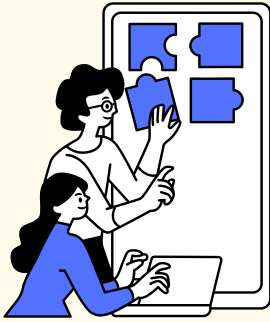# INSTRUCTOR TASKS THAT ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION

BEFORE THE CLASS STARTS

- Set clear outcomes and clear expectations
- Adjust the mark allocation to give weight to participation if appropriate
- Make the policy on plagiarism clear to all
- Indicate when it is best to contact you
- Provide criteria for contacting ("Be sure to contact me if...")
- List assignments info: (When/how to submit...)
- Indicate expectations for adult learners – what they have to do to succeed
- Make it clear in the course description that there is group work if that's part of the course
- If material is being mailed, ask students to check for completeness a soon as they receive the package.
- Provide "How to study" information at appropriate levels – this may be different for high school grads than for those who already have degrees
- Provide a list of extra reference materials
- Introduce yourself with a biographical message
- Requirements for computer skills and communication ability should be clear and should also make it clear why the skills are required.
- Set an expectation that students will keep in touch
- Create a space to invite introductory questions in order to initiate student-to-student interaction
- When planning discussions, frame discussion questions that actually are discussable.

THE CRITICAL FIRST TWO WEEKS

- Make personal contact by any means possible
- Make sure technicalities of contact are possible
- Introduce yourself, and ask students to post an introduction including reasons for taking the course, related experience and other substantive comments.
- Provide a dedicated forum for technical problems, one for questions re: assignments and a "water cooler" or lounge forum for more casual conversation
- Indicate expectation that students will not just 'vanish' on business trips etc.
- Make sure everyone knows what group they are in, and how to post to the group and the whole class
- Make sure they know the instructor can see everything, including postings in groups
- Provide phone numbers for technical emergencies
- Be specific about when you will check and reply to email.
- Make sure all students are registered
- In cases with multiple tutors/instructors in one course, make sure students know who their instructor/tutor is
- Be clear on marking schemes, especially for participation, and the timing of marking
- Encourage participants to submit "am I on the right track" drafts

THROUGHOUT THE COURSE

- In online courses, request contributions specifically (and perhaps publicly) from participants. ("Jo, Antoine and Lynn, you all work in acute care settings. What do you think about this issue?")
- Encourage students to comment on each others' contributions
- Include some discussion starters that are experience based, and some that are content based
- Keep in touch – a "how's it going" email or call can help a struggling participant to complete the course
- Add a "how are you doing" note to the home page
- Give groups power to resolve group problems – let them try to resolve problems first, then come to you if required.
- Allow students to submit drafts for early direction
- Send out general comments about the assignments. For example, when the assignment requires application of theory to personal life or practice, let them know what you learned reading the papers
- Send a summary of the week to private emails outside the course to encourage/entice those who have not been participating to return
- Point out current issues and articles in newspaper, etc. to encourage spontaneous mini-discussion (these activities work well in the lounge).
- Set reminders for yourself of when and what to check
- Keep generic postings to a minimum and keep most of your postings course and student specific
- Offer detailed and constructive comments on assignments
- Use announcements frequently
- Follow through on your promises

AT THE END OF THE COURSE

- Have a concluding remark and best wishes statement
- Encourages students to share class experiences, in, for example, a goodbye forum
- Get your marking done on time and get feedback to students
- Review student feedback to make revisions aimed at boosting participation next time