

## Tips for running successful discussion boards

### 1. Explain to students the purpose for your using a discussion board.

- How does the use of the discussion board support module learning outcomes, student skill development, assessment etc?
- How do you intend to use the discussion board? For example, as a Q&A forum for all module issues, to support a specific teaching event (continue a discussion post-seminar etc.), as an online alternative to face to face tutorials, for gathering student feedback etc. How will online discussions support learning within the module?

### 2. Communicate what you expect from students.

- Time input – indication of how much time you expect them to engage in online discussions.
- Types of issues to discuss - what are relevant or non-relevant topics.
- Length and style of posts – give some examples.
- How the discussion forums have been technically set up – any specific forum or thread structures, whether student posts will be anonymous or moderated etc.
- How you want students to behave towards other students - whether you want student to comment on and acknowledge other students posts etc.
- Use of social media – for example, you could suggest that students discuss issues in social media if they prefer first, but then to add important issues to the VITAL discussion board for tutors to comment on etc.

### 3. Clarify what students can expect from you or other supporting staff.

- When you will respond to posts – e.g. will monitor 3 times a week and only reply to important issues.
- How you will respond to posts – answer questions fully or act as a facilitator, or monitor questions, gather them together and answer within a lecture etc.
- Will other staff (e.g. GTA's or nominated student 'e-champions') have a moderating role.

### 4. Build up students confidence and familiarity

- Give students an opportunity to practice using the software with a low-risk question to develop their familiarity & confidence.
- Build up the difficulty of questions and online activities as the module progresses.
- Refer and link online discussions to lectures etc. to keep the discussion board relevant to other teaching methods used within the module.