

## Getting Started with Asynchronous Discussion

Asynchronous means, the instructor and the students do not meet simultaneously; however, students and instructors continue to interact regularly, and students are required to complete coursework at set intervals, including participating in class activities, online discussions/chats, group projects, quizzes, exams, etc. An asynchronous discussion takes place over time without the boundary of time or location of faculty or student. As we continue to consider the access to bandwidth and the need to be flexible to student and faculty needs, conducting discussions asynchronously is a viable and equitable alternative to synchronous communication.

## Pedagogical Considerations

### Transitioning to Asynchronous Discussion

- Compose prompts for your discussion are open ended questions or statements to facilitate student to student and student to instructor interaction.
- Target learning outcomes that were the outcomes of your original in-person, synchronous classes whenever possible.
- Consider how the in-class discussions contribute to the learning outcomes you identified for your course. What should students learn, or what knowledge should students enhance or expand upon based on the discussion? How will you know they have achieved what you intend them to achieve in an online environment?
- Identify signs of accountability in the discussion. In many cases student accountability is easier to track in an online format. If students must complete a post or a number of posts in a certain amount of time, it is evident that the student has or has not and to what level of quality – as established in advance by the instructor.

### Creating Community and Establishing Regular Communication

- Communicate with students often. If at all possible, begin by contacting students via email or course announcements multiple times a week. Teaching and learning remotely can be isolating, your communications and interactions with students will help them feel less alone in your course.
- Consider a video message. Facial expression and voice inflection go a long way in helping students feel more comfortable and less isolated. While use of bandwidth needs to be part of the decision-making process for real time interaction and recorded video content, even a single greeting or inspirational message can go a long way in setting the tone for this new reality.

### Assessing and Grading Discussion and Participation.

- Communicate your expectations for assessment to your students before they begin a discussion so they know what you will be expecting. Clarify if the discussion will be graded and what that would entail. Make sure students know what is important to you related to asynchronous discussion and determining a grade.
- Questions for consideration:

- Will grading be based on how often students make comments or post to a discussion board or, will you expect a level of quality regardless of the number of posts?
- How will you determine the level of quality for posts? How will you communicate that to students?
- What kind of participation will you expect?
- Will participating in discussions that are graded have a discrete participation grade, or will the discussion include participation?
- Will students be responsible for posting only once or will they need to post multiple times over the duration of a discussion? If you have a number of times that you expect, be sure to communicate that to students. It is likely that asynchronous discussions are as foreign to your students as they are to you.
- Consider starting with a discussion that is ungraded on which you provide detailed feedback so students can know what to expect.

To see step-by-step directions on how to create discussions in your Blackboard course(s), you can find them here. [\[LINK\]](#)