DMU Replay title: **Discussion board for distance learning**

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Discussion Board is a feature of Blackboard that allows participants to carry on discussions online, at any time of day or night.

It is described as an ‘asynchronous’ tool, because students don’t need to be logged in at the same time.

By contrast, synchronous tools, such as Blackboard Collaborate, and other ‘virtual classroom' applications make the most of participants being able to share an online classroom environment simultaneously, and thus interact with each other ‘live’ in real time.

Asynchronous participation tools such as Discussion Board can be particularly useful for distance learning courses, particularly on courses where students can’t all be available regularly at set class times, for example, if students are in different countries or different time zones.

Discussion Board is a key feature of Blackboard and you may already be familiar with it as it is also used on many face-to-face courses and programmes.

You’ll find instructions for setting up Discussion Board and all the other Blackboard tools on DMU’s ‘CELT hub’.

For example, one way you might choose to use Discussion board is to break your class up into smaller study groups, for example, if you wish students to work on a group assignment.

[Keyboard clicks]

Here are some examples of the kinds of task you might set your students.

You might ask students to post the first two hundred and fifty words of an assignment on discussion board so that they can view each other’s work and you can check that they know how to reference and aren’t making any fundamental mistakes in their essay writing.

Students have a discussion about a particular topic with one student designated as ‘starter’ and another student designated as the ‘finisher’. This can work particularly well, for example, if you ask students to post two postings such that all the students add a post, and then all students add a second post, with the finisher adding the final post

Here are some tips for improving student interaction on Blackboard.

One common mistake that some lecturers make when setting a Blackboard task is to be too ‘hands off’ by, for example, simply posting a task on Discussion Board and then just leaving the students to it and telling them to respond to the task

Instead, it is often advisable to ‘direct the discussion board traffic' just as a good teacher in a classroom will moderate and direct a good face-to-face discussion rather than letting the discussion go off, or drift off, in random directions.

Another tip is to ensure that you assign clear actions and tasks.

One final suggestion is to ensure that you include some student interactivity in your discussion board task.

For example, consider a discussion board task about the poetry of W B Yeats.

There may be two postings and the second posting could be to find a distinctive feature of the poetry of Yeats that no-one has yet spotted in their first posting.