

Getting the Most out of Student Interaction Online

Enhancing Interactivity

1. Require participation. (Don't make discussions a low-priority "add-on".)
2. Reward or at least acknowledge participation.
3. Be clear in your instructions and expectations; exemplify or model.
4. Use controversial topics that inspire conversation & varied opinions.
5. Allow enough time for a conversation to develop.
6. Let students be aware that you are reading.
7. For hybrid classes, make a connection when the class meets to the online discussion.
8. Let students guide the conversation. Facilitate only to drive the conversation to another level. (Refer to other comments by name, as in a F2F discussion.)
9. Require students to support opinions.
10. Create a positive supportive atmosphere.
11. Rotate members of small group discussions as well as the role of leader.
12. Create a Topic area for social talk, "the coffee shop" or "cyber cafe".

Resources for Facilitating Online Discussions

Facilitating Online Learning: Effective Strategies for Moderators

George Collison, Atwood Pub., 2000. (SY library, 371.334 F33 2000)

Facilitating Interaction in Computer Mediated Online Courses

Mauri Collins , Berge Collins Associates and Zane Berge , University of Maryland, Baltimore County http://www.nib.unicamp.br/recursos/distance_education/flcc.html

Enhancing In-class Discussions

Teaching Effectiveness Program, University of Oregon.
<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~tep/technology/techdisc.html>

Tips for setting up successful online discussions, Kate Britt, (Interesting set of resources and a few discussion examples)

<http://www.webct.com/OTL/ViewContent?contentID=2515824>

Creative Use of Threaded Discussion Areas (3 part article), Karen Peters,

<http://www.webct.com/OTL/ViewContent?contentID=898084>

Discussion Tool Ideas

Compiled from DL listserv discussion, f03 (facilitated by Angie Berdahl)

- Give points for initial post & follow-ups
- Due date for initial post, & follow-ups
- Have them copy/paste their posts into an assignment they turn in later... saves instructor time from going in to assess all the posts.
- Students post introduction. Instructor replies privately; but other instructors reply publicly to show the value of the post.
- Share thesis ideas with each other
- Choose topics that are controversial, that don't lend themselves to identical responses... boring.
- Points for every response... but what about the quality? Detail?
- No points for posts, but take away participation points if there is no weekly post.
- 2 people get together each week to summarize/highlight the weekly discussion postings.
- 2 people moderate the discussion each week, and are free to choose a topic.
- Instructors - Don't reply too soon – give a student the chance to reply. Fight urge to respond too quickly
- Have fewer but more in-depth discussions (3) with substantial detail in posts. (20-25% of grade)
- If miss discussion, have option to write an essay.
- Deduct points for lack of substantive contribution
- Talk about “soft” issues in technical areas. (e.g. security policies, ethical behavior)
- Instructor participates often, drive discussion further
- Instructor models responses
- Students take turns leading a weekly readings-based online discussion the day before class meets - provides a great platform for the in-class discussion