



Course Author Handbook

Assignments and Assessments



Assessments, Assignments, Content: Meetings and Tasks

Formal Assessments

- Create formal assessments and update syllabus.
 - Midterm and final course reviews
 - Rubrics
 - Alignment to learning outcomes
- Just-in-time training on tools.
 - Grading
 - proctoring

Learning Engagement

- Create engagement/learning activities/assignments/interaction and update syllabus.
 - How to create effective questions to evoke thoughtful discussions
 - Rubrics for learning activities
 - Alignment to learning outcomes
- Just in time training on tools

Content Presentation

- Create content presentation and update syllabus.
 - Verify alignment to learning outcomes.
 - Check for potential copyright challenges on various resources.
 - Find educational resources for online.
- Just –in-time training on tools.
 - Panopto (Learn it, create one, get feedback, then create all the others.)

Interaction

Online courses have three types of interaction: interaction with the **content**, interaction with **peers**, and interaction with the **instructor** (Moore, 1989). Research shows that successful online courses must include at least one of these interaction types at a rich and rigorous level (Anderson, 2003; Russell, Kleiman, Carey, & Douglas, 2009).

What Type of Interaction Does My Course Need?

See the Bulletin for full definitions of these types of courses:

- **Interactive online** (mainly asynchronous) **must** have strong interaction with the instructor (Faculty Presence Standard) and with peers (Learning Community Standard). This is mainly achieved via discussion forums and other tools that encourage peer interaction. Strong interaction with the content is also encouraged.

- **Interactive online courses** (mainly synchronously), with regularly scheduled live videoconferences or phone conferences, must have strong interaction with the instructor (Faculty Presence Standard) and with peers (Learning Community Standard). Depending on the design of the live sessions, peer interaction in discussion forums may also be necessary to achieve strong peer interaction. Strong interaction with the content is also encouraged.
- **Self-paced courses** must have rich interaction with the content and with the instructor (Faculty Presence Standard).

Regular and Substantive Interaction with the Instructor

At Andrews University, “regular and substantive interaction” with the teacher is essential to differentiate between self-paced (correspondence) courses and interactive online (distance education) courses. This is necessary to comply with federal regulations for financial aid.

Definitions

The Andrews University Online Quality Assurance Committee has defined “regular and substantive interaction” as teacher-led, meaningful, and beneficial interaction between the teacher and the students.

- “Regular” refers to the quantity of teacher-initiated interaction equivalent to what would occur in a face-to-face course.
- “Substantive” refers to the quality of teacher interaction that results in improved learning experiences. Substantive interaction includes but is not limited to the following:
 - Meaningful feedback – detailed explanations on student performance
 - Beneficial feedback – helps students understand how they perform and provides guidance for future improved performance.
 - Timely interaction – you specify reasonable times that students can expect responses to their inquiries or grading; includes interaction initiated by you.
- “Instructor” requires interaction with an instructor who has the qualifications to teach the course or with a qualified graduate student teaching under the direction of the qualified instructor, according to Andrews policy.

Auditable Examples

Because the federal financial aid auditors may review the course in LearningHub, the following minimum interactions must occur in LearningHub. Your Instructional Design Specialist or Instructional Facilitator is responsible for the internal Andrews audit of the interaction in the course.

For a semester-length interactive online course there must be a variety of regular and substantive interactions with students each week. Examples include, but are not limited to the following:

- discussion forums

- grading
- announcements or a weekly overview
- a notice of the date, time, and link for a scheduled Zoom conference; or the recording of the Zoom

For shorter courses, there must be a variety of regular and substantive interactions with students each week; for example:

- in an 8 week course, there should be at least four interactions per week
- in a 4 week course, there should be at least eight interactions per week

For blended face to face with online courses:

- There must be a variety of regular and substantive interactions with students each week that is not face to face.
- If the course is longer than 15 weeks, there should be the equivalent of minimum two interactions per week. i.e. if 30 weeks are online, there should be one interaction per week.

Your Instructional Design Specialist or Instructional Facilitator can assist you in designing the course to meet this requirement, keeping the credit hour definition in mind.

Instructional Tips

There are multiple ways to ensure regular and substantive interaction with you, the instructor.

Strategies include:

- Discussion forums – you are present: commenting, summarizing, asking questions, affirming
- Messages within the LMS
- Phone calls (documented by you)
- Posting in the news forum
- Posting a video announcement
- Grading
- Poodll response
- Video conference / Zoom meeting
- Email (documented by you)
- Social Media
- Statement / reminder of deadlines
- Office hours – making a time commitment for availability

Feedback that you initiate is a common way of providing substantive interaction. Meaningful, beneficial, and timely feedback includes but isn't limited to:

- Exemplary rubric for all major assessments that is graded using the rubric in LearningHub

- Explanations of why the student received a specific grade so the student understands how they can improve
- Correct answer in quizzes shown once the quiz is closed for the whole class
- Exams (before the final) give specific written feedback regarding student performance

Exceptions

Courses that meet these requirements but are not auditable in LearningHub must include an explanation document each semester the course is taught. We suggest placing it hidden from the students indented underneath the syllabus. Your Instructional Design Specialist or Instructional Facilitator may arrange with you a time to audit the interaction occurring outside LearningHub to ensure compliance.

At the graduate level, the amount of “regular and substantive interaction” may be significantly different depending on the design of the course.

Interaction with Peers

It is important to develop assignments that facilitate interaction between the instructor and students, as well as among the students themselves. In courses where there is little or no interaction, the students frequently complain that they feel like they did not “get anything” for their monetary investment; as such they feel like they could have just read all of this on their own and why did they need the faculty member? Examples of things that can facilitate these interactions are: Posting case studies requiring integration of the material that is being covered over that particular time period; posting discussion questions, audio-taping a Powerpoint lecture that the students listen to and then respond to in some fashion, etc.

These things are what helps our Andrews University interactive online courses be distinguished from online self-paced correspondence courses.

For these types of assignments, the students should be required to post a reply and have a percentage of their grade devoted to the both the quantity and the quality of their posts. The instructor needs to be an interactive, involved participant in these discussions and respond to the post—either responding after several posts have been made or responding appropriately to a select number of individual student posts. This shows the students that the instructor is actively involved in the course and is “listening” and critiquing what they have to say and creates a responsive atmosphere. It is important that during the duration of the course, the instructor personally responds to EVERY student at least 1-2 times.

Questions need to provoke critical thinking. A simple yes/no question or one that requires only a fact as an answer, is not sufficient for discussion that brings about critical thinking. A good question moves the student out of their own frame of reference to the author’s frame of reference. It provokes discussion and leads to more questions.

Develop a grading rubric of what is expected in terms of class participation for students to receive a passing grade. As is always the case, some students will do minimal work (i.e. post one sentence) if the expectations are not clearly outlined for what the instructor considers a quality

experience. Assign enough points to the discussions to “matter” if they do not put forth some effort. It is recommended to assign points to the introductions as well. A sample rubric is included in the Online Course Author Handbook, and our Instructional Design team can assist with adaptations. <https://www.andrews.edu/distance/dlit/online-course-development.html>

Discussion forums are the most common way to build learning community and create peer and instructor interaction. However, other methods of group work and collaboration such as pair videoconferences, collaborative work on a wiki, communication via Twitter are also ways to meet the Andrews University Learning Community standard for teaching online. Our Instructional Design team can assist you in selecting the tools and pedagogy best suited for your learning outcomes.

Additional Examples of Interaction with Peers

- Study buddy pairs
- Collaborative writing
- Collaborative project creation via a wiki
- Problem based activities
- Simulations
- Case study discussions
- Peer moderation

Interaction with the Content

Examples of Interaction with the Content

- Instructor videos with opportunities throughout to react, take notes, and think about the content
- Reflective activities
- Self-assessments
- Practice activities
- Reaction papers
- Animations
- Simulations
- Personal instructor voice within the content

Discussion Forum: Background in Online Courses

Discussion boards are the most customizable communication tool within Learning Hub. This tool can be used for a variety of teaching strategies that can meet six of the Andrews University Standards for Online Classes.

- Critical Thinking
- Student Reflection
- Faculty Presence
- Learning Community
- Stimulating Learning Experiences
- Assessment

The discussion board tool can be used in a variety of instructional formats.

Discussions	Case Studies	Faculty Office	Portraits
Role Plays	White Paper	Student Center	Interviews
Group Work	Analysis	Peer Review	Polling
Literature Circles	Class Introductions	Jigsaw Teaching	Debates

Four Mental Models of Bulletin Board Posting The following chart offers guidelines to discussion postings. The more to the right students are in posting, the higher quality of the discussions.

Mental Model	Posting	Questioning	Reflecting/Connecting	Dialoguing
Definition	Students post a message as if submitting an assignment - often repeating what has already been said - and don't respond to others.	Students ask questions but often they aren't connected with what others have said - students don't engender a response.	Students respond to what others have said – using their name or quoting them - sharing personal experience(s) and metaphor(s) to further explain their viewpoint.	Students are present in the discussion - listening, asking for clarification, sharing experiences, affirming others, and extending the conversation.

Based on S. Freed, "Metaphors and Reflective Dialogue Online" in New Horizons in Adult Education.

Types of Interactions

- *Initial Post:* A good first post increases students' scores by incorporating chapter readings, lectures, and their own carefully crafted thoughts about the case.
- *Shared Discussion:* Raise questions. Students demonstrate having done the course reading and read others' posts by generating solid questions about their posts. Students raise questions to generate dialog.
- *Disagree or Agree:* Talking to each other, comparing contrasting ideas and concepts.
- *Full Dialogue:* It generates thought and leads to the engagement of others and their ideas. This dialogue leads to fuller understanding of options and a broader, more comprehensive understanding of the case.

Note for Self-Paced Courses

In self-paced courses, we still use the discussion forum, but we call it a blog. It's less discussion, because the students in the course start at different times and progress at different paces. The instructor responds to students to encourage them, and students can read the posts of previous students in the class.

The most common format we have been using is to have students respond to more questions per blog, and not to require students to respond to each other.

A different idea would be to have a small number of forums that can be used at any point in the course. Students can interact with peers in the course, even if they are at different points in the class.

Discussion Forum: Planning Guide

1. *Instructional Strategy*
Decide how you will use the discussion forum. Role play? Peer Review? Small group discussion? Will you use the discussion forum mainly for learning community or for significant academic interaction? This will dictate the required nature of peer responses. Do they need to share experiences, cite academic sources, or both? Some academic content is difficult to discuss or do group work with; in this case, how do you provide for the "side conversations" that students have outside and around the classroom?
2. *Grading Policy*
What weight will the discussion forum have in your grading system? How will you grade students' participation? How frequently should they post? Do they have to initiate any discussions? When do the boards open and close?
3. *Student Interactions*
How will the students know how to interact? If using small groups, how will they find their group? Do they have to use certain formatting when referencing sources? Do they need to weave multiple students' replies into a cohesive summary or response?
4. *Assessment Rubric*
This rubric should clearly delineate points for specific types of interactions. Be sure to include information on frequency, quality, and the required nature of responses to peers.

Sample of Discussion Forum Requirements

Introduction for Students: In order to have meaningful discussions in which you are engaged, these guidelines will help you understand what it is you are supposed to do when participating in discussion forums. The idea of all this is to make you think critically, and apply what you are learning to real-life situations to help you learn.

Grading Standards

The rubric used to grade the weekly discussion questions is posted below. Each discussion question will be worth 50 points.

Student Participation Expectations

- When you post your answer to a discussion question, include examples and information that back up the statements you are making.
- Some discussion questions may ask you to apply what you've learned, in which case you will need to share examples from your experiences that pertain to the topic being discussed. When you answer the questions, be able to support your answer.
- Everyone is required to respond to at least two classmates' posts for each discussion question. Simply typing "I agree" is not a suitable response, and points will be deducted. You should try to engage further discussion by asking further questions of the person to whom you are responding.

Discussion Board Sample Grading Rubric					
Criteria	Exceptional	Very Good	Acceptable	Needs Improvement	No Submission
Frequency & Quantity	(10 points) 3 or more posts EACH week.	(8 points) At least 2 posts EACH week.	(7 points) At least 1 post EACH week.	(6 points) 1 post total or does not post in all weeks discussion.	(0 points) No Submission
Quality	(15 points) All posts use course terms and concepts accurately, focus on the topic, and show critical thinking.	(12 points) Majority of posts use course terms and concepts accurately, focus on the topic, and show critical thinking.	(10.5 points) Less than half of posts use course terms and concepts accurately, focus on the topic, and show critical thinking.	(9 points) No posts use course terms and concepts accurately, focus on the topic, or show critical thinking. Or, posts only once the entire discussion.	(0 points) No Submission
Community	(15 points) All posts acknowledge posts of others and expand the discussion using examples from reading, Web research, or personal experience as appropriate.	(12 points) Majority of posts acknowledge posts of others and expand the discussion using examples from reading, Web research, or personal experience as appropriate.	(10.5 points) Less than half of posts acknowledge posts of others and expand the discussion using examples from reading, Web research, or personal experience as appropriate.	(9 points) One or more posts violate Mutual Respect Policy and/or no posts acknowledge the contributions and ideas of class peers. Or, posts only once the entire discussion.	(0 points) No Submission
Citation	(5 points) All posts use accurate citation in APA format where appropriate.	(4 points) Majority of posts use accurate citation in APA format where appropriate.	(3.5 points) Less than half of posts use accurate citation in APA format where appropriate.	(0 points) One or more posts are plagiarized. <i>[This may be grounds for a zero!]</i> Or, posts only once per discussion.	(0 points) No Submission
Length	(5 points) All posts are a reasonable length (100-300 words).	(4 points) Majority of posts are a reasonable length (100-300 words).	(3.5 points) Less than half of posts are a reasonable length (100-300 words).	(3 points) All posts exceed word limit or fail to meet word limit. Or, posts only once the entire discussion.	(0 points) No Submission

Required Assignments and/or Assessments for Online Courses

To successfully measure a student's grasp of the material, you should provide several different types of outcome measures. In addition, the following types of activities are required for all online courses at Andrews:

1. Introductions Interactive Online courses require a design that provides for students and instructors to know each other (Learning Community Standard).

- Create a method for students to introduce themselves to their classmates. For example, you could create an introductions discussion forum and require all students post an introductory message in the forum at the beginning of the course. You should post an introduction about yourself as well. You can make this assignment more personal by including your own pictures or perhaps creating a video about yourself and uploading it. Create a personal tone in the introduction by including some personal information such as your hobbies, family, passion about the profession, etc. Students tend to mirror the style of introduction that you use. The goal is to begin the process of creating a community by allowing personal information to be shared. In case of cohorts, rather than just a general intro board, help the students introduce to each other and you the specific aspects about their work that relate to your course.
- If any course content was created by a different instructor than the one facilitating the course, a "meet the course author" page should be included as well.

Self-paced courses require a design that provides for the instructor to know the students.

- An introduction assignment should provide an opportunity for students to introduce themselves to you and provide any appropriate background and prior experience with the course content.
- A "meet the instructor" page should be included in self-paced courses. If any course content was created by a different instructor than the one facilitating the course, a "meet the course author" page should be included as well.

2. Library Assignment

It is highly recommended that every course include an assignment requiring the use of the James White Library's services or print/media/electronic resources for which the students have paid. Integrate the library into the course content using a variety of methods besides research papers and peer-reviewed journals. The library assignments should give the students opportunities to understand the philosophy behind their course, get a broad picture of their subject matter, compare and cite different types of resources correctly, find career options in their fields of interest, gain an exposure to the professional associations and journals of their subject areas, find literature to support their views in a discussion, defend their solutions to case studies, discover problems similar to what they are being asked to solve, and develop skills for life-long learning. See the off-campus website

(<https://www.andrews.edu/library/offcamp.html>) for useful links and hints offered to you as a professor. Select the appropriate LibGuide for your course by going to this link (<http://libguides.andrews.edu/content.php?pid=600205>) and embed it in your Learning Hub course.

3. Student Identity Verification. Federal guidelines require that we must verify the identity of students in our online courses. A combination of the following measures should be used in courses AND online degrees to ensure that the student receiving the degree or transcript is the student who completed the work in the course. Every course must have either at least one proctored exam or one live videoconference where the proctor or instructor checks the photo ID of the students. No measure is bullet-proof, so multiple measures must be used. Please note that the more interaction that you have with students, the better you are at ascertaining the veracity of student's identity.

- **Exam proctoring** with a professional proctor or testing center is considered the gold standard of student identity verification. Exam proctoring services can be provided by the School of Distance Education Testing Office or by individual departments. Email dlit@andrews.edu for assistance on setting up exam proctoring in your syllabus and LearningHub space. This can include the SDE Testing Exam Request Form and special settings on the LearningHub exam such as randomization of questions and a password for the proctor. Contact the Testing Office at sdeexams@andrews.edu regarding the implementation of the exam proctoring.

For any test that you do not want the student to have access to notes or books, there must be a proctor. For information that is not considered critical to clinical safety or skills, it is certainly acceptable to not require a proctor. Adult learners need to have seen, handled, and integrated the material but it is not always necessary to require memorization of it. In these cases, it is recommended that you set a reasonable time limit on the test (ie the test will close at the end of the time limit) so as to ensure that the student has gone through the material prior to the test.

It is recommended that several measures be used to ensure the integrity of the exam. Randomization of questions, setting time limits, and using question banks reduces the ability of students to cheat.

- **Live Videoconferencing.** If you require students to attend a live videoconference session, and participate or present, check their photo ID in the class roster in vault.andrews.edu to verify that the student attending the course is the student registered for the course.
- **Plagiarism Checking.** Design plagiarism-reducing assignments that are difficult to copy and paste from the Internet. Realize that students could pay a company to write the paper for them. Use TurnItIn to check for plagiarism. Work with an Instructional Design Specialist to assist you in designing assessments that reduce cheating.
- **LearningHub Login.** Requiring students to login to LearningHub using their Andrews University ID is the most basic way to verify student identity. This measure should be used in conjunction with other measures.

- **On campus attendance.** Requiring some on campus attendance as part of an online degree is another component of online student identity verification. However, it should not be the only measure used within the full degree design.

4. Synthesis. Online graduate courses should be designed to help students apply what they learn in a significant way that serves to show their ability to synthesize course outcomes meaningfully within the context of their degree program. This could be accomplished through a student-created project or product that culminates the learning experience. For undergraduate courses this is highly recommended as well, but there may be some rare exceptions. Presentations, final projects, research papers, and written plans are all possibilities. Design or use a grading rubric to guide the students' work in the project. Rubrics very concretely allow the student to interpret what they have to do.