

Designing & Facilitating Inclusive Online Discussions

Discussion engages students with course content while building community with classmates and rapport with the instructor. Instructors can use this checklist to self-evaluate the design and facilitation of online discussions with the goal of inclusively engaging all students.

- Flexibility is built in through asynchronicity, due dates, or grading windows.^{i, ii, iii, iv, v}
- Settings allow students to edit responses.^{vi}
- Clear guidelines are given for how often to post, length, and participation.^{vii}
- There is transparency around instructor feedback/response time.^{vii}
- A rubric or checklist is provided on how discussions and participation will be graded.ⁱ
- Discussion prompts are open-ended enough to seek greater understanding rather than finite answers or solutions.^{iiiv, viii}
- Discussion prompts apply course content to students' lives and experiences.^{vii}
- Discussions encourage students to connect to each other, the instructor, and the institution.^{viii}
- "Netiquette" or "community guidelines" are posted in the course.
- Instructor participates in discussion regularly to make sure it stays civil.ⁱ
- Instructor shares and expresses some vulnerability in online discussions.^{iv}

Examples of Asynchronous Discussion Tools

Asynchronous discussion tools allow students to respond and participate at different times, allowing for flexibility while still providing engagement between students and instructor.

- Packback
- Canvas discussion boards
- Teams chat (not graded)

ⁱ Darby, F. (2020, Aug 24). The secret weapon of good online teaching: Discussion forums. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

ⁱⁱ Dahlstrom-Hakki, I., Alstad, Z., & Banaerjee, M. (2020). Comparing synchronous and asynchronous online discussions for students with disabilities: The impact of social presence. *Computers & Education*, 150, 103-142.

ⁱⁱⁱ Jamili, M., & Krish, P. (2021) Fostering 21st century skills using an online discussion forum in an English for specifics purposes. *Malaysian Journal of Learning and Instruction*, 18(1), 219-240.

^{iv} Sousa, A.N. (2021). Dialogue in online learning spaces: How transitioning to online learning during a pandemic impacts classroom dialogue and inclusivity. *Journal of Teaching and Learning with Technology* (10) 229-237.

^v Mehta, R., & Aguilera, E. (2020). A critical approach to humanizing pedagogies in online teaching and learning. *The International Journal of Information and Learning Technology* 37(3), 109-120.

^{vi} Meyers, S., Rowell, K., Wells, M., & Smith, B.C. (2019). Teacher empathy: A model of empathy for teaching and student success. *College Teaching*, 67(3), 160-168.

^{vii} Addy, T.M., Dube, D., Mitchell, K.A., & SoRelle, M. (2021). *What Inclusive Instructors Do: Principles for Excellence in College Teaching*, Stylus Publishing.

^{viii} Peralta Community College District. (2020). A critical approach to humanizing pedagogies in online teaching and learning. *The International Journal of Information and Learning Technology*, 37(3), 109-120.