Taking the temperature of your online classroom

Have you been thinking – how are my students doing online? Are they learning what was intended? What are they struggling with?

You could ask students these questions directly, however some students are reluctant to respond as their responses can be linked to their name, immortalising them as *'the person who did not know'*. However, you can use learnonline in ways that allows students to **anonymously respond** to your questions.

In this *Guide*, we will run through a few ways that you can 'take the temperature' of your online classroom to determine how your students are going with their learning.

Establishing knowledge

When starting a new topic, it is good practice to try to link the new knowledge to something that students already know (Ambrose *et al*., 2010). To find out what that is, you would generally ask questions of the students, such as:

- What did you get out of the reading?
- Have you ever been in this situation?
- What do you think about ...?

Students' responses to these questions can help you tailor your lesson to your audience, making the learning experience more effective.

An example can be seen in the course JUST 2011 where they use the **feedback tool** in learnonline to find out what assumptions student bring to the course about corrections, offenders and offending in Week 1.

The results from the anonymous poll are summarised the following week by the teacher and are posted to the course forum.

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Poll: What do you think?

Before we leap into the course, we would like to know what you think. In the Poll below, answer the five questions. They are designed to test the assumptions you bring with you to the course. We will summarise the (anonymous) findings for you next week.

Later in the course you will reflect on how accurate your ideas about Corrections, offenders and offending were.

📢 Poll: What do you think?

With feedback, you can ask various question types such as multiple choice, numeric, short answer and longer text responses.

You can also ask students about their incoming knowledge using Zoom by setting up a **Zoom poll**. By ticking the option anonymous, you can gather information from your Zoom participants without their details being recorded.

Edit Poll 1

Experience with virtual classrooms

☑ Anonymous? ⑦

1. Have you experienced a virtual classroom before?

   ◉ Single Choice   ○ Multiple Choice

   Yes - I have hosted sessions

   Yes - I have been a participant

   No - but I have done teleconferencing

   No - this is all new to me

Minute paper/ Muddiest point

Many of you would have heard of 'minute papers' or 'muddiest points' (Angelo & Cross, 1993), which are quick surveys held at the end of a lesson that asks students to anonymously respond to one, or both of the following questions:
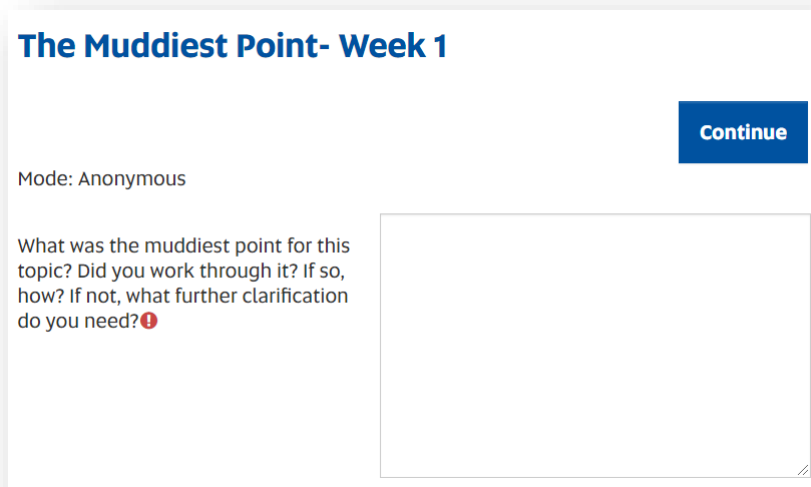
- what was the most important thing you learnt?
- what questions do you still have unanswered?

The teacher then collects and collates the work and responds to the students at the beginning of the next lesson about what came out from the survey. It is a great way to find out what students are actually learning and what they are struggling with!

An example of an online program that regularly uses muddiest points is UO Construction Management.

The **feedback tool** in learnonline is used at the end of each week, in each course, and students are invited to anonymously respond to the question by Sunday night:

What was the muddiest point for this topic? Did you work through it? If so, how? If not, what further clarification do you need?

The teacher then reviews this feedback on Monday mornings, and prepares a forum post to all students that explains any identified issues. They then can take action to redress the problem for current and future cohorts.

This strategy is great to use when an online course is offered for the first few times to flush out any gaps in the course, but eventually the responses will drop off as the course gets updated to address any problem areas.

You can see an in-course example (although you will not be able to see data) https://uo.unisa.edu.au/course/view.php?id=778&sectionid=57413.

How do I set up anonymous responses to questions in my course?

Instructions on how to set up the feedback tool in learnonline
https://lo.unisa.edu.au/mod/page/view.php?id=1697573

Instructions on how to set up Poll tool in Zoom
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=72&v=erz4xtQHoVs

If you would like to ask online teaching and learning questions related to your course, you can look through our FAQs, write to TIU@unisa.edu.au, have an online consultation with a member of the TIU, or complete the online modules as part of *Introduction to Engaging Learners Online*.

References

Ambrose S, Bridges M, DiPietro, Lovett M, & Norman M 2010, How Does Students' Prior Knowledge Affect Their Learning? In *How Learning Works: 7 Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching*, Jossey Bass, San Francisco, pp 10-39.

Angelo T & Cross K 1993, Classroom Assessment Techniques 2nd Ed, Jossey Bass, San Francisco, pp 148-158.