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. iv, 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)

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