

OTS Module 3: Facilitating Online Discussions

Audio Feedback in Online Discussions

You have already spent some time looking at how to establish and maintain a personal presence in your online course. As you have seen, student satisfaction with online learning is directly correlated to their perception of the instructor's level of participation in the course. The crucial word here is perception. Not only is it important for you to spend time in your course it is equally important that students know you spend time engaged with them in the course.

Audio feedback is one technique you can use to bolster that perception of personal engagement. Research by scholars at Virginia Tech, West Virginia University, and UNC-Charlotte indicates that adding audio feedback will "...strengthen both the sense of community and the instructor's ability to affect more personalized communication with students."

Use of audio feedback leads to;

1. The perception by students that the feedback they received was more effective at the conveying nuances of course topics.
2. Student perceptions of increased levels of participation and personal involvement by their instructors.
3. A greater sense of community among students in online classes.
4. Increased retention of course content.
5. A student perception that their instructors care more about them and their learning.

How do you create audio feedback?

Audio feedback can be created in a number of ways. The easiest is to create small .mp3 files using a simple audio editing tool like the open-source tool Audacity or Apple's Face-time and embedding them in course discussions and discussion related announcements.

Alternatively, you can conduct your discussions using a Web 2.0 tool like VoiceThread.

Consult your instructional designer to discuss the details of employing this powerful form of interaction with your students in class discussions.