



E-Moderation

Top tips for e-moderating online courses

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MOTIVATE - and encourage students throughout the course. You can do this by posing questions or starting dialogue on the community forum, as well as by responding to participants' posts.

2



GUIDE - new members of a course may be unfamiliar with the technology or topic and will need guidance, especially in the beginning. Post an FAQ section for frequently asked questions, and include contact information for course staff.

3



SUPPORT - give an overview of the weeks ahead, and ensure that resources and assignments are accessible and clearly laid out.

4



RESPOND REGULARLY - develop a moderation schedule that uses your time efficiently, while still meeting global participants' needs. For instance, having two 30-minute shifts (in the morning & afternoon), can be more effect than a single one-hour shift.

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RESPOND TIMEOUSLY - while you shouldn't check the forums every 5 minutes, it is important for you to be visible and respond to concerns as soon as possible (within 1 working day), to ensure participants are not discouraged.

6



WAIT - before you respond to a post - particularly an emotionally-loaded one. Pause and consider the context before you reply.

7



LISTEN - "you have two ears, and one mouth" - listen to others and read their posts and comments twice before responding.

8



BUILD ON STRENGTHS - most online communities attract a range of people, from experts to enthusiastic amateurs. Don't underestimate the value of this diversity - encourage all members to contribute.

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COLLABORATION - encourage collaboration by asking students to assist and respond to each other on the forums.

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REMINDERS - because your participants might be working professionals, it is an excellent idea to send them regular reminders. In small courses, don't forget to check your participants' list to see when last they logged in, and encourage absentees to join in.

11



PROFILES - encourage members to feel part of the community through the creation of profile pages, including a picture. Profiles allow users to connect via common interests, which include: education, career and location.

Communication strategies

REGULAR COMMUNICATION is key in keeping your online course alive, and the forums are an excellent place to provide updates and encouragement, even if you don't plan to use this platform for content discussion.

Q&A FORUMS - are an important element for any online course. Use this space to address students' questions and concerns about the course content or assignments.

ONLINE PRESENCE - consider scheduling a regular time slot indicating to students when you will be available on Skype or via instant messaging.

FEEDBACK - give timely feedback for all assignments, not just forum discussions.

Key tasks for maintaining forum discussions



HARVEST

Keep track of key points in posts and assignments as the discussion progresses over the weeks. This process ensures that interesting discussions and action items are not buried in the myriad of comments.



SUMMARIZE

Compile the posts on the same topic into a short summary to provide an overview for new participants, who might otherwise become overwhelmed by the number of posts.



WEAVE

Find shared elements (threads) in posts and 'weave' them together to show an underlying pattern. You are providing more than a summary here, you are contributing a new way of viewing the topic. Do this regularly (weekly) to keep the discussion alive - see Triggers below.



ARCHIVE

Your weaves and summaries can be useful during the original course, in subsequent reruns and for research purposes. Consider how and where you will store this data before the end of the course, and how will students access this information.



TRIGGERS

Finally, if your forums are quiet, you can also use participants' individual comments or a weave of several comments to stimulate debate and further discussions within a forum.



online-learning@tudelft.nl



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