



Learning to Learn

With the ACE Team



Today's Objectives



- To reflect on what we bring to our studies
- To identify some aspects of 'Learning To Learn'
- To explore ideas about connections between motivation, identity, deep and surface learning and academic success
- To reflect on the ideas presented and our initial reactions to them
- To understand the role of the ACE Team and the types of support ACE offer for your studies



Adult students possess many aptitudes and skills...

The ACE Team



Reflect for a minute: What strengths am I bringing to my studies?

Figure 1: Thinking (Stock Images, Microsoft, no date)



Adult students' aptitudes and skills – examples only

The ACE Team

Perhaps you thought of some of these?

- ✓ Juggling competing priorities
 - ✓ Being well organised
 - ✓ Working with other people
 - ✓ Chairing meetings
 - ✓ Enjoying learning new things
 - ✓ Seeing patterns and connections
 - ✓ Using software – for work or leisure
-
- ✓ Motivated to work hard to achieve a goal
 - ✓ Willing to persevere and keep on trying if something proves difficult (=resilient)



Learning to Learn = ?

Put your thoughts here



Figure 2: Do you know? (Stock Images, Microsoft, no date)

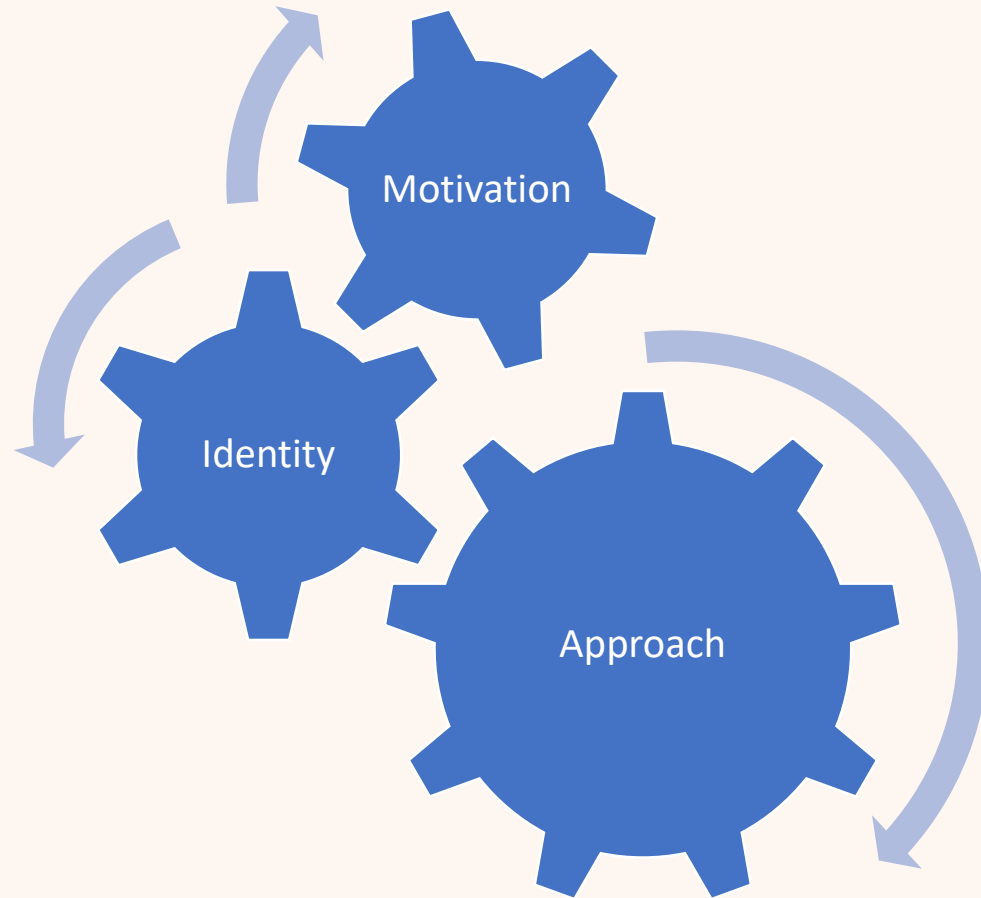


Learning to Learn is

'... the talent to seek and persist in learning. It shows the ability to organise knowledge, by way of effective time and information management, both at personal and group levels ...' (Structural Learning, 2021)



Motivation, identity and approach to learning



- and how they contribute to academic success (Taylor, 2022)



Motivation, identity and approach to learning

Motivation: What my degree means to me and why I am doing it

Identity: How I see myself in relation to my degree

Approach to learning: how I view my studies and how I go about working on my assignments



Figure 3: Climber (Stock Images, Microsoft, no date)



Motivation

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Your course may represent ...

A path to a particular career - 1

An opportunity to pursue a deep interest in a chosen subject - 2

An opportunity to develop the academic part of yourself - 3

An expensive financial investment which should quickly start to pay dividends, for example through promotion - 4

Having some time for yourself - 5

Something else - 6

What does this course mean to you?



What does this course mean to you?

The ACE Team

- Everyone probably has their own mix of motivations
- Everyone's thinking can change, especially when they become members of a new group



Student identity: ‘Learner’ versus ‘Consumer’

‘Learner’ identity		‘Consumer’ identity
My degree is about belonging to an academic discipline and student group		My degree is like a product I would buy
I hope to have to think hard so that I can develop my understanding		I’m strongly focused on learning what will be useful to me in my career
If I put in the effort, I will be able to master the topics in my course		My degree is my best route to a well-paid job
If I don’t learn, I need to work harder		If I do all my assignments, I deserve a good result
Learning is the most important thing for me		Marks are more important than learning



Two approaches to learning

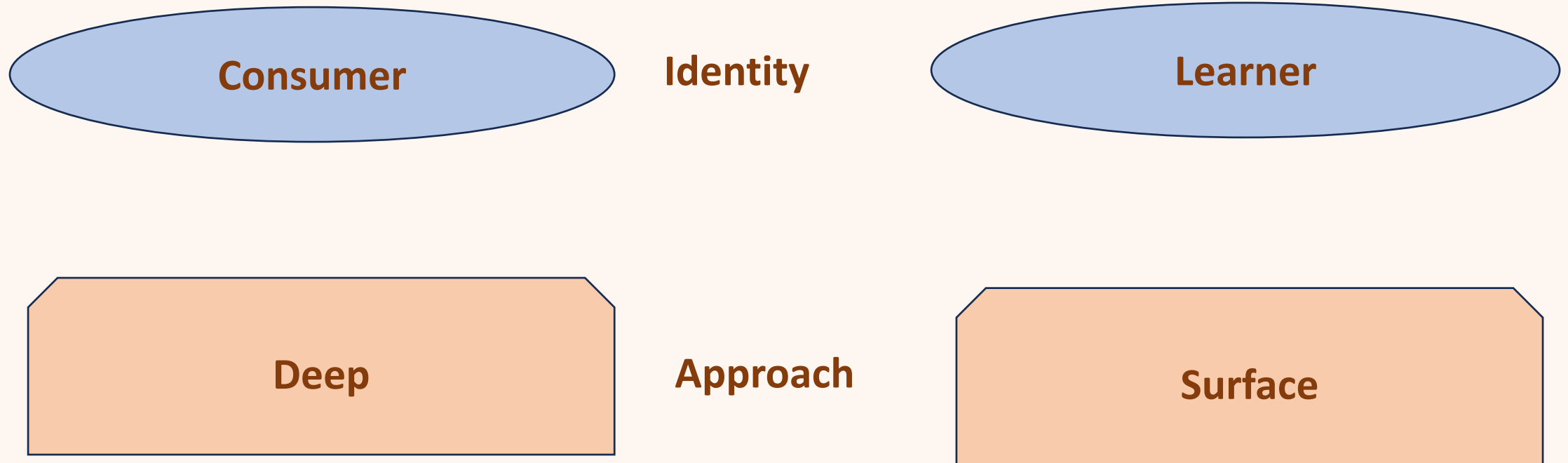
Deep learning	Surface learning
Reads and studies widely and deeply	Reads and studies narrowly
Aims to understand the meaning behind the material	Aims to regurgitate the material
Connects new material to previous knowledge and beliefs	Learns subjects in isolation
Seeks to create new arguments and ideas from what they have learned	Seeks to repeat arguments of others accurately
Motivated internally by desire to learn or love of subject	Externally motivated by the need to pass assessments or gain grades
Thinks critically about what they have learned	Focuses on memorising necessary material without examining it

Table 1: Deep and surface approaches to learning (Advance HE, 2025)



Approach to learning and student identity

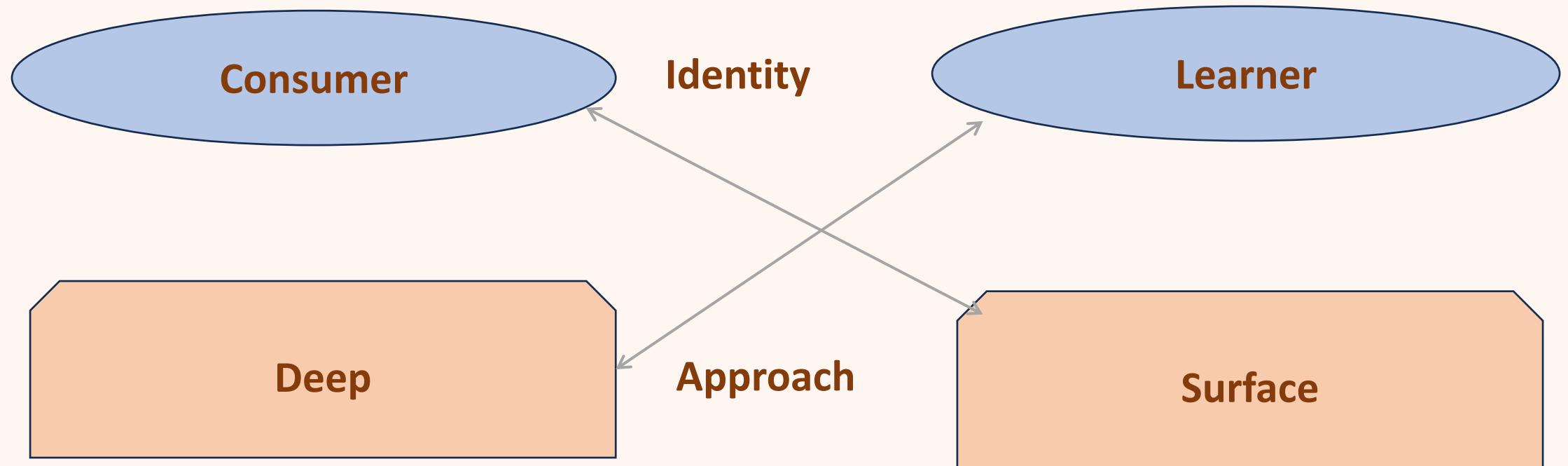
What do you think? Which approach is more associated with which student identity?





Approach to learning and student identity

What do you think? Which approach is more associated with which student identity?





Identity and approach to learning 3

The ACE Team

Both deep and surface learning have their place in our lives, including our studies. Can you think of examples of situations where surface learning might be more suitable?



Identity and approach to learning 3

Examples of situations where surface learning might be more suitable

- The evening before a test where there is a lot of content
- Any other occasion when we only need to remember something for a short time
- If we do not regard the topic as important to us???



Identity, approach to learning, success and wellbeing

The ACE Team

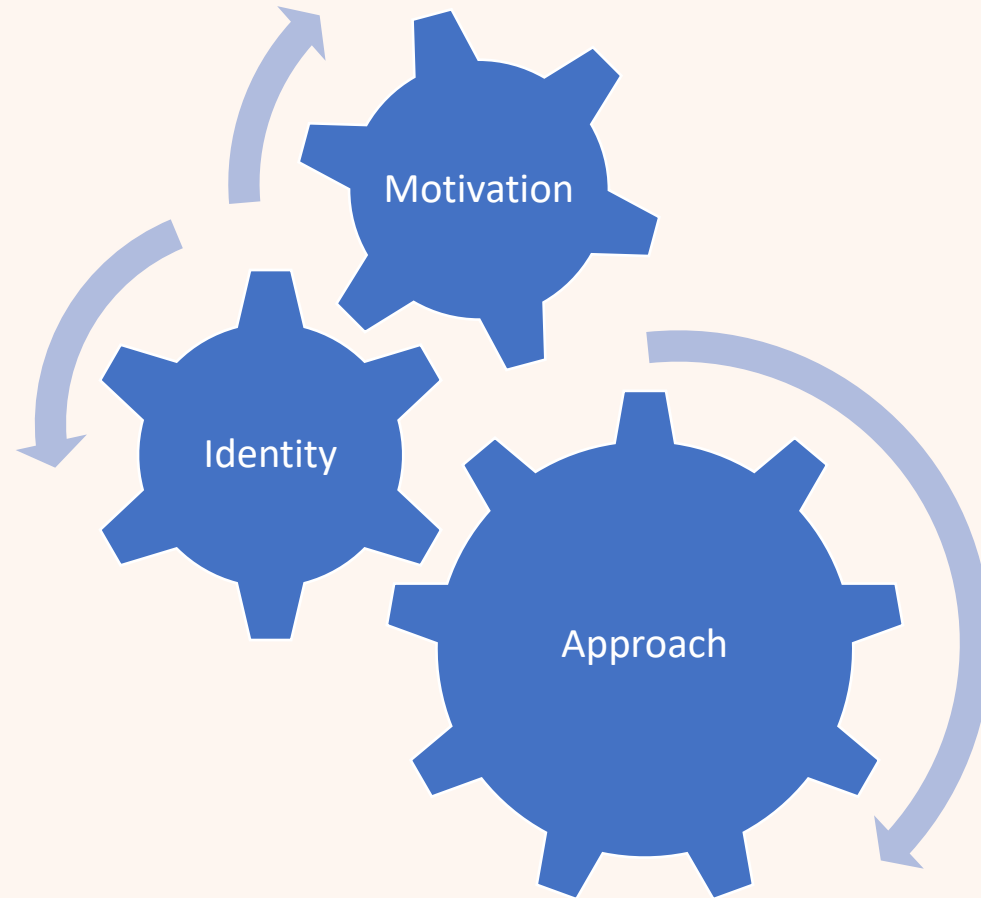
However, according to Taylor (2022),

- **Surface learning is associated with a strong consumer identity and lower academic achievement**
- **Deep learning is associated with a strong learner identity, higher academic achievement and a strong sense of belonging to a student group and/or discipline.**



Success

The ACE Team



Motivation, identify and approach all contribute to success



Discussion

The ACE Team

What do you think about these ideas of motivation, identity and approach to learning?



Academia is ACE!

Learning with The Academic Community of Excellence



What do the Academic Community of Excellence (ACE) do?

➤ Let's take a look at a short video

[Meet the ACE \(Academic Community of Excellence\) Team](#)



One to One / Small Group Appointments

We offer 30 minute one to one sessions where we can discuss your specific needs.

It is recommended you come to these sessions with a list of questions.

If you would like to show us your work, we can look at one paragraph.

We cannot comment on content.

Book a one- to- one appointment:

<https://qahighereducation.com/the-ace-team/>





To ACE or not to ACE?

Jessie has been doing research for her assessment.

She has read some books and journal articles and is confident of the information she has found.

However, she is unsure of how to put this into her assessment.

Can the ACE Team help her?
To ACE or not to ACE?





To ACE or not to ACE?

Farhana has just started her course.

Her lecturer has mentioned that they will be using Microsoft Excel.

Farhana is generally happy with technology. She has used Microsoft Office and PowerPoint before. However, she has never used Excel.

When speaking to her classmates, Maria and Ksenia, she realised that they don't know how to use Excel either.

Can the ACE Team help Farhana and her friends develop this skill together?

To ACE or not to ACE?





To ACE or not to ACE?

Alfie is having trouble logging into his VLE, because he has forgotten his password.

He has tried various different combinations, but nothing is working.

He makes an appointment with the ACE Team to help re-set this.

Can ACE help him?

To ACE or not to ACE?





To ACE or not to ACE?

Kenny is confused about his assessment topic.

He is overwhelmed by all the work – university is more effort than he anticipated.

He doesn't know what to do.

He books an appointment to speak with the ACE Team.

Can ACE help Kenny?
To ACE or not to ACE?





To ACE or not to ACE?

Michael has not received his student finance yet.

He is extremely stressed as he has had to cut down on his work hours to attend university. It is already his second week and he has been attending perfectly, but the finance has not come through.

He wonders if by speaking to ACE he can get his student finance sorted.

To ACE or not to ACE?





To ACE or not to ACE?

Remember that there are various teams here – ACE, Attendance, Finance, IT, Student Services, Welfare.

Take a moment and consider which team might be the best for what you need.

**You are always welcome into the ACE office,
whatever your reason.**

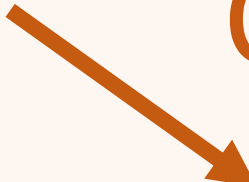
If it is something we cannot help with, we will redirect you to the correct Team.





The ACE Team

The Academic Community of Excellence



- You don't have to be struggling to chat to us!
- We are here to help you get the most out of your course and maximise your grades

"They are supportive and understanding and I would recommend everyone use the ACE team throughout their modules. Great people and a great resource!"

"The ACE team are incredible and without them, I would not be enjoying my studies as much as what I am."

"The ACE team gives the students so much help and support, and always goes the extra mile to answer all our questions."

Student testimonials

The ACE Team



The Academic Community of Excellence (ACE)





Where can you find us?



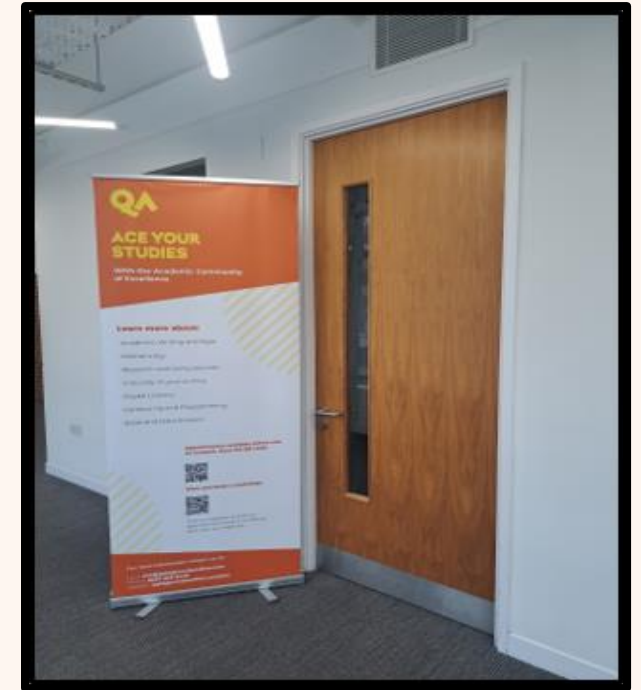
London Fitzwilliam
House: Ground Floor
Daytime students



London RAV campus:
Ground Floor
Evening/weekend
students



Birmingham Campus: 1st
floor in the library



Manchester Campus:
Floor 8 next to
Library/SASC Team

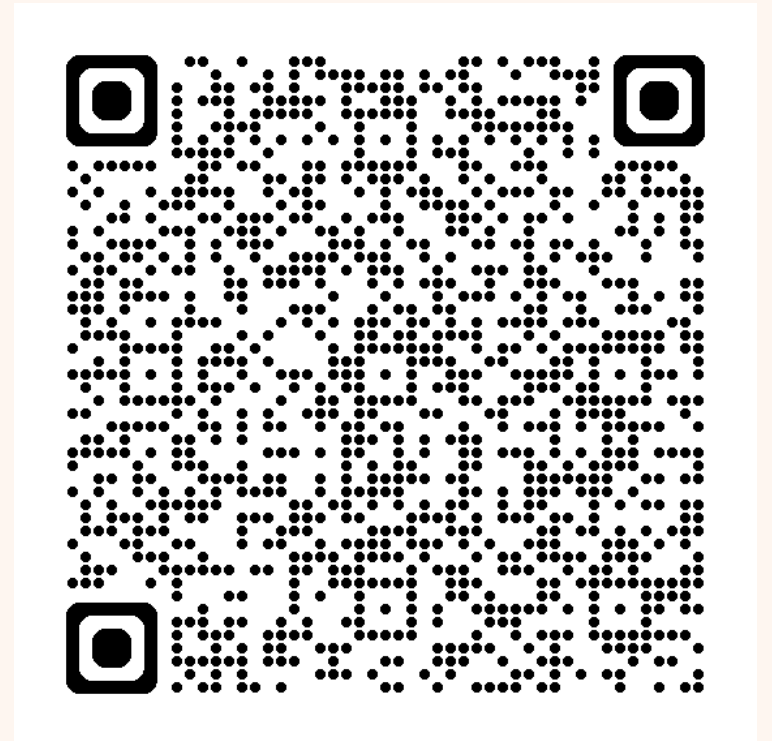


ACE's Academic Skills Quiz

The ACE Team

Why not take 10 minutes to work through ACE's academic skills quiz by answering the questions and watching the videos?

[Academic Skills Quiz](#)





References

Advance HE (2025) *Education for Mental Health Toolkit - Deep and Surface Learning*. Available at: <https://advance-he.ac.uk/teaching-and-learning/curricula-development/education-mental-health-toolkit/learning-focused/deep-surface-learning> (Accessed 26 July 2025).

Microsoft (no date) Stock Images.

Structural Learning (2021) *Learning to Learn: A Teacher's Guide*. Available at: <https://www.structural-learning.com/post/learning-to-learn-a-teachers-guide> (Accessed 26 July 2025).

Taylor, L. (2022) *Balancing students' identities as learners and consumers*. Advance HE toolkit. Available at: [Balancing students' identities as learners and consumers | Advance HE](#) (Accessed 26 July 2025).