

## Examining Online Teaching: Considering Facilitation Patterns

A well-designed course supports the instructor's efforts to foster key teaching aims. Beyond the goals for the course itself (which usually target the concepts, skills, and applications needed to succeed in the course), instructor's also want their courses to support the learners' success and development in broader ways. They focus on specific teaching aims and the **facilitative actions** they can take to promote them.

Some common areas of facilitation within online courses include the following:

- Facilitate discussions.
- Participate in discussions.
- Provide feedback on assignments and activities.
- Scaffold self-assessment and peer feedback.
- Model desired thinking approaches and disciplinary practices.
- Question/challenge practices, content, and perspectives.
- Encourage questions as well as independent problem-solving.
- Build community.

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In the reflective comments below, note how the same instructor is reflecting on her facilitative actions through self-questioning.

### **How do I respond to student participation and attempts to meet course goals?**

Sometimes I correct misconceptions right away to avoid people learning misinformation and at other times I encourage students with differing views to engage each other in further debate without offering any correction. I want them to think it through. I grade using a rubric that aligns with the instructions for the discussions and assignments.

### **Do my actions appear to facilitate student learning, or to interfere with it?**

My corrective comments may be contributing to some student confusion and unwillingness to defend their position heartily. It is not evident that they have supported their ideas with evidence. When I correct one student, it may cause other students to feel anxious and less likely to take a risk. I want them to take risks, make mistakes, and enjoy learning from them.

**What adjustments can I make now?**

I can avoid providing corrective responses and instead ask additional questions that require more thinking in the direction I want students to explore. I can connect student ideas from one post to another and promote further discussion of those ideas.