

A collection of articles and resources for student engagement, many focus on online discussions.

CTL Engagement

This module helps you consider how to promote interactions between you and your students, your students with your course content, and your students with each other to amplify engagement.

<https://www.umass.edu/ctl/engagement>

This module is organized by the framework:

WATCH a short video that provides an overview of best practices on engagement.

EXPLORE (*many, many - JL*) additional resources on engagement.

DO something with what you've learned by completing the Flexible Course Planner for this module.

TOOLS that amplify student engagement, supported by the UMass IDEAS Team.

The 9-minute video is a good place to start → <https://youtu.be/-nAgDPPbSbc>

How Do I Design Successful Online Group/Collaborative Work Assignments?

UMass CTL

Main article link. Page also includes a number of links to other resources

<https://www.umass.edu/ctl/keep-teaching-group-work-online>

10 Tips for Effective Online Discussions

Edwige Simon, Educase Review

These tips can help educators ensure that online discussions are engaging and beneficial for postsecondary students.

<https://er.educause.edu/blogs/2018/11/10-tips-for-effective-online-discussions>

Ground Rules

The first two weeks of an online course are critical because this is when students develop good habits... Ask for clarifications if a post appears vague. Even at the graduate level, students will be students, and early in the course is when they are finding out what they can get away with and what lines they should not cross. For the first two weeks, leave detailed feedback in the gradebook comment section. If a student did not meet the discussion expectations, deduct points and refer them to the discussion guidelines.

Discussion Leaders

Have students take turns leading the discussion every week. The discussion leaders are responsible for adding a discussion question and moderating the answers. Previously, I required students to write an

end-of-week discussion summary, but I realized that I didn't want to read them—and I don't think students read them, either. I now ask discussion leaders to select three of their classmates' quotes and write a one-paragraph reflection on each, which has proven to be of greater value to all in support of the learning process.

Last Minute Posting

Hodges noticed that most of his students were responding to the prompt within the last 30 minutes before the Sunday deadline, he decided to instead require students to make an initial post by Wednesday, allowing a few days for discussion to percolate.

Depth of Post

Instead of assigning a grade based on whether a student posted, or the number of words in a response, Speer gives high marks to posts that “advance the discussion.” Each student who posts is building on what other students said, as in a face-to-face conversation. “You can restate and affirm all day if you want to,” Speer said. “I’m not giving credit for that.”

3CQ

A discussion post format known as 3CQ, developed by Jennifer Stewart-Mitchell. Each student’s response must include a compliment, a comment, a connection (3C) and a question (Q).

Responses other than text

The popular video-creation tool Voicethread (<https://voicethread.com/products/highered/>) has been a boon to innovators of online discussions. At Bryant University, discussion boards consist of a mix of written “essay-like” responses, usually informed by research, with “experiential” video posts that express an opinion or tell a story.

Voice thread can be integrated into Moodle as an external tool. Instructions can be found here → <https://innovate.umass.edu/collaboration-tools/#:~:text=VoiceThread,come%2C%20first%2Derved%20basis.>

10 Reasons why Students Don’t Participate in Online Discussions and How to Remedy Each

Debbie Morrison, *Online Learning Insights*.

Article link:

<https://onlinelearninginsights.wordpress.com/2013/10/08/ten-reasons-students-dont-participate-in-online-discussions-how-to-remedy-each/>

This is a brief two-page table referenced in the article:

https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B1tFlcXR_eNbZk41V3BVdXdvQUE/edit

1. Aren’t clear on the expectations
2. Feel they have nothing to contribute
3. Experience technical difficulties
4. Are offended by a fellow classmates’ post
5. Poor discussion etiquette

6. Inhibited by timing of due dates
7. Discouraged by discussion questions that appear unrelated to course goals
8. Inhibited by certain students that appear to dominate
9. Students' initial post and/or responses to classmates are shallow and brief
10. Students' are just not into it...

Teaching Critical Thinking Through Online Discussions

Carol B. MacKnight Educase Quarterly

Faculty play a critical role in fostering critical thinking among students using Web Communication tools. The article contains a good list of Socratic Questioning Prompts for critical thinking and open-ended questions, and presents various group discussion formats.

<https://virtualchalkdust.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/eqm0048.pdf>

Five New Twists For Online Discussions

Laurie Berry, Kristin Kowal. University of Wisconsin Extended Campus

Five "twists" on traditional discussions in online courses. These activities encourage student engagement and critical thinking, and they might help you feel more connected to your students as well!

<https://ce.uwex.edu/five-new-twists-for-online-discussions/>

Twist 1: Adding Images of Examples

Twist 2: External Discussion and Reflection

Twist 3: Debate

Twist 4: Role-Play

Twist 5: Fishbowl