Characteristics of Successful Threaded Discussions
Washington State University
2002

1. *Presentation of Discussion*

Does not encourage critical engagement	Does encourage critical engagement
• Does not articulate goal(s) for the discussion clearly or does so vaguely. • Does not relate goal(s) for the discussion to the activity/course goals. • Invites a yes/no answer • Ignores students' personal knowledge base and/or experiences • Encourages students to repeat contents of resources • Does not encourage students to interact with one another. • Does not encourage students to apply evaluation criteria to one another's or their own comments. • Does not integrate evaluation criteria	▪ Articulates goal(s) for the discussion clearly. ▪ Relates goal(s) for the discussion to the activity/course goals. ▪ Is open-ended ▪ Encourages students to draw on personal knowledge and experience ▪ Encourages students to synthesize information, experiences, perspectives, etc. ▪ Encourages students to engage each other, perhaps applying evaluation criteria to theirs and others contributions to the discussion ▪ Encourages students to present and support their own values on the issues. ▪ Integrates evaluation criteria

2. *Evaluation Criteria*

Does not encourage critical engagement	Does encourage critical engagement
• Does not clearly state expectations in advance • States expectations but these expectations are not clear • Does not relate expectations to the discussion goal or does so only vaguely. • Does not encourage critical analysis of key issues/concepts. • Is rigid, not allowing enough flexibility for creative brainstorming, synthesis, and analysis.	▪ Provides clear and explicit expectations for the discussion ▪ Relates expectations clearly to the stated goals for the discussion. ▪ Encourages critical analysis of key issues/concepts ▪ Provides enough flexibility to allow for creative brainstorming, synthesis, and analysis

3. *Nature of facilitator's contributions*

Does not encourage critical engagement	Does encourage critical engagement
• Pronounces answers right or wrong; caps discussion extensively. • Does not invite further questioning. • Does not encourage elaboration of thoughts. • Establishes primarily student/facilitator dialogue. • Does not allow time for discussion and/or tangents to develop. • Does not intervene to keep discussion on-topic when necessary.	• Challenges view presented or invites further questioning. • Invites expanded elaboration. • Invites students to dialogue with others. • Allows time for the discussion to develop. • Allows elaboration of ideas, even those that may initially appear to be off-topic, yet later prove to be highly relevant, to develop without intervening too early. • Does intervene to keep discussion on-topic when appropriate and does so in a way that is supportive.

4. *Content of posts*

Does not encourage critical engagement	Does encourage critical engagement
• Does not meet criteria for activity or discussion. • Tends to consist of non-substantive comments such as "I agree." • Tends to espouse personal opinions and does not demonstrate a willingness to engage in a critical examination of alternative views. • Is self-contained with little or no reference to other posts.	• Meets or exceeds criteria for activity or discussion. • Demonstrates thoughtful and substantive analysis of either the topic at issue or other posts. • Demonstrates a willingness to listen to and consider other viewpoints. • Encourages further interaction by challenging or offering/requesting further elaboration. • Includes references to other posts.

5. *Development of threads*

Does not encourage critical engagement	Does encourage critical engagement
• Develops no threads. • Develops short threads (few responses to posts). • Contains subject lines that are either blank or unchanged from parent posting. • Contains a discussion that is dominated by one or two participants. • Contains a discussion in which participants tend to interact with a narrow group of their peers in the class.	• Develops threads with multiple responses to original posts and other responses. • Makes informative use of subject line. • Contains a discussion in which multiple voices appear in multiple roles. • Contains a discussion in which participants engage with each other broadly by responding to posts by different members of the course.