



DISCUSSION BOARDS

WHAT TUTORS NEED TO KNOW

POTENTIAL BENEFITS



- A Deeper Level of Understanding of the Curricula
- Improved Student Engagement and Motivation
- Enhanced Learning Outcomes

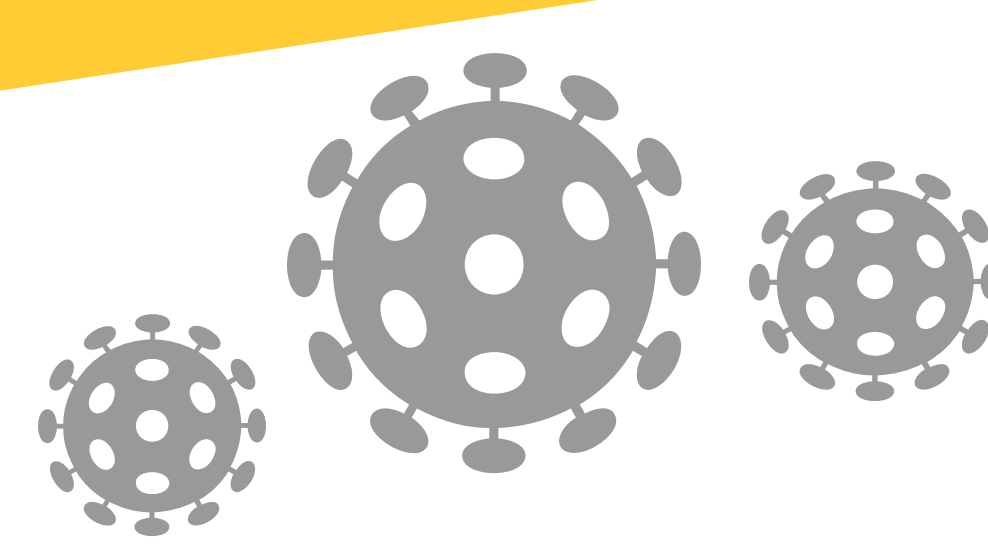


- Development of Higher-Order Thinking Skills
- Increased Metacognition



- Providing a Positive Learning Experience
- Satisfying Student Expectations

(Roavi, 2007, Topçu, 2008 & Douglas et al., 2020)



TEACHING AND LEARNING

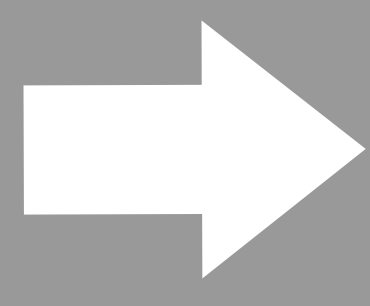
- There is no need for students or tutors to be engaged simultaneously. This allows for more flexibility and potential engagement: Interactions can take place inbetween other activities.
- Discussion Boards (DBs) are a useful addition to classroom teaching as it extends student-tutor interactions beyond the timetable.
- DBs provide students and tutors with time to structure and organise their thoughts, which will assist higher-level thinking.
- DBs supports distance and blended learning approaches. These are more likely to be in place at present, due to the pandemic.
- In using a DB, there is less pressure on students to 'perform', as opposed to a classroom setting. A DB will also decrease feelings of isolation amongst students . This will reduce anxieties, increase feeling of belonging, and support positive mental health.
- Integrating an DB will increase levels of interaction in course content, which will subsequently improve learning outcomes.

CONSIDERATIONS

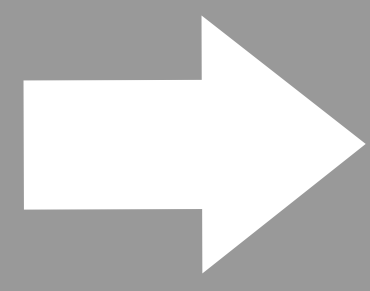
- Don't be discouraged by any apparent lack of 'activity' within a discussion as it may be 'unseen'. Students will spend time reading, or 'listening' to posts.
- A DB will be beneficial, even if the tutor can only invest minimal time.

(Topçu, 2008, Cheng et al., 2011, Rovai, 2007 & Wise et al. 2013))

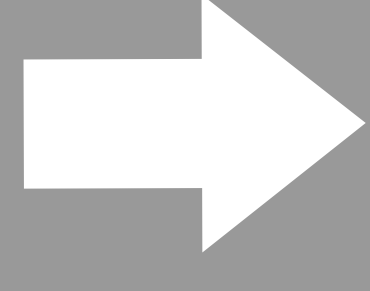
PRACTICAL TIPS



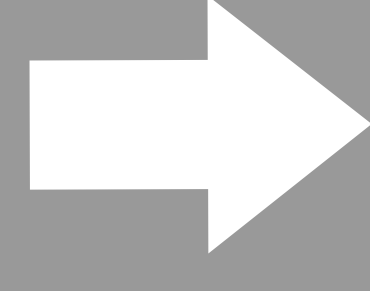
Before you start your DB, you may need to build some structure to enable students and tutors to interact effectively. Is it easy to identify the subject of the discussion board? How should the students ask their questions? Do they need to identify themselves as a student or tutor? Who should participate, and how? Can they include links to further reading? Can they 'like' other student's questions?



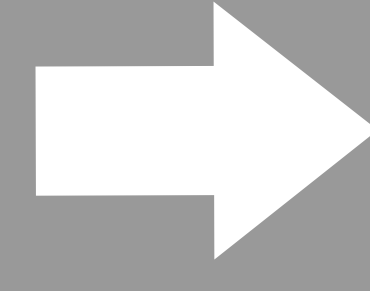
Create an online presence by being active and engaged in the DB - particularly early on. You could do this by asking open questions, related to the topic, which might initiate a discussion. You should clearly identify who you are, how, and how often you will engage in discussion.



If you have a large group of students, invest time in structuring smaller groups to support and foster a sense of community. You could use existing small group teaching structures, such as tutorial or practical groups.



You should explain to the students why online discussions are being used, within the context of the teaching and learning activities. It may be helpful to clarify that their main aim is to support the students to develop collaborative knowledge construction, which will help them to develop their own understanding.

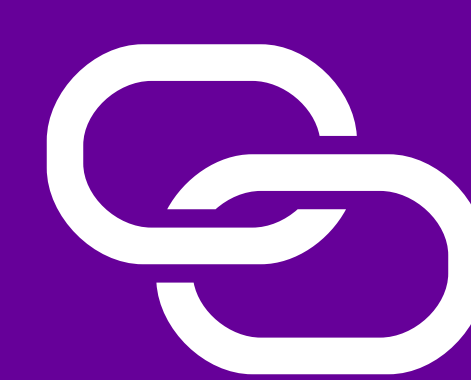


DBs need to be facilitated by the tutor, who should provide the students with feedback, such as: How to appropriately engage in discussions; answers to subject specific questions; stimulus to support the development of critical thinking skills with higher-level knowledge construction; signposting to appropriate sources of information. Once a solid foundation for discussion has been established, students will be able to direct themselves and there should be less need for facilitation.

(Bain, 2011, Douglas et al., 2020, Hew and Cheung, 2011, Guo et al., 2014 & Hall, 2015)



There are many platforms you can use to create DBs. For more information and guidance, contact your eLearning Team.



FURTHER INFORMATION

[Reference List](#)



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