Support for staff

When you provide activities and resources online, you need to support your students' engagement with the online environment. It helps if you integrate the online activities well with other aspects of the course, such as face-to-face classes, and if you clearly align online activities and assessments with course learning outcomes. While the fact that online activities will be assessed provides strong extrinsic motivation, you can use Moodle tools in other ways to engage your students and manage their participation.

Learn more about good online facilitation by participating as a learner in online activities and courses yourself.

Provide guidance to your students

- Course overview—in addition to the **Course outline**, students will benefit if you show in detail the different course elements and assessments. This could be in the form of a syllabus or a **visual planner**.

- Explain how the online components will be run—How often should students log in? Summarise the activities they need to complete online. How often will you be online? Also provide some help with navigation.

- Introductions—particularly in a large class, it can be difficult for you and the students to get to know each other individually. An introduction activity can help to provide a social aspect to the online environment. A **forum** is a particularly useful tool for such an activity.

- Practice activity—so that students can be confident in using the tools to complete assessment activities, provide an ungraded practice task using the same tools—e.g. **forum**, **quiz** or **assignment**.

Provide ongoing help and support

- Help forum—a discussion forum for course-related queries can save you time; you can post answers to the whole class rather than answering multiple emails. Students can answer each others' queries here, too.

- Keep students informed—tools such as the **News forum** and **messaging** help you keep students up to date with new course items and activities. Suggest that they subscribe to course **discussion forums** so they receive emails alerting them to discussion postings.

- Guidelines and templates—consider what documentation you can provide to help students participate in

activities and complete assessments. For example, for **group work** you can provide some **guidelines on group facilitation** to help students manage their own group processes with minimal input from the teacher.

Monitor participation and progress

- **Notifications** allow you to receive information about individual course activities by email from the Moodle course. Your Moodle home page also displays these notifications under the course link.

- **Moodle reports**:
  - Live log—all activity in the course for the past hour
  - Activity report—all the activity in the course, sorted by topic
  - Participation report—reports on participatory actions by user role for a selected activity for a nominated period
  - Activity completion—completion of all activities for all users in the course
  - Statistics—select a course, a report type and a time period. Statistics are presented in a graph and a table.

- **Assess participation in a forum**

Support independent learning

- Formative assessment activities—provide the opportunity for students to test themselves and assess their own progress. For example, using the **Quiz** tool that can be computer-marked, so it does not add to the assessment load for the teacher.

- Reflective learning activities—asking students to reflect on and communicate about what they have learned (e.g. in a **blog**) is a useful reflective activity, and can help the teacher in early diagnosis of misconceptions.

- Peer support—provide the means for students to support each other (e.g. Help forum), and to give feedback (e.g. self and peer review using the **Workshop** tool)

- **Restrict access**—Applying a condition for release of activities and course material can ensure that access is provided in a timely and appropriate manner. For example, additional formative assessment can be provided to students who score below a certain grade in an assignment.

- The **flipped classroom** approach entails delivering learning resources for students to absorb in their own time, and using class time for more active learning. Blackboard Collaborate is one tool you can use to **pre-record your lectures** (you may also find this **Pre-Recorded Lecture Guide** useful). You can also use this tool to conduct webinars on key topics or queries.

Promote engagement in online activities

- Guidelines—provide clearly defined expectations and guidelines for student participation and what they can expect from the teacher online. Sometimes students have had very little experience in online learning so

setting out expectations from the start will make participation easier for them and for the teacher. This **Student guide to online study** may be useful to some students.

- Explicitly stated **learning outcomes**—if students know why you are asking them to complete a particular online activity, they are more likely to be motivated to participate.

- Assessment—will always be a major factor in student motivation. **Quizzes** for class preparation can have a very small grade attached to encourage completion while not providing a large incentive for cheating.

- Peer review—learning to critically review their peers' work will help students assess their own performance. Consider using this for preliminary stages of assignment preparation. See information on self and peer assessment using the **Workshop** tool.

- Flexibility and customised learning paths—providing some flexibility in access to course resources can allow the most able students to manage their own learning, while providing additional support to less proficient learners (e.g. **Lesson tool** for customised pathways, **recorded lectures**, **Quizzes** for self-assessment, **Restrict access** and **Activity completion** for materials).

See also

Also see **Prepare your students for online learning**