How Can I Use The Discussion Board?

The following are guidelines and a sample grading Rubric you may want to use to evaluate discussions in your course. It is intended to be a guide that you can revise and customize for your course.

The Discussion Board is one of the most powerful communication tools in an online course and can significantly increase student interaction. A discussion forum can help students become acquainted with one another, work collaboratively on projects, achieve critical thinking on topics or issues, and demonstrate learning outcomes. Online communication can also bring out the shy or hesitant learner who might otherwise be silent in a face-to-face discussion.

Discussion activities may include but are not limited to:

- Class discussions about specific questions or topics related to the course readings.
- Specific questions or topics associated with class assignments or projects.
- Small group discussions designed around group exercises or project.

As with any learning activity, provide your students with clear expectations for participating in a discussion forum. Some things to consider are:

- Large course enrollment (25 – 30), and number of students participating in a discussion forum. It is difficult for a group of this size to conduct meaningful online discussions. Consider establishing discussion groups of 10 or less to facilitate more manageable and meaningful discussions.
- Length of time for the discussion forum. Establish when a discussion will start and end. For example: *This week’s discussion will run from Sunday evening until Saturday evening (10:00 pm).*
- Establish clear expectations for participation along with a grading rubric. For example: *You should post your initial response to the discussion board by Wednesday (10:00 pm) and then post at least one reply to two other students by close of the discussion on Saturday evening."

Again these are considerations to think about when designing your discussion forum and are only presented as guidelines you can modify for your course.

Discussion Rubric (Sample)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Timely discussion contributions. Comments are meaningful and show preparedness which reflect course readings. In-depth thought and contributions which add to the overall learning of the other individuals in the course. Demonstrates courtesy and respect to others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>Timely discussion contributions. However, overall contribution is lacking in that readings are only sometimes incorporated into the discussions and postings do not always reflect questions posed or topics described. Individual participated in all but ONE of the discussion forums. Demonstrates courtesy and respect to others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>Overall contributions not meaningful – type of comments for example 'good idea' or 'I agree'. Very little evidence of having read course materials or giving any in-depth thought to the reading. Failed to participate in at least 2 discussions during the posting period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>Participation is erratic or non-existent. Little or no evidence of having read course materials and preparing for the discussion. Failed to participate in at least 3 discussions during the posting period.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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For questions or comments, contact the Computer Services Help Desk
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