

## Acceptance of Undergraduates for the Implementation of AEC Course

Siti Kausar Zakaria

Faculty of Education & Humanities, Unitar International University, Kelana Jaya, Selangor,  
Malaysia

Email: sitikausar.zakaria@unitar.my

Noorhuda Abdul Karim

Faculty of Education & Humanities, Unitar International University, Kelana Jaya, Selangor,  
Malaysia

Email: noorhuda@unitar.my

Nurul Aisyah Kamrozzaman

Faculty of Education & Humanities, Unitar International University, Kelana Jaya, Selangor,  
Malaysia

Email: aisyah.kamrozzaman@unitar.my

Noor Azzanny Jamaludin

Faculty of Education & Humanities, Unitar International University, Kelana Jaya, Selangor,  
Malaysia

Email: azzanny.jamaludin@unitar.my

Mohd Noor Daud

Sultan Idris Shah Education University, Tanjong Malim, Perak, Malaysia

Email: mohd.noor@fsk.upsi.edu.my

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v13-i10/19117> DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v13-i10/19117

*Published Date: 29 October, 2023*

### Abstract

AEC (Appreciation of Ethics and Civilization) course aims to educate students on the concept of good ethics in everyday life as well as to help them appreciate Malaysian society's diversity. The purpose of this research is to examine undergraduates' acceptance of course content implementation and lecturers' competencies. The data collected through online questionnaires for students at Unitar International University in the Kelana Jaya district were

used in the analysis. The data was entered into SPSS and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Students are satisfied with the course content. Most of them agree that the contents can assist them in better understanding the concepts of ethics and civilization in Malaysia's diverse populations. Students are least satisfied with course descriptions of the contents when compared to other items. Students are pleased with the lecturers' guidance, always available to answer student questions and deliver lessons diligently. Although students responded positively to most of the items, they less positively respond to the lecturer's teaching methods, or the way lecturers instructed them. To ensure that the content is current and relevant, the course should be reviewed on a regular basis. Curriculum designers and lecturers should work together to identify areas that require updates or enhancements to keep up with evolving ethical and civilizational issues. To improve their pedagogical skills, lecturers should actively seek professional development opportunities such as creating an engaging learning environment.

**Keywords:** Penghayatan Etika & Peradaban Course, Course Contents, Lecturers' Competencies.

### **Background of Study**

In Malaysia, AEC (Appreciation of Ethics and Civilization) course is a compulsory subject under the General Studies program in higher education institutions. The General Studies program aims to provide students with a well-rounded education by introducing them to a variety of subjects outside their specific disciplines. In the context of Malaysian higher education, General Studies subject that is usually mandatory for students across different disciplines. One of the compulsory subjects within General Studies is the AEC (Appreciation of Ethics and Civilization course)

Ethics is a field of study that has been explored and defined by numerous scholars throughout history. The definitions of ethics provided by prominent scholars are different according to time periods. Aristotle (384-322 BCE) is a Greek philosopher considered ethics as a branch of philosophy and defined it as the study of moral character and the evaluation of human actions. He emphasized the importance of virtuous behavior and the cultivation of good habits (Homiak, 2023). Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) is a German philosopher who was provided a deontological perspective on ethics. He defined ethics as the study of moral duty and emphasized the significance of rationality and universal moral principles. According to Kant, ethical actions are guided by categorical imperatives (Johnson, 1996).

John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), an English philosopher and utilitarian, was interested in the ethical consequences of actions. He defined ethics as the science of increasing overall happiness while decreasing suffering. Mill advocated for the utility principle, which states that actions are morally correct if they maximise happiness for the greatest number of people (Nathanson, 2023). Lawrence Kohlberg (1927-1987) was an American psychologist who developed a moral development theory. He defined ethics as the study of moral reasoning and the progression of people's moral thinking from pre-conventional to post-conventional stages.

Kohlberg emphasized the significance of moral quandaries in promoting moral development. Alasdair MacIntyre (1929) was a modern philosopher who specialized in virtue ethics. He defined ethics as the study of virtues, moral character development, and the pursuit of a good life within a specific social and cultural context. MacIntyre emphasized the narrative aspect of ethics, emphasizing the significance of personal and communal stories in shaping moral behavior.

Scholars have studied and defined the concept of civilization throughout history. It remains complex and multifaceted, with different scholars emphasizing different aspects based on their disciplines and perspectives, as defined by Samuel P. Huntington (1927-2008), an American political scientist, in his book "The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order" (1996). He contended that civilizations are the highest level of cultural groupings of people and identified major civilizations such as Western, Islamic, Confucian, and others based on shared cultural, religious, and historical characteristics.

In his book "A Study of History" (1934-1961), British historian Arnold J. Toynbee (1889-1975) provided a comprehensive view of civilization. He defined civilization as a society that has gone through a cycle of growth, decay, and renewal, and is distinguished by its ability to overcome obstacles and adapt to changing conditions (Haggman, 2011). In his book "The Civilizing Process" (1939), German sociologist Norbert Elias (1897-1990) explored the concept of civilization. He defined civilization as a long-term social development process centered on increasing control over human behavior, manners, and emotions. Linklater (2010) emphasized Elias' emphasis on the role of social constraints in shaping individual behavior.

In his book "Muqaddimah" (1377), Arab historian and philosopher Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) provided a definition of civilization. He defined civilization as a social organization characterized by sedentary living, agriculture, labor division, and the advancement of arts and sciences. Khaldun emphasized the rise and fall of civilizations, as well as the significance of group cohesion (Dale 2006). Lewis Henry Morgan (1818-1881), an American anthropologist, made significant contributions to our understanding of civilization through his work on cultural evolution. He defined civilization as the pinnacle of human social development, characterized by the emergence of centralized government, written language, and labor division (Servis 1981).

#### Appreciation of Ethics and Civilization Course

The appreciation of ethics and civilization courses in Malaysian universities provides valuable knowledge and skills that can benefit students for a variety of potential reasons. The course aims to develop moral and ethical development, cultural and global understanding, as well as affective and cognitive skills such as critical thinking analysis, professional personal development, communication, and interpersonal skills (Atheerah et al. 2022).

Students benefit from the courses as they gain a solid understanding of moral principles, values, and ethical decision-making. This can help them navigate complex ethical quandaries and make informed decisions in personal and professional settings. Civilization courses teach students about various cultures, histories, and civilizations. Because of Malaysia's multicultural society, these courses are especially important for fostering cultural understanding, tolerance, and respect (MyePortfolio UTM, 2020).

The course frequently includes a critical examination of moral theories, cultural practices, and societal norms. Students learn to think critically, to question assumptions, and to evaluate ethical arguments, all of which are important skills in today's diverse and dynamic society. Understanding ethics and civilization can be applied in a variety of professional fields. Students may gain knowledge about ethical issues in business, law, healthcare, and other fields (MyePortfolio UTM, 2020).

Furthermore, these courses can assist students in developing personal values, integrity, and social responsibility, all of which are desirable qualities in the workplace and society. Essentially, the assignments in the assessment of the course assigned by the lecturers involve engaging in discussions, debates, and collaborative projects. This can help students improve their communication, empathy, and interpersonal skills, allowing them to engage in

meaningful conversations with people from various backgrounds. To summarize, ethics and civilization courses can contribute to students' holistic development and prepare them for active participation in a multicultural and globalized world (Zahid et al. 2022).

#### Course Content

The topics and materials covered in a course are referred to as course content. A course description, objectives, learning outcomes, and a syllabus are usually included. The course content in Appreciation of Ethics and Civilization is mostly conceptual in nature. According to Durrant (2022) conceptual course content refers to the types and concepts taught in courses that cover important subjects like history, humanities, philosophy, or religion. Conceptual course content is frequently regarded as more important for assisting students in developing critical thinking skills. The Ethics of Appreciation and Civilization, however, goes beyond this to help students develop their affective domain in terms of their sense of nationalism and patriotism as well as their moral character.

There are nine different topics covers, starting of the first topic about Malaysia: Unity in diversity, which discusses the fundamental concepts of ethnic relations, Malaysia's multi-ethnic society, understanding ethnic relations in Malaysia, and social integration through accommodation, acculturation, assimilation, and amalgamation. The focus of Topic 2 is on the portrayal of ethnic relations, with the Malacca Malay Sultanate serving as a metaphor for a multiethnic community and the emergence of plural societies during the British colonial era. Topic 2 also examines the concepts of prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination in relation to ethnic relations.

Topic 3 discusses the unity and integration approach, socioeconomic issues at the time of independence, the economy as an ethnic issue, new economic policy, Malaysia's economic success, and problems and challenges. Topic 4 discusses the prosperity spillovers across ethnicities by defining the concept of the Constitution and the history of its drafting. It also discusses the Malayan Union, which was the first Malaysian constitution during the period of British colonization, the creation of the Malaya Federation in 1948, inter-ethnic cooperation towards independence, the Reid Commission, the working committee and declaration, the elements of tradition in the Federal Constitution, the sultanate and monarchy, and Islamic and Malay constitutional issues. Topic 5 focuses on the political consensus in Malaysian ethnic relations by elaborating on the political development, formal cultivation of ethnic relations in socio-politics, and demographic and political alliances in Sabah and Sarawak.

The 6 topic is about finding common ground despite religious diversity. The roles of religions in human life, classification, and fostering coalition and agreement among various religious ethnicities will all be elaborated upon in this constitution. 'From Segregation to Integration' and 'From Isolation to Consolidation' is the topic covered in Topic 7. It attempts to discuss the challenges of fostering integration in Malaysia, the role of government, and the establishment of the Department of National Unity and National Integration (JPNIN), as well as the formulation of government policies. To foster acceptance of ethnic culture, society's role in the context of ethnic relations will be clearly defined.

Topic 8 is about the empowerment of education for social cohesion. As a result, the history of Malaysian education, ethnic relations, and the background in ethnic community education will be discussed. As there are three main school streams in this country, they are English Vernacular School National Schools and Chinese Tamil Vernacular Schools. As a result, this may contribute to educational challenges and issues such as language, cultural understanding, and acceptance, while nationalism and patriotism become the primary goals. Topic nine, as the final topic, investigates the everyday lives of Malaysians to foster unity and

harmony, such as discussing ethnic food diversity as a unifying factor, food and social space in ethnic relationships, multicultural arts and social inclusion, and social and media integration.

Referring to the Unitar International University course plan, the learning objectives of this course are to enhance students' understanding of social value concepts, such as ethnic unity, the basic concept of ethnic relation, plurality, and pluralism in society, and introduce students to the concept of political, economic, and Constitutional development in the context of Malaysian ethnic relations. Describe issues and challenges in the context of Malaysian ethnic relations. There are certain outcomes should be achieved by the students at the end of study, that are LO1 (Learning Outcome 1) describes students are able to describe issues and challenges in the context of Malaysian ethnic relations, LO2 (Learning Outcome 2) students should be able to assess the value of national identity and volunteerism in various contexts for developing responsible citizens and LO3 (Learning Outcome 3) students are able to establish and foster relationships and social interactions among people of different ethnicities.

The "Appreciation of Ethics and Civilization" course is designed to cultivate students' understanding and appreciation of ethical values, moral principles, and the development of civilization. It is meant to equip students with a broader perspective on ethical decision-making, social responsibilities, and the impact of civilization on society. Since this course is mandatory, it is typically included in the curriculum for students across different disciplines, regardless of their majors, to promote ethical awareness and a deeper understanding of civilization.

The course, along with other compulsory subjects, was offered at Malaysia's Unitar International University under the General Study department, Faculty of Education and Humanities. It focuses on the unique characteristics of Malaysia's ethnic community network as a dynamic social network. The goal of this course is to improve students' understanding on the value concept of social unity, ethnic relation portrait, the basic concept of ethnic relation, pluralism and pluralistic community in Malaysia, economic and political development, and Malaysian Constitution in the Malaysian context of ethnic relation, integration and dealing with challenges and issues such as religion and society, government contributions, and inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic communities.

The course was designed to accommodate both online (modular) and conventional (nonmodular) learners. Over the last decade, online learning has grown significantly as the internet and education have combined to provide people with the opportunity to learn new skills (Koksal 2020). Online learning as well as conventional mode at this university brings the community to have the opportunity to pursue various courses and programs offered. Unitar has also known for its online and distance learning programs, providing flexible options for students who prefer to study remotely. UNITAR offers a wide range of programs, including undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, diplomas, and professional certification courses. The subjects and fields of study vary across disciplines such as education, humanities, business, information technology, media, arts, hospitality, and more.

Online learners at Unitar can access courses and study materials through the university's online learning platform. This platform allows them to participate in virtual lectures, access course materials, submit assignments, engage in discussions with instructors and fellow students, and take assessments. Basically, online learners are mostly working adults and having work experience. Each semester, they need to complete 14 contact hours. The number of weeks per semester is 7 weeks of online mass lectures delivered via an online

learning platform, plus 3 hours of online facilitation under the supervision of a lecturer. Two assessments/course works must be completed as carry marks before the final exam session.

### Lecturers' Competencies

The knowledge, skills, and characteristics that make lecturers effective educators are referred to as their competencies. These skills are essential for developing students, providing high-quality instruction, and fostering a positive learning environment. The competencies of lecturers in terms of their knowledge and skills, as well as self-concept, values, and confidence, will be highlighted in this study. These key competencies for lecturers are further described.

### Lecturers' knowledge and Skills.

The knowledge of a lecturer refers to subject matter expertise. Lecturers should have a thorough understanding of the subject they teach. They should have a broad knowledge base and be up to date on the latest advancements and research in their field. Subject matter expertise enables lecturers to provide accurate information while effectively engaging students (Vereijiken, 2020).

The term "skill" is a pedagogical term. Lecturers must be knowledgeable about instructional strategies, teaching techniques, and educational theories. They should be capable of creating engaging lesson plans, creating learning objectives, and designing curriculum (Guerriero, 2023). Lecturers can use the right assessment techniques and develop instructional materials that are effective by using their pedagogical knowledge. One essential component of pedagogical skill is communication skills. Effective communication is essential for lecturers to convey information clearly and engage students in the learning process. Lecturers should be able to articulate concepts effectively, use appropriate language for different audiences, listen actively, and encourage open discussion (Sword, 2020).

Education is a dynamic field, and lecturers should be adaptable and willing to update their knowledge and skills continuously. They should be open to new teaching approaches, technologies, and methodologies, adjusting their instruction to meet the evolving needs of student (Granziera et al. 2019). In managing classroom, lecturers should be skilled in creating a positive and inclusive learning environment. They should be able to establish clear expectations, manage time effectively, maintain discipline, and handle diverse student needs and behaviours in the classroom (Nagler et al. 2016).

Lecturers should possess strong interpersonal skills to build rapport with students and colleagues. These skills include empathy, approachability, respect, and cultural sensitivity. Lecturers should foster a welcoming and inclusive learning environment in which students feel at ease participating (Morina, 2019). In designing assessment, lecturers should be proficient in designing assessments that align with learning outcomes. They should give constructive feedback to help students understand their own strengths and weaknesses. Effective assessment practices support student learning and growth (Fisher & Bandey, 2019). In today's digital era, lecturers also should be able to effectively integrate technology into their teaching. They should be familiar with educational technology tools, learning management systems, and online collaboration platforms to enhance instructional delivery and engage students effectively (U.S Department of Education, 2017).

Lecturers' self-concept, values, and confidence play significant roles in shaping their teaching effectiveness and overall professional development. Self-concept refers to how individuals perceive and evaluate themselves (Leonard, 2023). In the context of lecturers, self-concept relates to their beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions about their teaching abilities,

knowledge, and overall competence. A positive self-concept is crucial for lecturers as it influences their motivation, teaching style, and interactions with students (Barni et al. 2019).

When lecturers have a strong and positive self-concept, they are more likely to believe in their capabilities to effectively deliver content, engage students, and create a positive learning environment. A positive self-concept also allows lecturers to embrace their strengths, acknowledge areas for improvement, and continuously strive for professional growth. It contributes to their confidence and resilience when facing challenges in their teaching roles (Rusticus, 2022).

According to Gamage et al. (2021) values represent the guiding principles and beliefs that shape an individual's behaviour and decision-making. For lecturers, their values influence the goals they set for their teaching practice and the standards they uphold in their interactions with students and colleagues. Values can include a commitment to knowledge dissemination, fostering critical thinking, promoting inclusivity, or encouraging ethical behaviour among students.

When lecturers align their teaching practices with their core values, they create a meaningful and authentic learning experience for their students. Values-driven teaching enhances the lecturer's sense of purpose and fulfilment in their profession. It also enables them to navigate ethical dilemmas, make principled decisions, and act as role models for their students (Henard & Roseveare, 2012).

Confidence is a key element of self-concept. Munna (2021) stated that confidence is built through experience, knowledge, and continuous professional development. Lecturers can enhance their confidence by staying up to date with research and best practices in teaching, seeking feedback from students and peers, and reflecting on their teaching experiences. Developing confidence also involves recognizing and leveraging their strengths, embracing a growth mindset, and actively addressing any self-doubt or imposter syndrome that may arise.

In summary, a positive self-concept, aligned values, and confidence are essential for lecturers' professional growth and effective teaching. These aspects contribute to their motivation, engagement with students, and the creation of a supportive learning environment. Nurturing these factors through self-reflection, continuous learning, and seeking support can lead to a fulfilling and impactful teaching career.

### **Problem of Study**

The purpose of compulsory subjects is to instil a sense of nationalism and patriotism in students. Aznan et al. (2022), Malaysian society, particularly young people, are not exposed to and concerned about issues like manners towards ethics and morality, which will eventually cause ethics and civilization to decline. As a result, the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education has mandated that students take courses at the higher education level as compulsory subjects. The course is related to other citizenship courses like Ethnic Relation, Malaysia Studies, Philosophy and Current Issues, TITAS, etc, called as MPU (Mata Pelajaran Wajib) or compulsory subject is to produce good and responsible citizens. A good citizen is accountable to himself, his family, society, and the environment. It is expected to produce graduates who are holistic and have pure values, as well as a Malaysian identity (Mohd Sohaimi et al. 2021). Taylor's (1961) theory stated that values are standards and laws that come together to create a human way of life that outlines the principles and objectives of life. Value is a normative and regulatory concept that shapes human judgements and behaviour decisions.

According to a study by Nair and Sinasamy (2021) conducted at two secondary schools in Penang, there is a correlation between patriotism and students' interest in learning about history. When comparing ethnic groups, Malay students exhibit a stronger sense of patriotism than students of other races. Lack of nationalism and patriotism will compromise efforts to create morally upright citizens and foster high standards of behaviour. Effective teaching methods and course materials will have a significant impact on the students' ethics and increase their interest in the subject.

Lecturers' skill, personality and attitudes have much influence on students towards the course. Ros Aiza et al. (2020) conduct a study among USIM students enrolled in the course to examine the relationship between their motivation to learn the course and their attitudes towards their lecturers discovered that motivation to learn the subject was related to the personality of the lecturers. The development of patriotic sense of ethics and behaviours in students will be difficult if the lecturers or teachers are lack of skills, good values and not showing high level of confidence and good attitudes.

Richardson (2005) study was investigated the values and beliefs of University Professors in relation to their teaching practices stated the importance of aligning teaching strategies with professors' values and beliefs. Bandura (1997) in his review of the literature examined the concept of self-efficacy among lecturers, focusing on their beliefs in their ability to effectively perform their teaching roles explored the sources of self-efficacy beliefs and their impact on lecturers' instructional practices and student outcomes. Pajeras (1992) explored how teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning, that are teachers' pedagogical beliefs, and their use of instructional practices influenced their classroom behaviours. Kyriakides and Christoforou (2013), there are relationship of teachers' instructional practices and their confidence towards students' achievement.

### **Literature Review**

Malaysia is a multicultural and diverse nation with a wide range of ethnicities, religions, and philosophical perspectives. Ensuring the course content is inclusive and respects cultural sensitivities while promoting universal ethical values can be a delicate balance to achieve. Previous studies conducted concerning students' perception on the implementation of course shown different results.

Zahid et al. (2022) conducted a study among bachelor's degree students at Mara Technology University and discovered that the course offerings had a positive impact on the students and left room for improvement in the teaching and learning process. Mohd Sohaimi Esa et al. (2021) analysis study was based on primary and secondary sources as well as the author's own experience and observations, the appreciation of Ethics and Civilization course is implemented in a dynamic, flexible manner.

In different phase, Mohd Sohaimi Esa et al. (2021) conducted research among students at the University of Malaysia Sabah (UMS) to determine the effectiveness of online teaching and learning of the course during MCO (Movement Control Order) in terms of the teaching and learning objectives, curriculum, and methods in accordance with the new norm. The study's findings indicate that the basic goals and objectives of this course are met even though it is delivered entirely online. However, it is assumed that success will be greater if it is delivered using face-to-face teaching and learning methods. Study among first semester Diploma students conducted by Kamsani (2021) at Politeknik Sultan Muadzam Shah show that there was a high level of positive student acceptance of the course's content, lecturers' instruction, and course evaluation.



The different views of students founded by Ateerah et al. (2022) among 1837 Bachelors' degree students demonstrates the need to eliminate superfluous and ambiguous subtopics so that the course can be more focused, as compared to another compulsory subject, that is Philosophy and Current Issue subject offered at the university. The respondents demonstrates that the course's content needs to be revised to ensure that the learning objective will be better absorbed by university students.

### **Research Objectives and Questions**

This study will look on students' acceptance of AEC course content implementation and lecturers' competencies to teach the course.

#### **Research Objectives**

These specific elements will be the objectives of the research.

1. to investigate students' acceptance of AEC course contents
2. To investigate students' acceptance on lecturers' competencies in teaching the course

#### **Research Questions**

1. To what extent are AEC course contents being accepted by students?
2. To what extent are students accept on lecturers' competencies in teaching the courses?

#### **Methodology**

This study employed a quantitative survey approach. The approach is more reliable and objective in assessing students' level of acceptance towards course contents and lectures' competencies. A descriptive analysis was employed to measure level of acceptance. This study was carried out at a private local university in Malaysia, where a random sample of 201 students was selected from a population of 410 students enrolled in January semester, year 2023. The research utilized a questionnaire consisting of three main parts: demographic information, students' acceptance on the course contents implementation and lecturers' competencies.

The questionnaires instruments were developed by Rubiah & Abdul Manan (2015) and modified by Kamsani (2021). This questionnaire has two main sections, first section about the background of the respondents, and the other about the questions using a 5-point Likert scale. Part two was divided into two elements, that is students' acceptance on the implementation of course contents and second elements about students' acceptance on lecturers' ability and competency. Respondents must provide answers based on the statements in the parts provided. In the questionnaire, respondents were given five answer options: (1) Absolutely No Agree, (2) Disagree, (3) Not sure, (4) Agree, and (5) Strongly Agree. The mean interpretation modified by Jamil (2002) was used to calculate the mean score for the three questionnaire instruments. The mean interpretation of the Likert score obtained from each construct is that 1.00 - 2.33 is a low score, 2.34 - 3.67 is a medium score, and 3.68 - 5.0 is a high score.

A pilot test conducted showed that the questionnaires constructed and modified from the previous instruments have high reliability. A preliminary survey (pilot test) was conducted in February for 30 respondents who have been pre-selected for a formal survey. The results of the 'Cronbach's Alpha' analysis show that the Cronbach's Alpha index ranges from 0.81 to 0.85 for each item in the selection process. The Cronbach alpha value score is between 8.00-9.00 indicated the very good association as ruled by Hair et al (2016). The researcher used a

table sample determination proposed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) to determine the number of samples in this study. According to Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) recommendations, a total population of 410 people corresponds to 201 respondents. The data will be analysed using SPSS software (Statistical Package for Social Science) version 28.0 to present research findings based on descriptive statistical procedures.

### Analysis of Findings

The research findings are analysed based on respondents' demographic and in relation to the research question. The frequency of gender, ethnicity, mode of learning, and faculty of the respondents in this survey are explained in Table 1.

Table 1 respondents' Demography

	Gender		Ethnicity			Fac			Mod		
	M	F	Mal	Chin	Ind	S&S	Feh	Fob	Smad	On	C
	48	153	72	24	71	34	149	48	4	135	66

M: Male

F : Female

Mal : Malay

Chin : Chinese

S&S: Sabah & Sarawak Indigeneous

Ind : Indian

Fac : Faculty

Feh : Faculty of Education & Humanities

Fob : Faculty of Bussiness

Smad : School of Media & Arts

Mod : Mood

On : Online

C : Conventional

According to Table 1, this survey included students from three faculties, the Faculty of Education and Humanities (149, N=201), the Faculty of Business (48, N=201), and the School of Media and Arts Design (4, N=201). In terms of gender, there are 48 (N=201) male students and 153 (N=201) female students. There are 66 (N=201) conventional students and 135 (N=201) online students based on their learning mood.

### Descriptive Analysis of Variables

The following are the detailed results of the research findings analysis.

1. To what extent are AEC course contents being accepted by students?
2. To what extent are students accept on lecturers' competencies in teaching the courses?

Table 2 Average score in General

Scales	Mean	SD
AEC Course Contents	4.2078	.72671
Lecturers' Competencies	4.4407	.60496

Table 2 shows the average score on each subscale in general. It appears that students' acceptance with the contents and materials of the AEC course is lower than that of lecturers' competencies to teaching the course. Given that the average scores were higher than the AEC

course contents, most students were more accepted with the lecturers' competencies compared to AEC course materials implemented. Overall, students were pleased with both the course content and the lecturers' competencies.

Table 3 Average Score AEC Course Contents Acceptance in Detail

Scales (AEC Course Content)	Mean	SD
1. I'm interested in the course's content.	4.14	.96
2. I'm interested in the course's description's contents	4.09	.96
3. I'm interested in learning more about this course's content.	4.23	.83
4. I'm satisfied with the course's content.	4.19	.82
5. I'm satisfied with the course's learning outcomes (CLO).	4.22	.81
6. This course is appropriate for diploma and bachelor students.	4.13	1.00
7. This course is related to current issues	4.33	.83
8. The course's content helped me better understand the idea of ethics and civilization in Malaysia's diverse population.	4.48	.75
9. The course's content gave me a strong moral foundation for myself.	4.40	.78
10. The contents of this course provide motivation for me to attend the class.	4.17	.95
11. The contents of this course have prompted me to look for appropriate supplementary resources.	4.11	.95
12. Because of this course's requirements, I was on time for classes and didn't miss it.	4.14	.75

According to the mean analysis in Table 3, all the items concerning the level of student acceptance of the AEC course were at a high level. The eighth item with the highest mean was "The course content, which helped me better understand the concept of ethics and civilization in Malaysia's diverse population". The second item with the lowest mean is "I'm interested in the course description's contents".

Table 4 Average Score Acceptance on Lecturers' Teaching in Detail

Scales (Lecturers' Competencies)	Mean	SD
1. The lecturer's teaching methods piqued my interest in learning more about the course.	4.30	.79
2. The lecturer's instruction has the effect of instilling good values in the student.	4.36	.77
3. I am satisfied with the course description provided by lecturer.	4.45	.75
4. I am pleased with the lecturers' method of teaching in this course.	4.33	.84
5. Teaching in Malay is appropriate for this course.	4.40	.92
6. The lecturer's instruction has helped me better understand this course	4.30	.85
7. Lecturers are always prepared with material to teach.	4.52	.69
8. Lecturers are always available to respond to inquiries from students.	4.55	.63

9. Lecturers are always prepared to deliver course content in a systematic manner.	4.48	.64
10. Lecturers always relate what they teach other disciplines.	4.39	.75
11. Lecturers deliver lessons with diligence.	4.55	.65
12. The lecturer consistently connects the material in this course to current events.	4.49	.65
13. Lecturers always ensure that students understand what is being taught.	4.47	.69
14. The lecturer's serious demeanour denotes his or her command of the subject matter.	4.53	.69

According to the mean analysis in Table 3, all the items concerning the level of student acceptance on lecturers' teaching were at a high level. The eighth item was the highest mean, "Lecturers are always available to respond to inquiries". The first and sixth items were the lowest mean, "The lecturer's teaching methods piqued my interest in learning more about the course", "The lecturer's instruction has helped me better understand this course".

## Discussion

### Students' Acceptance on Course Contents

Students expressed interest in and satisfaction with the course's content, descriptions, and learning outcomes as shown from item 1 to 5. Student satisfaction and engagement are important indicators of a successful educational experience. Students finding the course content relevant and interesting indicates that the material is engaging and aligns with their academic interests and goals. This can contribute to a more positive and motivated learning environment (Gray, 2016).

According to the study, receiving positive feedback from students regarding the appropriateness of the "Appreciation of Ethics and Civilization" course for both diploma and bachelor's degree students, as shown in item 6, indicates that the course is effectively designed to cater to a diverse range of learners. It attests to the course's adaptability, relevance, and potential to benefit a diverse range of students pursuing various educational and career paths. The course address current issues, including racial issues. Malaysia is a multi-ethnic and multicultural country, and it is critical to address racial and ethnic diversity and harmony. As shown in item 7, the study found that students agree with this statement. Students also agree that the course can foster a deep understanding of Malaysian society's diverse cultures, traditions, and backgrounds. This comprehension is critical in addressing racial issues and fostering harmony among various ethnic groups, as shown in item 8 that course's content helped me better understand the idea of ethics and civilization in Malaysia's diverse population.

Students satisfy that the course's content gave a strong moral foundation, provide motivation to come class and didn't miss it as shown in item 9, 10 and 12. The fact that the course can offer a solid moral foundation suggests that it does a good job of communicating ethical principles, values, and ideas. This can be helpful in assisting students in creating a strong ethical framework that directs their behaviour and choices in both academic and practical contexts. It implies that students can develop strong morals because of the course material.

It's encouraging to hear that students in the "Appreciation of Ethics and Civilization" course are motivated to find relevant supplementary resources, as illustrated in item 11. This

motivation can have several advantages for their learning experience, such as self-directed learning. When students are motivated to seek out additional resources, it indicates that they are engaged in self-directed learning. They are taking the initiative to investigate topics in greater depth or from various perspectives, which can lead to a better understanding of the subject. Supplemental resources for enrichment can provide additional insights, examples, and perspectives that complement the course material. Students who actively seek out such resources are more likely to enrich their learning experience and gain a broader understanding of ethics and civilization.

As a result, it can also foster critical thinking. The desire to find additional resources can foster critical thinking. Students may need to assess the credibility and relevance of these resources, compare various points of view, and make informed decisions about what to include in their understanding of the subject. Supplementary resources can occasionally provide practical applications for course concepts. This motivation can inspire students to investigate how ethical principles and civilizational insights can be applied to real-world scenarios. A strong desire to find additional resources demonstrates interest in and engagement with the subject matter. This zeal may result in more active participation in class discussions and a greater willingness to delve into complex ethical and civilizational issues.

Encouraging students to seek out additional resources fosters a lifelong learning habit. This skill will help them not only in their academic studies, but also in their careers and personal lives. Instructors can help students find credible and relevant supplementary resources, recommend books, articles, websites, or other materials, and facilitate discussions or assignments that encourage students to explore these resources. In this way, encouraging students to take ownership of their learning can result in a more meaningful and empowered educational experience.

#### Students' Acceptance of Lecturers' Competencies

Item 1 piqued my interest in learning more about the course, and item 6 the lecturer's instruction has helped me better understand this course show the lowest satisfaction from the students, indicating that lecturers' pedagogical skills and methods are still major issues in most educational settings. This will have an impact on students' motivation to learn general studies subjects, making efforts to instil good values, moral characters, and a sense of patriotism based on Malaysian formulas more difficult. According to the Malaysian Blueprint 2015-2023 (2015) lecturers will be expected to innovate their teaching and learning practises to instil in their students a sense of social responsibility and citizenship skills such as religious understanding and Malaysian ideological ethical and moral behaviours.

Item 8 that is lecturers are always available to respond to inquiries from students and item 11, lecturers deliver lessons with diligence have shown the most positive feedback from students. It can give the interpretation that lecturers have strong positive self-concept, values, and confidants. Strong Positive self-concept indicates that lecturers have high self-esteem and self-worth. They are most likely confident in their abilities as educators and have a positive self-image (Barni 2019). Therefore, this is in line with the aim of the course to develop positive impact on students so that they can become quality graduates in terms of academics and ethical values (Zahid et al. 2022).

Similarly to the item 2 that the lecturer's instruction has the effect of instilling good values in the student, item 9 lecturers are always prepared to deliver course content in a systematic manner, item 11 lecturers deliver lessons with diligence, item 13 lecturers always ensure that students understand what is being taught and item 14 The lecturer's serious

demeanour denotes his or her command of the subject matter have shown satisfactory feedback by the students. Lecturers' values imply that they have certain principles and beliefs that guide their actions and decisions in the classroom. Such values include dedication to student learning, academic integrity, and ethical teaching practises. It also shows that lecturers possess strong positive self-concept as well as have high self-esteem and self-worth. They are most likely confident in their abilities as educators and have a positive self-image. Lecturers are thought to have a strong sense of self-assurance. They are most likely competent in their roles and have faith in their teaching methods and knowledge (Gamage, 2021).

Lecturers have adequate and satisfactory knowledge and expertise in explaining the contents as shown in item 3, students satisfied with the course description provided by the lecturer. This demonstrates that lecturers have adequate knowledge and expertise in the subject matter they are teaching. They are most likely well-qualified to effectively explain course content. Students rely on their instructors to provide accurate and comprehensive information, so this is an important aspect of effective teaching (Munna, 2021).

In item 8, lecturers are always available to respond to inquiries from students. This respond is tally to the item 7 that lecturers are always prepared with material to teach. Lectures who always prepared will be quickly respond to the students' inquiries. According to this satisfactory respond, it means that lecturers are always willing to speak with their students and address their concerns. The teaching and learning environment may benefit in several ways from this accessibility and responsiveness. When lecturers are approachable and quick to respond to questions from students, it fosters a positive environment whereby students feel comfortable asking for clarification, direction, or help whenever they do. This could make learning more enjoyable overall. Important information, including assignment specifics, course materials, and expectations, can be effectively communicated if someone is available to answer questions. Students who have this clarity are more likely to complete their studies and stay on track. A good rapport between lecturers and their students is fostered by availability to engage with them. It may result in better relationships between teachers and students (Ischinger, 2009).

Students respond satisfactorily to Item 10 that lecturers always relate what they teach to other disciplines, and Item 12 that lecturers consistently connect the material in this course to current events. Both discuss elements of how lecturers incorporate their teaching into a wider context, and they have significant ramifications for the calibre of education delivered. This item implies that lecturers make consistent connections between the subject matter they teach and other academic disciplines or fields of study (Cai, 2015). Discussing current issues in economics, politics, social, cultural, and environmental issues through the lens of ethics and civilization is an important component of the Appreciation of Ethics and Civilization course (Zahid et al. 2022). By relating the course material to various disciplines, students can better grasp how the knowledge they acquire can be applied to real-world situations. Ethics and civilization are topics that often require multifaceted solutions, and an interdisciplinary approach can help students understand how to approach complex issues in a practical context. They can see the relevance of ethical principles and historical context in addressing contemporary challenges (Rozeyta, 2020).

## **Conclusion**

The course's material is clearly engaging and relevant when students express their interest in it and satisfaction with it. Positive reviews imply that the course successfully accommodates

both diploma and bachelor's students, reflecting its adaptability and widespread appeal. The course promotes cultural harmony and understanding by addressing contemporary issues, including racial issues. Students feel that the course improves their comprehension of Malaysia's diverse cultures as well as the idea of ethics and civilization. The course gives students a solid moral foundation, encourages them to come to class, and keeps attendance rates high. The encouragement of self-directed learning, critical thinking, and lifelong learning practises encourages students to look for additional resources.

Lesser student satisfaction with the lecturer's instruction suggests that pedagogical challenges may exist. When it comes to availability and responsiveness to student questions, lecturers are well-regarded. Students value lecturers' morals, assurance, and readiness, which suggests a solid self-concept and self-assurance in their roles. The level of expertise and knowledge displayed by lecturers raises the standard of instruction. The lecturers' dedication to connecting material to other fields of study and to current events benefits the course. In summary, the course seems to have a favourable effect on students' knowledge of ethics and civilization, their desire to learn, and their involvement in extracurricular activities. While there may be room for improvement in some areas of the lecturers' instruction, their overall dedication and skill as educators are valued. Furthermore, the interdisciplinary approach and relevance of the course to provide a comprehensive educational experience, it effectively responds to contemporary issues.

The course should continue to include components from various academic disciplines, as evidenced by the students' appreciation for an interdisciplinary approach. This method can give students a more comprehensive understanding of ethics and civilization, so it ought to be a major component of the curriculum. The course should continue to place a high priority on discussions of cultural diversity, racial harmony, and ethics in a multicultural society given the multicultural context of Malaysia. This focus can aid in fostering social cohesiveness and preparing students for active citizenship in a multiethnic society.

The desire of students to look for additional resources highlights how crucial it is to promote self-directed learning. Incorporating assignments or activities that promote independent research and critical thinking as well as advice on where to find reliable sources are two ways that lecturers can support this. According to the study, some lecturers might need to improve their pedagogical strategies, particularly in terms of engrossing students and making the course material more interesting. Opportunities for ongoing professional development can help lecturers enhance their teaching methods and adjust to the needs of various student populations.

Those lecturers who are responsive to students' questions and are always available to do so are praised by their students. This emphasises the value of keeping lines of communication open with students and making yourself available to them when they have queries or concerns. The ability to successfully incorporate interdisciplinary elements into their lessons should be a skill for lecturers. Collaboration with colleagues from other disciplines may be necessary for this, as well as ongoing professional development to stay current on pertinent interdisciplinary topics.

Lecturers should make every effort to keep the course relevant to current events and issues. Staying up to date on relevant developments and incorporating them into the course can help to increase its relevance and keep students engaged. Lecturers should continue to improve their self-concept, values, and educational confidence. Belief in one's abilities and a positive self-image can improve teaching effectiveness and students' perceptions of the course. In short, the findings of this study suggest that Malaysia's "Appreciation of Ethics and

Civilization" course should evolve and adapt to meet the needs of diverse students and a rapidly changing world. Lecturers play an important role in this process by improving their teaching methods, staying current on issues, and creating a welcoming and engaging learning environment.

This study has the potential to advance both theoretical and practical aspects of education. It can contribute to theory development by shedding light on the factors that influence student engagement and satisfaction. Furthermore, it can align with and enrich existing learning theories, providing insights into how pedagogical approaches relate to learning and cognitive psychology theories. Furthermore, this research can help to inform motivation theories by providing a better understanding of the factors that motivate students to actively engage with course materials, which will benefit fields such as self-determination theory by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (1985) and expectancy-value theory by Kurt Lewin (1944). This research not only adds to our theoretical understanding, but it also has practical implications for educators and institutions seeking to provide more effective and engaging educational experiences for students in the fields of ethics and civilization.

The findings of this study may provide educators and institutions with practical insights into how to improve teaching methods and curriculum design to better align with student needs and expectations. It can influence decisions about curriculum development, faculty training, and student support at the institutional or national level. By emphasising the importance of tailoring course content and teaching methods to meet student needs and preferences, the research can promote a student-centred approach to education. It also can assist institutions and educators in assessing the efficacy of their teaching practises and making data-driven decisions to improve the educational experience.

In conclusion, research on student acceptance of course content and lecturer competencies and knowledge can advance our understanding of learning and motivation theories while also providing valuable insights into various contextual factors that influence education. Its importance stems from its potential to improve teaching and learning practises as well as inform educational policies in a rapidly changing educational landscape. The authors thank UNITAR International University for the support of the publication of this research.

## References

- Abdul Razak, A., Abd Latif, S. F., Rusdi, F., & Mubarak, M. Z. (2022). Effectiveness of learning and teaching the appreciation of ethics and civilization course from the perspective of the educators and students in the University of Malaysia Kelantan (UMK). *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 21(9), 327 - 347.
- Barni, D., Danioni, F., & Benevene, P. (2019). Teachers' self-efficacy: The role of personal values and motivations for teaching. *Front. Psychol.*, 10.
- Cai, W.W., & Sankaran, G. (2015). Promoting critical thinking through an interdisciplinary study abroad program. *Journal of International Students*, 5(1), 38 - 49.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). The general causality orientations scale: Self-determination in personality. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 19, 109–134.
- Fisher, M.R., Jr., & Bandy, J. (2019). *Assessing student learning*. <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/assessing-student-learning/>.
- Gamage, K.A.A., Dehideniya, D.M.S.C.P.K., & Ekanayake, S.Y. (2021). The role of personal values in learning approaches and student achievements. *Behavioral Sciences Journal*, 11(7), 102.



- Guerriero, S. (2023). *Teachers' pedagogical knowledge and the teaching profession, background report and project objectives. project of better policies for better lives.* [https://www.oecd.org/education/cei/Background\\_document\\_to\\_Symposium\\_ITEL-FINAL.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/education/cei/Background_document_to_Symposium_ITEL-FINAL.pdf).
- Granziera, H., Collie, R.J., & Martin, A.J. (2019). Adaptability: An important capacity to cultivate among pre-service teachers in teacher education programs. *Psychology Teaching Review*, 25(1).
- Gray, J.A., & DiLoreto, M. (2016). The effects of student engagement, student satisfaction, and perceived learning in online learning environments. *NCPEA International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 11(1).
- Haenard, F., & Roseveare, D. (2012). *Fostering quality teaching in higher education: policies and practices. institutional management in higher education.* <https://www.oecd.org/education/imhe/QT%20policies%20and%20practices.pdf>.
- Hair, J., Celsi, M., Money, A., Samouel, P., & Page, M. (2016). *The essentials of business research method, 3rd edition.* Faculty Bookshelf. <http://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/facbooks2016/2>.
- Ischinger, B. (2009). *Creating effective teaching and learning environments: first results from tali.* <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/43023606.pdf>.
- Johnson, R. N. (1996). Kant's conception of merit. *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 77, 313–337.
- Kamsani Md. Saad (2021, April). Persepsi pelajar terhadap implementasi kursus penghayatan etika dan peradaban di Politeknik Sultan Abdul Halim Muadzam Shah, Kedah. [International Conference on Syariah & Law 2021], ICONSYAL 2021.
- Krejcie, R.V., & Morgan, D.W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*.
- Leonard, C. (2023). *Self-concept, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. libretext social sciences.* <https://socialsci.libretexts.org/>.
- Lewin, K. (1947). *Field theory in social science.* New York: Harper & Row.
- Mohd Sohaimi Esa, Romzi Ationg, Irma Wani Othman, MK Mohd Shah, Muhammad Safuan Yusoff, Habibah Artini Ramlie & AMR Abang Muis (2021). Evolusi kursus teras universiti dari sejarah pembentukan bangsa Malaysia ke Penghayatan Etika dan Peradaban. *International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counselling*, 6(39), 16 - 181.
- Mohd Sohaimi Esa, Irma Wani, Ramzi Ationg & Siti Aidah Lukin (2021). The effectiveness of online teaching and learning for the appreciation of ethics and civilization (pedp) course: A case study of undergraduate students at Universiti Malaysia Sabah. *International Journal of Law Government and Communication*, 6(23).
- Munna, A.S. & Kalam, M.A. (2021). Teaching and learning process to enhance teaching effectiveness: A literature review. *International Journal of Humanities and Innovation (IJHI)*, 4(1), 1 - 4.
- Morina, A. (2019). The keys to learning for university students with disabilities: motivation, emotion, and faculty-student relationships. *National Library Medicine*, 14(5).
- Nagler, K.S. & Tirol, H. (2016). Effective classroom-management & positive teaching. *English Language Teaching Journal*, 9(1).
- Ros Aiza Mohd Mokhtar, Latifah Abdul Latiff & Abd Hakim Mohad (2020). Hubungan motivasi belajar kursus penghayatan etika dan peradaban dalam kalangan pelajar USIM dengan tanggapan mereka terhadap pensyarah kursus. *The Online Journal of Islamic Education*, 8(2).

- Rusticus, S.A, Pashootan, T., & Mah, A. (2019). What are the key elements of a positive learning environment? Perspectives from students and faculty. *Learning Environments Research*, 26, 161–175.
- Malaysian Higher Education (2015). *Executive summary: Malaysian education blueprint (2015-2025) higher education*. <https://www.um.edu.my/docs/um-magazine/4-executive-summary-pppm-2015-2025.pdf>
- Nair, S.M. & Sinasamy, R.P. (2017). Patriotism among secondary school students and its relationship with their interests towards learning history. *Asian Journal of Education and Training*, 3(2), 110-117.
- Nathanson, S. (2023). *Act and rule utilitarianism*. *internet encyclopaedia of philosophy*. <https://iep.utm.edu/util-a-r/>.
- Pajares, M. F. (1992). The influence of pedagogical beliefs on teachers' use of instructional practices: evidence from a longitudinal study. *SAGE Journal*, 62(3).
- Rozeyta, O. (2020). *Appreciation of ethics and civilization*. MyPortfolio@UTM. <https://eportfolio.utm.my/view/view.php?t=HvBoK8VkXz6lUGgLNyqD>.
- Rubiah Abu Bakar & Abdul Manam Mohamad. (2015). Penerimaan pelajar terhadap pelaksanaan kurikulum kursus prinsip-prinsip asas Islam (CTU 101) di UiTM. *Jurnal Islam dan Masyarakat Kontemporari*, 9, 25 - 40.
- Sword, R. (2020). *Effective communication in the classroom: Skills for teachers*. *High speed training*. <https://www.highspeedtraining.co.uk/hub/communication-skills-for-teachers/>.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2017). *Reimagining the role of technology in education: 2017 national education technology plan update*. *Office of educational technology*. <http://tech.ed.gov/>.
- Vereijken, M.W.C. & Van Der, R.M. (2020). Subject matter pedagogy in university teaching: How lecturers use relations between theory and practice. *Teaching in Higher Education Journal*, 880 - 893.
- Zahid, E.S.B.M., Ahmad, N.A.B., Abdul Halim, I.B., & Lateh, A.T.B.A. (2022). Students' Perception of Appreciation of Ethics and Civilization Course at Universiti Teknologi Mara, Penang branch. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 11(2), 1356 - 1373.