



Doing Well for Online Discussion by Dr. Henry Khiat, UniSIM

Online discussion is an important part of blended courses in UniSIM as it is a platform where students can learn from their instructors and peers. At the same time, it is usually graded. Each online discussion session is structured around some lead questions on a particular topic. The session can be synchronous or asynchronous. Certain characteristics and procedures are desirable in effective online discussion. They are described in the three stages below.

Stage 1: Preparation

Do the following before the online discussion.

- 1) Read up the guidelines and grading criteria your instructor may have set for the discussion.
- 2) Revise and review the lecture that the discussion would be based on.
- 3) Study the required readings for the session.
- 4) Prepare your responses to the discussion questions and formulate questions that you would like to use to clarify about issues that you may be unclear about.

Stage 2: During discussion

The characteristics below can be useful during the discussion process.

- 1) Keep an open mind
By keeping an open mind about what are being discussed, you would be able to learn more about others' perspectives. More importantly, learn to accept others' views and even challenge your own beliefs. This enables you to gain knowledge in width and depth.
- 2) Keep track of the key points in the discussion
The discussion would be useless if you do not keep track of the points made by others. Always go back to the threaded messages in the discussion if you lose track of the discussion.
- 3) Do not be irrelevant, judgmental and personal
This means you do not
 - a) Make comments irrelevant to the discussion
 - b) Pass judgment on others' comments
 - c) Make any hurting comments about others
- 4) Make a strong case
When you carry across a point, argument or view in your discussion, ensure that it is
 - a) Carried across clearly
 - b) Easy to follow
 - c) Well supported by theoretical and empirical data
 - d) Connected and relevant to the ongoing discussion
 - e) Not a repetition of others' points
 - f) Able to relate to others' points
 - g) Objective and not laden with emotions



Stage 3: After discussion

Consolidate all the viewpoints made in the discussion. Sieve out the useful ones that are important in your learning. Add them to your notes. Review and revise them periodically for your subsequent lessons or assessments.

Below is a checklist that you can use to ensure that you do well for graded online discussion.

CHECKLIST FOR EFFECTIVE ONLINE DISCUSSION

Ensure you have achieved the **12 point-Check** below before you click "Reply" in the Discussion Forum.

No	Item	Tick if achieved
1	Do my postings show good understanding of the concepts used to answer the discussion questions? (Aim: To show your level of conceptual understanding of the course objectives)	
2	Are the facts or evidence reported in my postings accurate? (Aim: To ensure accuracy of information posted in your postings)	
3	Do I make reference to the course's required readings in my postings? (Aim: To support your postings with literature and show that you have done your readings)	
4	Do I make reference to other external and independent readings in my postings? List down the full references if you are quoting studies outside your required readings) (Aim: To support postings with further literature and show that you done additional reading)	
5	Are my postings thought-provoking or interesting enough to elicit responses from other participants? (Aim: To generate learning and communication among the participants)	
6	Do I ask probing questions in my postings? (Aim: To generate learning and communication among the participants)	
7	Do I build my postings on the content of other participants' postings? (Aim: To show that you have read others' postings and understand their responses)	
8	Do I integrate the multiple views of the other participants in my postings? (Aim: To show that you have the ability to evaluate and synthesise others' responses)	
9	Are my responses clearly and concisely stated? (Aim: To ensure other participants and your instructor can follow your arguments easily)	
10	Are my postings evenly distributed throughout the posting period? (Aim: To reflect your participation in the discussion forum from start to finish)	
11	Do I use proper language, grammar, punctuation, etc in my postings? (Aim: To show use of good English in your writing)	
12	Do I use proper cordiality and respect in my postings? (Aim: To show your observance of netiquette)	