

AARE 2016 Symposium

Understanding online discussion: socio-cultural and discorsal perspectives

Creating a research community for distance students

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Creating a research community for distance students: Using guided asynchronous online discussion groups.



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Context

RSCH20001 Fundamentals of Research

- Recommended unit for new RHD students
- Approx. 20 students per term
- All are Distance students
- Many are new to CQU
- Assessment tasks are based on their unique research project, multiple discipline areas



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Problem

- Students feel isolated
- Unsure of assessment tasks
- All new to research
- Many new to CQU



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Aim

Provide a forum for non-co-located RHD students to form bonds with other RHD students who are at a similar stage of their enrolment.

That forming relationships among other RHD students will reduce the loneliness that new students sometimes face when embarking on their RHD.



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Task

Assessment 1 - Preliminary research topic:

- Proforma to provide information about their enrolment, supervisors, proposed research topic, and reason for pursuing topic.
- Students required to post draft of assessment to the Discussion Forum to introduce themselves to other students.
- Students encouraged to make comments and provide feedback on each other's assessment task.



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Guided asynchronous online discussion

When making comments and suggestions on other people's work please use the following communication strategies:

- Address the person(s) you are responding to by name(s).
- Acknowledge what they have written in some way by complimenting (e.g. something that has impressed you, such as an idea, an experience, etc); or supporting / agreeing with something they have written.

(Delahunty, 2014).



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Results

- 20 students enrolled
- 15 students posted Assessment Task 1 to the Forum

Number of Students	Number of Comments/posts
1	10
1	9
1	8
1	6
3	4
2	3
4	2
1	1
1	0



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Actor-Network Theory

To get the students to engage with the task:

- Entice them by making it clear how this process can help them achieve their goals.



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