



# Fostering Learner Agency

## What is learner agency?

[Universal Design of Learning 3.0](#) (CAST, 2024) provides a framework for designing and implementing learning experiences that foster **learner agency**, a student's capacity to actively participate in their learning process. Agentic learners make conscious choices about their education, setting goals, and taking responsibility for their academic progress (Bandura, 2006).

Learner agency is characterized by:

- Taking initiative and being self-directed in learning
- Setting and pursuing personal learning goals
- Making choices about learning paths and resources
- Participating actively in learning (e.g., engaging with learning resources and materials, completing assignments)
- Reflecting on and evaluating one's learning
- Seeking help and feedback when needed

## Why is learner agency important?

Supporting the development of learner agency is essential for several reasons:

- **Enhanced Motivation:** Students with a strong sense of agency are more intrinsically motivated to learn and persist through challenges (Ryan & Deci, 2000).
- **Improved Learning Outcomes:** Agency positively correlates with academic achievement and deeper learning (Zimmerman, 2008).
- **Preparation for Lifelong Learning:** In today's rapidly changing world, the ability to direct one's learning is essential for personal and professional growth (Blaschke, 2012).

## What can you do to foster learner agency?

Faculty can implement several strategies to foster learner agency:

- **Provide Clear Expectations:** Clearly communicate course objectives, deadlines, and assessment criteria.
- **Encourage Goal-Setting and Self-Reflection:** Guide students in setting personal learning goals and tracking their progress (Zimmerman, 2002). Incorporate regular self-reflection activities throughout the course.
- **Foster a Supportive Online Community:** Establish a supportive presence as an instructor through regular communication and timely feedback (Garrison et al., 2010). Create opportunities for peer-to-peer interaction and collaboration.

In sum, agency emerges and grows through meaningful interactions, leading to feelings of ownership and a sense of control, improving engagement, satisfaction, and academic success. Facilitating learner agency is about using strategies that allow students to be active agents in their learning journey.

## References

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