

# INSPIRE-ing the student experience

**How to use this guide.** The following suggestions are designed to support unit leaders and teaching teams to address areas for improvement after reviewing the Early Semester Survey results. Suggestions are ordered from *quick wins* to *long term* approaches, and are attached to evidence-based practices from the INSPIRE toolkit. Based on the survey results, if there are areas that could be improved, unit leaders and teaching team members might consider applying one or more of the suggestions below to support the student experience.

INSPIRE Educator Toolkit: [inspire.acu.edu.au/evidence-toolkit](https://inspire.acu.edu.au/evidence-toolkit)

## 1. I understand the expectations in this unit.

These actions help reduce ambiguity by making expectations visible, concrete, and consistent across the unit.

Priority	Suggestion	How academics could enhance the student experience	INSPIRE summary
Quick win	Post a short weekly “What to do this week” announcement.	Use 3 brief points: what students should do, what matters most, and what is due next. This directs attention to the essentials and can be implemented in under 10 minutes each week.	<a href="#">Signalling</a>
Quick win	Rewrite key instructions in plainer, more direct language.	Swap dense wording for simple prompts such as “Start here”, “Do this before class”, and “By the end of this week...”. This reduces cognitive load and makes expectations easier to interpret.	<a href="#">Spoken language</a>
Moderate	Add a one-page checklist for each major assessment.	Break the task into steps, include the submission requirements, and highlight common mistakes. Checklists give students a practical scaffold for managing complex tasks.	<a href="#">Scaffolding</a>
Moderate	Provide an annotated exemplar or model response.	Show students what a strong response looks like and briefly explain why it meets the standard. This turns abstract criteria into something students can see and emulate.	<a href="#">Rubrics</a>
Longer-term	Audit the unit for consistency across pages, classes, and assessments.	Check whether learning outcomes, weekly pages, assessment instructions, rubrics, and due dates all tell the same story. Mixed messages are a	<a href="#">Scaffolding</a>

		common source of confusion for students.	
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## 2. I feel confident that I can meet the expectations.

These actions build students' confidence by increasing clarity, early success, and supported practice.

Priority	Suggestion	How academics could improve the student experience	Closest INSPIRE summary
Quick win	Send a short message normalising challenge while reinforcing that success is achievable.	A brief note acknowledging that the unit can feel demanding—but that students can succeed with support—can improve confidence and reduce unhelpful anxiety.	<a href="#">Motivational climate</a>
Quick win	Break major tasks into smaller milestones.	Provide students with a sequence such as understand the task, gather sources, draft, check against criteria, and submit. Smaller steps make success feel more manageable.	<a href="#">Scaffolding</a>
Moderate	Add a practice activity before the high-stakes assessment.	Use a short quiz, worked example, mini-case, or draft component so students can rehearse expectations before they are formally assessed.	<a href="#">Testing and quizzes</a>
Moderate	Ensure students receive some early feedback in the first few weeks.	Even brief feedback helps students calibrate their performance and understand whether they are on the right track.	<a href="#">Feedback</a>
Longer-term	Redesign support so it fades as competence grows.	Front-load the unit with worked guidance, models, and prompts, then gradually remove supports as students become more capable and independent.	<a href="#">Scaffolding</a>

## 3. I see value in the learning activities.

These actions help students understand why activities matter and how they connect to meaningful learning and future performance.

Priority	Suggestion	How academics could improve the student experience	Closest INSPIRE summary
Quick win	Add a one-line “why this matters” statement before each activity.	For example: “This activity will help you prepare for the clinical reasoning needed in Assessment 2.” Explicit purpose increases perceived value.	<a href="#">Motivational climate</a>
Quick win	Label activities clearly as linked to assessments or outcomes.	Use labels such as “Helps with LO2” or “Useful for Assessment 1”. Students are more likely to engage when the relevance is visible.	<a href="#">Signalling</a>
Moderate	Use a short debrief or reflection after key activities.	Ask students what the activity helped them practise, what they learned, and where they might use it again. Debriefing makes value more explicit.	<a href="#">Reflective practice</a>
Moderate	Use more discipline-relevant cases, examples, or scenarios.	Students often value activities more when they resemble real professional practice or realistic decisions they may need to make in the field.	<a href="#">Simulation</a>
Longer-term	Replace lower-value activities with problem-solving or case-based work.	Where activities feel like busy work, redesign them so students must apply ideas, make decisions, and work through realistic problems.	<a href="#">Problem-based learning</a>

#### 4. I have opportunities to be active in my learning.

These actions shift students from passive recipients of information to active participants who discuss, retrieve, apply, and practise.

Priority	Suggestion	How academics could improve the student experience	Closest INSPIRE summary
Quick win	Add one small active-learning moment to each class.	A quick poll, scenario prompt, minute paper, or think-pair-share can make participation more routine without major redesign.	<a href="#">Group collaboration</a>

<b>Quick win</b>	<b>Use short retrieval questions during teaching.</b>	Pause and ask students to recall or apply a key idea rather than just listening. Retrieval practice strengthens learning and engagement.	<a href="#">Testing and quizzes</a>
<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Turn some explanation time into small-group problem-solving.</b>	Ask students to work through a case, decision point, or short problem together. This increases cognitive engagement and peer learning.	<a href="#">Problem-based learning</a>
<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Flip one part of the session.</b>	Move some basic content into a short pre-class video or reading, then use class time for discussion, application, and feedback.	<a href="#">Flipped classrooms</a>
<b>Longer-term</b>	<b>Build recurring simulation or scenario-based practice into the unit.</b>	Especially in applied disciplines, repeated supported practice can make learning more active, authentic, and skill-focused.	<a href="#">Simulation</a>

## 5. I feel supported in this unit.

These actions strengthen students' sense that help is available, that they are noticed, and that the unit has been designed with support built in.

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Suggestion</b>	<b>How academics could improve the student experience</b>	<b>Closest INSPIRE summary</b>
<b>Quick win</b>	<b>Add a visible “Where to get help” block in Canvas.</b>	Make it obvious who to contact, when, how, and what support services are available. Unclear help pathways often feel like a lack of support.	<a href="#">Retention strategies</a>
<b>Quick win</b>	<b>Send short check-in announcements that acknowledge effort and progress.</b>	A brief human message can increase connection, reduce isolation, and signal that the educator notices how students are tracking.	<a href="#">Motivational climate</a>
<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Create a shared Q&amp;A or FAQ space.</b>	A common place for questions helps students get answers quickly, reduces repetition, and reassures students that others share similar concerns.	<a href="#">Retention strategies</a>

<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Proactively contact students who miss early activities or submissions.</b>	A short personalised message can prompt re-engagement and shows students they have not slipped through the cracks.	<a href="#">Retention strategies</a>
<b>Longer-term</b>	<b>Design support into the unit, not just around it.</b>	Build in prompts for planning, monitoring, asking for help, and reflecting. Support is strongest when it is embedded in the learning design itself.	<a href="#">Self-regulatory learning</a>

*Prepared for staff use in reviewing low-scoring learning experience items.*