Using Blackboard to support good practice in teaching & learning

Chickering and Gamson (1987) point to the following characteristics of teaching and learning as being especially valuable for improving learning outcomes:

1. Encourage student–staff contact
2. Encourage co-operation among students
3. Encourage active learning
4. Give prompt feedback
5. Emphasise time on task
6. Communicate high expectations
7. Respect diverse talents and ways of learning.

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<th>GOOD PRACTICE</th>
<th>HOW CAN BLACKBOARD HELP</th>
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<tr>
<td>Encourage student–staff contact</td>
<td>A virtual learning environment (VLE) can help contact between tutors and their students through its communication tools. Students can post messages at a time and place convenient for them. For example, tutors can set up a Q&amp;A area in the discussion board (in some VLEs this could be anonymous) which tutors read and respond to on a regular basis.</td>
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<td>Encourage co-operation among students</td>
<td>The discussion tools can be used to encourage student co-operation in small or large groups, face-to-face or online. Areas can also be created in a VLE for students to share work. For example, groups of students can have a private area where they develop their group presentation. They may choose to work together face-to-face and then load their work into the VLE for others, including the tutor, to review.</td>
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<td>Encourage active learning</td>
<td>Through careful course design, focusing on student activities, you can encourage active learning. For example, before loading materials into the VLE, think about what you want the students to do and how these activities will help fulfil the learning outcomes. For example, if you want them to review a poem from World War I, you would divide the class into groups and ask them to review the poem from different perspectives: the reader, the poet, the narrator, the friend. These could all be housed in the VLE with groups commenting on each other’s work.</td>
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Give prompt feedback

The assessment tools including quizzes and the assessments assist timely feedback. Quizzes can provide a wealth of feedback for students. Not only can they inform students if the answers are correct, but also they can provide pointers to further study, hints and tips, and links to additional readings.

Emphasise time on task

By using a VLE to link to Library resources and online resources, students can spend time working through activities that you have developed rather than searching through shelves and surfing the web. This means they focus on the task rather than getting the materials for the task.

Communicate high expectations

As the tutor, you can use a VLE to show what you expect of your students. With agreement from students, you can use examples of previous students’ work to show the level of work that you expect and why.

Reference


This guide is an adaptation from ‘Effective use of virtual learning environments (VLEs)’, JISC infoNet, www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/infokits/vle/

Further Help

Please contact the CQSD TEL team for help and advice on making more effective use of Blackboard to support teaching and learning.

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