

Online Facilitation – Skills & Strategies

Compiled by Beth Cougler Blom, March 2016

Building and Maintaining Course Community

- Welcoming learners
- Aiding learners to navigate the course site, materials & resources
- Developing own technical skills so that course technology is not a barrier to your management of the course
- Showing own humanity and encouraging same in learners; using conversational tone
- Being open to also being a learner and sharing own moments of learning
- Creating a shared learning environment
- Communicating with learners, often in multiple ways (course site, email, phone, Skype etc.)
- Encouraging learner-to-learner exchanges and support
- Encouraging and respecting the contributions of diverse learners and diverse perspectives
- Fostering a safe and supportive learning environment with and for learners
- Using humour
- Trying new things and taking risks
- Maintaining a positive attitude toward conflict

Supporting Adult Learning

- Maintaining focus on course outcomes throughout all course activities and discussions; keeping group on task and topic
- Modelling effective discussion strategies
- Demonstrating effective questioning techniques
- Encouraging sharing of learners' unique experiences
- Using varying activities and communication strategies
- Creating opportunities to summarize learning
- Weaving ideas from different discussion threads together
- Challenging the status quo; asking tough questions
- Using storytelling to engage learners and to share from own experience
- Seeking out new content resources to add based on group's interest
- Bringing in outside supporting people resources as required

Time Management & Availability to Learners

- Using own time effectively
- Maintaining regular and visible presence to learners across the duration of a course
- Being clear about how and when learners can reach you
- Responding to learners in a timely manner

Encouraging and Assessing Participation

- Reaching out to learners at the outset of a course
- Assisting in preparing the learners for what it means to learn online and online learning strategies
- Being clear about expectations around, and showing examples of, excellent participation to learners
- Considering the relationship between own participation and participation of learners, in terms of frequency and numbers of posts (balance between showing visible presence and not overshadowing the conversation)
- Using strategies to build relationships with learners so that learners feel your presence
- Using strategies to engage low participators
- Using strategies throughout the course to track and assess learner participation
- Providing formative feedback to learners about their participation as well as providing guidance and opportunities for learners to self-assess their own participation
- Observing learner activities; watching for patterns and gaps
- Recognizing contributions by learners
- Reaching out offline, when required, to learners throughout a course

Reflecting and Closing Community

- Encouraging learners' reflection
- Celebrating learners' achievements
- Reflecting back on own course experience
- Sharing own learning and goals for future
- Thanking the course community
- Seeking opportunities to further develop own practice
- Inviting formative and summative feedback from learners on course and self