

# Getting them on board – online discussions using Canvas



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# Getting them on Board

- Share our experience of online discussions
- My teaching context
- Show examples using the Canvas IVLE
- Share some tips
- Invite you to take part and experience Canvas for yourselves

# Your experience



# Advantages especially in distance learning/MOOCs

- Allows distance learners to fully engage
- Encourages and scaffolds peer collaboration and support



# Disadvantages

- Confusing/difficult to navigate
- Not all learners engage
- Can be challenging for less confident students
- Cultural issues of face



# My context at UoB

- EAP – English for Academic Purposes
- International students
- Onsite classes with VLE used for self access
- All levels from foundation to masters/PhD
- 2013 move from WebCT to Canvas
- Push for all staff to create and maintain courses online
- Push to get SS using new IVLE

# My answer...?

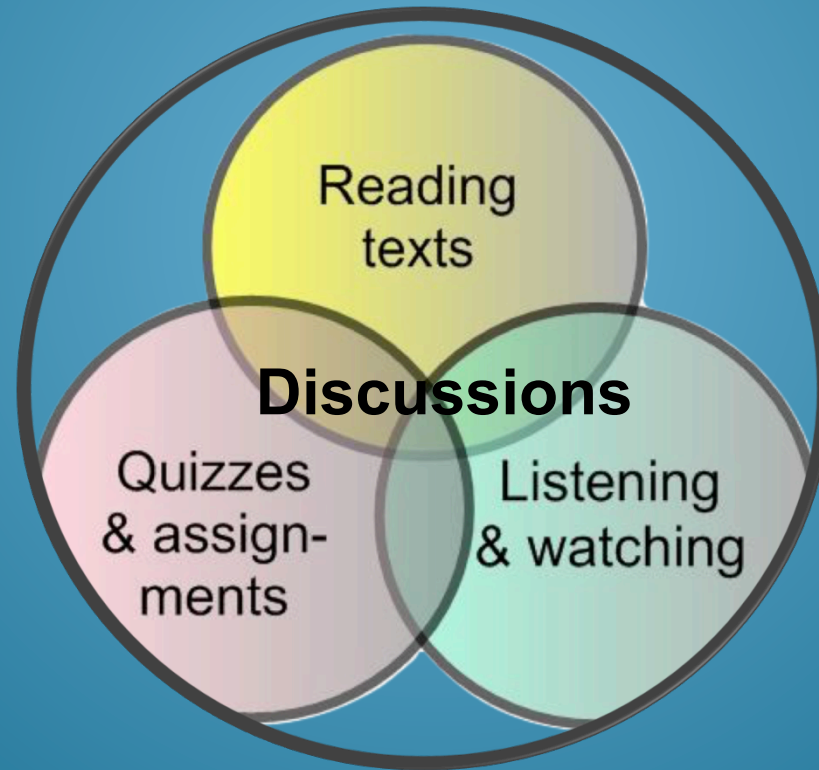
- Try out different features of Canvas
- Discussion boards worked best with least effort!!!





# Getting SS on board

Integrated approach rather than 'add-on'





# Using discussions as a guided forum for learning

- home-based written task (Foundation)
  - home-based oral task (Foundation)
- home & class-based task (Pre-sessional PG)

As I go through the examples, feel free to familiarise yourself with the Canvas interface and try out the example tasks (examples of anonymised student input will be shown here)

# Enrol on the course

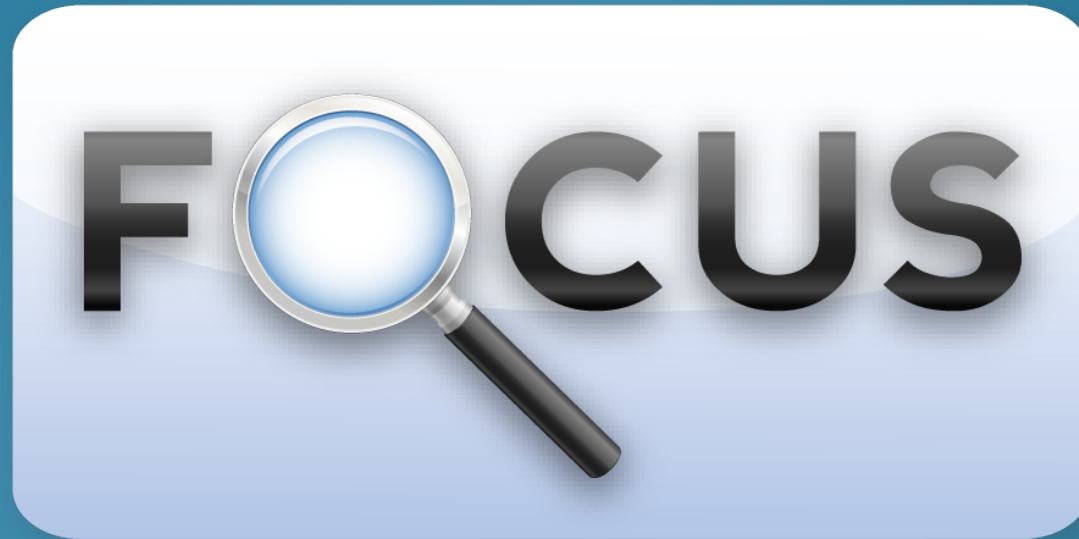
<https://canvas.instructure.com/enroll/HGKKGP>



mozilla  
**Firefox**<sup>®</sup>



# Two ways to activate discussions





# THE WI-FI DEBATE

Jane Sjoberg

Oct 14 at 2:15pm

24

Watch a short TV programme about wireless technology.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHASkiH1JrI>



Provide a guided task.

Include open questions.

1) Why is Wi-Fi a controversial issue?

2) What does Dr Simon Mann (head of the Health Protection Agency's Wi-Fi Project) think about current Wi-Fi safety regulations in the UK? What evidence does he have to support this opinion?

3) What does Professor Olle Johansson (a Swedish neuroscientist and a member of the Radiation Research Trust) think? What evidence does he have for his opinion?

4) Whose position do you feel is more convincing? Why?

Topic Title

HTML Editor

**B** *I* U A ab                                 Font Size Paragraph

Adjust task  
settings to  
reflect  
expectations

Attachment Choose File No file chosen

- Options
- Allow threaded replies
  - Users must post before seeing replies
  - Enable podcast feed
  - Graded

Group Discussion

This is a Group Discussion

Available From

Until

## Example 1 – individual feedback

- 1) Wi-Fi uses microwaves to connect to devices. During this process, one part of the wave will be absorbed by human body. Although there is no science evidence that the absorption is affecting the body, there is a lot of evidence that is caused by microwave radiation.
- 2) Dr Simon Mann thinks the current safety regulations are not enough. He has a lot of evidence that Wi-Fi is harming human body. In addition, the current regulations are not consistent.
- 3) Professor Olle Johanssen believes that Wi-Fi is safe. He has a lot of evidence that the radiation is immense but far lower than the recommended exposure. He also has a lot of evidence that low radiation exposure is safe.
- 4) I did not participate in or read any researches, but I believe that Wi-Fi is safe. I see it everywhere, and little evidence or news showing that Wi-Fi is harmful. I see it in the press. Although Wi-Fi gives huge utility in daily life, I believe that it has many proven vital disadvantages, since there are people who care a lot about their health. With all the evidence that Wi-Fi damages our body, I consider Wi-Fi to be pretty safe to use.

Targeted, individual feedback can encourage further dialogue with the student.



**Jane Sjoberg**

Oct 24, 2014

I see your point about people caring about their health, but by the same logic cigarettes and alcohol would have become obsolete. Even if people know that a product is harmful, this does not mean that they will automatically stop using it!

*Edited by Jane Sjoberg on Oct 24 at 4:25pm*



I think that the logic applied is different. On cigarettes packages. There are slogans that state that it is harmful to human body, and there is the concentration of alcohol printed on the bottle, while no one will tell you that Wifi does any harm to your body upon buying it and using its service.





**Jane Sjoberg**

Oct 24, 2014

## Example 2 – general feedback



I have read all your responses with interest. Most of you seem to be convinced by Dr Mann's assurances that current safety regulations are correct and that we shouldn't worry about wi-fi.

If you'd like to read more about his findings then you can read the attached:

Peyman, A., Khalid, M., Calderon, C., Addison, D., Mee, T., Maslanyj, M., & Mann, P. (2014). Exposure to electromagnetic fields from wireless computer networks (wi-fi) in schools; results of lab

*Edited by Jane Sjoberg on Oct 24 at 4:14pm*

 [peyman\\_wireless\\_laptop\\_rf.pdf](#)

Feedback/answer keys/  
extension tasks can be  
given by replying to the  
whole task at the end.



**Jane Sjoberg**


Oct 24, 2014



If instead you would like to know more about research into the possible dangers of Wi-Fi, you could read:

Lai, H., & Hardell, L. (2011). Cell phone radiofrequency radiation exposure and brain glucose metabolism. *JAMA*, 305(8), 828-829.

I have attached it here for you, too.

 [EditorialJAMA2011.pdf](#)

# Task Design

## Example 3 – task design



INTERNET DATING

Jane Sjöberg

Would you try online dating? Why/why not?

What do you think the risks and benefits of online dating might be?

In your answer you may start a new thread or reply to someone else's comments and explain why you agree or disagree with that person's ideas.

*This topic is closed for comments*

Make reading  
and replying  
part of the task



Search entries or author

Unread



Subscribed

## Discussion Board Workshop

Home

Announcements

Discussions

People

Pages

Modules

Assignments

Grades

Files

Syllabus

Outcomes

Conferences

Collaborations

Quizzes

Settings



Nov 30, 2014



To have an intimate relationships, I must know that person physically and emotionally. Therefore, I would never want to try online dating. The risk from online dating can be varied it could range from fraud to the worst case scenario, rape. In my opinion, people would not get any benefits from online dating. Moreover, I do not think that online dating is morally correct because it is not what nature wants us human to do.

Edited by [redacted] on Nov 30, 2014 at 10:25am



Jane Sjoberg

Dec 5, 2014



In the worst cases, internet dating could lead to serious crime, but most people have safety rules like never meeting a stranger in an isolated place and always having a person to call them during the first half hour of a date. I do wonder about your second comment, though. There are many things that are not 'natural' for humans (e.g. flying) - does that necessarily mean they are wrong?

Write a reply...

- Home
- Announcements
- Modules
- Assignments
- Discussions
- Grades
- People
- Pages
- Quizzes
- Collaborations
- Conferences
- Syllabus
- Outcomes
- Files
- Settings**

Course details

Sections

Navigation

Apps

Feature Options

## Course details

This course has enabled open enrollment. Students can self-enrol in the course URL: <https://canvas.bham.ac.uk/enroll/BCMYN3> [more options](#)

- Let students self-enrol by sharing with them a secret URL
- Add a "Join this Course" link to the course home page
- Let students attach files to discussions
- Let students create discussion topics
- Let students edit or delete their own discussion posts
- Let Students organise their own groups
- Hide totals in student grades summary
- Hide grade distribution graphs from student
- Disable comments on announcements

Adjust  
course  
settings

# Advantages of allowing editing?

- SS can craft replies
- Encourages SS to read each other's responses
- Teacher can see when a S has edited/deleted a post (though not the edit itself)



Nov 30, 2014

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Write a reply...

# Preessional Example

- Main task = Academic Research Paper  
3,000-4,000 words on a topic related to  
chosen major
- Writing process scaffolded by Teacher &  
subject specialist TA
- TOPIC – TITLE – LIT SEARCH – EXTENDED  
OUTLINE – FIRST DRAFT – FINAL DRAFT

[https://canvas.bham.ac.uk/courses/7264/  
discussion\\_topics](https://canvas.bham.ac.uk/courses/7264/discussion_topics)



# Advantages

- Useful platform for planning stages
- Encourages peer discussion/support/peer review (e.g. of outlines)
- Promotes enquiry/shared learning
- Student feedback - positive

What general areas of Computer Science are you interested in?

Last post Aug 11, 2014



ARP Rationale For Tuesday 12th August 08.00am Last post Aug 15,

2014



# Student Feedback

The canvas discussion page was really helpful for me when we write the rational and we should ask each other including you. I can say the truth, I imagine the outline of my topic while you and students were asking questions. **Some question let me think to " oh, stop Wad do not cover this area or i need to read more about something" . [...]**

**Some questions allow me to think to describe some words that i was think it is clear to every one but in fact it is not.** For example, i was thought the word "algorithm" is clear and, but in questions one asked me what is algorithm. So, in my ARP, i wrote a small definition between brackets what is algorithm. In my outline as well, **it was really helpful for me to support my ideas :) I remembered students were inconfident with a point that i wrote in my conclusion and they said i must wrote it in my outline. I did not agree with them and while i discussed with them, my idea is supported and i became more confident with it :)**

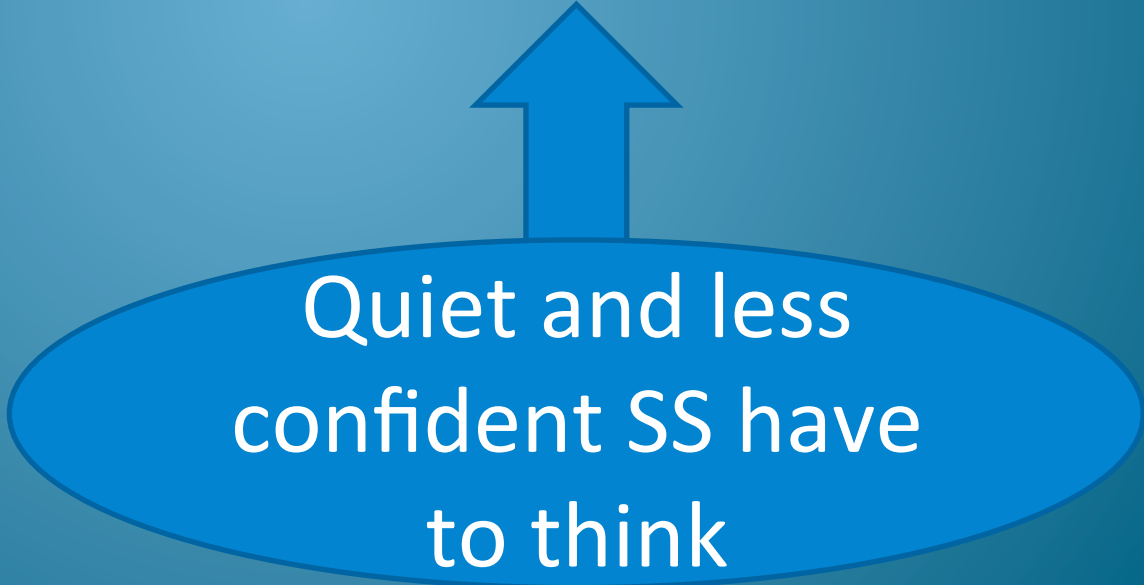
In fact, I really like that page. I hope if we could use it in some courses in my master. But, we do not. So, we create a page or group on Facebook to discuss our work.

# A few final tips



# Don't limit discussion time to homework

- Use online discussions in class instead of F2F pair/group work
- Start an oral discussion in class and follow up with an online version or vice versa



Quiet and less confident SS have to think

BFA English 2 (1)  
2013/14

Home

Announcements

Assignments

**Discussions**

Grades

People

Pages

Syllabus

Quizzes

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Settings

Home > BFA English 2 (1) > Discussions

Search title, body, or author

Unread

Assignments

**+ Discussion**

**▼ Pinned Discussions**

**Organ donation in my country**  
Last post Mar 12, 2014

**Our Personal Opinions**  
Last post Mar 12, 2014

**Academic Style**  
Last post Mar 12, 2014

**▼ Discussions**

**TATTOOS**  
Last post Mar 31, 2014

**Listening - writing an abstract**  
Last post Mar 13, 2014

**What I learnt**  
Last post Mar 5, 2014

Pin a discussion so that SS sees it at the top when clicking on the discussions tab

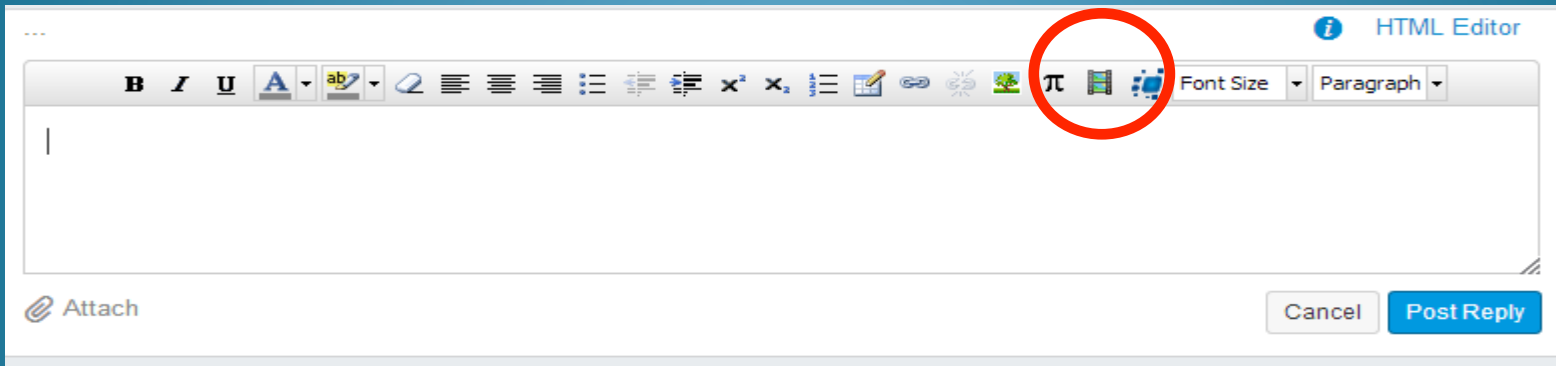
# Disadvantages?

- Possibility to 'go through the motions' just based on other people's contributions (NB can be mitigated in task settings on Canvas)
- Some students still engage less than others
- If feedback given generally, no guarantee that SS engage with it or even look at it



# What's next?

- Setting tasks that involve video responses



- Getting students to design tasks rather than just do them



# Your turn!

- Enrol on the Canvas course if you have not done so already
- Create a discussion task using the + tab
- Play with the settings
- Remember to **SAVE** (bottom) and then click **PUBLISH** (top right) when you are ready for others to view!
- Later ---- participate in one of the other discussions!

# Build your own (free!) or try a course!

- <http://www.instructure.com/try-canvas>



## TRY IT

Take Canvas for a test drive with our free, two-week trial account. It's pre-loaded with course content to help you explore and hit the ground running.



## BUILD IT

Teach your class on Canvas for free, forever. You bring the content and students. We'll provide the awesome platform.

< OR >

# One last thing...

<https://canvas.instructure.com/login>

