WGU Connect Moderator Expectations

and Best Practices

# PURPOSE STATEMENT

WGU Connect is a Student Community platform designed to foster connections, support, and collaboration. Users are encouraged to engage with peers, access academic and career resources, and build meaningful relationships throughout your WGU journey. This notice is intended to guide the use of WGU Connect in order to achieve these goals.

We expect all users to observe the community rules of conduct set forth in this notice.

By using or accessing WGU Connect as a registered user, you are agreeing to abide by the conditions outlined in this *WGU Connect Notic*e, which may be updated from time to time. Such modifications shall be effective upon posting. Therefore, we recommend you review these terms each time you access WGU Connect.

# TERMS OF USE

### Conduct

Users of the WGU Community may not post or transmit:

1. content that discloses private or personal matters concerning any person or sensitive personal information, including, but not limited to, phone numbers, emails, social security numbers, addresses, and information protected under FERPA;
2. off-topic comments not related to WGU activities;
3. advertising, promotional materials, or other forms of solicitation including chain letters, pyramid schemes, class action suits, or charitable appeals.
4. any file or link to a file that contains viruses, corrupted files, "Trojan Horses," or any other contaminating or destructive features that may damage someone else's computer;
5. duplicate posts, spam messages, or posts repeated excessively on one or more boards;
6. messages designed to evade profanity or other filters;
7. content that violates the [WGU Community User Guidelines](https://cm.wgu.edu/t5/WGU-Student-Policy-Handbook/WGU-Community-Guidelines/ta-p/1668), [WGU's Student Policy Handbook](https://cm.wgu.edu/t5/WGU-Student-Policy-Handbook/tkb-p/studentpolicyhandbook) (including the [Code of Student Conduct](https://cm.wgu.edu/t5/WGU-Student-Policy-Handbook/Student-Code-of-Conduct/ta-p/129)), or [WGU's Privacy Policy](https://www.wgu.edu/privacy/archived-privacy-policy.html); or anything that interferes in any way with the operations in the forum or with a fellow user's message box, including but not limited to mail or "post" bombing, news bombing, other flooding techniques, deliberate attempts to overload a system and broadcast attacks, or attempts to avoid messaging blocking.

Community moderators will monitor the WGU Community to ensure compliance with this notice and to provide assistance when necessary. WGU Community moderators may at any time and without prior notice remove any posted message or thread, delete words that violate these guidelines from posted messages, or report your conduct to the Student Conduct Administrator. If you recognize any violation of these guidelines, please notify us directly at: [wguconnect@wgu.edu](mailto:wguconnect@wgu.edu)

### Privacy

Your privacy is very important to us. WGU, as the manager of the WGU Community, will protect your information in accordance with the requirements of Family Education Rights and Privacy Acts of 1974 (FERPA) and as described in our Privacy Policy. However, you are responsible your use of the WGU Community and for any content you post, submit, share or display through the WGU Community. All content you post may be available to other users of the WGU Community. However, it's important to note that user's of the WGU Community are not bound by FERPA, and therefore do not have an obligation to keep information you share confidential. With this in mind, please do not share sensitive and/or personal information, as WGU cannot guarantee the privacy or confidentiality of any such information.

### Unauthorized Use

You are responsible for all activity originating from your account that is reasonably under your control. It is your obligation to keep your login information secure and confidential. If your user identification or password(s) is compromised, or if you become aware of any unauthorized use of your account or other breach of security, you are responsible for promptly notifying us. You can notify us by sending an email to [wguconnect@wgu.edu](mailto:wguconnect@wgu.edu)

For the full User Terms of Service, visit [WGU USER TERMS OF SERVICE (Student Handbook)](https://cm.wgu.edu/t5/user/UserTermsOfServicePage)

# THE MODERATOR ROLE

As a moderator, you help ensure a safe, vibrant, student-driven community focused on inclusion, engagement, and belonging. Your timeliness and dedication play a vital role in the success of these community spaces.

**Courses are required to have 3 moderators from the instructional faculty per course. All instructional faculty moderators should anticipate spending at least 2 hours per week moderating course communities.**

# DAILY DUTIES

Moderators must be committed to facilitating and moderating community discussion. If your community has a schedule, it is important to commit to that time and day and let your administrator know if you are unavailable for your assigned time.

If you are asked to contribute posts, you must adhere to the guidelines provided by the WGUC best practices and your administrator. If you have any circumstances that may prevent you from fulfilling your duties, please get in touch with your administrator immediately.

Daily Duties:

1. Log into WGU Connect and community groups daily or on your scheduled days
2. Review student posts

* Correct inaccurate student posts immediately and provide reliable, accurate WGU resources when applicable.
* Allow 24 hours for students to respond to general discussion posts. This ensures the WGU communities remain a student-led space
* Respond to posts with positivity, professionalism, clarity, and encouragement.
* Flag or identify and escalate inappropriate posts and contact your administrator/moderator team

1. Plan for one scheduled moderator post per week. For Example: One moderator in the Alumni group will post 1 time in the community for the week. No other moderators will post.

* Ideally, there should be no more than 2 moderator posts per week

# MODERATION AND REPORTING

Moderators are an integral part of keeping a community safe and welcoming, as well as keeping conversations on track and within general community guidelines. Moderators should review conversations and ensure that discussions stay on topic, maintain respect, and do not violate university policies.

Moderators should correct misinformation and respect intellectual property and copyrighted material. It is important to do so in a way that is respectful and without judgment.

Moderators are instructed to follow the WGU Community guidelines below for inappropriate posts. If you have any questions or a post is unclear to you, contact your administrator.

Users can report posts using the flag indicator. Work with your moderator team and administrator to appropriately review and respond to flagged posts.

1. Inappropriate, spam, or non-substantive posts, including sales/marketing offers, will be removed. Posts that contain illegal or copyrighted content will be removed. Posts or replies that contain hostile, threatening, offensive, defamatory, bigoted, or exclusionary language, including rants, will be removed.
2. Posts that include protected exam content, including examples of performance tasks, will be removed. Posts advertising or advocating for the use of "pay-to-pass" services (such as purchasing pre-written tasks) will be removed.
3. The WGU Community Moderator will contact individual participants whose posts or replies violate any of the community rules. The post may then be removed from the community, and the matter may be referred for disciplinary action in accordance with the WGU Student Code of Conduct and individuals (students and non-students) may be banned from the community.
4. Subsequent violations of these rules may lead to restricted participation in the community or escalated disciplinary action.
5. Individual participants who feel their post was removed inappropriately may contact the Communications and Communities team with an appeal. The individual will receive a response regarding their appeal within two business days.

For more, visit [WGU Community Guidelines in the WGU Student Handbook.](https://cm.wgu.edu/t5/WGU-Student-Policy-Handbook/WGU-Community-Guidelines/ta-p/1668)

# DISCUSSION POST BEST PRACTICES

When creating a post for a student-led digital community space, moderators or facilitators should consider the following best practices:

**Inclusivity and Respect**

**Diversity Consideration:** Be mindful of the diverse backgrounds and perspectives within the community. Avoid content that may be offensive or exclusive, and actively encourage a wide range of voices and experiences. Encourage healthy debate by modeling respect, allowing students to clarify and provide evidence for their views.

**Establish Clear Guidelines:** Set clear expectations for respectful communication. Intervene promptly if any content violates these guidelines, ensuring a safe and inclusive space for all members.

* [WGU Community Guidelines (Student Handbook)](https://cm.wgu.edu/t5/WGU-Student-Policy-Handbook/WGU-Community-Guidelines/ta-p/1668" \t "_blank)
* [WGU Community User Terms of Service (Student Handbook)](https://cm.wgu.edu/t5/user/UserTermsOfServicePage)

**Relevance and Value**

**Alignment with Purpose Statement:** Ensure each post directly relates to the community's purpose and objectives. Content should contribute meaningfully to the ongoing discussions or activities.

**Provide Substance:** Offer valuable information, insights, or resources in your posts. Aim to enrich the community's collective knowledge and provide members with content that is genuinely helpful or thought-provoking.

**Engagement with a Call to Action**

**Interactive Elements:** Craft posts that go beyond information-sharing. Include questions, polls, or prompts that encourage members to participate actively.

**Call to Action:** Explicitly invite members to share their thoughts, experiences, or projects related to the post. For example, "Share your insights in the comments!" or "Tell us about your experiences with [topic]."

**Tone and Mood**

**Helpful and Positive:** Ensure that your responses are positive and helpful, acknowledging student responses with a positive tone and mood.

**Professionalism:** Users should treat WGU communities as professional spaces. It is important for moderators to model professionalism in their posts and responses.

**Privacy and Academic Authenticity**

**User Privacy:** Users should not share anything about themselves that they would not share openly in public. Be careful to respect the privacy of all users and address individual privacy concerns appropriately.

**Academic Authenticity:** Users are expected to share tips for success, but posts that contain exam questions, examples of performance task submissions, or advocacy of “pay to pass” services or websites should be removed and reported.

**Equity and Accessibility**

**Equity:** Student participation in the community experience is *optional*, so moderators (especially course moderators) will want to ensure they are not posting special content in this space. **Courses may include materials found in the Course of Study but should not include direct links to learning resources.**

**Accessibility:** Posts should adhere to WGU Accessibility guidelines. Basic guidelines are discussed in the material below. For more information, see your community administrator.

# ADDING DISCUSSION CONTENT

As a subject matter expert in your group, providing additional content to your community adds a great deal of value to the community experience.  By posting additional content, you are calling attention to resources and ideas that students might not otherwise have encountered.

Consider the following elements regarding content creation:

* Will the content generate interest and conversation among group members?
* Is the content evergreen? Please note, this is not mandatory but content that is no longer relevant should be updated or deleted to ensure all posted information is accurate.
* Does the content provide information or resources that will help students?
* Is the content aligned with the community's purpose?

### Types of Content

Listed below are some of the main types of content that can be used in a community group discussion.

**Welcoming:** These posts are helpful to get a community group going.  Welcoming  posts give users a first impression of the group and is a great opportunity to restate the community purpose, values and rules.

**Storytelling**: Share or ask for stories that emphasize the student journey.  This can include interviews with WGU staff and students, graduation stories and alumni to name a few.  Stories help build emotional connection and understanding in the community.

**Questions:** Questions that call for a response from users encourage engaged dialogue and sharing ideas.  Users have the opportunity to share their knowledge and experiences with one another.  Encouraging students to post their own questions can create peer to peer engagement.

**Education:** Helps users learn, create awareness around WGU resources and think about concepts in new ways

### Content Examples

The following messages are examples of the different types of content.

**Welcoming**:

Welcome to the Night Owl 101 Community!  Please introduce yourself to the group!

Here are some things to share:

* Your program
* Your state
* Current interests
* What are you most excited about as you get started at WGU?

**Storytelling:**

Hi all! It's a new term (yesterday) for me, and all of you, too! As I was sitting down to register for my courses and get things organized, I evaluated my goals and put a lot of thought into what I want to conquer in this term. 6 months feels like an eternity, but as someone who's starting their 4th term, I can say that it goes by in the blink of an eye!

So, my first goal for this term is to be intentional about the DAYS that I focus on school. I want to set specific days that are free from work and school obligations so that when I'm "off", I am truly able to unwind and relax.

Does anyone else want to share?

**Questions:**

Happy Monday everyone! I am going to be changing my study space this week. Does anyone have any good recommendations for maximizing a space for studying? Tips on keeping the kids and pets away or organizational tips to making adjusting the space for OA's easier?

**Education:**

Career development is a crucial aspect for you as you pursue your college degree.

We want to give you the tools and resources to help guide you as you navigate the professional world.

Take a look at some of our key resources:

1. Career Coaching
2. Resume Development
3. Weekly Workshops
4. Employer Connections

Check out the Career and Professional Development Center today and share your favorite resource below!

### When to Post Content to the Discussion

Posting content to the discussion feed can keep the flow of engagement from students going! Consider the following components when deciding when to post:

**Peak Activity Times**

Posting content during times when users are logged in to the community is an effective way to gain engagement.  Users can respond to your post in real-time and fresh content during peak times can maintain discussion feed activity.

**Time Sensitive Information**

When a post is time-sensitive, it is important to add content that is relevant to the time-sensitive event.  An example of this can be a post centered around a specific holiday. If the post is too early or too late, the relevance of the post is lost.

**Driving Urgency Behind a Call to Action**

A slightly different situation when a post is time-sensitive is when users need a sufficient window to interact with a post.  An example of this is asking users to contribute topics to an upcoming live event.  A sufficient window of time would be needed for students to add responses.  Posting this type of content too early might diffuse the urgency of user engagement while posting it too close to the event would not give users sufficient time to fulfill your call to action.

# ACCESSIBILITY

The Importance of Accessibility

Student communities are a place to bring WGU students together in a way that is both inclusive and accessible.  It is crucial to incorporate elements of accessibility in the platform.  In this section, we will discuss the elements of accessibility and how they can be implemented by WGU connect moderators.

What is Digital Accessibility?

Digital accessibility refers to the design and development of digital content, platforms, and technologies in a way that ensures equal access and usability for all individuals, including those with disabilities. It aims to remove barriers that may prevent people with disabilities from accessing, interacting with, and benefiting from digital resources and technologies.

Key Aspects of Digital Accessibility

Perceivable: Digital content should be presented in ways that can be perceived by all users, regardless of their sensory abilities. This includes providing alternatives for non-text content such as images, videos, and audio.

Operable: Users should be able to navigate and interact with digital interfaces using a variety of input methods, including keyboards, mice, touchscreens, and assistive technologies like screen readers and voice commands.

Understandable: Content should be presented clearly and understandably, with consistent navigation, predictable interactions, and understandable language. Users should be able to easily comprehend the structure, purpose, and functionality of digital elements.

Robust: Digital content and technologies should be compatible with a wide range of assistive devices, browsers, and platforms. They should adhere to established standards and guidelines to ensure interoperability and future compatibility.

Accessibility by Category

The following items further define accessibility components by each category.

**Images**

Images are used in posts as well as events that contain a presentation.  Please consider the following recommendations when using images in the community:

* In posts and presentations, images should be relevant to the topic.
* Images should have alternative text to describe them whenever possible or be marked as decorative if they do not add to the content of the post or presentation.
* Images should be free of writing, whenever possible.
* When using images in presentations such as an event, briefly describe the image to the audience.

**Written Comments**

Written comments are used in our student forums and community feeds as original posts as well as replies.  These recommendations apply to all areas of the community where there is written text.

* Written comments should be easy to understand.  Stick to an 8th-grade reading level or lower.
* Avoid jargon and unnecessary technical language.
* Avoid unrelated metaphors, idioms, or culturally specific examples.
* Define unusual words and acronyms.

**Presentation Slides**

Presentation slides are often used in events to guide and illustrate the topic.  These can also be linked as resources in forum posts.  Please utilize these recommendations when sharing presentations in the community.

* Include white space.
* Use headers.
* Use lists.
* Have simple colors and fonts.

When hosting a community event where slides will be shown, please contact the main WGUC administrator of your community for further accessibility guidance.

Things to Avoid

When composing a post or reply, please avoid the following elements to help maximize accessibility.

* Avoid using all capital lettering.
* Avoid using large blocks of italicized or bolded text.
* Avoid underlining words for emphasis.

How to Respond if a Student Chooses to Self-Disclose an Accessibility Issue

WGU respects students’ privacy and maintains confidentiality regarding their disability status and accommodation needs. Students are free to self-disclose their accessibility information at their discretion.  If a student self-discloses this information within WGU Connect, moderators should not edit or delete the content.  If a student is seeking assistance with an accessibility concern, moderators can reply to the student with the appropriate resources including referring them to the WGU Accessibility team (accessibility@wgu.edu) and the Student Handbook article regarding digital accessibility: [WGU Digital Accessibility Policy - Academics(opens in a new tab)](https://cm.wgu.edu/t5/WGU-Student-Policy-Handbook/Digital-Accessibility-Policy-Academics/ta-p/42611).

# DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION

A diverse online community has a wide variety of people with different backgrounds and interests. The more varied the members, the better!

Diverse communities include differing perspectives. This means not only diversity in ethnicity but also in ideas, thoughts, values, etc. Perspective can vary from person to person which makes for an interesting discussion when combined into one group or forum. Diverse online community members will have different perspectives on the same topic, and this can lead to more enlightening discussions.

WGU DE&I Vision Statement

WGU is endeavoring to be the most inclusive university in the world. We look to lead the national conversation around diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I). Most importantly, we endeavor to achieve this by collectively living our cultural beliefs to be the most innovative, student-centric university.

Alignment with WGU's Missions and Key Results

Our vision statement is intentionally bold, inspiring necessary change across the university to meet the needs of employees and ultimately our students and to realize our key results. The statement underscores our mission, vision, cultural beliefs, and key results. It is designed to help individuals internally and externally better understand and align themselves with the WGU mission. This statement answers why we are committed “to changing lives for the better by creating pathways to opportunity.”

Fostering DE&I in our Student Community

When engaging in the WGU Student Community, be mindful that our discussion topics should include all of our students.  Asking them to share their thoughts on topics is key to encouraging varying perspectives.  We can all learn from one another and will not always agree.   Encouraging respectful discourse in WGU Forums and feeds and asking for feedback from our students can help us build a community where everyone feels included and comfortable connecting and sharing.

For additional resources, please visit the [WGU DE&I Intranet Site](https://westerngovernorsuniversity.sharepoint.com/sites/DEI) (opens in a new tab). Non-faculty moderators can contact their main community administrator.

# STUDENT CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS

Our students are expected to review and abide by the WGU Student Code of Conduct as well as the WGU Community Guidelines. As stated in the Student Handbook:

Any Student found to have committed or to have attempted to commit the following misconduct may be subject to the disciplinary sanctions outlined in this Code of Conduct: Unprofessional conduct, including Harassment, threatening, bullying or verbal abuse of any member of the WGU Community by any means (conduct, speech, written notes, electronic communication, etc.), or use of threats, profanity, and demeaning or intimidating comments; Failure to conform to the standards of professional conduct outlined in the [Teachers College Professional Disposition and Ethics](https://cm.wgu.edu/t5/Field-Experiences-Handbook/Professional-Disposition-and-Ethics/ta-p/109), the [Leavitt School of Health Code of Professional Conduct and Dispositions](https://cm.wgu.edu/t5/Nursing-Student-Handbook/Leavitt-School-of-Health-Code-of-Professional-Conduct-and/ta-p/103), and similar standards of professional conduct associated with other WGU field experience programs.

Students may view the complete Code of Conduct, the WGU Community Guidelines, and the WGU Community User Terms of Service using the links below.

[WGU Student Code of Conduct(opens in a new tab)](https://cm.wgu.edu/t5/WGU-Student-Policy-Handbook/Student-Code-of-Conduct/ta-p/129)

[WGU Community Guidelines (opens in a new tab)](https://cm.wgu.edu/t5/WGU-Student-Policy-Handbook/WGU-Community-Guidelines/ta-p/1668)

[WGU Community User Terms of Service (opens in a new tab)](https://cm.wgu.edu/t5/user/UserTermsOfServicePage)

# STUDENT WELLBEING INFORMATION

WGU is dedicated to optimizing support for student wellbeing across the continuum of each student's academic journey at WGU, in service to students in all WGU Programs, knowing there is a direct connection to student wellbeing and academic success.

Early identification and proactive support for students facing wellbeing barriers translate into proactive removal of barriers to their academic success and significantly improve academic outcomes!

WGU Student Wellbeing Services provides free resources aimed at helping students navigate personal, family, and financial challenges that can affect their academic progress and other responsibilities.

What to do When There is a Student Wellbeing Concern:

Our students lead full and complex lives.  WGU offers wellbeing resources to assist students along the continuum of their academic journey with all their wellbeing needs.   Students can visit the [Student Wellbeing Services(opens in a new tab)](https://westerngovernorsuniversity.sharepoint.com/sites/StudentWellbeingServices/SitePages/Crisis-Support.aspx) page for full details of the resources listed below.  This link can also be given to students directly.

Student Wellbeing Services offers the following resources:

* Mental health counseling and wellbeing services
* Crisis support 24/7
* Connections to local resources
* Peer-to-peer support community

**If students post about experiencing self-harm, suicidal thoughts, abuse/violence, or any threat to their wellbeing, please use the**[**Crisis Decision Tree**](https://wgu.service-now.com/sp?id=kb_article_view&sysparm_article=KB0022622)**for Faculty and Staff (opens in a new tab) for immediate support and to determine the next best steps for student concerns related to wellbeing. If you are a non-faculty moderator, please share the information on Student Wellbeing Services below and contact your main community administrator.**

**Student Wellbeing services website and dedicated access line:**

[**Student Wellbeing Services**](https://westerngovernorsuniversity.sharepoint.com/sites/StudentWellbeingServices?xsdata=&sdata=NUhjRHNld3lBSHJyd0U1LzcxUkk1dXBKODdxSjh3VEpmdmowY3FyOWJXcz0%3D&ovuser=cfa792cf-7768-4341-8857-81754c2afa1f%2Cmjungbauer%40wgu.edu)

1-877-824-0555 Call. Chat. Anytime. Anywhere.

Free Student Mental Health, Wellbeing, and Crisis Support 24/7