

Guidelines for Effective Online Asynchronous Instruction

Recent shifts related to online instruction have created challenges for instructors and learners. Course evaluations, coupled with informal feedback from students, revealed both affordances and areas for improvement that were supported in a review of current literature on the topic. Students in online asynchronous courses, especially, expressed expectations for greater engagement and more opportunities for making connections with peers and with faculty. These guidelines are intended to support instructors in building community and promoting student engagement in asynchronous virtual spaces.

1. Implement introductory assignments that prioritize student and instructor identities

Asynchronous virtual environments can have a disembodied effect on participants, allowing identities to remain obscured. To demonstrate the importance of knowing one another, instructors should include introductory assignments wherein students share key information about themselves, as well as images or videoclips that put faces to names. A model of the assignment also serves to “humanize” the instructor.

2. Establish and utilize peer groups

Semester-long groupings of 3-5 students encourage deep, ongoing interactions around content and allow opportunities for students to develop relationships.

3. Set up Student Engagement Hours

While they might be scheduled at the same time, **weekly Student Engagement Hours** are distinct from office hours in that they are designed to attend to students’ social and emotional needs by connecting informally with instructors and peers.

4. Create regular opportunities for students to monitor learning

Self-checking helps keep students engaged and can provide useful feedback for the instructor. Some strategies include having students submit exit tickets after completing modules or units, or sharing brief reflections with peer group members and then summarizing group responses for the instructor.

5. Value and assess engagement

Meaningful learning requires engagement and participation. Assignments and assessments should be designed to emphasize and evaluate student engagement with content and with one another.

For more information on implementing any of these strategies, please reach out to Dr. Julie Gorlewski, Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Teacher Education.