Home
Unit Design
Intended Learning Outcomes
Assessment
Learning Activities & Delivery Modes
Content & Learning Resources
Communication
> Facilitating communication between teachers and students
> Facilitating communication between students
> Guide to online discussion boards
> Introduction
> Purpose
> Learning Design & Netiquette

TEACHING & LEARNING: GUIDE TO ONLINE DISCUSSION BOARDS

Student Engagement

INTRODUCTION
PURPOSE
LEARNING DESIGN & NETIQUETTE
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT
FACILITATION
ASSESSMENT & REFERENCING
REVIEW & EVALUATION
CHECKLIST

NAVIGATE THIS PAGE

Student Voice regarding engagement in relation to online discussion boards
Student engagement tips
Dealing with difficult behaviours

Create PDF in your applications with the Pdfcrowd HTML to PDF API PDFCROWD

Resources

Effective online teaching primarily relies on student engagement. In the online environment, student engagement can be encouraged by many factors which effectively deliver an inclusive active and interactive learning environment. This involves utilising strategies which are inclusive of the student cohort and actively encourage collaboration.

According to Nandi et al. (2012), there are three levels of participation in online asynchronous discussion forums:

1. "Lurkers" – students who read discussion posts but do not actively participate (Salmon 2003)
2. Students who post brief notes to discussion boards with limited interaction
3. Students who actively post and respond to discussion board posts (Ho 2002).

Student engagement relies on motivation. According to Gerbic (2006) students are motivated to participate in online discussion boards to exchange ideas and seek feedback thereby enhancing their learning while de-motivators may include irrelevant discussion topics and arrogant or inappropriate discussion postings. Furthermore a lack of guidelines as to the purpose of the discussion board in the unit of study may also disengage students.

Student Voice regarding engagement in relation to online discussion boards

> "I like the idea of everybody having to start a discussion, and also having to reply to the discussion, which is really good at keeping the students engaged".

> "Any discussion that i [sic] could relate to as part of my practice i enjoyed engaging in, But found discussion on topics that i had no experience or no recent exposure interesting to read but i would not participate as i would bring nothing constructive to the conversation".

> "Discussing global health e.g. global warming was interesting as there were clearly two sides to the topic which helped create a good discussion"

Create PDF in your applications with the Pdfcrowd HTML to PDF API PDFCROWD

> “I enjoyed the one that focuses on anatomical positioning in the body. It was kind of like problem solving for a riddle, and generally an enjoyable task that didn’t feel like an inconvenience.”

> “Also found it a little frustrating that most people just agreed with everyone else. Perhaps some gentle provocation from the facilitator could help build confidence in sharing differing opinions and support more rounded discussions.”

> “Hearing people's stories about the areas they live and work in because I do not yet have much experience working in different areas and locations of health care”.

Student engagement tips

- Ensure that teaching staff have a social presence in the online discussion board;
- Communicate to students your involvement in the discussion board; for example, you may read every post but you do not respond to every one;
- Clearly communicate your expectations of the student use of online discussion boards in your unit;
- Design discussion activities that are interesting, motivating and clearly linked to student learning outcomes of the unit;
- Ensure that students are the central focus of discussion boards;
- Allow students to suggest discussion topics;
- Use an informal survey to ask students for online discussion board activity suggestions;
- Use brainstorming to generate critical thinking and problem solving skills;
- Create a ‘web-based field trip’ by providing students with a series of links to investigate and then post answers to related questions and build a group discussion of the ‘field trip’.
- When requesting referencing, think about the real need for this – will it take away from the active engagement?
- Ask students for their opinions;
- Encourage peer feedback – peer response and peer editing activities can be utilised;

Create PDF in your applications with the Pdfcrowd HTML to PDF API PDFCROWD

- Incorporate group work by enabling discussion groups to work independently on a case study or similar activity and then produce a group analysis from their discussions;
- Remember that the communication is asynchronous which can make online conservations in a discussion forum disjointed unless they are well designed to enable the flow and connection of ideas.

Dealing with difficult behaviours

In the online environment, difficult behaviours can be an issue especially in an asynchronous online environment. Depending on your discipline, students may or may not post discussions of a personal nature. These may be related to your unit content or totally unrelated. How do you deal with such behaviour?

- Ensure students are fully aware of netiquette requirements and establish 'Rules of online posting' at the beginning of the unit. You may even like to ask the students to provide input into these rules by inviting them to contribute to an existing set of rules or "brainstorming" ideas for these rules in the context of the unit they are studying. This should assist students with respect to being aware of what they can or cannot post and to take ownership of the rules of netiquette for the unit.
- If faced with a situation where a student is behaving inappropriately online you may remove the inappropriate post and contact the student to explain why the post has been removed. Referring students to student advisors and other relevant Safety, Health and Wellbeing support staff and resources are also recommended in certain contexts.

Resources

- Alzahrani, M.G., 2017. The Effect of Using Online Discussion Forums on Students' Learning. *Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology-TOJET, 16* (1), pp.164-176.
- Dixson, MD, 2010, 'Creating effective student engagement in online courses: What do students find engaging?' *Journal of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning 10* (2), pp.1-13.
- Gerbic, P., 2006. To post or not to post: Undergraduate student perceptions about participating in online discussions. *Who's learning? Whose technology?* Proceedings ascilite Sydney 2006.
- Ho, S, 2002. Evaluating students' participation in on-line discussions. In *The Eighth Australian World Wide Web Conference (AusWeb 2002)* , Sunshine Coast, Queensland, Australia.
- Nandi, D, Hamilton, M & Harland, J, 2012. 'Evaluating the quality of interaction in asynchronous discussion forums in fully online courses.' *Distance Education 33* (1), pp. 5-30.
- Salmon, G, 2003. *E-tivities: The key to active online learning* . Kogan Page, London.

Create PDF in your applications with the Pdfcrowd HTML to PDF API PDFCROWD

- Wood, L., McNeill, M. & Harvey, M., 2008. *How to lead discussions: Learning through engagement* . Macquarie University. Available at: http://www/mq/edu/au/ltc/pdfs//FBE_Lead_Discussions.pdf.
- Safety, Health and Wellbeing at the University of Tasmania http://www.University of Tasmania.edu.au/students/shw
- Using discussion boards and online collaboration (Open Universities Australia): https://www.open.edu.au/content/documents/study-item/study_tip_using_discussion_boards_and_online_collaboration.pdf
- Facilitating Learning Experiences (Teaching and Learning, University of Tasmania): http://www.teaching-learning.University of Tasmania.edu.au/learning-activities-and-delivery-modes/facilitating-learning-experiences.
- Generating and Facilitating Engaging and Effective Online Discussions (University of Oregon Teaching Effectiveness Program): http://tep.uoregon.edu/technology/blackboard/docs/discussionboard.pdf
- Teach online: Making Online Classroom Discussion More Dynamic and Engaging https://teachonline.asu.edu/2014/01/making-online-classroom-discussion-dynamic-engaging/
- Engaging Students in Discussion Online (University of Washington) https://www.washington.edu/teaching/files/2012/12/OnlineDiscussion.pdf
- Online Discussion Questions that work (Faculty Focus) http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/online-education/online-discussion-questions-work/
- Asynchronous Discussion; Best Practices (American Public University System) http://www.uwex.edu/disted/conference/resource_library/proceedings/08_12701.pdf
- The Guide to Fostering Asynchronous Online Discussion in Higher Education http://fold.org.au/guide_intro.html

---

Provide feedback | Download PDF

Create PDF in your applications with the Pdfcrowd HTML to PDF API PDFCROWD

University College

UNIVERSITY of TASMANIA

Authorised by the Head, Tasmanian Institute of Learning & Teaching

3 February, 2018

© University of Tasmania, Australia. ABN 30 764 374 782. CRICOS Provider Code 00586B

Copyright | Disclaimer | Privacy | Web Accessibility | Site Feedback | **Info Line 1300 363 864**

We acknowledge the palawa and pakana people upon whose lands the University of Tasmania stands

Create PDF in your applications with the Pdfcrowd HTML to PDF API

PDFCROWD