

Brightspace Communications Guide for Instructors

Communicating with your students is an important facet of any course. Establishing your instructor presence is critical in an online course, and this guide will help you choose which tool to use. We have included a chart that identifies the Brightspace communication tools that best suit common scenarios, and a reference guide for each tool.

Scenario	Recommended Tools
<p>INFORM</p> <p>Providing students with timely information is critical as it helps to keep them on track and increases success rates. Use Brightspace to keep students informed of important dates and events, and to provide access to reference tools.</p>	<p>News, Email, Calendar, Discussion Forums, FAQ, and /or Glossary.</p>
<p>CONNECT</p> <p>Nurturing a connection with your students is especially critical in an online environment. Create instructor presence, manage discussions, and facilitate introductions.</p>	<p>Discussion Forums and/or Replace Strings.</p>
<p>SUPPORT</p> <p>Maintaining virtual office hours and having an online presence will increase your chances of reaching students in difficulty before a crisis. You can also monitor student progress and provide appropriate interventions and support.</p>	<p>Email, Chat, Intelligent Agent, and/or Pager.</p>
<p>COLLABORATE</p> <p>Increase collaboration between students by using the tools available in Brightspace. This can increase engagement and help create a community of learners, which in turn provides better opportunities for learning.</p>	<p>Discussion Forums, ePortfolios, Chat, and/or Pager.</p>
<p>REFLECT</p> <p>Provide opportunities for student reflection and learning. Use Brightspace to encourage reflection and awareness of learning.</p>	<p>Discussion Forums and/or ePortfolio.</p>



Reference Guide – Brightspace Communication Tools

Tool	Description and suggested uses
CALENDAR	Set up calendar events to alert students of assignment deadlines and other important dates.
CHAT	Real time text-based course chat rooms that can be used for informal discussions, brainstorming, or office hours. Can only chat with online students or faculty. Transcripts can be printed or saved for your records.
DISCUSSION FORUM	<p>Course-based discussion boards that are typically used for topic-specific discussions or reflections. The asynchronous nature gives time for reflection and more thoughtful debate. This allows students who might not speak up in class to participate more fully.</p> <p>Can also have a general forum where students can post questions and get assistance from classmates or instructors. Also use the General Forum to post answers to common questions you have been receiving. Grading is optional.</p>
EMAIL	Email can be sent to individual students or to the entire class. Emails are sent to official Dal email accounts and any responses are sent through email, not Brightspace.
EPORTFOLIO	Students can create and share reflections and examples of their work in their ePortfolio and allow classmates to comment on them. Assignments can be set up to accept ePortfolio work and presentations.
FAQ	Create a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page for your course.
GLOSSARY	Create a glossary of commonly used terminology for your course as a reference document.
INTELLIGENT AGENT	Intelligent agents can notify you (or individual students) when specific events occur. Used to monitor activity and trigger automated messages. For instance, the system can send an email automatically if a student has not logged in for a predetermined period of time, or if they have performed below expectations on a specific assignment.
NEWS	Post important changes and updates to your course home page using the News tool.
PAGER	Text-based messaging system for informal/quick conversations with individual students, other faculty, or announcements to the class. All parties do not have to be online simultaneously (similar to texting on your phone).
REPLACE STRINGS	Replace strings can be used throughout the course to personalize the overall online experience. For instance, this feature allows you to use each student's name in a group email or communication automatically. DO NOT OVERUSE.

* See next page for additional other communication tools that are fully integrated with and accessible through Brightspace.

Reference Guide – Other Communication Tools that are fully integrated and accessible through Brightspace

Tool	Description and suggested uses
CAMPUS PACK	Use Campus Pack wikis, journals, and blogs to increase opportunities for collaboration, sharing, and reflection.
COLLABORATE	Full web-conferencing suite with screen sharing and recording capabilities. Best used for planned synchronous online class discussions. Can also be used for individual face to face meetings with students needing assistance.
OFFICE 365	Office 365 can be used to collaborate and co-create documents (Word, Excel, PowerPoint etc.)

For additional training resources , go to <http://www.dal.ca/dept/elearning/training-resources.html>

Suggested Readings

[Creating a Sense of Instructor Presence in the Online Classroom](#) (Faculty Focus, 2014)

[Fostering Collaboration in the Online Classroom](#) (Faculty Focus, 2011)

[How to Plan for and Moderate Online Discussions for Online Learning](#) (Contact North, 2013)

[How to Promote Critical Thinking with Online Discussion Forums](#) (Online Learning Insights, 2013)

[Instructor Presence in the Online Class – Key to Learner Success](#) (Online Learning Insights, 2012)

[Six Ways to get your Online Students Participating in the Course](#) (Faculty Focus, 2012)