

- 1 • Outcome oriented task design
- 2 • Explicit Communicative Strategies
- 3 • Interactional scaffolding by the lecturer
- 4 • Clear expectations for student participation

Learning Outcome(s):

The Learning outcomes for these online discussions relate to a Masters of Teaching (primary, secondary and early years) level capstone project over 12 week (24 hour) unit worth 24 credit points.

The learning outcome related to focused on line discussion (FOLD) forum include:

Demonstrate their research-fulness through the effective communication of ideas and concepts developed from the critical evaluation of research data.

Discussion One – On-line discussion forum introducing yourself and your topic.

Discussion Two - Use this forum to **clarify your capstone project questions**, data gathering and creativity

Discussion Three - **approaches to data** and deepening your understanding of your educational context and research project

Discussion Four – **Analysis and report writing** My literature and data don't align – what do I do? Or everything is falling into place – have I missed something?

Anticipate / prepare for when you expect students will need steering ...

In this project I anticipated that some students would miss the first session or two and would want to join later on. Similarly, I anticipated that as many of these students were doing relief teaching, practicum related projects related to their course and that some would miss sessions during the 12 weeks. Therefore, the FOLD project was intended to complement the learning circles embedded within the course.

1. Discussion one meant students had a formal written space to reinforce their initial project thinking.
2. Discussion two meant students had the opportunity to clarify their questions. At this point we had reinforced with the students that they could not do a project that involved an ethics application (interviews, surveys and so forth) so many had to redesign their projects methodologically.
3. Discussion three provided an opportunity to consider in more depth the research question and their projects

4. Discussion four anticipated that some students would be feeling anxious about handing in their projects maybe their data raised more questions than answers. I also anticipated contributions from those who were feeling confident and pleased with their projects.

What communicative strategies will students be using?

As this was the first time of using discussion forums in their course of two years I scaffolded and introduced a strategy each discussion forum. So I introduced a new communication strategy each forum

Communicative Principle 1: Reading and responding to others listening and being listened to

Communicative protocols:

1. Personalising responses by **naming** the person(s)
2. Acknowledging others' ideas/contributions, e.g. through
 - a) **Complimenting** them or their ideas
 - b) showing **support/agreeing with** them or their ideas

Communicative Principle 2: Building a collective understanding from a variety of ideas and perspectives

Communicative protocols:

1. **Re-stating**: to clarify or refine an idea
2. **Extending on ideas**: to add more information or a new perspective
3. Presenting **alternatives**: to propose a different perspective to discuss

Communicative Principle 3: Towards building new understandings together thinking more broadly and deeply about ideas/ issues

Communicative protocols to include in your responses

1. **Presenting alternatives** by proposing a different perspective
2. **Challenging the idea(s)** to stimulate the discussion towards new understandings
3. **Justifying your position** by giving reasons to explain your ideas to make your point clearer

Explicit instructions for student participation:

1. **Posting should be orientated towards an issue or idea** that is relevant to you and others in your learning circle
2. **As above the minimum number of postings** will be four – one in each forum. In addition, if you are unable to attend sessions and learning

circles you are expected to extend and use these forums as appropriate to build collective understanding, support the establishment of a positive social space and construct new knowledge.

3. **Take a position in your posting.** Research is about taking a risk and learning to see in a new manner.
4. Use the discussion forums and postings to support your change and development as a researcher.
5. Posting should be no more than 100 words
6. **An appendix for the final assignment** attached to use for the reflective part of your assessment

Planning for participation: Your own? How will you organise discussion structure to suit your class?

This was the first and only unit that had a discussion forum embedded in the unit during these students two year course. I therefore reinforced participation through contributing each week myself.

- Sometimes I contributed to individuals in the form of resources or ‘tweaks’ and ideas to their project.
- Sometimes I contributed to an overall discussion summarising key ideas or reinforcing principles.
- Since we had a physical presence in this course I reinforced the discussion forums and ideas during tutorials and lectures with students.