

Facilitating Learning in Synchronous Environments

Facilitator's Guide

Course Structure

This 3-credit, five-unit course is designed to run ten weeks. A lesson plan for each unit is downloadable from the course site. Each lesson plan provides a breakdown of the instructor and student activities, as well as the resources that should be used to support the unit. Students work individually, in pairs, and teams of three or four on activities and assignments. Fifty percent of the assessment occurs in the final two units of the course, the course was designed this way to provide students time to build a repertoire of skills before they are assessed in the application of those skills. Consider providing prompts to the students (via the instructor bulletin forum or other communication channel) on the assignment timing, as well as a reminder to start work on the culminating assignments in units 3 & 4.

Units

Each unit includes a text introduction. You are encouraged to replace these with your own audio or video recordings, as media has been shown to improve faculty presence in online courses (Borup, et. al. 2012). Consider doing an end of unit wrap-up—either synchronous meetings with the class or as a stand-alone video or audio recording, include a summary of the unit content and how students will use their learning in subsequent units and assignments This will be particularly useful for end of unit 3 as students plan for their synchronous session

There are several synchronous plenary session discussions planned during the course – it is suggested that you use a variety of tools for these sessions, to model effective use of synchronous technology. Some options to consider: Blackboard Collaborate, Adobe Connect, BlueJeans, google+hangout, etc. Units also include asynchronous class and team discussions. Early in the course, you should explain how the synchronous plenary sessions and asynchronous forums are connected.

Activities and Assignments

There are five activities and four assessed assignments in the course, with an assessment rubric for each assignment. The rubrics are aligned with the course learning outcomes and assessment criteria, providing three levels of performance descriptors. You are encouraged to share these with the students before they undertake the assignments, and to use them when assessing student work. The activities and assignments in units 1, 2 and 3 have been designed to scaffold student learning, preparing them for the culminating assignments in units 4 & 5. You will need to determine how teams will be formed in the course for the team assignments. Suggest a mix of assigned teams and self-selected teams be used.

Social Bookmarking & Social Media

The course designers have chosen to use diigo social bookmarking to link to online collaboration tools in unit 3. You are encouraged to use your own choice of social media tools (e.g., diigo, Pinterest, Learnist, Pearltrees, etc.) and are welcome to re-tag the diigo resources available here: <https://groups.diigo.com/group/sync-environments-tools>. You are also encouraged to use twitter to communicate with the class and have them use it to share links, ideas, resources, etc. Recommend adding a twitter feed widget to the front page of the course.

Course Resources

Consider making readings and resources are made available for pre-reading before the course formally opens. This is particularly important for unit 1, which has a significant list of readings and video resources. The majority of the required readings are available on the open web at no cost. However, there are three articles linked to the Royal Roads University library database under subscription. If you have a Royal Roads account you will be able to authenticate and access the article. If not, you will need to find an alternate source or remove these links from the course.

Unit 1

Olaniran, B.A. (2006). [Applying synchronous computer-mediated communication into course design](#). Campus-Wide Information Systems, 23(3), 210-220. doi:10.1108/10650740610674210.

Unit 2

Hrastinski, S., Keller, C. & Carlsson, S.A. (2010). [Design exemplars for synchronous e-learning: a design theory approach](#). Computers & Education, 55 (2), 652-662.

Unit 5

Smyth, R. (2011). [Enhancing learner-learner interaction using video communications in higher education: Implications from theorising about a new model](#). British Journal of Educational Technology, 42(1), 113-127. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8535.2009.00990.x

Bibliography

Borup, J., West, R. E., & Graham, C. R. (2012). Improving online social presence through asynchronous video, The Internet and Higher Education, Volume 15, Issue 3, June 2012, Pages 195-203.

