

Student experiences of reading list engagement

Students use reading lists strategically

Students use reading lists to support immediate academic tasks

Why students use reading lists

- 66% Assignments and assessments
- 32% Finding sources for research
- 30% Preparing for classes
- 30% Following up lecture content

Key finding: Assessment relevance is the strongest driver of engagement.

Most students spend only 1-4 hours per week on reading

39% use reading lists every week

Students prioritise content they see as most useful and relevant.

Key finding: Most students do not complete all recommended reading.

Students are selective readers

Teaching staff make a big impact

Students engage more when reading lists are used in teaching

Students value:

- Links to assessment
- Explanations of relevance
- Discussion and activities
- References in class

Key finding: Teaching practice strongly influences engagement.

Students face significant barriers to engagement

Common challenges:

- Too many readings
- Limited study time
- Competing demands
- Unclear priorities

Key finding: Time, not access, is the main challenge.

Workload is the biggest barrier

Students want more than books

Students value a range of resource types

Preferred formats:

-  Videos
-  Journal articles
-  Book chapters
-  Interactive content
-  E-books

Key finding: Students benefit from varied formats and shorter resources.

Students want easy to navigate reading lists

Students value:

- Essential readings highlighted
- Clear sections and chapters
- Explanatory notes
- Consistent structure

Key finding: Clear organisation supports reading decisions.

Design matters

Students are most likely to engage when reading lists are:

-  Relevant to assessment
-  Clearly explained
-  Focused and manageable
-  Embedded in teaching
-  Well organised
-  Available in different formats

Overall finding: students engage when reading feels purposeful, achievable and relevant.

Data presented here collected as part of a reading list research project using survey and focus group methods (Ethos No. 81905).