

Online Collaborative Learning

What is online collaborative learning and why is it important?

Online collaborative learning refers to online teamwork and mutual interaction among group members who work together to build knowledge.

Effective online collaborative activities help develop active online communities that increase motivation, engagement, and connection.

Meaningful Online Discussion

An online learning activity that is often foundational to online collaboration is meaningful online discussions. Online discussions can be effective if implemented wisely, ensuring that discussion expectations and procedures are clear and manageable. Intentional organization and management of online discussions provides strong support throughout the process to facilitate the construction of knowledge among students. It is also vital to recognize the importance of identifying the intrinsic value of discussion forums to encourage student engagement.

★ Design Principles

- **Appropriate Technology:** Choose a tool that is convenient to use and conducive to peer interactions. This might be a discussion feature within an LMS or a stand-alone tool.
- **Student Orientation:** Familiarize students with the tool.
- **Clear Instructions & Expectations:** Ensure expectations and procedures are clear. For example, make sure it is explicit when to start a new discussion thread and when to continue a discussion thread.
- **Appropriate Topics:** Ensure that discussion topics are in alignment with content objectives.
- **Online Behavior:** Ensure that students understand behavior expectations for online environments. This includes what information is appropriate to share in a public forum, how to engage in disagreements, and how to use a respectful tone in written discussions.

★ Implementation & Evaluation

- **Teacher Presence:** It is important to remain present in discussion threads to help facilitate the discussion and to support respectful disagreement.
- **Teacher Support:** Remind students of expectations and provide clarifications about the discussion task.
- **Teacher Feedback:** Provide feedback throughout the discussion process to reengage students, remind them of the expectations of the discussion task, or expand their thinking.
- **Peer Feedback:** Utilize online discussions for conducting peer-feedback activities. Provide guidance on how to give respectful and constructive peer feedback.

Reference:

Bates A. W. (n.d.) *4.4 Online collaborative learning*.

<https://opentextbc.ca/teachinginadigitalage/chapter/6-5-online-collaborative-learning/>