EBSN
Professional
Development
Series

In-course Communication

Tips

SUPPORTING DOCUMENT TO PILOT COURSES

0. Overall Communication Plan: 6 Key Emails	
T - 1 Week	A week before the course starts is a great opportunity to email the learners to introduce yourself, give a brief overview of the course and explain expectations. It allows the learners to 'meet' their new tutor and boosts social presence
Week 1	The start of week 1 is when the **next email** should be sent. This is primarily to again welcome the learners and explain the week's content to them in brief. This email can also contain dates for the live webinar sessions if known
Week 2	The start of week 2 is when the **3rd email** should be sent. This is primarily to give a brief summary of the previous week's content and to explain the current week's content to them in brief. Checking in on the learners is also important in this email as is reinforcing the fact that they can reach out to you if required.
Week 3	The start of week 3 is when the **4th email** should be sent. This is primarily to give a brief summary of the previous week's content and to explain the current week's content to them in brief. Checking in on the learners is also important in this email as is reinforcing the fact that they can reach out to you if required.
Week 4	The start of week 4 is when the **5th email** should be sent. This is primarily to give a brief summary of the previous week's content and to explain the current week's content to them in brief. Checking in on the learners is also important in this email as is reinforcing the fact that they can reach out to you if required. This email can also contain dates for the live webinar sessions. Importantly, this email should direct the learners to the End of Course Evaluation which will come available in week 4.
	At the end of week 4 it is good practice to send a **final email** to the students thanking them for their participation and wishing them good luck in their future endeavours

1. In the Beginning to Welcome your Students

1.1. Welcoming email

The welcoming email is very important to get things started. You can use it not only to inform students about general practicalities of the course, but also to motivate, start building a learning community and show that you're there to guide, give feedback, support and answer any question. This helps build confidence, a crucial element when fostering the development of an online learning community. It's important to send this message using their private email addresses, to be sure they will receive the message.

1.2. Introductory video (Optional)

You can also reinforce your welcoming message by creating an introductory video. It could be a general course and teacher introduction or something more specific, like for example an invitation to participate in the Forum.

2. During the Course to Activate and Provide Support

2.1. Learning activity explanation

All learning activities should have clear textual instructions in order to avoid student's questions regarding what to do. In this way, creating additional content can benefit, especially when the task is rather complex. A video explaining the assignment can be produced, or even a live session for Q&A using Zoom might work, although the forum might also be used for this purpose.

You can also produce extra content on demand, like for example when students are struggling with an exercise and need your explanation. This strategy attends student's specific needs, while sharing with them the way you think regarding a certain problem/exercise.

2.2. In-course communication (motivational announcement/message in the forum)

These messages are simple to produce by the teacher and can have a big impact on students' motivation and participation. They can be seen as the most common form of daily communication with your students. To give you an idea of when to use which tool, the forum should be seen as the heart of the online course, where regular communication occurs, while the announcement should be used to launch activities, as a reminder and sometimes in specific moments where you, as an e-moderator, feel that it's important (e.g. due to general student absence in the course).

2.3. Spark

As we know from the MOOC design, the spark is an element to use in the beginning of a unit or learning activity, to trigger your students to study a certain topic, showing its relevance and/or real-world application. It could be an image or a quote, a video or even a question to rise discussion in the forum. Although it's common to think of the spark in the course design process, it's a great example of how to engage online students with your content. Try to leverage the spark in subsequent discussions if possible.

3. In the end, to give feedback and wrap-up

3.1. Feedback video/text

At the end of the week you should provide feedback to participants regarding the most important aspects discussed or realized in the course. You can provide a summary, general feedback to all group, the main takeaways or maybe even explain a difficult concept, question or exercise where many students struggled. This can be done using the Forum (e.g. when the activity was based on discussion) or by video

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