

Managing Communication in Your Course



Email

Best Use

Welcome Email - Tell the students something about yourself and any information about the course that will pique their interest.

Important Information - Use email to send students important announcements. Tell students that you will be using email as an official communication gateway for items that are important.

Tips

Timeframe - Do not assume that electronic mail is received or read in any specific timeframe.

Privacy - Don't put anything in your student correspondence that you would not want to see on the front page of a local or national newspaper.

Availability - Don't be available to your students all the time. Set up a framework for turnaround time.

You must decide ahead of time the responsibility you will take in the course and provide it to your students in detail. For example, how often will you respond to email? On what days? At what times?

Establishing these guidelines will help alleviate the feeling of being overwhelmed by all your students.

Announce times when response time will be suspended (such as conferences) or times when it will be shortened (when a test is coming up).

Remind your students that your faculty role includes more than teaching responsibilities.

Assignments - Don't be vague about the names of assignments or the subject line of email messages. Use a formula such as course ID, assignment number or title of assignment and student's full name. For each space add an underscore.

For email subject line:

COMM-101-01_Assignment_1_Jones

For a file name:

COMM-101-01_Assignment_1_Jones (if you have two Jones' have them use their first name also)

Create Mailboxes and Filters

COMM-100-01

COMM-100-02

Teach Netiquette - Publish a list of protocols or rules for your students to follow - This helps to maintain order. Explain some standards for conduct and address issues in writing emails and responding to peer work in the threaded discussions or chat rooms.

Rule 1: Remember the Human

Rule 2: Adhere to the same standards of behavior online that you follow in real life

Rule 3: Know where you are in cyberspace

Rule 4: Respect other people's time and bandwidth

Rule 5: Make yourself look good online

Rule 6: Share expert knowledge

Rule 7: Help keep flame wars under control

Rule 8: Respect other people's privacy

Rule 9: Don't abuse your power

Rule 10: Be forgiving of other people's mistakes

<http://www.albion.com/netiquette/>

Have students take the Netiquette Quiz:

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Discussion Boards

Best Use

Break the Ice - Post a short biography of yourself and things about you that pertain to the course. Have the students do the same. This creates a sense of community and provides the instructor with feedback about the students.

Form learning teams - Have students find peers with common interests and form study groups or assignments.

Water Cooler - The Water Cooler is a forum for students to post discussion threads that may not be directly related to course assignments. The instructor may periodically visit the "Water Cooler" but students will not be graded on their postings.

Interviews - Have students interview a person whose profession is related to course content and present a summary to promote discussion.

Panels - Have guest panelists provide material and engage in a discussion. Then open it to students.

Debates - Have students post a position on a topic to which other students respond pro or con with supporting evidence.

Discussion Questions - Use pre-class study questions and advance organizers to encourage critical thinking. Assign specific discussion questions to individual students.

Case Study - Provide a short problem or case as the basis for discussion.

Weekly Summaries - Have students submit a 100-200 word summary of what they feel are important points covered in the course that week.

Technology Issues - The purpose of this discussion forum is to provide a vehicle for you to assist one another in solving the technical problems that might arise from using a tool like Blackboard. Discussion is by no means restricted to Blackboard. Feel free to discuss problems you may be encountering in using any of the following: a computer, WebTV, software, Blackboard, modems, etc. The instructor monitors the discussion periodically (or assigns a student) and may award "Extra Credit" to students that are willing to assist one another throughout the term.

Reports - Individual students or groups of students present a project or paper with a general discussion by all students.

Weekly Critiques - Have students submit weekly critiques of an online article or Web site relevant to course content.

Student Led Discussions - Each student submits one critical thinking question to the class discussion forum about the reading material for that week and then is responsible for leading the discussion. Students must be required to participate in at least 2 or 3 discussion threads in addition to their own.

Tips

The First Week - Don't expect all students to be successfully reading and participating in your class discussion list in the first week of the semester. Computer issues and expectations about the class format may be different for students unfamiliar with using electronic communication.

Grading - Clearly communicate how postings will be graded. Provide weekly updates to each student on their grade status.

Interaction - Clearly communicate your expectations. How often and in what way will you be monitoring the discussion board? Structure feedback on evaluation of the students postings and learning. Assign students the role of moderator.

You must decide ahead of time the responsibility you will take in the course and provide it to your students in detail. For example, how often will you respond to the discussions? On what days? At what times? Will you respond to every threaded discussion response by every student?

Establishing these guidelines will help alleviate the feeling of being overwhelmed by all your students.

Information Gateway - Don't structure communication flow in the course so that you are the gateway for ALL communication. State your expectations for how students should participate in the class discussions and how you will participate.

Office Hours - Important questions can be posted to help students resolve issues that all students might be encountering.

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Virtual Chats

Best Use

Oral Quizzes - Have students meet individually online and quiz them on course content. Students sign up for a time.

Language Study - Chat transcripts can be used for grammar practice in language courses. Students can analyze sentences, spelling or vocabulary using real contexts.

Small Group Work - Have small groups of 3-5 students use the chat sessions to work on a project.

Virtual Office Hours - Set weekly times where you are available online - have students schedule time slots if you have problems with too many entering at once.

Debriefing Exercises - Use chat to debrief an assignment a student submitted to determine if the work is their own if you suspect plagiarism.

Transcripts as a Study Tool - Post transcripts of chats so students can review conversations.

Brainstorming Sessions - Students can use the chat to brainstorm ideas for writing assignments.

Guest Speakers - Invite a guest to your course chat session (outside expert or instructor) and have your students prepare questions.

Tips

Be prepared - Use pretyped questions or short comments that can be cut-and-pasted from your word processor.

Limit the number of participants - Schedule several sessions on the same topic and have students sign up - limit to about 6-8 students - archive the transcripts.

Help Late Comers - Take a moment to orient them to the discussion by summarizing

the current thread.

Start/Stop Times

Have Definite Starting and Ending Times - Advertise in advance so students can arrange their schedules to attend - Limit each session to 30 minutes and cut it off when time is up.

Limit the Topic of Conversation - This will help to structure the discussion and keep the students focused.

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Technical Issues - Prepare students for technical problems they may encounter and test prior to the scheduled chat.

Instructor Forum - The instructor forum is used for students' questions about the course or assignments that can be answered publicly. The instructor will post responses to the questions within 24 hours.