

# Teaching and Supporting Online Learners 3

Communicate positively and often

	Strategies	Some Student Comments
1	Communicate with online learners regularly and positively – let them know that you are interested in them and that they are just as important as face-to-face students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>If you're in a classroom situation at least you can ask your fellow students or the tutors but when you're remote, you have no idea and you have to try and work it out. You waste so much time; you'd be there for hours working out the problem before you even start the assignment.</i></li><li>• <i>I had to ask a lot of questions and I kind of had to force myself to email the tutor without feeling like I was being annoying or anything.</i></li><li>• <i>The support on the emails I find is very beneficial and helpful. They come at the right times that remind you that it doesn't matter if you're new or you've been at it for 10 years, everybody still faces the same problems where you need to get up and walk away or, if you need to have a sleep or if you're just finding it's all too hard, you're not alone.</i></li><li>• <i>Sometimes just to be reminded you're not alone, regardless of where everybody's at. It helps because when you are doing studies online; you sit in your own worlds, just you and your computer and all your paperwork and textbooks around you and your everyday life and everything else going on and you just try to shut it off to the point you become so isolated and then you realise "Oh that's right, it's nice to know that there are other people sitting there doing that"</i></li><li>• <i>Some of the tutors actually would give you little snippets of their day in what they did in that hour, like what degree or whatever master's they're still trying to undertake and complete and give you a bit of a run-down on how many assignments and that.</i></li><li>• <i>They have online classes, like where you can go and talk and the teacher talks back.</i></li></ul>

	Strategies	Some Student Comments
2	<p>Be accessible – make sure students know when and how they can contact you. They can't see you so they need to know you are there.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>I have corresponded to all of my different tutors for each different unit and have had a few reply and some have been very supportive and they're very helpful and others are very, you know, staunch at reminding you that, you know, they're just as busy as well.</i></li> <li><i>My tutor, she was wonderful. She gave incredible feedback. I said I could follow her feedback and each time it would get better. You know, I'd achieve a higher mark and I ended up getting 93%.</i></li> <li><i>The tutors are fantastic. They talk non-stop which is just brilliant, you know, there's so much to learn from them.</i></li> <li><i>I gain more confidence out of the feedback from the teachers than I had out of any other forums or anything else. One of them noticed how much effort I put into one of the things, even though I technically I wasn't up there, she realised how much work I'd done. It means that they're aware of what students are doing. So when they write a blurb about what you're doing it's awesome.</i></li> </ul>
3	<p>Student forums can be problematic and often not well moderated – there is a need to ensure good design and responsiveness of the moderator so that students feel comfortable and confident using them</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The first two units we had a weekly class, that we would all log into and we had the tutor – she'd put the questions up on the main screen and we had a box off to the side where we could write our responses or ask questions</i></li> <li><i>I found that really did generate a hell of a lot of thought provoking questions and I found those to be extremely beneficial.</i></li> <li><i>The discussion boards are sometimes quite good but sometimes a bit futile; depending on the unit, some of the questions I find are a little bit mundane; they're not explanatory enough – the questions are too general, they can be read in three or four different ways or interpreted in three or four different ways.</i></li> <li><i>You sort of sit back on these discussion boards and see that ... you're pretty much just a number...</i></li> <li><i>When you're studying on-line even though the teachers encourage group discussion or whatever, believe me, some of them cannot be bothered with it. I think the forums, when they put you into a group and you've got to come up with things, I had a lot of issues with that and I think that's actually more stressful for students ... participation is low and there's a lot of excuses. I might as well just do it myself.</i></li> <li><i>Forums I don't handle... Well I don't like as much because certain people who like to ask questions constantly are quite regularly irrelevant.</i></li> <li><i>Even in the discussions on the bulletin board the tutor will correct your phrasing if you haven't correctly attributed your ideas. I love that. It is amazing. It has helped me so much and that is what I think uni is.</i></li> </ul>