subject without attending lectures	1.48 (1.32-1.64)	*1.2* (*1.01-1.38*)	1.39 (1.15-1.63)	*1.94* (*1.56-2.31*)
Lectures are a waste of time	1.37 (1.22-1.51)	1.17 (1-1.34)	1.24 (1.06-1.43)	1.76 (1.35-2.16)

Employment:

77% of undergraduate students have jobs (BBC 2015)

21% have two jobs (Boar 2019)

14% are in full-time employment (Guardian 2014)

84% worry about having enough money to live on (Student Money Survey 2017)

Mental Health

"Many [of the 100 universities returning data] did not even know how much they spent on mental health, and only a handful of universities could supply information on how long students were waiting for counselling.

For the few that did, the longest wait was, on average, 43 days - more than half the length of a standard university term."

See also:

(Shelley 2019)

Student Minds' University Mental Health Charter due out on 9th December.

BBC NEWS

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Universities 'in dark' over student mental health needs

By Hannah Richardson
BBC News education and social affairs reporter

16 September 2019

Mental Health

15.4 million working days lost in 2017-18 in the UK due to work-related stress, anxiety and depression ([HSE 2018](#))

"[P]oor mental health is the foremost cause of work-related absence" (Mind - [MHAW 2019](#))

"Over half (56%) of respondents who took a day off for a mental health issue would prefer to cite physical illness as the reason for absence instead." ([CMHA 2018](#))

Conflict with assessments/assessment pressure

Prioritising work on assessment over class time is commonly cited as a cause of absence.

Nominal workload model: 1 CAT = 10 hours

- How long are assessments on your modules supposed to take?
- When do assessment deadlines occur during the year?
- Have you observed an impact on attendance?

Attitudes

| Year | n | Students answering | | | |
		Average answer	SD	Average absences	SD
First	27	5.4	0.6	0.7	1.0
Second	29	5.1	0.4	0.6	1.0
Third	33	5.1	0.7	1.0	1.2
Fourth	16	4.9	0.4	0.6	0.8
Total	105	5.2	0.6	0.8	1.0

"First-year students (n = 27) were the most 'optimistic', indicating the highest average importance rating for attendance (5.4, SD = 0.6), yet accruing absences at a rate only slightly lower than the overall average of 0.8 (SD = 1.0) (see Table 2). On the other hand, fourth-year students (n = 16) seemed to be the most 'realistic', indicating the lowest average importance rating for attendance (4.9, SD = 0.4), yet still accruing an average number of absences lower than the overall average."

Sample: 172 economics UG students.

(Gump 2006, p.10-11)

What is already being done in my dept to set expectations regarding student attendance?

How successful are those measures? How could they be improved?

Student Motivation

Attitude → Intention → Action

Student Motivation

Attitude → Intention → Action

Value judgement, feeling, emotion, etc.

Plan for action

Period of deliberate activity conditioned by an intention
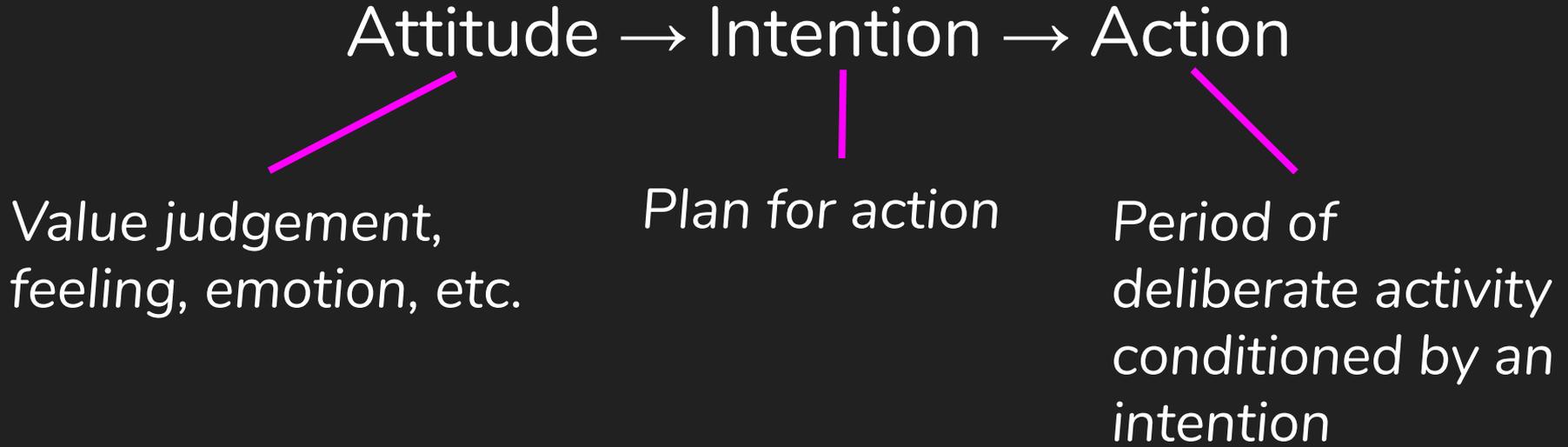
Student Motivation

Attitude → Intention → Action

Student Motivation

Intrinsic vs Extrinsic
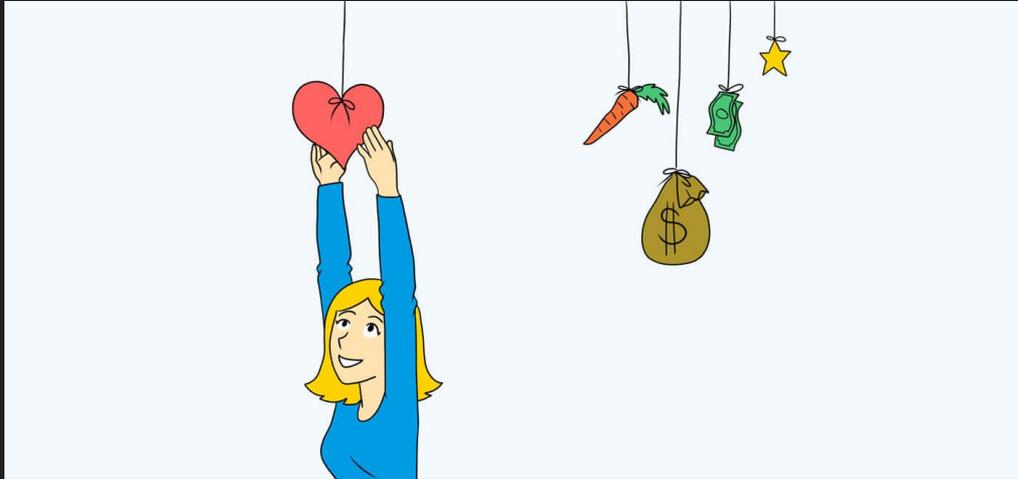
What can I do to promote/increase my students' motivation - extrinsic or intrinsic?

What do I need to know or find out?

What are the obstacles/challenges?

Availability of learning materials/experiences outside of the classroom:
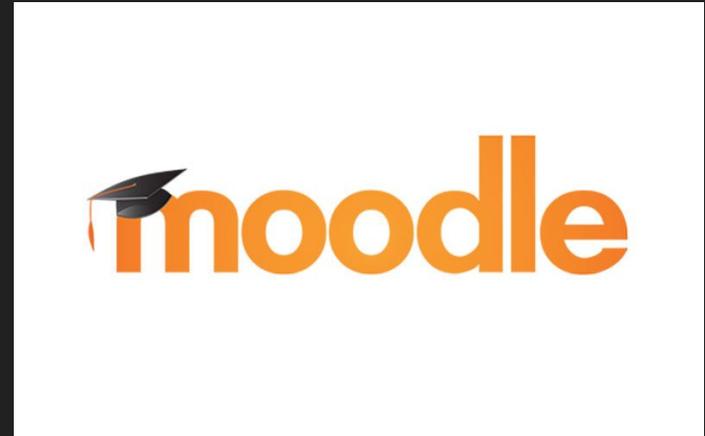
How do I want my students to use VLE resources, esp. Lecture Capture?

How can I communicate this to my students? How can I integrate my preferred way of using the technology into the course?

Should I change my practices and expectations in light of the availability of these resources? If so: how?

Learning Communities

Shared Curriculum   Classroom Co-operation

Shared Lifestyle   Shared Learning Needs

"creating and sustaining a culture that values attendance within the university classroom" (Gump 2006, p.45)

Learning Communities
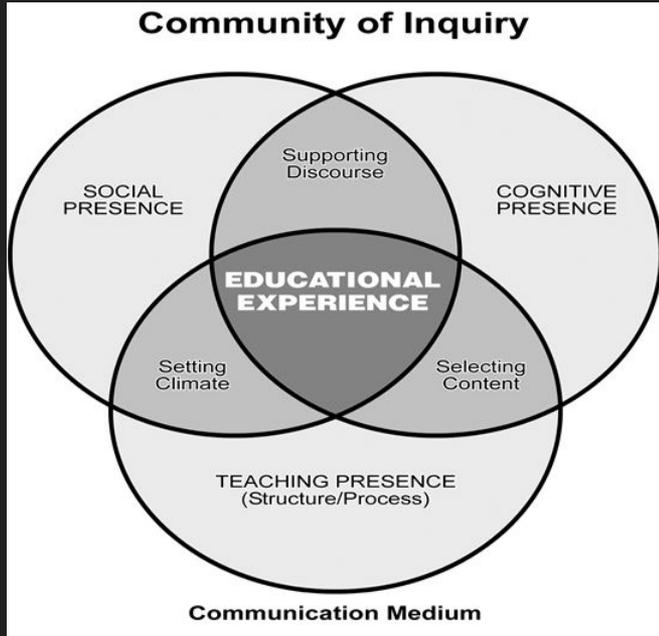
"An educational community of inquiry is... a group of individuals who collaboratively engage in purposeful critical discourse and reflection to construct personal meaning and confirm mutual understanding"

"Group cohesion is achieved when students identify with the group and perceive themselves as a part of the community of inquiry."

(Garrison an Akyol 2013)

What can I do to promote the development of learning communities within my module(s)?

...at the level of the course or dept? What support or collaboration with colleagues would be beneficial?

Conclusion:

In this session, you have discussed several families of factors affecting student attendance, and thought about measures you might take to positively influence attendance with reference to those factors.

Consider how you might implement these measures simultaneously. Reflect on how different the student experience would be if you were to implement these changes.

Do you think students would prefer this re-designed experience?
Do you think it would be beneficial for them, in educational terms?
Do you think attendance would improve?