

Discussion Boards

Activity Summary

The discussion board is a popular way to allow students to interact with one another virtually while not requiring all members of the discussion to be online at the same time. Discussions are logged and grouped into threads that contain a main post heading and all related replies.

Objectives

- Analyze topics, texts, or media covered in a unit/module.
- Respond to and interact with peers.

Interaction Type

Learner-Content
Learner-Learner

Tech Skills Required

Learner – Novice
Facilitator - Novice

Mode

Asynchronous

Time Required

5-7 days

Tools/Materials

- Access to the internet and web browser
- Blackboard Discussion Board
- Reading base (textbook literature, non-literature)

Activity Prep Guidelines

1. Identify topic or theme for discussion. Should be related to topics and materials in the unit/module.
2. Develop open-ended questions for the discussion. Consider the cognitive nature, reading base, style and type of question, and experiences of the learners.

Do:

- Problem-solving or case study scenarios where there is no known answer or no single correct answer.
- Scaffold with clarifying questions as part of the larger discussion question: What do you think is the main issue/point? How does this relate to? Can you provide examples?
- Factual type questions can be appropriate if leading questions require the student to: compare/contrast, categorize, deconstruct, argue, critique, theorize, hypothesize, defend, justify, or synthesize.
- Use polls and surveys to generate student responses to topics/issues then use the results as part of the discussion topic/question.

Don't use questions that have a yes/no answer or a single correct answer (i.e., answered by a fact.)

3. Create a rubric with the criteria for the assignment: Content, number of posts/replies, use of resources, writing style, engagement with others in discussion forum.
4. Create a sample post and response as a guideline for what is expected for student participation.
5. Create Discussion Forum in Blackboard. Post the discussion question(s) and reading base to the forum. Add due dates for initial post and replies. Attach the rubric and sample post.

Variations

As a variation the instructor can participate in the discussion to add a learner-instructor interaction to the activity.

A second variation is once a discussion is over have students write a 1-2 page discussion summary that analyzes, reflects on, and synthesizes what was discussed.

References

Akin, L., & Neal, D. (2007). CREST+ Model: Writing Effective Online Discussion Questions. *Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, 3(2). Retrieved 10/8/2014 from <http://jolt.merlot.org/vol3no2/akin.htm>.