Quickstart Guide

Effective Facilitation - Expanded Version

Purpose

While online learning can offer great opportunities for self-directed learning and flexibility, sometimes you need to have a human (or a team of humans) on the other side to encourage, guide, and create opportunities for connection and deeper learning. This is where facilitators come in. Course facilitation includes everything involved in running a course, from administrative tasks to the kinds of tasks that a traditional classroom facilitator would do.

The first step in creating a facilitation plan is to look at how involved you expect your teaching team to be. This is always a balancing act: the more involved they are, the more your learners will be engaged and connected with the course, and the more they will learn. But, of course, that also requires a larger time commitment for your facilitation team.

A facilitator, or team of facilitators, may use a number of different strategies to engage learners in an online learning environment. Facilitators that are available and accessible to learners are a crucial part of a learner's journey. Humanized content, being able to convey concepts in meaningful ways, and using multiple engagement methods improves learners' sense of community and feeling of connectedness to the content and the course. Effectively facilitating an online course can also be very rewarding for the facilitator(s).

Considerations & Best Practices

- Decide how you're going to facilitate your course fairly early on; it may not change your course design significantly, but it could change it to some degree!
  - To whom on your team should learners reach out if they have questions or trouble with the platform? A central mailbox? A specific person?
  - How often & how thoroughly will your team moderate the discussion boards?
  - How often & thoroughly will they review assignment submissions for feedback?
  - Will your teaching team be conducting live webinars?
  - Will they be acting as mentors to a group of learners?
  - Will they be moderating the Team and Group workspaces? (If you have them)
  - Will someone review feedback survey results to adjust later modules even as the course runs? How about after the course finishes?
- Block time on your calendar daily or several times a week to help you prioritize facilitation.
- Review course data on a regular basis (perhaps weekly) to get a feel for what's happening.

Troubleshooting & Questions

Course admins are the first point of contact for all learner questions. Make sure learners have a clear understanding of how to reach you with any questions or issues.

- How to Add a Help Menu

If a course admin is unable to resolve a technical or platform issue, the admin can forward it to hello@novoed.com for troubleshooting. Please include the **course URL** and details on **what's happening** and **what was already tried to resolve the issue.**

Ways to Incorporate

Use these tables to assign roles for facilitation to your team before your course begins. The details will vary depending on the timeline of your course and how you plan to run it. These time guidelines are only estimates.

Instructor / Facilitator / Moderator Responsibilities:

Person	Responsibility	Description	When (Time Involved)
	Customize course email communications	Update draft emails in platform with reflections about specific learner activity and contributions to motivate them	Varies (Weekly?)*(30 - 60 minutes to review submissions & update emails)*
	Discussion board catalyst	"Like" and comment on discussions, make connections between learners, ask clarifying questions, etc.	2 - 5 times a week*(15 - 30 minutes each)*
	Webinars	Run any live webinars	Varies*(30 minutes prep plus actual webinar time)*
	Assignment feedback	Read submissions & respond: affirm good work, ask questions, and suggest additional ideas	Weekly once submissions come in*(1 – 2 hours per week)*
	Learner Support	Resolve learner questions, issues with logging in, etc. Refer issues you can't resolve to the support desk.	Daily*(Timing varies)*

	Content Flags	List your email address on the Content Flags page. If someone flags a discussion post or assignment submission as inappropriate or blank, everyone listed will receive an email overnight. Review the flagged item and decide if it should be deleted.	Rarely; when notified *(5 minutes)*

Admin Responsibilities:

Person	Responsibility	Description	When (Time Involved)
	Clone the course	Clone the course or request cloning	Before launch *(Under 1 hour)*
	Update Welcome & Onboarding Message	Update the Welcome Email and Onboarding Message as needed for this run of the course	Before launch *(Under 1 hour)*
	Update course lesson pages	Update all course pages as needed (What might change? Dates? Info?)	Before launch *(Time varies)*
	Draft communications	Draft the wordings of new course emails & announcements (during- and post-course, intervention…)	Before course launch *(1-2 hours)*
	Set up communications	Set up communications in platform (during- & post-course, intervention...) (Can edit later!)	Before course launch *(1-2 hours)*
	Enroll learners & teaching team	Make sure everyone is enrolled and ready to go in the course	When course launches *(Under 1 hour)*
	Assign Mentors, Teams, & Groups (if using these)	Determine which learners will have which Mentors or be in which Teams and/or Groups. Assign in platform.	After enrolling learners and the teaching team *(1 hour)*
	Engagement data analysis	Review assignment/activity completion and survey results	Weekly *(30 – 60 minutes each)*
	Learner Support	Resolve learner questions, issues with logging in, etc. Refer issues you can't resolve to the support desk.	Daily as needed *(Timing varies)*

	Content Flags	List your email under Content Flags. If someone flags a post or submission as inappropriate or blank, everyone listed will receive an email overnight. Review the flagged item and decide if it should be deleted.	Rarely; when notified *(5 minutes)*

Sample Weekly Engagement Plan

Here is a sample engagement plan for one week of a cohort-based course that is run for multiple weeks. Feel free to customize it for your course.

For self-paced offerings, you may be doing less facilitation.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Course Comms: Check that this week's emails are set up and edit as needed **Daily:** Handle any Content Flag notices you receive	**Discussions:** Compliment well-thought out posts and ask for more details on ones that are light on content. Look for questions that need answering.	**Gallery:** Give feedback and "likes" on assignment submissions	**Discussions:** Respond to posts and questions as on Tuesday	**Gallery:** Give feedback and "likes" on assignment submissions **Data:** Weekly Analytics check

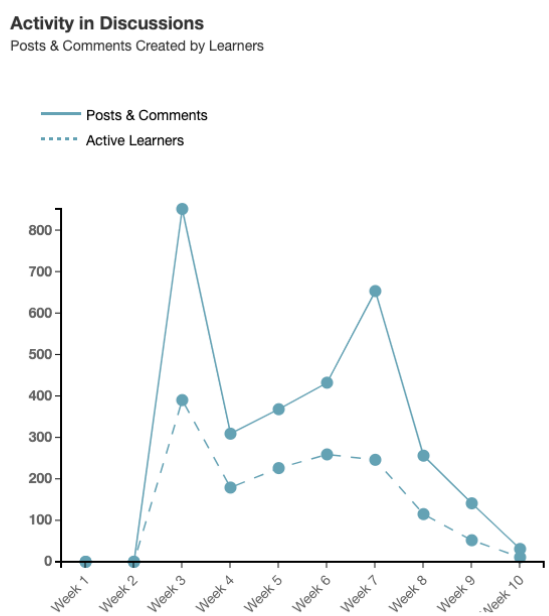
Analytics & Data Downloads

Part of facilitation is to look at what's happening and alter how you are facilitating to increase engagement. If your role includes reviewing data for this purpose, here's how to get started.

The NovoEd platform automatically tracks an amazing amount of data on every course that is run. All you need to do is access that data, and there are two ways to do so:

Analytics Page

Use the [Analytics page] to get a snapshot of key engagement metrics in your course, such as:

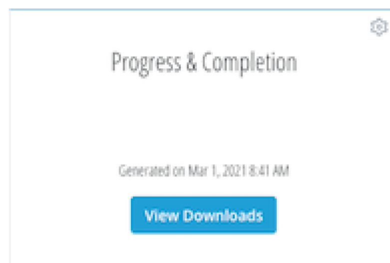


- How many learners submitted each assignment
- How many discussion posts were made each week, and by how many learners
- How many learners viewed each video, and what percentage of the video did they watch
- How many learners submitted each survey, and for multiple-choice questions, how many learners selected each choice

Data Downloads Page

Use the Data Downloads page to create custom reports and pull more detailed data. The larger the report (based on the number of fields included in it and the number of people being reported on), the longer it will take for the report to run. Small reports may only take a minute or two, while large ones could take significantly longer.

Here are some commonly created **Data Downloads:**



- **Enrollment Status** (date learner was enrolled, current enrollment status, date unenrolled, date of first visit to course, and last activity date)
- **Progress** (% of lesson pages viewed, points earned, and completion status)
- **Assignments** (submission date and number of comments received)
- **Quizzes** (submission date, submitted answers, and % correct)
- **Discussions** (number of comments made)
- **Audios & Videos** (% watched)
- **Surveys** (submission date and submission answers)
- **Teams** (submissions, posts shared, documents created, and submissions shared)

And here are some commonly created **Content Downloads:**

- **Assignments** (text submitted and links to submitted files)
- **Discussions** (actual text from posts)

Best Practices for Data Downloads

A few tips for you:

- For all of these reports except Enrollment Status, consider whether or not you want to include data on learners who are no longer enrolled in the course. Most of the time, you will just want data on the enrolled learners in reports like these.
- Consider how you want to see the data:
    - Do you want it all together in one place? You could put all of this in one report… but it might be overwhelming to look at.
    - Do you want all of the assignments in one report, all of the videos in another, etc?
    - Or, do you want everything from Module 1 in one report, everything from Module 2 in another?

- For the most part, the platform tracks all of this data whether or not you set up a report for it. One thing it won't do is get learner feedback… unless you set up a feedback survey early enough for learners to see it and complete it.
    - When planning your course, decide whether or not you want to get learner feedback through a survey.
    - And do you just want one survey at the end of the course?
    - A mid-point survey and a final survey?
    - A survey at the end of every Module?
    - You'll want to set these up before your learners reach these points in the course.

Explore More

Best Practices for Facilitation

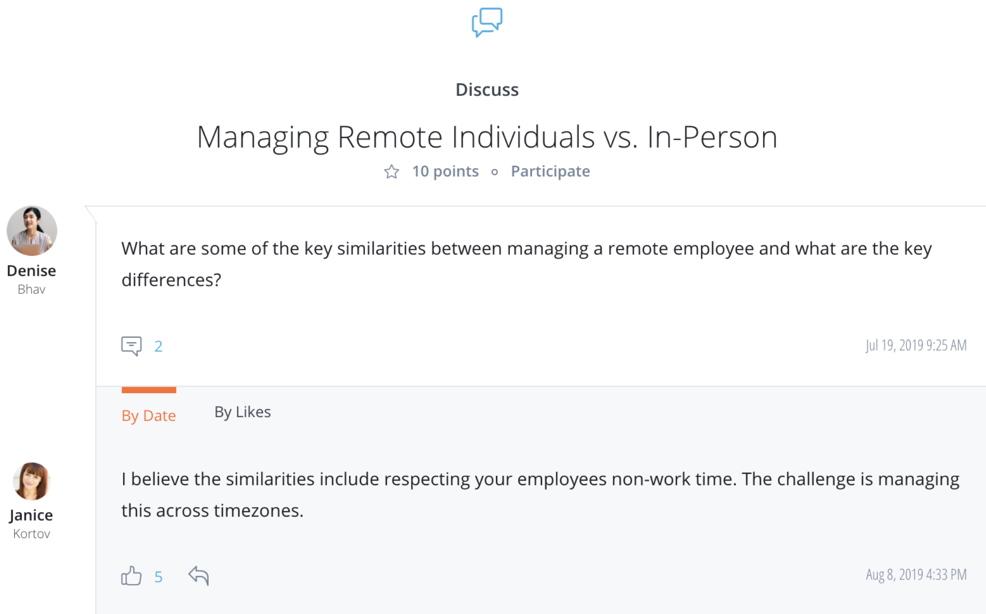
These articles contain best practices for facilitating social online courses:

- Everything you need to know about online facilitation: Part 1, Part 2, Part 3
- Designing a Participant Engagement Plan to Maximize Learning
- Pre-course Communications: 4 Tips to Drive eLearning Engagement
- 5 Ways to Build a Successful Online Learning Community
- 3 Email Intervention Examples to Re-Engage Learners In Your Online Courses

Platform "How-To" Documents

Here are a few articles from the Help Desk Website that you can refer to after your onboarding for any questions on how to do common facilitation tasks:

- Course Communications Overview
- Discussion feature guide
- Monitoring Discussions
- Assignment Gallery
- Content Flagging



Appendix: Best Practices for Providing Feedback

Here are some resources on best practices for what to say when you are providing feedback. Feel free to customize your feedback with the tone and energy you want to bring to the course.

Resource 1: Table from the article ***The Art of Giving Online Feedback*** published in **The Journal of Effective Teaching:**

Table 1. Best Practices for Providing Online Feedback: Application Examples.

Address the learner by name	For example, "Sue, the font selected for the PowerPoint presentation is easy to read. Good choice!"
Provide frequent feedback	Set a pattern for providing feedback to learners. For example, every week by Wednesday for the previous week and within 72 hours after an assignment deadline.
Provide immediate feedback	Within 72 hours of courseroom discussions and less than one week for paper/project assignments.
Provide balanced feedback	"Peggy, great job with including APA source citation. For APA format, place a comma after the author name and before the year. The APA for the corresponding reference on the reference page is correct! Good work!
Provide specific feedback	"The second paragraph on page 4 includes helpful information that is explained in clear terms. The information in this paragraph should have a source citation and reference on the reference page. Good job using Times New Roman 12 point and double spacing the entire APA document."
Use a positive tone	Two-thirds of the feedback should be positive and point out what is correct. Create a feedback tone that inspires the learner to use the comments to improve future work.
Ask questions to promote thinking	"Great job with the definition of the concept. What are some examples of the concept you could describe in the paper after the definition to help clarify the meaning?"

Resource 2: Table adapted based on information provided in the book ***Understanding Online Instructional Modeling: Theories and Practices*** by Robert Zheng and Sharmila Ferris.

Examples of Facilitating Online Communications During the Course	
Types of Facilitation	Examples
1. Identifying areas of agreement / disagreement	"Joe, Mary has provided a compelling counter-example to your hypothesis. What do you think?"
2. Seeking to reach consensus / understanding	"I agree with both Joe and Mary here, Carrie what are your thoughts?
3. Encouraging, acknowledging, or reinforcing student contributions	"Thank you for your insightful comments!"
4. Setting climate for learning	"Don't feel self-conscious about 'thinking out loud' on the forum. This is a place to try out new ideas after all!"
5. Drawing in participants, prompting discussion	"Any thoughts on this issue?" "Anyone care to comment?"
6. Assessing the efficacy of the process	"I think we're getting a little off track here. Let's talk more about the benefits of sales calls"