LEARNINGHOUSE

Monthly Workshop Series: Discussion Forums

Workshop Summary

"Engagement" in higher education involves three types of student interaction: with each other, with course content, and with instructors. Discussion forums allow instructors to hit all three areas, offering rich opportunities to enhance engagement, promote deep learning, and build community. As such, they're one of the most powerful tools in the arsenal of an instructor of an asynchronous online course. In this session, participants will learn about the affordances of online discussion forums and encounter strategies to incorporate them into their online courses.

Session Information

Feedback and Practice	
Date/Time	Thursday 19 July 2018, 1:00-2:00 pm ET
Session URL	https://thelearninghouse.adobeconnect.com/fd-forums-1807/

Audio	Audio for the workshop may be done either via phone or your computer's microphone and speakers. If you wish to use your phone, use the following call-in information:
	    Number: (888) 619-1583
	    Passcode: 712 743 4023

Recommended Reading	1. Engagement in Online Courses 2. Three Ways to Encourage Conversation in Online Discussion Forums 3. Sample Discussion Forum Ground Rules 4. Discussion Forums: Purpose, Practicalities, and Possibilities
Instructions	At or just before the start time of the session, click the "Session URL" above, sign in as a guest (with your full name), and Adobe Connect will launch in your browser.
Technical Requirements	Computer with a web browser Phone OR speakers/microphone attached to computer (for workshop audio) Internet speed of DSL or higher (>512 kbps)

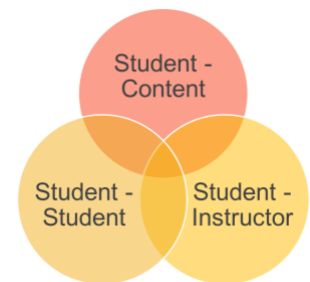# Monthly Workshop Series: Discussion Forums

Recommended Reading

Prior to entering the Adobe Connect room, please consume the following articles on our Center for Teaching and Learning website:

1. Engagement in Online Courses
2. Three Ways to Encourage Conversation in Online Discussion Forums
3. Sample Discussion Forum Ground Rules
4. Discussion Forums: Purpose, Practicalities, and Possibilities

"Engagement" is a bit of a buzzword in online education. Addressing this challenge head-on, when we talk about "engagement" in courses – whether online or face-to-face – we're really talking about *interaction*; specifically interaction in one of three areas:

- between students and each other
- between students and course content
- between students and the instructor

If you enhance any of these three areas of interaction, then you've arguably enhanced the "engagement" of your course. "Engagement in Online Courses" discusses ideas for how to enhance each of these areas of engagement. While the article isn't focused on discussion forums, it helps illustrate that discussion forums allow instructors to address all three areas of engagement.

Figure 1. The three types of interaction that occur in courses can overlap with each other depending on the material or approach.

But many instructors struggle with how to leverage discussion forums to promote deep learning. "Three Ways to Encourage Conversation in Online Discussion Forums" provides some high-level suggestions on how you can use asynchronous discussions to build community, establish relevance, and promote collaboration. Note that sample discussion board prompts as well as a sample discussion board rubric are linked from this article as well. Use them to your advantage!

If students don't have guidance on how to meaningfully participate in discussions, however, any efforts you may make to create effective prompts may be for naught. Accordingly, "Sample Discussion Forum Ground Rules" provides some language you can use in instructing students

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how to interact on your forums that increases the chances of having civil, balanced, and thoughtful discussions with and between your students.

Lastly, we've included a link to an infographic titled "Discussion Forums: Purpose, Practicalities, and Possibilities" that helps you address key questions you should ask yourself when considering the inclusion of a discussion board in your online course. Addressing these "three P's" can help you identify the type of discussion board, activity, and discussion you want to create.

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Adobe Connect Tips

- If possible, do try to consume the recommended readings prior to the start of session, since the session will build on these materials.
- Be sure that you're in a quiet location with a good internet connection.
- Audio for the session may be done via phone or VOIP (computer microphone and speakers).
- Please mute your audio when you are not speaking. Whether you're using your phone or your computer for audio, headphones are strongly recommended, to reduce the chance of feedback or echoes.
- If using your computer's microphone and speakers, we recommend you arrive a minute or two early and run the Audio Setup Wizard. Once you're in the Adobe Connect room, you can run the wizard by clicking **Meeting > Audio Setup Wizard**.
- There may be polls, activities, and discussion. Please be prepared to participate, and don't hesitate to ask questions at any point!
- Be sure to sign in once you arrive so we know who has attended the session. Though the URL will be provided in the Adobe Connect room, you can also find it here: https://form.jotformpro.com/learninghouse/fd-signin