

Bring Meaning to Online Discussions with Intentional Design

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What's this about?

We were frustrated with a sense that students seemed to be **missing something** in an online class (*UDL: A Framework for Teaching and Learning*) that they were getting in the face-to-face classroom version of the same course.

We believed that the way we were having students “interact” in online discussion forums **was not providing an equivalent experience** to classroom discussion, so we did a comparison reflection.

What did we find? Students’ discussion experiences were, in fact, **very different** across a number of criteria (see table).

*Join us for our Emerging Ideas session to find out what we did to **improve discussions in our online course** and discover how you can follow a similar process to improve your own!*

Comparison Reflection—How Discussion is used in in the Classroom v. Online in *UDL: A Framework for Teaching and Learning*

	Classroom	Online Discussion Forum
Interactions	Less formal interactions (students feel safe offering a short answer or not fully thought out/authentic opinion)	Interactions tend to be more formal (crafted responses focus on a specific prompt)
Assessment	Not formally assessed (what you are saying and contributing is not as important as you being present and engaged)	Every response is formally assessed and points were awarded weekly. Students were required to include citations and number of responses
Community-Building	Used for community-building and peer feedback activities	Primarily designed to promote weekly interaction, but community-building is more incidental or byproduct
Type of Discussion	Used often for students sharing of knowledge and practical experience (theory to practice bridge)	Discussion prompts facilitated more factual and evidence-based responses rather than experiential.
Size of Groups	Break down into small group work—discuss and solve a problem	Never had students break down into small groups for the purpose of discussion only--small groups in online reserved for project and deliverable work

For more information about how you can use intentional design to improve discussions in your own online courses, contact:



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