



Nottingham Trent
University

Tips for effective facilitation of online learning

This document is designed to provide hints and tips for facilitating online learning in recognition that students learning online may require adaptation of our traditional teaching and communication approach, especially given that in this context online may not have been their desired study mode. The ideas in this document are not requirements but have been collated based on examples of good practice and experience from across the university.

Tip 1: Establish clear channels of communication from the outset and set learning parameters

- Make sure that you introduce yourself and the teaching team to the students via a Welcome NOW News post. This could be text based or why not personalise it with a video?
- Tell students what to expect from their learning experience. Provide their schedule of activities, explain what type of learning activities they will be engaged in and how long they should expect to devote to the module each week.
- Clarify the deliverables for the module – formative and summative and establish key deadlines.
- Make sure students know who to contact in the event of queries and how to best contact you. If you have set up a Q & A discussion board to handle common queries, make sure they are directed to that right from the start. Manage expectations in terms of how frequently you will be 'online', how quickly you will respond to different types of enquiries.
- Make sure that your NOW Profile has some basic information and most importantly a picture. Students like to be able to see who they are corresponding with.

Tip 2: use the NOW announcement tool to maintain regular communication

The NOW announcement tool can be used to help guide your students and keep them on track with deliverables each week.

- Post a welcome announcement before the module starts to set clear expectations for your students.
- Maintain regular announcements (advised 2 per week, one at the start and one at the end) to help your students keep on track. These announcements can establish the agenda for the week and provide useful weekly summaries. They can help keep students on track with activities and deliverables. They are an effective way to handle group feedback and responses to queries.
- Remember you can schedule announcements in advance on NOW.

Tip 3: achieve a balance of tutor presence within module formative activities

Discussion forums can be used to create discourse around a particular topic, however, as tutor you don't need to respond to/ comment on every post. You should aim to achieve a balance, as follows:

- A minimum of 10% of postings should be from the tutor. You should avoid excessive posting as they may swamp the 'classroom' and stifle student discussion.
- Tutor postings should be meaningful contributions that lead the discussion and support student engagement.
- They should promote engagement with the topic and encourage 'quieter' students to participate.
- Check in on formative activities at intervals throughout the week

You can find out how to set up a discussion forum [here](#).

Similarly, with other types of asynchronous activities such as journal/ whiteboard activities, it is important as a tutor to have a presence as it is part of giving feedback to students. Make sure students realise this because it has been found that quite often, in an online environment, students appreciate the greater visibility of feedback, which may impact positively on student satisfaction.

Tip 4: set clear expectations for response times

Students need to know when they can expect to receive a response from you if they ask questions or seek support. It helps to set these expectations in advance and make them clear to students in your welcome announcement.

Your School will have standard expected response times (normally two working days). If you are not sure what the expected response time is in your School please contact your Learning and Teaching Manager.

Note that in an online environment, the notion of 'working days' becomes blurred. The key thing is to just be clear and consistent across the programme from the start about what students can and cannot expect. If expectations are managed from the start, there are rarely problems!

Tip 5: monitor student engagement

Whilst it is a School level decision about the specific process for monitoring and managing student engagement in general terms, at a module level it is of course good practice to keep an eye on engagement with the various activities the module will involve.

- On campus activities will be timetabled and attendance monitored via the QR system
- Synchronous online sessions will again be timetabled and monitored via the QR system

However, with asynchronous activity, it is important to monitor whether your students are engaging with the online learning materials and there are a range of tools available to support you to do this.

Dashboard

The Dashboard algorithms will be adjusted to provide a more accurate picture of a student's engagement with NOW.

NOW

NOW reporting features include activity tracking (to give insight into engagement for a specific activity), Progress Trackers and Intelligent Agents. Visit NOW Central to learn about the full range of features.

Observations regarding student engagement in a module should ideally inform the School's process of engagement monitoring and management.