

Facilitating Online

A course leader's guide

Tony Carr, Shaheeda Jaffer and Jeanne Smuts



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Published by the Centre for Educational Technology

Dedication

This reprint of Facilitating Online is dedicated to the memory of Jeanne Smuts who died on 28th July 2009. Jeanne brought her passion, her transformational insight and her materials development expertise to this project. Jeanne was ingenious, courageous, compassionate and beautiful. Her physical challenges could not constrain her soul nor her passions for human connection, deep learning, powerful communication and profound personal and social change. She is greatly missed.

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Introduction

Why do we need an online facilitation course?

Increasingly, universities are using online resources and interaction to support student learning. Even educators with excellent face-to-face facilitation skills are likely to confront a significant learning curve in transferring these skills to the online environment. Sound online facilitation skills can equip educators to facilitate engaged students across a range of conversational spaces, including online discussion forums, chat rooms, wikis and blogs, for debate and shared knowledge construction. Trained online facilitators are also able to make appropriate choices concerning the use of online communication within the design of learning activities.

While several online facilitation courses already exist, these are not easily available to educators from African educational institutions. In response to this need, we have developed *Facilitating Online*, an online facilitation course, as an Open Educational Resource for training educators and online community facilitators in Anglophone Africa. The online course resources are freely available and can be customised for local contexts. The course resources consist of a downloadable *Course Leader's Guide* and a specimen online course site, which are available on the website of the Centre for Educational Technology (<http://www.cet.uct.ac.za/FacilitatingOnline>). You can also send us comments or queries at cet-facilitate@uct.ac.za.

About this guide

The *Facilitating Online: Course Leader's Guide* consists of six sections, which comprise both the course content and guidance on implementing the course.

Section 1 (About the course) contains the course description, which outlines the purpose of the course, the principles underlying the course, the capabilities expected of online facilitators, the course model, and course and specific outcomes.

Section 2 (Advice to participants) provides the requirements for prospective participants and the preparation required by them for effective participation.

Section 3 (Week-by-week activities) contains the activities for each of the five weeks of the course. The activities address the participant directly. Therefore, these activities could be used by you with minor adaptations to your online learning environment, or could be adapted to your local context. The activities refer to tools for the online environment in which the *Facilitating Online* course was piloted. You will need to link references to tools in the activities to actual tools in your online learning environment. You will also need to link the referenced articles in the activities to articles stored in the resources section of your online learning environment.

Section 4 (Preparing to run the course) provides advice on the skills that you as the course leader need to lead this course, the infrastructure that you need to have in place to implement this course, and what you need to do to set up this course.

Section 5 (Implementing the course) provides general guidance on what would be required from you when you implement this course. The guidance advises you on what needs to be done the week before the course, during the course, and after the course.

Section 6 (Week-by-week guidance) gives you detailed advice on each learning activity throughout the five weeks. Each week has an overview, which is intended to give you a quick sense of what to expect for that week.



Section 1

About the course

This online course focuses on online facilitation in fully online courses, mixed mode courses, online conferences or collaboration projects. Therefore, it is intended for educators of courses, online conference hosts or project leaders of online projects. The course takes place over a period of five weeks, and includes asynchronous and synchronous learning activities.

Purpose of the course

The purpose of this course is to:

- develop knowledge, skills and attitudes concerning online facilitation, with application in online components of formal courses and online collaboration projects;
- provide an awareness of and develop skills in the toolsets available to support online facilitation (e.g. online discussions, blogs, podcasts and synchronous communication software); and
- develop knowledge and skills in designing online activities using an appropriate combination of technologies in online components of formal courses and online collaboration projects.

Course principles

This online facilitation course adopts an active and experiential approach to learning. The course is based on the following principles.

Fostering online learning communities

This course fosters the capacity to build online learning communities and communities of practice within the context of courses and conferences. This course is also designed to provide participants with an experience of engagement in an online learning community. Online learning communities are encouraged through developing online interaction and learning conversations amongst participants. Acknowledging, valuing, respecting and accommodating diversity as a combination of similarities and differences plays a central role in fostering and maintaining online learning communities. The course creates awareness of the benefits of online facilitation as a step towards becoming leaders of online learning communities.

While the *Facilitating Online* course mostly uses online discussion, chat and e-mail, it also introduces the opportunities afforded by Web 2.0 technologies for developing and maintaining online learning communities.

Playful learning

The course uses play as a bridge to learning by attempting to make learning fun. Playful learning involves participants taking small risks, playing with ideas, keeping an open mind and making connections where they are not obvious. Participants are encouraged to express their creativity through developing their ability to challenge, question and explore.

Reflective learning

A key principle underpinning this course is the emphasis on reflection as a learning process. Reflection on your own learning helps you to take ownership of your learning process. Articulating your reflections makes your thinking available for comment and feedback.

Reflection is an important facet in the development of online facilitation skills and strategies required for the establishment and maintenance of online learning communities. Reflection enables participants to become aware of themselves both as learners and as facilitators.

Capabilities of online facilitators

The capabilities listed in Table 1.1 are indicators of what expert online facilitators are expected to be able to do. These capabilities required for facilitating learning online are organised into five categories:

- supporting online learning;
- social skills;
- online communication skills;
- technical skills; and
- social networking skills.

While the course addresses some of these capabilities, we do not expect participants to emerge from the course as expert facilitators. Facilitators develop expertise over a long period of time through practicing online facilitation in different contexts. Each activity addresses a few specific outcomes and builds towards the capabilities outlined below. The specific outcomes and their relation to the capabilities are contained in the tables preceding the activities for each week of the course.

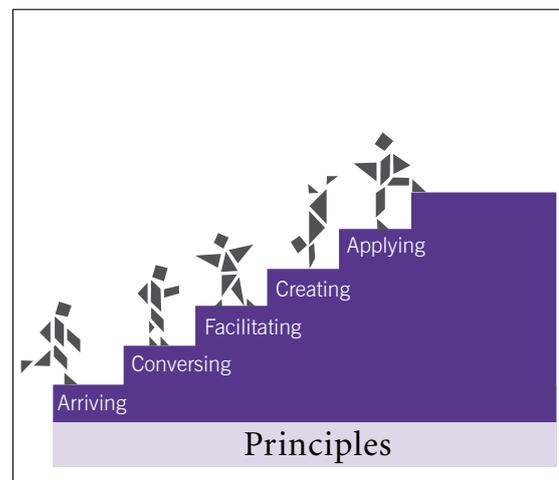
Course model

The course is based on the model shown in Figure 1.1, which illustrates the learning pathway that participants will travel as they progress through the course. Initially, the participant will be a newcomer to online learning facilitation. We hope that this course enables the participant to become a facilitator capable of facilitating an online course or conference independently.

The model rests on the principles outlined above and assumes particular forms of engagement that are agreed upon by participants in the online learning community. At

each level, participants take on particular roles and develop specific skills, which are outlined in more detail below. Your role as course leader will also change during the course.

Figure 1.1 Course model



Level 1: Arriving

At this stage, the participant enters the online space. The participant's role is to show presence in the online learning environment, to notice the presence of others and to become familiar with the online space. The course leader plays the role of the host who eases the participant's access to the course and welcomes participants to the online learning space.

Level 2: Conversing

At this stage, participants get to know each other and the course leader better, are introduced to basic online facilitation skills and begin to develop strategies for building online learning communities. The course leader takes on the role of a community builder and a guide.

Level 3: Facilitating

At this stage, the participants begin to take on a more active role as novice facilitators as they increase their knowledge of facilitation skills and strategies. The course facilitator takes on the role of coach and mentor.

Level 4: Creating

At this stage, participants are given opportunities to sharpen their skills as facilitators. Opportunities are created to raise

Table 1.1 Capabilities of online facilitators

Quality Stage	Beginner	Intermediate	Expert
Supporting online learning	Recognises challenges faced by participants	Recognises challenges faced by participants and provides support to participants	Recognises challenges faced by participants, provides support to participants and anticipates participants' challenges
	Engages in knowledge construction by participating in discussions	Facilitates knowledge construction by using questioning and providing feedback to participants	Facilitates knowledge construction by using stimulating questioning, providing generative feedback to participants, exploring ideas by stimulating debate and knowing when to be silent
	Participates as a group member and uses time effectively	Manages individuals and groups, uses time effectively and paces discussions	Manages individuals and groups with ease, uses time effectively and paces discussions appropriately
Social skills	Participates in making a welcoming and enabling learning environment	Creates a welcoming and enabling environment and attempts to build trust amongst participants	Creates a welcoming and enabling environment with ease and builds trust easily amongst participants
	Recognises why individuals are not participating	Possesses some strategies for engaging individuals who are not participating	Possesses a range of strategies for engaging individuals who are not participating
	Acknowledges diversity and is aware of personal role in potential conflict	Acknowledges diversity, is aware of interpersonal dynamics and attempts to manage diversity and conflict	Acknowledges diversity, is aware of interpersonal dynamics and manages diversity and conflict constructively
Online communication skills	Writes clearly and concisely online	Writes clearly and concisely online and produces engaging messages encouraging participation	Writes clearly and concisely online, produces engaging messages encouraging participation and communicates in multi-modal forms
Technical skills	Navigates learning environment	Navigates learning environment easily and is able to provide basic technical support in relation to learning environment to participants	Navigates learning environment easily and knows how to deliver support to participants quickly
	Uses basic tools such as email, chat and discussions in online environments	Uses advanced tools such as wikis, blogs and online meeting rooms in online environments	Uses advanced tools such as wikis, blogs and online meeting rooms in online environments and manages learning environments
Social networking skills	Participates in social networks by participating in discussions and accessing resources	Participates in social networks by participating in discussions and accessing and sharing resources	Participates in social networks by participating in discussions, accessing and sharing resources and initiating and facilitating groups

awareness of diversity, conflict and building trust in online learning communities. Participants also adapt or design learning activities for their online learning courses. The course facilitator maintains the role of coach and mentor.

Level 5: Applying

At this stage, participants prepare for leaving the course and becoming independent online facilitators. The focus is on building networks and finding resources that will serve as a support base outside this course environment. Participants and the course leader engage as peers within an online community of practice.

Course outcomes

The course outcomes express the knowledge, values and skills that participants are expected to have and demonstrate at the end of the course.

At the end of the course, participants should be able to:

- facilitate asynchronous online discussions;
- facilitate synchronous online discussions;

- demonstrate knowledge of different facilitation strategies in response to diversity, difference and conflict;
- demonstrate knowledge of the opportunities afforded by Web 2.0 technologies for online learning communities; and
- design or adapt short online learning activities using a range of online facilitation tools appropriately.

Specific outcomes

While the course outcomes describe what participants should know and be able to do by the end of the course, the specific outcomes describe the minimum level, depth and breadth of what is to be learnt. The course outcomes remain the same from week to week, while specific outcomes change from week to week. The specific outcomes are grouped into the same categories as the general capabilities expected of expert online facilitators: online learning, social skills, social networking skills and technical skills. The specific outcomes are listed in Section 3 (Week-by-week activities).

Section 2

Advice to participants

In this section, we outline the requirements expected of prospective participants who are considering joining the course and the preparation required by them for effective participation. Please note that the requirements and preparation notes address the participant. You may want to change this advice to suit your local context.

Requirements of the course

Time

Over the next five weeks, you will be expected to participate consistently. You will need to allocate up to ten hours per week to gain maximum benefit from this course, and to log in to the course website and participate in learning activities during at least four days of the week. You will need to work out what suits you best. It is often advisable to log in for about one hour in the morning to complete the activity for the day and then to check in later in the afternoon to respond to other participants' questions and responses. However, the timing will vary depending on the differences in time zones between you and other participants and the facilitator. If you can ensure that at least some of the time that you spend in the course is free of interruptions, then your progress is likely to be faster. You will find it difficult to do this course during short breaks in your normal working day. Therefore, you should treat this course as you would treat a face-to-face course where you are expected to attend

course sessions. You are advised to block out certain times in your daily calendar to focus on the course activities.

Technology

For this to work well, you will need a reliable Internet connection. If you have a very slow dial-up or network connection to the Internet, you will need to be very patient as pages download. In this case, you are advised to compose your messages offline before joining discussion forums and to download or print sections of the course for off-line reading.

You will need a recent version of a web browser (Microsoft Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Opera or Safari) and a recent version of a word processor and spreadsheet (Microsoft Office or Open Office). For some of the activities later in the course, you will need to have the latest version of Adobe Flash installed on your computer. If you can play sound files through speakers or microphone, then you will be able to use all of our course materials.

Technical skills

The technical skills needed for this course include basic word processing, sending and receiving emails with attachments, web searches, opening Internet sites and downloading online resources. If you currently lack these skills, then we suggest that you learn them first and join the course the next time it is run.

Preparing to arrive (Week 0)

During the week before the course starts officially (Week 0), we will send you the information outlined below that we think you need in order to make a good start. If there are technical challenges, you can find out what they are before the course starts. Then you should try to resolve these. The communication during this week may also help you to consider how the time needed for the course will fit in with all the other parts of your life.

You will receive an arrival instruction document, which will be emailed to you. This will familiarise you with the course programme and technical guidelines. By the start of the course, we expect that you will have logged on to the course site, completed the 'Who are we?' survey and started your learning journal. If you have any questions, please contact the course leader.

Accessing the website

The course website will be made available to you from a time specified by the course leader, who will send you an email with the course site address, your username, password to login and a time to begin accessing the course. Your course leader will also provide you with instructions for changing your password. If you have not received your username and password by the Wednesday before the course begins, please contact the course leader at the email address provided in the initial course communication.

Completing a survey

As we prepare for the start of the course, we need to consider ourselves as a new online learning community. It will be much easier for us to make contact with each other and to start working together productively early in the course if we know something about each other's interests, goals and expectations. We have designed a survey (see Appendix 1)

to help us to share some information about ourselves across the class. From the results, we will be able to see information about each participant and about our course community as a whole. Our survey will be live and available to you on the course website.

Starting a journal

Keeping a journal is a great way to reflect on your learning. You are encouraged to keep a journal of your experiences on this course from the outset. This will help you to monitor your own growth as an online facilitator and to review how much you have learned at the end of the course. You can keep a paper journal or record it electronically as a word document. This is a private space for your eyes only, where you can say anything you want at any time!

You will also be encouraged to bring some of your reflections to the course community in a shared journal, which you will find as a topic with your name in the 'Journals' forum for the course. This will help you to contribute to the course and to receive feedback from others. Some of these reflections will also help you to participate in the end-of-week 'Reflections' topic, which is the last activity each week. Some of these reflections will be directed by questions posed by the facilitator. However, you should feel free to share reflections or ask questions about anything else related to the course. Please feel encouraged to post messages in journal topics owned by colleagues in the course if you want to engage with their thinking. On the other hand, you are not obliged to reply to comments by anyone else on your journal topic.

Here are some questions that will help you to start your learning journal:

- What are your feelings about the course before you start?
- What are your goals and expectations for the course?
- How will you know if you have met your goals?

Be as specific as possible and enjoy using your journal on your learning journey.

Section 3

Week-by-week activities

This section contains the learning activities for the five weeks of the course. Each week corresponds to a level as outlined in the course model. Each week contains an overview of the specific outcomes that the activities in that week develop. The specific outcomes are grouped in terms of the same categories used for the capabilities of experts in Table 1.1. There are four to seven activities for each week, which ends with an end-of-week reflection activity. Each activity outlines the purpose of the task, the actual task, the tools used and the time frames for completing the task.

Week 1 Arriving

In this week, we focus on welcoming everyone to the course, familiarising ourselves with the course environment, programme and outcomes and getting to meet each other online. You will also have an opportunity to consider your strengths and learning opportunities as an online facilitator.

Table 3.1 shows the specific outcomes that you should be able to achieve by the end of this week. The specific outcomes are grouped according to the categories used for the capabilities of online facilitators in Table 1.1.

Table 3.1 Week 1 Arriving – specific outcomes

Online learning	Social skills	Social networking skills	Online communication skills	Technical skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• articulate strategies for using chat as an online facilitation and learning tool• assess personal strengths and weaknesses in relation to course online facilitation capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• make yourself better known to your fellow participants• participate in making the learning environment welcoming and enabling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• participate in a social network to support individuals with technical aspects of the online learning environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• read and respond to messages using discussion forums• read and respond to messages using online chats• send and reply to private email messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• log in to the online course site• navigate the online course environment and locate announcements, discussion forums, chats, private messages, library• update your profile in the online course environment

Activity 1.1 Introducing ourselves

Here we are, in the course website. Now it is time to take the step of making ourselves visible to each other. Who knows what could happen next?

Purpose: Practicing reading and writing messages

Task: Come to the 'Introducing ourselves' topic in the 'Week 1 Arriving' forum. Say 'hello' to us by replying with a message. Tell us what is happening right now around you in your physical location. What can you hear and see as you prepare this message? Include something about your experience of getting to the site. Next, look out for and read the responses from the other participants. Respond to one or more participants whose messages you found interesting. Just hit the 'Post Reply' button to open the message form. If you want to respond to a particular message, then refer to the message in yours.

Tools: Discussion forum

When: Week 1, Monday – Tuesday

Activity 1.2 Creating our profiles

If we want to make it easy for other participants to find basic information about ourselves, then we can share it in one place – our profiles.

Purpose: Creating a basic web presence

Task: Tell us more about yourself by updating your profile. To do this, you will need to:

- click on the 'My Profile' link on the left-hand side of the page;
- enter the information you want to share (you can also upload a digital image if you want to);
- then scroll to the bottom of the screen to 'Save' the updated profile; and
- take a look at the profiles of the course leader and other participants by clicking on their names in the list of participants (this will help you to get a better sense of who is in the course with you).

Tools: My profile

When: Week 1, Monday – Tuesday

Activity 1.3 Getting to know our space

Our course includes several readings and other resources. Mostly, there will be links to these from the course materials. Sometimes though, you will want to navigate the folders that contain our online library. This activity will help you to do this.

Purpose: Practicing finding resources in the library

Task: Browse around the site. Go to the library and find the document 'Online facilitation course model' (Appendix 2) in the Week 1 folder in the library. Record any insights or questions about the model in your shared learning journal. Respond to the insights and questions about the course model shared by at least one of your colleagues in their journal.

Tools: Library and learning journal

When: Week 1, Tuesday

Activity 1.4 'Just three words' game

Play is an important part of learning. In this activity, we play together with words.

Purpose: Starting to communicate in a chat room

Task: Join the 'Just three words' chat and reply to the last message. The only rule is that your message must consist of three words. Have fun!

Tools: Chat room

When: Week 1, Wednesday – Thursday

Activity 1.5 Talking about technology

There is a lot of technology between us. We hope that it will connect us, but this will only happen if we learn how to use it well.

Purpose: Learning how to get the best from the online learning environment

Task: Do you have any questions about how to use the online environment as you explore the course? Or maybe you have suggestions or answers to questions from fellow course participants. Come and join the discussion in the 'Talking about technology' topic where we can generate knowledge collectively.

Tools: Discussion forum

When: Week 1, Thursday – Friday

Activity 1.6 Exploring synchronous communication

Chats allow for a level of spontaneity and energy that can sometimes feel chaotic. Let us explore how we can harness this energy for our learning on this course.

Purpose: Practicing and reflecting on synchronous communication

Task: Join the online meeting in our chat room at the agreed chat time on Thursday OR on Friday. This is a weekly opportunity to catch up with each other about our progress in the course and to explore the use of synchronous

communication for online learning communities. This week we will use our experience of the chat to consider what facilitators and participants need to do to support effective communication in a chat room.

Tools: Chat room

When: Week 1, Thursday or Friday (exact time to be specified)

Figure 3.1 Synchronous communication



Activity 1.7 Assessing your online facilitation capabilities

Here, each of us considers what we most need to learn to become effective online facilitators. There is an opportunity for a private conversation with the course leader about this.

Purpose: Reflecting on personal learning goals

Task: Read the document on 'Online facilitator capabilities' (Appendix 3). Then assess your strengths and weaknesses in relation to the facilitator capabilities. Note your strengths and weaknesses and key learning objectives in your learning journal. Check in with the course leader by sending a message to comment on your strengths and weaknesses and learning goals. Communicate with the course leader by email at course.leader@domain.ac.za.

Tools: email

When: Week 1 Thursday – Friday

Week 1 Reflection

Purpose: To reflect on our learning in Week 1

Task 1: Review the entries that you have made in your private journal. When you are ready, spend a few minutes capturing your thoughts in your shared learning journal. Then take part in the closing conversation for the week by sharing a few of your reflections in the 'Week 1 Reflections' topic

Task 2: Share some of your reflections on the following questions:

- What have you liked so far?
- What can you do to improve your participation?
- What can you suggest to the facilitators to improve the workshop?

Respond to reflections by one or more of the participants by Monday of Week 2. Try to engage thoughtfully with perceptions that may be different from yours.

Tools: Discussion forum

When: Week 1, Friday – Week 2, Monday

Week 2 Conversing

In this week, we consider strategies for building online learning communities, agreements about how our community will work together and some online facilitation skills and strategies. Along the way, we will get to know each other better.

Table 3.2 shows the specific outcomes that you should be able to achieve by the end of this week. The specific outcomes are grouped according to the categories used for the capabilities of online facilitators in Table 1.1.

Table 3.2 Week 2 Conversing – specific outcomes

Online learning	Social skills	Social networking skills	Online communication skills	Technical skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify the alignment between own learning goals, other participants' goals and the overall Online Facilitation Course purpose • develop and apply strategies to encourage online participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reflect on strategies for building online learning communities • articulate appropriate ways of working together as a group • reflect on the experience of engaging with other participants in order to get to know each other better in an online learning environment • work collaboratively to develop a shared group purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop a knowledge resource collaboratively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • read and respond to messages using discussion forums • read and respond to messages using private messages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use a wiki as an information sharing tool

Activity 2.1 Similarity Safari

Participating in this fun activity will give you an opportunity to get to know others on the course and to start building a community. Start by getting to know a few people with whom you have something in common.

Purpose: Using personal communication in building a learning community

Task:

1. Check the results for Part 1 and Part 2 of the 'Who are we?' survey in the library.
2. Go on a 'Similarity Safari' and identify how much these parts of the survey show about what you have in common with your fellow participants.
3. Engage with one or two participants with whom you feel you have a lot in common using the private messages tool. Try to get to know the person a bit better. Take care to check for messages from other participants and to reply to these.
4. Then join the 'Similarity Safari' topic in the Week 2 forum where we can talk about this experience of making contact with individuals within the group. Were you able to identify participants with whom you have something in common? How was the communication similar to or different from getting to know people in a face-to-face workshop?

Tools: Discussion forums and private messages

When: Week 2, Monday – Tuesday

Activity 2.2 Developing shared goals

We have thought about our individual learning objectives or expectations of the course. This is where we look at whether we have any shared learning goals.

Purpose: Identifying what we need to learn together

Task:

1. Read the following:
 - our combined expectations as collated from the responses to Part 3: 'What I want to learn' in the 'Who are we?' survey in the library; and
 - the purpose of this online facilitation course (Appendix 4).
2. Now join the 'Shared goals' topic to consider how we can improve the alignment between our individual learning objectives for this course and the overall purposes of the course.

Tools: Discussion forum

When: Week 2, Tuesday – Wednesday

Activity 2.3 How to work together

It is not enough to simply have a shared purpose (although sometimes it may be a huge achievement to discover that there even is one). We also need to think about how we work together to achieve this purpose.

Purpose: Developing ways of working together as a group

Task: Join the weekly chat to discuss how our group wants to learn and work together. Consider the appropriate guidelines for how we should treat each other in this course, including both the shared conversations and private conversations. The guidelines can be informed by but not limited to key values, rules and principles. You may want to consider the principles underlying this course (Appendix 5). Visit the website on Saturday or Sunday to see our 'Agreements' document in the Library. You will be able to refer to it as a living document guiding our interaction and to post further comments throughout the course.

Tools: Chat room

When: Week 2, Wednesday – Thursday

Activity 2.4 Encouraging participation

We participate in learning communities in different ways. In the online environment where we cannot see or hear each other, this may lead to misunderstandings and possibly even to conflict. As an example, highly vocal participants and their more reflective peers may have very different ideas of how learning happens.

Purpose: Developing strategies to encourage participation

Task: Imagine that you are a course leader. You encourage participants to contact you if they experience any problems in the course. It is Friday of Week 1 and you find the following message in the 'Week 1 Reflections' forum:

One thing that really irritates me is the really loud students who like to dominate discussions and then have the nerve to call those of us who prefer to observe and reflect a bit, before participating, 'lurkers'.

It is 20 minutes since the message was posted and none of the participants has yet replied. How would you respond to this message? Come to the 'Encouraging participation' topic to share your thinking.

Tools: Discussion forums

When: Week 2, Thursday – Friday

Figure 3.2 Encouraging participation



Figure 3.2 Lurking

Activity 2.5 Scheduling facilitation

Purpose: As we go through the five weeks of the course, our focus shifts from being participants in a course to considering ourselves as online facilitators in training. To make real progress *you* will need to facilitate at least one discussion topic in the course either as lead or co-facilitator. You will have the support of the course leader in a coaching role. You can facilitate by yourself or ask a fellow participant to co-facilitate with you.

Task:

1. Decide on a topic you would like to facilitate. Choose from the following:
 - the forums for the Activities from Week 3 to Week 5;
 - the 'Open space' forum (if you want to facilitate a topic in the 'Open space' forum then prepare a question that you think will interest your colleagues);
 - the Lounge; or
 - the 'Tips and tricks' forum.
2. Visit the wiki and fill in your name on the schedule. To do this:
 - click on edit;
 - then fill in your name in the appropriate slot; and
 - when you are finished, just save the page.

Tools: Wiki

When: Week 2, Friday

Week 2 Reflection

Purpose: To reflect on our learning in Week 2

Task 1: Review the entries in your private journal. When you are ready, spend a few minutes capturing your thoughts in your shared learning journal. Then take part in the closing conversation for the week by sharing a few of your reflections in the Week 2 'Reflections' discussion.

Task 2: Come to the Week 2 'Reflections' topic to share some of your reflections on what you have learnt this week. In particular, please share your insights about the strategies to build online communities. You may also want to tell us what you have liked so far this week and how the facilitators can improve the workshop. Respond to reflections by one or more of the participants by Monday of Week 3. Try to engage thoughtfully with perceptions that may be different from yours.

Tool: Discussion forum

When: Week, 2 Friday – Week 3, Monday

Week 3 Facilitating

In this week, we continue our development of facilitation skills and strategies. In particular, we focus on summarising and weaving conversations. We will also consider the similarities and differences between face-to-face facilitation and online facilitation and strategies for facilitating effectively online.

Table 3.3 shows the specific outcomes that you should be able to achieve by the end of this week. The specific outcomes are grouped according to the categories used for the capabilities of online facilitators in Table 1.1.

Table 3.3 Week 3 Facilitating – specific outcomes

Online learning	Social skills	Social networking skills	Online communication skills	Technical skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> articulate the unique characteristics of online facilitation summarise discussions and identify different styles of summarising weave threads across one or several discussions and identify different styles of weaving identify effective facilitation strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> work collaboratively and acknowledge the contributions of other participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop a knowledge resource collaboratively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> acknowledge the contributions from others write clearly and concisely online 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use a wiki as an information sharing and collaboration tool

Activity 3.1 Exploring facilitation

Most of our facilitation skills were learnt in face-to-face settings. Here we consider what is involved in taking these skills online with us.

Purpose: Comparing face-to-face facilitation to online facilitation

Task 1: Consider the following questions:

- How are online learning interactions similar to and different from those in face-to-face contexts?
- Which are the three most important face-to-face facilitation and teaching skills for online facilitation and teaching?

Task 2: Now contribute to the wiki page for your assigned group of four, where we compare online learning interactions with face-to-face interactions and highlight face-to-face facilitation and teaching skills that are useful in online facilitation and teaching. Each group will need to find a way to work together in the wiki. This is unlikely to happen unless someone takes the lead very early in the process and starts to enter some of their ideas. This will work best if your group starts by choosing one member as your facilitator.

Direct links to the wiki page for each group:

- Group One (member names)
- Group Two (member names)
- Group Three (member names)
- Group Four (member names)
- Group Five (member names)

If you are still unsure about how to use a wiki, watch our 'Screen Movie' on basic use of the wiki.

Tools: Wiki

When: Week 3, Monday – Wednesday

Activity 3.2 Preparing summaries

Online discussions seldom follow a simple path. There are disagreements, differences of perspective and often there are multiple branches. As the number of messages increases, it may become difficult for participants and the online facilitator to keep a big-picture view of where the discussion is going.

Purpose: Practicing summarising of discussions

Task:

1. Read the article on 'Creating effective summaries' (Appendix 6).
2. Choose a topic from any of the discussions in Weeks 1 and 2 or in the Lounge. Then prepare a summary of the topic. (It is fine if we end up with several summaries of some topics, because this makes it easier to consider the different ways that we summarise discussions.) Please post your summary to the 'Preparing summaries' topic in the Week 3 forum, where you will see an example of a summary.
3. Then share your reflections about your experience of preparing a summary and the different styles of summaries that you observe across the group in the 'Preparing summaries' topic.

Tools: Discussion forum

When: Week 3, Tuesday – Wednesday

Activity 3.3 Preparing weaves

Summaries take us only so far. Sometimes, at the meeting point of messages with shared or opposing themes there is a glimmer of gold. Sometimes, these new or surprising insights can help to re-ignite a dying discussion.

Purpose: Practicing weaving discussions

Task:

1. Read the advice from Gilly Salmon on 'How to weave' <http://www.atimod.com/e-moderating/resources.shtml> or <http://tinyurl.com/d38p2y> Then you may want to consult an example of a weave of the Week 1 'Reflections'. This appears at the beginning of the 'Preparing weaves' topic in the week 3 forum.

2. Start by preparing a micro-weave of elements from three discussion postings. Use this to lead into a question that may open a further stage of conversation. Then try for a complex weave of a whole discussion topic. Post your weaves to the 'Preparing weaves' topic.
3. Now share your reflections about your experience of preparing a weave and the different styles of weaving that you observe across the group in the forum.

Tools: Discussion forum

When: Week 3, Wednesday – Thursday

Activity 3.4 Effective online facilitation

There are so many books and articles about facilitation in general and online facilitation in particular. What have we learned that can help us to become highly effective online facilitators? We will share what we think are the most important aspects of online facilitation.

Purpose: Developing guidelines for effective online facilitation

Task: Read the articles, 'The art of hosting good conversations online' <http://www.rheingold.com/texts/artonlinehost.html> or <http://tinyurl.com/804e2s> by Howard Rheingold and 'The do's and don'ts of online facilitation' (Appendix 7). Join our weekly chat to discuss these two articles and to develop guidelines for effective online facilitation.

Tools: Chat

When: Week 3, Thursday – Friday

Week 3 Reflection

Purpose: To reflect on our learning in Week 3

Task 1: Review the entries in your private journal. When you are ready, spend a few minutes capturing your thoughts in your shared learning journal. Then take part in the closing conversation for the week by sharing a few of your closing reflections in the Week 3 'Reflections' topic.

Task 2: Share some of your reflections of what you have learnt this week. In particular, reflect on your experiences of two different facilitation styles or strategies. What are the implications for the facilitation of online courses? You may also want to tell us what you have liked so far this week and how the facilitators can improve the workshop. Respond to reflections by one or more of the participants by Monday of Week 4. Try to engage thoughtfully with perceptions that may be different from yours.

Tools: Discussion forum

When: Week 3, Friday – Week 4, Monday

Week 4 Creating

In this week, we strengthen our facilitation skills. We consider strategies for dealing with differences and conflict and building trust in online communities. Towards the end of the week, you will use a simple template to adapt or develop a short online activity for use in one of your courses or learning communities.

Table 3.4 shows the specific outcomes that you should be able to achieve by the end of this week. The specific outcomes are grouped according to the categories used for the capabilities of online facilitators in Table 1.1.

Table 3.4 Week 4 Creating – specific outcomes

Online learning	Social skills	Social networking skills	Online communication skills	Technical skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> design or adapt an online activity for use in own context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop and apply strategies for building trust online articulate strategies for dealing appropriately with differences and diversity in an online environment demonstrate skills in valuing and managing diversity online describe the sources of conflict identify strategies for dealing with conflict 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reflect on and give feedback on activities designed by other participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> engage in multi-modal forms of communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in multimodal forms of communication by using audio or visual technologies such as photographs, drawings 'mindmaps' and audio files.

Activity 4.1 Deepening connections

Most online learning communities and courses still rely heavily on asynchronous text communication. Because we do not see or hear each other, it is easy to start feeling isolated. If we want to achieve anything together, we will need effective strategies that deepen connection and trust. One of the key abilities of a facilitator is to develop strategies for nurturing trust and building a safe environment in which participants feel confident to communicate.

Purpose: Learning strategies for building trust online

Task: Imagine that you are a course leader. You have sent an email to a few participants who have been very quiet for several days. One participant responds by saying:

Last week I participated in the discussion on the different online technologies, but I received almost no responses to the contributions I made. It felt like the other participants and the facilitator were talking over me and only with each other. I know I possibly know the least about the topic, but I really hate feeling excluded and am wondering if I want to continue with the course.

Now join the 'Deepening connections' topic in the Week 4 discussion forum to discuss your reply to this email and how you would solve the problem. Are there wider implications for how we can sustain and deepen connection and trust within our learning community?

Tools: Discussion forum

When: Week 4, Monday – Tuesday

Activity 4.2 Dealing with diversity

Our identities are complex, so we will always be able to identify differences and similarities in other people. Sometimes this feels difficult to manage as online facilitators, but access to a range of different perspectives can provide richer insights and deeper learning within a course or learning community.

Purpose: Developing skills to value and deal with diversity in online learning events

Task:

1. Read the article by Jeanne Smuts, 'Why diversity matters' (Appendix 8).
2. Join the discussion in the 'Dealing with diversity' topic about the article on diversity in an online learning community. This will be facilitated by a participant in this course with the support of the course leader in a coaching role.

Tools: Discussion forum

When: Week 4, Tuesday – Wednesday

Figure 3.3 Diversity



Activity 4.3 Managing conflict

We cannot call in the United Nations to resolve conflicts in our online learning events. Let us see what we can do to transform conflict to strengthen the community.

Purpose: Discussing ways of managing conflict in online learning events

Task: Read the article about non-violent communication (NVC) as a model for dealing with conflict (Appendix 9). Then join the chat on Thursday to discuss the NVC model of conflict transformation and how it can be applied in online interactions such as this online conflict mini-case:

After a meeting lasting most of the morning, you return to the discussion forum. In the rough and tumble of a lively debate, one participant has posted a message that offends many of your deeply held religious beliefs. You also think that the message is likely to cause deep offence to many other participants. How do you respond?

Tools: Chat

When: Week 4, Thursday

Activity 4.4 Creating an online activity

It is time to consider what we can take back home from the course. This is an opportunity to design and get feedback on an online learning activity for your context.

Purpose: Designing or adapting an activity for use in your own context

Task: Design an activity for use in your own context.

1. You may use the activity design template (Appendix 10) as a guide to design your online activity. If you have experience or feel confident, you are welcome to design an online activity from scratch. You also have the choice of adapting an existing activity. You are encouraged to enrich the activity by using photographs, drawings, 'mindmaps' or audio files to help communicate your ideas.
2. Share your activity in the 'Creating an online activity' topic and look at the activities designed by other participants. You can also ask your course leader for feedback by email before posting your activity to the forum. Give feedback on the online activities of a few participants. Try to start your feedback with words of acknowledgment and encouragement as well as providing enabling questions and maybe one or two suggestions.

Tools: Discussion forum

When: Week 4, Wednesday – Friday

Week 4 Reflection

Purpose: To reflect on our learning in Week 4

Task 1: Review the entries in your private journal. When you are ready, spend a few minutes capturing your thoughts in your shared learning journal. Then take part in the closing conversation for the week by sharing a few of your closing reflections in the Week 4 'Reflections' topic.

Task 2: Share some of your reflections of what you have learned this week. In particular, share insights or a question on issues of trust, diversity and conflict in online facilitation. What are the implications for your facilitation of a course or learning community? You may also want to tell us what you have liked so far and how the facilitators can improve the workshop. Respond to reflections by one or more of the participants by Monday of Week 5. Try to engage thoughtfully with perceptions that may be different from yours.

Tools: Discussion forum

When: Week 4, Friday – Week 5, Monday

Week 5 Applying

In this week, we prepare for leaving the course and becoming independent online facilitators. We look at ways of building networks and finding resources as part of our personal development plans. Then it is time to share our closing reflections and to say goodbye.

Table 3.5 shows the specific outcomes that you should be able to achieve by the end of this week. The specific outcomes are grouped according to the categories used for the capabilities of online facilitators in Table 1.1.

Table 3.5 Week 5 Applying – specific outcomes

Online learning	Social skills	Social networking skills	Online communication skills	Technical skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> access and evaluate resources on online facilitation create a personal development plan for continued learning about online facilitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide constructive feedback to other participants' personal development plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> join and participate in online social networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> engage in multi-modal forms of communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use web searches use social networking sites such as Facebook set up a personal blog upload a resource into a designated online folder in the Library

Activity 5.1 Adventure into the World Wide Web

Let us step beyond the safe predictability of the course site to see what treasures we can find in the newer parts of the Web. We start by engaging in an online network.

Purpose: Participating in social networks

Task: Join and participate in an open online community. Check out Facebook. Your facilitator has set up a Facebook group and has invited everyone here who is not yet on Facebook to join as a Facebook friend. Explore Facebook by extending your network of Facebook friends and by finding and joining other groups that interest you. Report on your journey in the Facebook group for this course

Optional extension activities: If Facebook is familiar to you or you want to extend your explorations into social networking sites, you may be interested in exploring the very active Classroom 2.0 <http://www.classroom20.com> social networking site for those interested in Web 2.0 and collaborative technologies in education. This uses a service called Ning <http://www.ning.com>, which also allows anyone to set up their own online social network for free. Of course, you can ignore these suggestions and look for some other specialised online community or network that appeals to you. Share your experiences in our Facebook group.

Tools: World Wide Web, Web search

When: Week 5, Monday – Thursday

Activity 5.2 Further adventures into the World Wide Web

Let us continue our journey into the World Wide Web. This time, we focus on starting a blog and looking at the blogs of others.

Purpose: Searching for, accessing and evaluating online resources

Task:

1. Find resources that you can use in your own course or learning community as an online facilitator. One good place to start might be a general web search or a search for useful specialist blogs from either the Google Blogsearch <http://blogsearch.google.com> or Technorati <http://www.technorati.com>.
2. Share your experiences and/or recommend resources in your blog. If you need some help to start it then watch the 'Screen movie' or ask for assistance.
3. Add some of your resources to the 'Our recommendations' folder in the library, which contains our course resources.

Tools: World Wide Web, web search, blogs, library

When: Week 5, Tuesday – Thursday

Activity 5.3 Creating a personal development plan

Our learning did not start with this course and it does not end here either. What are your priorities and plans for learning about online facilitation after this course?

Purpose: Creating a personal development plan with a focus on developing your capacity as an online facilitator

Task: Use the Personal Development Plan (PDP) template (Appendix 11) provided in the Library to develop your own personal development plan. Send your draft personal development plan to the course leader and another participant using email or the private messages tool. Be prepared to respond to draft plans of your fellow group members with words of acknowledgment and encouragement, enabling questions and a few suggestions if you have any. Your role is to assist your colleagues to refine their development plans.

Tools: Private messages tool or email

When: Week 5, Tuesday – Thursday

Activity 5.4 Sharing plans and discussing the way forward

Our plans are for ourselves, but we can benefit from comments and questions that challenge our assumptions and help us to fill in the missing pieces. In this way, we can help each other to finish the course with effective plans for the next few steps in our growth as online facilitators.

Purpose: Improving personal development plans

Task:

1. Post your improved plan in the 'Sharing our personal development plans' topic of the Week 5 forum to invite broader comment.
2. Read the personal development plans of your fellow participants in preparation for the forum discussion.
3. Join the forum discussion, which will be facilitated by a course participant from Wednesday to Friday with the support of the course leader in a coaching role. Respond to the draft plans of your fellow course participants with encouragement, by asking enabling questions and sometimes with suggestions.

Tools: Discussion forum

When: Week 5, Wednesday – Friday

Week 5 Reflection

Purpose: To reflect on our learning in Week 5. Let us close the week before we close the course.

Task 1: Review the entries in your private journal. When you are ready, spend a few minutes capturing your thoughts in your shared learning journal. Then take part in the closing conversation for the week by sharing a few of your closing reflections in the Week 5 Reflections topic.

Task 2: Share some of your reflections about what you have learnt this week. In particular, share insights or a question about your progress and next steps as an online facilitator. You may also want to tell us what you have liked so far this week and how the facilitators can improve the workshop. Respond to reflections by one or more of the participants. Try to engage thoughtfully with perceptions that may be different from yours.

Tools: Discussion forum

When: Week 5, Thursday – Friday

Our closing event

After all your weeks of hard work and engagement with this learning community, it is time to say goodbye. Hopefully, we will see each other again online or face to face, but this course is ending and this community will never exist again.

Purpose: Contribute to a meaningful and appropriate closing event

Task:

1. Upload a picture, sound file or piece of creative writing to the 'Farewells' topic as part of your closing message to reflect on what you gained from the course.

2. Participate in the last online chat, which will be the closing event of the course.

Tools: Discussion forum

When: Week 5, Friday – Week 6, Monday

Evaluating the course

Please tell us what you think of the content and facilitation of this course.

Purpose: Providing feedback to the course leader and organisers

Task: Complete the course evaluation form (Appendix 12) and submit it within two weeks after the end of the course. Your feedback is valued and will enable the course leader and organisers to understand what worked well and what could be improved.

Tools: Online survey

When: Week 6, Wednesday – Friday

Section 4

Preparing to run the course

This section provides advice to you as the course leader. Your role begins well before the start of the course, with identifying whether you have the skills needed to run this course, selecting your team, recruiting participants, ensuring that you meet the technology requirements of the course, customising course materials and setting up your online learning environment.

Skills needed to run this course

Teaching skills

You should be an experienced educator or trainer and you should already have some training or experience as an online facilitator or online teacher. Most of the activities embody strong social constructivist assumptions. If you are uncomfortable with facilitating highly interactive face-to-face and online learning processes then you may also feel uncomfortable about facilitating this course. If you are interested in reading some of the books that inspired us in the design of the course there is a list of recommended readings in Appendix 13.

Technical skills

You will need basic technical skills including word processing, sending and receiving emails with attachments, web searches, opening Internet sites and downloading online resources. More advanced skills that will assist you include the use of blogs and Facebook, audio editing and making screen movies.

Selecting your team

You will need to work with a team of colleagues who in combination have a wide range of technical, facilitation and administrative skills and experience. This may be an existing team or it might need a new team, which will be formed specifically for this project. The other team members may include:

- a web designer (particularly if you want to customise the interface of the course environment);
- a technical support expert who is familiar with the online learning environment; and
- a course administrator who can deal with issues such as enrolments, registration, day-to-day queries and the issuing of certificates.

Recruiting participants

Sometimes, you may be asked to work with a class that has already been recruited. If this is not the case, you will need to allow sufficient time for both viral marketing through your networks and formal advertising to do their work.

When participants sign up, you should try to ask them a few questions, which will help you to learn something about their context and needs before the course begins. Potential participants who lack basic technical skills (email, word processing, web surfing) or regular access to the Internet should be advised to postpone their involvement in this course until these issues have been resolved.

Technology requirements

You will need to ensure that you meet the requirements set out below.

Your computer

You will need to have a recent version of a word processor, a spreadsheet programme, an Internet browser and an email client. For added flexibility, you may want sound and image editing software and the free Flash plug-in. If you want to make resources for guiding participants through the use of the online environment, then you will need presentation software, screen movie software or screen capture software. If you are operating with a very low budget, all of these are available free or open source. See Appendix 14 for details of free and open source options.

Your bandwidth

In order to access resources on the Internet, you should have at least the equivalent of a dial-up connection. Regular access to a stable connection is sometimes more important than the speed of the connection. If you want to tap into online video material, then you will need at least a slow broadband connection to the Internet.

An online learning environment

In order to offer this course, you will need to use a recent version of a stable, reliable, well-featured online learning environment that participants can access on a local network or on a server on the Internet. Some of the more popular online environments are Moodle, Sakai, KEWL and Blackboard.

Essential features include tools that permit participant profiles and lists, the sharing of course materials and readings, online discussions, online chats and links to external resources. Features that allow for a full use of all the activities shared for this course include private messages, wikis, blogs and an online survey tool. It is also possible to link participants through to a stand-alone online survey. If you are offering the course as a facilitator who

is not affiliated to an institution with an online learning environment, then you have the options of paying for the use of a course environment on a shared server owned by a service provider or of setting up your own online learning environment on your own shared server space. The second option is not recommended for those who have limited technical experience or lack the budget to bring in technical staff for the set-up and support of the environment.

Customising course materials

The course materials for this course are contained in Section 3. You may be happy to just change the dates, name of your institution, the members of the course team, links within the course environment and the advice about the use of the environment, to use these materials in almost plug-and-play mode. However, you are likely to get more value from these materials if you sometimes make changes to fit your local culture and language usage, if your participants have a regional or national base.

As you become more skilled in the design of online learning activities, you may want to develop new activities that you regard as more effective (for example, which may be more congruent with the culture of many of your participants). Suggestions for variations to the activities are provided in Section 6 of this guide. While the materials are designed to be adapted and mixed with other activities, you may want to take care that you do not lose the coherence and progression of the five-stage design of the course.

Setting up your online environment

You are advised to allow two to three weeks prior to the start of the course for setting up, testing and fine-tuning activities the first time you run the course. For subsequent implementation of the course, the set-up time should be shorter.

The course should be set up by someone who is familiar with the specific online learning environment that you have chosen to use. If you are not confident in the management of an online learning environment, then you should arrange for the assistance of a technical support person who can assist you to:

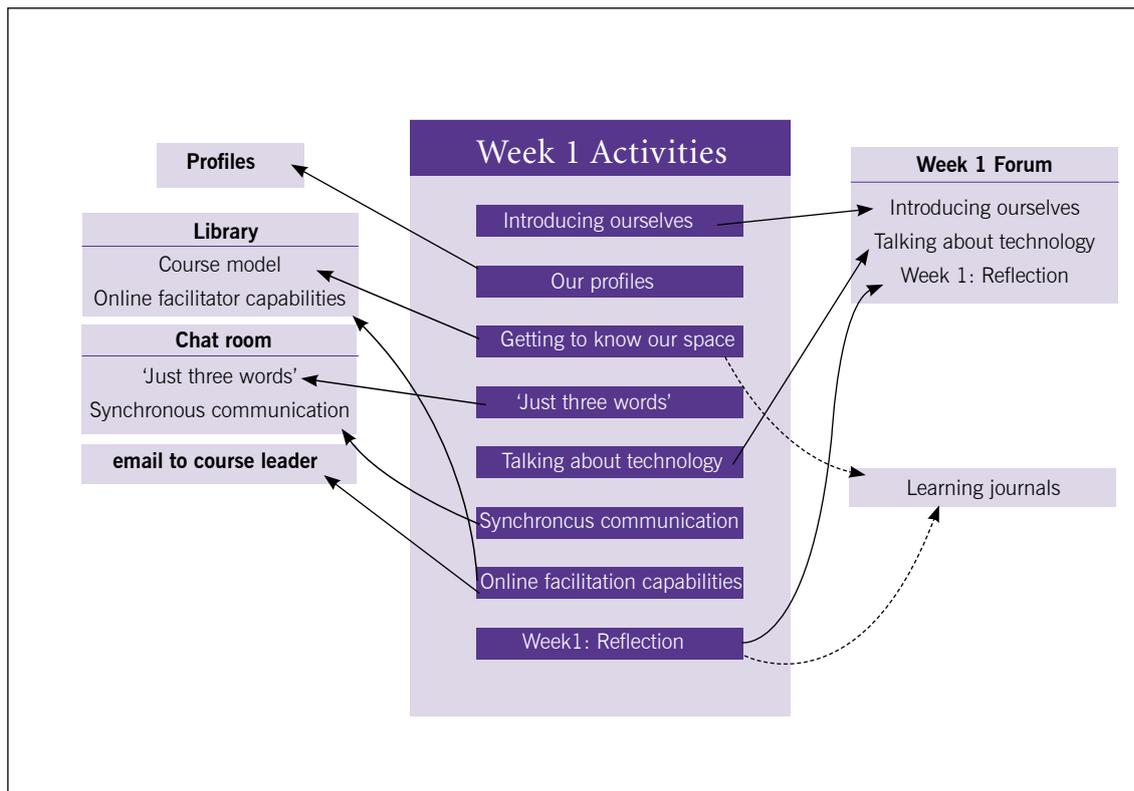
- upload the course materials to your chosen online learning environment;
- create links between the different weeks of the course and the activities within each week;

- set up the chat room and the discussion forums;
- post opening messages to the discussion forums;
- set up the wiki for some of the activities, including guidance to participants about uploading their suggestions for additional readings to the library;
- create the links between the course materials and the relevant tools and resources in the course site; and
- test the site to ensure that everything works and that there are no dead links.

Electronic versions of the course materials and a specimen course site are available at <http://www.cet.uct.ac.za/FacilitatingOnline> or <http://tinyurl.com/dmwqad>. The specimen site illustrates the set-up of the course and will give you a much better sense of how different components of the course material and the online learning environment fit together. We have chosen to have one discussion forum for each week with multiple topics for activities within the forum. Depending on the characteristics of your discussion software and your own preferences, you may want to structure the discussions differently.

Figure 4.1 is an example of how the course activities are linked to tools and files in the online learning environment. Your online learning environment may have different names for the tools featured in this figure.

Figure 4.1 Activities and tools





Section 5

Implementing the course

In this section, we provide general guidance on how to go about implementing this course. You are advised on what needs to be done the week before the course, during the course, and after the course.

Week 0

The week before the formal start of the course is vital to the success of participants, since this is an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the course model, technical requirements, and navigation of the course site including how to find resources. Participants who start their journals and log in to the course environment during this week will be able to have a more relaxed start to Week 1. On the Monday of Week 0, you should send a welcoming message to all participants, including the arrivals document (see section 2: Preparing to arrive, p. 8), which should also be posted in the site.

During this week, you should expect to receive messages from participants who are facing technical or logistical problems. By Wednesday of Week 0, you should send an email to all participants who have not logged into the course to establish the nature of their problems and to direct help appropriately. There will also be participants who are facing unexpected demands on their time either at work or at home. If it is clear that a participant will not be able to allocate enough time to the course, then you should ask him or her to consider postponing and joining another group the next time the course is offered.

During the course

Time required

Facilitation of this course requires a significant investment of time, especially in the first two weeks. You should expect to allocate 5–10 hours per week to this course.

Until the course develops its own rhythm, we suggest that you should log in at least once in the morning and once in the afternoon. If your online learning environment can send out email updates of forum activity, then you can use these to alert you to changes in the pattern of participant activity.

In our experience, there is likely to be a low level of course activity over weekends. You will need to decide for yourself whether a course facilitator presence during the weekend provides useful participant support and links activities from one week to the next, or whether this is simply a bad role model, because it implies that online facilitators take no time away from their courses. You may also consider working with a co-facilitator, in order to allow you more flexibility and as a way of building facilitation capacity in your networks.

Changing roles

This course is designed to ensure that the roles of course leader and participants change significantly over the duration of the course. The course model outlines how the roles of the facilitator and participants change.

At the beginning of the course, the leader will be the host easing the anxieties and confusion of participants and offering very clear direction for their activities. By the end of the course, participants should have the confidence to facilitate independently in their own courses and online learning activities. This will happen only if the course leader consciously shares and then relinquishes control, so that by the last few weeks the desire of participants to improve their practice and their sense of agency in the evolving learning community are the key drivers. If you are still the most active poster in Week 3 or 4 of the course, then there is a risk that postings by participants are being crowded out. As you step back in the later weeks, participants will fill the space that you make available. The participants are going to leave the course at the end of Week 5, and the opportunities to try out their new facilitation skills with you as a coach are invaluable in developing their confidence as online facilitators. You will probably need to grant participants further rights within the online course environment in the later weeks of the course (e.g. to make announcements or upload resources).

Growing community

From the start of the course, you need to model that the learning here is fundamentally within and about online

learning community. This means communicating a sense that each participant is welcomed, encouraged and respected. As course leader, you will need to encourage dialogue, support participants and provide constructive feedback to participants.

You can also think creatively about developing informal community-building activities, and supporting participants to facilitate these in a lounge/café forum. Some community-building activities, which are already part of the course, include the 'Just three words' game in Week 1, the 'Similarity Safari' in Week 2, the weekly chats and the conversations about the shared versions of participant journals

Responding to participants

Over a 5-week course with 20 participants, there may be 800 to 1 200 postings, of which 10% to 20% may be by the course leader. That means about 30 postings a day, including 3 to 6 by the course leader (more frequently in the first week, as you welcome participants). You will need to develop facilitation strategies to ensure that your postings count in value and not necessarily in volume.

Along the way, you will be grappling with questions like:

- What messages require me to respond?
- Can someone else respond?
- How quickly should I respond?
- What is my purpose in responding?
- Who should I respond to?

You may feel an urge to respond quickly to every posting

Figure 5.1 Growing community



by course participants. Unless it is a message that really requires a response from you, it is generally better to step back a bit and allow participants to reply before you pitch in. Where a particular participant has received no replies, you may be able to acknowledge his or her contribution in a direct reply or in a summary.

Forum or chat messages addressed directly to you will generally require a response, even if your decision is simply to ask other participants to respond.

Private emails or private messages within a learning environment should normally receive a private response within a maximum of 24 hours for messages. It is best if you tell participants very clearly what they can expect from you during weekends.

Remember to think carefully before you post, especially since most of your messages will be seen by the whole group.

Announcements and updates

Participants are likely to be very busy people who may be juggling work commitments with participation in this course. This implies that unless you are able to assist them in staying with the course, they are highly likely to drift away due to unexpected demands from work or home, or due to challenges presented by poor connectivity from work or home. One strategy that we have found very useful is to send out daily announcements with a summary of activities from the previous day and an alert of activities required for the current day. If these announcements contain links back into the course site then they will be especially useful in keeping participants up to date with recent developments and on track with the current activities. Appendix 15 contains a specimen update and announcement.

Monitoring participant activity

In your role as a manager of the course, you will need to stay attuned to patterns of activity and inactivity over time and across the group of participants. It is important right from the start of the course to keep track of the participants with low levels of activity as well as those who tend to dominate discussion forums. This will allow you to provide encouragement and prompting by email or phone before participants simply drift away and disappear. Some participants may experience technical problems that restrict their involvement. Be aware of these participants and ensure that they receive technical advice or encouragement to seek support locally. You may find it useful to keep a

participation spreadsheet in order to stay in touch with the overall patterns both of activity and of participation by each individual in each activity. It is best to go beyond the tick box and to include a space for comments on each participant in each week. End-of-course assessment will be much easier if you keep the participation spreadsheet up to date. We would suggest that satisfactory completion of 70% of the activities could count as completion of the course.

Coaching

Your role as a facilitation coach becomes especially valuable in the later weeks of the course, when participants are increasingly involved in peer facilitation of both required and optional conversations. Participants will receive most value from your coaching if you are able to do the following:

- Recruit participants to facilitate forums and chats in the later weeks. Scheduled facilitation duties of specific discussion forums provide powerful opportunities for participants to develop and practice new skills with your support and within the context of a vibrant online learning community.
- Help participants with their preparations to facilitate forums and chats that they have signed up to do or that they have been allocated to do. For some participants, a reminder of their facilitation duties and an offer of support may be sufficient. Many participants will benefit considerably from your encouragement and feedback on their plans.
- Allow participants to make some of their own mistakes, even if you will then need to assist them in picking up the pieces.
- Offer constructive feedback to participants on their facilitation duties in the form of advice and questions for reflection. Whether this feedback is private or shared with all participants, you should try to acknowledge good practices demonstrated by the participant before offering suggestions and directions for improvement.
- Detailed, honest feedback (which may sometimes be misinterpreted as criticism) is often best communicated by private email or private message, rather than as a public posting in the forum.

Facilitating reflective learning

The deepest, most enduring learning about online facilitation practices and perspectives is likely to require ongoing reflection on the experiences of being a participant and trainee facilitator in the course. As the course leader, you can

play a key role in facilitating reflective learning, which will support the transfer of learning from the course to the day-to-day practices of participants in the context of their teaching of courses or leadership of online learning communities. The two main spaces for reflective conversations are the shared journals and the end-of-week reflections.

Shared journals

Postings to the shared journals pull participants into reflective conversations about their own learning and about learning experiences across the class. These postings also provide you as course leader with insight concerning the participant experience and evidence concerning the level of reflection achieved by participants. Consequently, you should find ways to acknowledge contributions in journals and to encourage participants not yet journaling to contribute both to their own journals and to the conversations sparked by journal postings.

End-of-week reflections

The end-of-week reflection discussions can be a useful place for participants to review their progress and to ask questions and share insights about the activities for the week. The discussion questions for each week include a combination of generic questions about participant progress and challenges as well as questions that are specific to the focus of each week.

You can support participants by modelling reflection and by guiding their reflection.

Modelling and promoting reflection

Some of the useful approaches here are: summaries to help participants keep track of conversations; weaves to highlight some shared and varied themes across journal or discussion postings; and sometimes re-asking a question from a participant in order to encourage further responses and a deepening of the conversation.

Guiding participant reflection

Emphasising one or two key questions (for the end-of-week reflections, for example) is likely to lead to a more focused conversation about key practices and debates. You may want to modify the questions posed in the end-of-week reflection activities. At the same time, we need to ensure that there is space for participants to talk about any course-related reflections that they regard as important.

Reflecting on your own practice

You can use this course as an opportunity to stimulate your own professional development. Try to allocate some time every few days, and then again at the end of each week, to reflect on your role as a facilitator in the course. Some questions that you could consider are:

- What was your purpose in posting each message?
- What worked well and how do you judge this?
- What difficulties did you encounter?
- What do you need to do differently?

Ending the course

During the last two weeks of the course, you focus on supporting participants in exploring and planning beyond the course. As the course comes to an end, your role shifts towards that of an expert in a community of practice. Ideally, the closure of the course should be both reflective and celebratory. Make sure that you allow time for participants to celebrate their own achievements and to acknowledge the role of others in their learning. Many participants have an intuitive dislike for endings, but if you can involve them in the closing events and reflections then it may be possible to end the course on a high note. Try to start the end-of-course evaluation process early and set a deadline for responses, which could be on the last day of the course or perhaps during the week after the course ends. If you have arranged some form of certification for the course, then you always have the option of making submission of the evaluation survey by the deadline a condition for completion of the course.

After the course

Much as you may like to have a definite ending on the Friday of Week 5, course-related processes are likely to extend beyond the scheduled end of the course. Evaluations may be incomplete, some participants may have valid reasons for catching up and, inevitably, there will be assessment and administrative responsibilities for certified versions of the course.

Some participants are likely to want to engage in some kind of ongoing interaction about online facilitation. This allows you to either take on the role of facilitator of a growing community of practice or to refer such participants to existing networks, such as the Online Facilitation email discussion group facilitated by Nancy White of Full Circle Associates.

Section 6

Week-by-week guidance

This section takes you through all the learning activities for each week. This includes a focus on the roles that you will play as course leader and advice that is intended to help you in the most effective facilitation of each activity. For each week, there is an overview of the week and a detailed narrative guide for each activity during the week.

Week 1 Arriving

This week, you will focus on welcoming everyone to the course and providing opportunities for participants to familiarise themselves with the course environment, programme and outcomes and to get to meet each other online. You will also engage in communication with participants about their self-assessments of their strengths and learning opportunities as online facilitators. You will need to take a very active approach as a facilitator to model good practices including drawing quieter participants into the conversations. Many participants will be unfamiliar with processes of shared reflection in professional development courses, so you will need to offer encouragement and support for use of the shared journals including posting messages to the journals which acknowledge participant experiences and insights and then attempt to extend or deepen the conversation.

Although participants have an opportunity to post messages in Week 0, you are far more likely to learn about technical and logistical problems faced by participants in Week 1. It is especially important that you should closely monitor patterns of activity and inactivity during Week 1 since it becomes very much more difficult to catch up with course activities after this week. Daily updates and announcements will help to pull some of the missing participants into the course but you will also need to send personal email messages to some participants. In some case, a private phone call or exchange of text messages may be an appropriate intervention. If you are very busy then it is better to delegate some of these messages to a well-briefed course administrator than to leave them undone.

Table 6.1 Overview of Week 1 Arriving

Task	Activity 1.1 Introducing ourselves	Activity 1.2 Creating our profiles	Activity 1.3 Getting to know our space	Activity 1.4 'Just three words' game	Activity 1.5 Talking about technology	Activity 1.6 Exploring synchronous communication	Activity 1.7 Assessing your online facilitation capabilities
Preparation	Set up the new topic in the forum Seed the topic	Provide instructions about uploading images Send out daily update	Upload reading to library Set up journals in discussion forum Send out daily update	Set up the chat room Start the game in chat room Send out daily update	Set up the new topic in the forum Seed the topic Send out daily update	Set up the chat room Arrange a time for chat Prepare questions for chat Send out daily update	Upload reading to library Send private message to participants Send out daily update
Activity description	Participants introduce themselves, read and respond to the other participants' postings	Participants update their profile	Participants explore course site, locate the 'Online facilitation course model', read the document and record any insights or questions about the model	Participants are introduced to the chat tool	Participants ask questions about the tools used in the online learning environment or any technical difficulties they may be experiencing	Participants reflect on strategies required to make chat an effective learning tool	Participants engage with course 'Online facilitation capabilities', reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses as apprentice facilitators
Outcomes	Log in to the course Read and respond to messages in forums Help to make environment welcoming and enabling	Update profile	Find resources in the library Read and write messages in forums	Read and respond to messages in online chat	Read and respond to messages in forums	Read and respond to message in online chat Articulate strategies for using chat as an online facilitation and learning tool	Send and reply to private email messages Assess personal strengths and weaknesses of online facilitation capabilities
Tools	Discussion forum	My profile	Library Discussion forums	Chat	Discussion forum	Chat	Private messages
Core readings	None	None	Online facilitation course model	None	None	None	Online facilitation capabilities document
Facilitation roles and strategies	Host	Host	Host	Host	Host	Host Teacher and guide	Teacher and guide

Facilitator reflections	Record your reflections of facilitating the activity and participant engagement	Record your reflections of facilitating the activity and participant engagement	Record your reflections of facilitating the activity and participant engagement	Record your reflections of facilitating the activity and participant engagement	Record your reflections of facilitating the activity and participant engagement	Record your reflections of facilitating the activity and participant engagement	Record your reflections of facilitating the activity and participant engagement
Extension activities	None	Sharing photographs can provoke a lively discussion	None	None	Continue the discussion in a 'Tips and tricks' forum	Use a wiki to list issues from the chat	View Nancy White's presentation on the eight emerging competencies of online interaction
Activity variations	Design your own ice-breaker activity		Use blogs or wikis for journals instead of the forum	Write a story together using only one sentence at a time	None	None	None

Activity 1.1 Introducing ourselves

Preparation

Check that the following have been done in preparation for this activity:

- set up the new topic in the discussion forum and create a link from Activity 1.1;
- seed the topic with a welcome message (as part of this welcome message, you could share a digital image to stimulate participants' engagement and give them insight into using multi-modal forms of communication); and
- send out a daily activity update by email or use the announcement tool to remind participants of this task and time frame for the task.

Activity description

This activity involves participants introducing themselves by responding to the facilitator's message in the discussion forum, and reading and responding to the postings of other participants.

Outcomes

At the end of this activity, participants should be able to:

- log in to the course environment;
- read and respond to messages in discussion forums; and
- participate in making the learning environment welcoming and enabling.

Tools

The tools involved in this activity include:

- discussion forum.

Core readings

None

Facilitation roles and strategies

As the facilitator, you should play the role of the host easing the participant's access to the course and welcoming the participant to the online learning environment. Check which participants have not logged in to the course environment. You may need to wait for a day before either sending these participants an email or telephoning individuals to ascertain why they have not accessed the course or why they are not participating.

Monitor the forum discussion to assess whether participants are able to engage with each other. You may need to prompt participants to participate by asking particular questions or responding to participants' posts. Take care not to dominate discussions. You need to balance prompting responses with leaving participants to engage amongst themselves. Regular summaries of discussions are useful and open up avenues for further discussion. It is very important that as facilitator you acknowledge the contributions of participants and encourage them to contribute to the discussions.

Facilitator reflections

It is important for you to reflect on your role as a facilitator and on the course. Some questions that you could consider are:

- Have you been an effective, welcoming host?
- What worked well?
- What difficulties did you encounter?
- What do you need to do differently?

Extension activities

None

Variations of the activity

As a variation to this activity you could design your own ice-breaker. See, for example, Flexible Learning and Delivery at Curtin (2004) Online Icebreakers. Using Online Icebreakers, University of South Alabama Online Learning Laboratory. undated. Available at: http://usaoll.org/_jobaids/icebreakers/icebreakers.htm or <http://tinyurl.com/dd7dlp>
Demetri Orlando (2008) Icebreaker Ideas. Available at: <http://tw.wikispaces.com/Ice-breaker+Ideas> or <http://tinyurl.com/deuv7t>

Activity 1.2 Creating our profiles

Preparation

Check that the following have been done in preparation for this activity:

- provide participants with instructions about uploading a digital image in the profile and discussion forums; and
- send out a daily activity update by email or use the announcement tool to remind participants of this task and time frame for the task.

Activity description

In this activity, participants update their profiles and look at the profiles of other members of the course. This helps participants to familiarise themselves with the course leader and fellow participants.

Outcomes

At the end of this activity, the participants should be able to:

- update their profiles in the online environment.

Tools

The tools involved in this activity include:

- my profile.

Core readings

None

Facilitation roles and strategies

As the course leader, you still play the role of the host easing the participants' access to the course and welcoming the participants to the online learning environment.

Participants' profiles play an important role in building community. Therefore, you should emphasise the importance of updating profiles. You should lead by example and make your profile as informative as possible. Check whether participants have updated their profiles.

Given the different sensitivities that some participants may have about sharing their photograph, this should be encouraged rather than required. Participants who do not wish to share their photograph could be offered the option of using some other image. However, photographs make a huge difference to an online course, since people like to have an idea of who they are communicating with.

Some participants may experience difficulty with uploading photographs despite clear instructions. Make sure that these participants are helped.

Facilitator reflections

It is important for you to reflect on your role as a facilitator and on the course. Some questions that you could consider are:

- Have you been able to distinguish between those who are reluctant to upload their photographs and those experiencing technical difficulties?
- What worked well?
- What difficulties did you encounter?
- What do you need to do differently?

Extension activities

In some courses, the issue of sharing photographs can provoke a really lively discussion.

Variations of the activity

None

Activity 1.3 Getting to know our space

Preparation

Check that the following have been done in preparation for this activity:

- upload the file 'Online facilitation course model' to the appropriate folder in the library;
- set up participant journals in the discussion forums; and
- send out a daily activity update by email or use the announcement tool to remind participants of this task and the time frame for the task.

Activity description

This activity gets participants to find their way around the online site. In particular, they will need to locate the 'Online facilitation course model' in the library, read the document and record any insights or questions about the model.

Outcomes

At the end of this activity, the participant should be able to:

- find resources in the library; and
- read and respond to messages in the discussion forum.

Tools

The tools used in this activity include:

- library; and
- discussion forums.

Core readings

- Online facilitation course model.

Facilitation roles and strategies

Since the course is just starting, you will still play the role of the host easing the participants' access to the course and welcoming latecomers to the online learning environment. If participants have not arrived, you should email them first to determine whether they are experiencing any problems accessing the site. If these participants do not respond to your email, you will need to contact them by telephone.

You may need to prompt participants to reflect in their journals and respond to those who have already posted in their journals. Make reference to other participants' journals, weaving to highlight some shared and varied themes across individual journal postings.

Facilitator reflections

It is important for you to reflect on your role as a facilitator and on the course. Some questions that you could consider are:

- What worked well?
- What difficulties did you encounter facilitating the journal postings?
- What do you need to do differently?

Extension activities

None

Variation of the activity

You could use blogs or wiki pages, instead of the discussion forums, as the space for participant journals. If you choose to use blogs or wikis, you will need to know whether the participants have prior experience of blogs or wikis. If some participants have no experience of blogs or wikis, you may need to provide additional support for these participants. If you choose one of these options, then take care that it is easy for participants to find each other's journals. In newer versions of many learning environments, you may be able to set up a page showing the feed of the latest postings in the shared journals.

Activity 1.4 'Just three words' game**Preparation**

Check that the following have been done in preparation for this activity:

- set up the chat room;
- start the game by typing in the first three words; and
- send out a daily activity update by email or use the announcement tool to remind participants of this task and the time frame for the task.

Activity description

This activity is intended to introduce participants to the chat tool. It is a simple yet interesting way of engaging participants. Facilitators who have used this game have found that participants return to the chat long after the activity has been completed.

Outcomes

At the end of this activity, participants should be able to:

- read and respond to messages using online chat.

Tools

The tools used in this activity include:

- chat tool.

Core readings

None

Facilitation roles and strategies

You will still play the role of the host easing participants' access to the course. You may need to assist latecomers in catching up with the rest of the group. Encourage latecomers to participate in the current activity and then to return to activities that have already been completed.

You should still be monitoring whether all the participants have arrived. Contact those who have not by email or telephonically to ascertain why they have not joined the course yet.

Your role in the chat will be to contribute to the fun and to encourage participants to engage in the activity. Since this activity uses the chat tool but is not set up as a synchronous activity, you may need to make participants aware of this difference. Participants may expect you to be present whenever they enter the chat room or expect other participants to be present.

Facilitator reflections

It is important for you to reflect on your role as a facilitator and on the course. Some questions that you could consider are:

- What worked well?
- What difficulties did you encounter?
- What do you need to do differently?

Extension activities

None

Variation of the activity

This activity works best in chat rooms where it is easy to view messages posted before you enter the chat. This permits the use of chat for an asynchronous conversation. If the chat room does not have this feature, then this activity should be transferred to a discussion forum or be conducted synchronously.

A variation of the three-word game is to write a story together. The course leader starts off the chat with one sentence. The story is continued by adding one sentence at a time.

Activity 1.5 Talking about technology

Preparation

Check that the following have been done in preparation for this activity:

- set up the new topic in the discussion forum and create a link from Activity 1.5;
- seed the topic with a message encouraging participants to ask questions about the tools used in the online environment; and
- send out a daily activity update by email or use the announcement tool to remind participants of this task and the time frame for the task.

Activity description

This activity encourages participants to ask questions and share their knowledge about the tools used in the online learning environment or any technical difficulties they may be experiencing.

Outcomes

At the end of this activity the participants should be able to:

- read and respond to messages in discussion forums; and
- participate in a social network to support individuals with technical aspects of the online learning environment.

Tools

The tools used in this activity include:

- discussion forums.

Core readings

None

Facilitation roles and strategies

Your role as host continues and hopefully by now all participants have accessed the course. Be aware of who is participating, which participants are 'lurking' and who is posting in a superficial way. You may need to prompt participants to participate by asking particular questions or by responding to participants' posts.

Give the participants the opportunity to respond to questions posed. Take care not to dominate discussions. You need to balance prompting responses with leaving participants to engage amongst themselves. Regular summaries are useful to pull together discussions and to open up avenues for further discussion.

Facilitator reflections

It is important for you to reflect on your role as a facilitator and on the course. Some questions that you could consider are:

- What worked well?
- What difficulties did you encounter facilitating the discussion forum?
- What do you need to do differently?
- If particular difficulties have been experienced by the participants, are there changes that can be made to the course?

Extension activities

Continue the conversation about the use of the course learning environment in a new 'Tips and tricks' forum facilitated by a course participant.

Variation of the activity

None

Activity 1.6 Exploring synchronous communication**Preparation**

Check that the following have been done in preparation for this activity:

- set up the chat room;
- arrange a suitable time with all participants for the chat;
- prepare a text file of questions or prompts before the chat takes place; and
- send out a daily activity update by email or use the announcement tool to remind participants of this task and the time frame for the task.

Activity description

This activity is intended to encourage participants to think about the strategies required to make a chat an effective learning opportunity, and the factors that potentially could derail a chat and make it unmanageable.

Outcomes

At the end of this activity, participants should be able to:

- read and respond to messages using online chat; and
- articulate strategies for using chat as an online facilitation and learning tool.

Tools

The tools used in this activity include:

- chat.

Core readings

None

Facilitation roles and strategies

Your role in this activity shifts from focusing on being a host to being a teacher and guide. This activity is set up as a synchronous chat. Therefore, it is important to encourage all participants to participate in the chat. You may need to set up two time slots for chats, if participants are drawn from different time zones or if their schedules cannot support one meeting.

This chat, in contrast to the 'Just three words' chat in Activity 1.4, is synchronous rather than asynchronous. While you could make the chat fun and enjoyable, the main aim is to make participants aware of strategies for facilitating an effective chat and to look at ways of avoiding the chat becoming unmanageable or moving away from the focus of the chat.

A suggested way of starting the chat is to let the chat become unmanageable by holding back and allowing participants to take control. Participants may realise that the chat is out of control or off the topic, or you may need to make them aware of the state of the chat. You could then change facilitation style and become more controlling by directing who should 'speak' and when the individual should 'speak'. In this way, participants will become aware of different facilitation strategies, and they should realise that very firm control over who is allowed to 'speak', and control over when participants are allowed to 'speak', often dampens the discussion.

You should then engage the participants in considering which facilitation style is most appropriate and when other styles are more appropriate.

You could also discuss other strategies for facilitating synchronous chat. Make sure that you end the chat with a summary of the discussion. If you are unable to summarise the discussion during the chat, you could upload a summary into the library or a wiki page.

Make sure that you start the chat on time, giving people enough time to join the chat and giving yourself enough time to wrap up the chat. Welcome latecomers to the chat, but you should encourage participants to be on time for scheduled chats since latecomers may not have sufficient time to catch up with the discussion and may cause the discussion to revert to points already covered. If you can send private messages in the chat then it is generally best to use these to update latecomers.

Facilitator reflections

It is important for you to reflect on your role as a facilitator and on the course. Some questions that you could consider are:

- What worked well?
- What difficulties did you encounter facilitating the chat?
- What do you need to do differently?

Extension activities

You could set up a wiki page listing issues that arose in the chat and then encourage participants to add to the page. Make sure that participants are familiar with editing a wiki. You may need to provide support to those who have not experienced a wiki before.

Variation of the activity

None

Activity 1.7 Assessing your online facilitation capabilities**Preparation**

Check that the following have been done in preparation for this activity:

- upload the document 'Online facilitation capabilities' to the appropriate folder in the library;
- send a message to the participants using the private messages tool to encourage them to respond to the task set in the activity; and
- send out a daily activity update by email or use the announcement tool to remind participants of this task and the time frame of the task.

Activity description

In this activity, participants engage with course 'Online facilitation capabilities' and reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses as apprentice facilitators. Participants are introduced to the private messages tool.

Outcomes

At the end of this activity, participants should be able to:

- send and reply to private email messages; and
- assess personal strengths and weaknesses in relation to course online facilitation capabilities.

Tools

The tools used in this activity include:

- private message tool.

Core readings

- Online facilitation capabilities document.

Facilitation roles and strategies

Your role as teacher and guide continues. Your role is to encourage participants to engage meaningfully with the online facilitation capabilities. Although the task focuses on using private messages, you may want to encourage participants to make some of their comments available to the group in their journal. You could perhaps assess your own strengths and weaknesses as a facilitator using the online facilitator capabilities document. In this way, you will be modelling what you expect participants to do.

Since participants will be communicating with you in private, it is an ideal opportunity to address individuals who may be posting superficially or inappropriately or who may be lurking. You will need to be careful about how you communicate with these participants, since this is a delicate stage of the course. Participants should be comfortable with the online environment and should become more familiar with you as a facilitator and the other participants.

Facilitator reflections

It is important for you to reflect on your role as a facilitator and on the course. Some questions that you could consider are:

- What worked well?
- What difficulties did you encounter responding to private messages?
- What do you need to do differently?

Extension activities

You may also want participants to view the presentation by Nancy White on 'the eight emerging competencies of online interaction'. This is available with sound at: <http://emerge2006.net/breeze/11031-1/output/> or <http://tinyurl.com/bbee97>. The slides are also available at <http://tinyurl.com/c3f2p9>.

Variation of the activity

None

Week 1 Reflections

Preparation

Check that the following have been done in preparation for this activity:

- set up the new topic in the discussion forum and create a link from the Week 1 reflection activity; and
- send out a daily activity update by email or use the announcement tool to remind participants to complete the reflection task.

Activity description

Participants are required to share some reflections on the week's activities and their participation in the course both in their learning journals and the communal space of the Week 1 Reflections topics.

Tools

The tools used in this activity include:

- discussion forums.

Facilitation roles and strategies

You play the role of guide in reminding participants that reflection is a crucial component of the course and their development as online facilitators. Participant reflections are also important for the course leader to assess their progress in the course. Week 1 focuses on the participants' experience of accessing the course and the first week's activities. Assist participants who struggle to write down their reflections by asking open ended questions or by drawing attention to the links between different participants' reflections.

Facilitator reflections

Your reflections on the course are as important as those of the participants. You need to model the practice of reflecting on a regular basis. Some questions that you could consider are:

- How well have you played the roles of host and teacher/guide?
- How well did you get to know your participants?
- Have the activities worked in the way that you envisaged? What changes would you make in the future?

Week 2 Conversing

Your main role in this week is as a community builder to assist participants in completing the Week 2 activities, which ask them to think about trust and confidence in an online learning community and the dynamics of online groups. The ability to converse and engage with other individuals, in an online environment, requires the art of building trust and developing the ability to connect. The activities chosen for Week 2 aim to foster an enabling environment where individuals can gradually get to know each other and reach a clear agreement on a shared purpose and ways of working together as a group.

In Week 2, you will start to lead participants through the transition from being participants in an online course to becoming online facilitators. Activity 2.4 asks participants to devise facilitation strategies to draw 'lurkers' into a course, while Activity 2.5 asks participants to commit to leading an online discussion or chat in a future week. Many participants will need your encouragement to sign up.

Table 6.2 Overview of Week 2 Conversing

Task	Activity 2.1 Similarity Safari	Activity 2.2 Developing a group purpose	Activity 2.3 How to work together	Activity 2.4 Encouraging participation	Activity 2.5 Scheduling facilitation
Preparation	Upload survey results Set up the new topic in the discussion forum Seed the topic Send out daily update	Set up the new topic in the discussion forum Seed the topic Upload readings to library Send out daily update	Set up chat room Arrange a time for chat Prepare questions for chat Send out daily update	Set up the new topic in the discussion forum Seed the topic Send out daily update	Set up schedule in wiki Send out daily update

Activity description	Participants reflect on results of the survey, make contact with individuals with whom they have things in common and share experiences in the forum	Participants use chat to compare individual learning goals with those of other participants, as well as to consider the purpose of the course and to develop a shared group purpose	Participants develop guidelines for online interaction	Participants develop strategies to enhance participation in an online environment	Participants choose activity to facilitate and practice using a wiki to fill in a facilitator schedule
Outcomes	Read and respond to messages using the private message tool Read and respond to messages using discussion forums Reflect on the experience of engaging with other participants	Identify alignment between own learning goals, other participants' goals and the overall online facilitation course purpose Work collaboratively to develop a shared group purpose	Articulate appropriate ways of working together as a group	Develop and apply strategies to encourage online participation	Use a wiki as an information sharing tool
Tools	Library Discussion forum	Library Discussion forum	Chat	Discussion forum	Wiki
Core readings	Results of the 'Who are we?' survey	Part 3 of the survey Online facilitation course purpose	The principles underlying the online facilitation course	None	None
Facilitation roles and strategies	Community builder	Community builder	Community builder	Community builder	Teacher and guide
Facilitator reflections	Record your reflections of facilitating the activity and participant engagement	Record your reflections of facilitating the activity and participant engagement	Record your reflections of facilitating the activity and participant engagement	Record your reflections of facilitating the activity and participant engagement	Record your reflections of facilitating the activity and participant engagement
Extension activities	None	One participant summarises group's shared goals and posts to forum or a wiki page Other participants could be asked to adapt or add to the shared goals	Use a wiki to capture the main points of the chat, to serve as guidelines for working together as a group	Assign the summarising of discussion on strategies to one participant	Participants who choose to co-facilitate arrange a paired discussion to clarify roles and responsibilities
Activity variations	Design your own questions for Part 1 of the survey	Chat in which participants prepare draft shared goals	None	None	None

Activity 2.1 Similarity Safari

Preparation

Check that the following have been done in preparation for this activity:

- upload the results from the 'Who are we?' survey to the appropriate folder in library;
- set up the new topic in the discussion forum in your online environment and create a link from Activity 2.1;
- seed the topic with a welcome message (as a way to encourage participants to focus on the topic, you can bold or highlight a few core words in your message); and
- send out a daily activity update by email or use the announcement tool to remind participants of this task and the time frame for the task.

Activity description

This activity shows one strategy for building a sense of community in a fun and interactive way. Participants are encouraged to discover more about each other by checking the results of the 'Who are we?' survey, identifying commonalities and engaging with one or two other participants with whom they have a lot in common using the private messages tool. During the last part of the activity, the participants share their experiences of making contact with one another in the 'Similarity Safari' discussion topic.

Outcomes

At the end of this activity, participants should be able to:

- read and respond to messages using the private messages tool;
- read and respond to messages using discussion forums;
- reflect on the experience of engaging with other participants in order to get to know each other better in an online learning environment; and

Tools

The tools involved in this activity include:

- private messages tool;
- discussion forum; and
- library.

Core readings

- Results of the 'Who are we?' survey.

Facilitation roles and strategies

During this activity, you play the role of community builder. Although the activity is a fun activity, it has an important role to play in helping participants to get to know each other better and, therefore, is an important strategy in building an online community. Since the activity is dependent on participants finding others in the group who have some things in common with them, a situation could arise where particular individuals are left out of the activity. In this case, you may want to partner these individuals with others in the group.

Allow a few participants to post in the discussion forum and watch whether they are responding to the topic and task they had to complete. You might notice that some participants are talking off topic or avoiding sharing their experiences of making contact with one another. If this is the case, gently remind them of the topic and prompt them to share by asking particular questions or by acknowledging a participant who is sharing and engaging. Here, again, maintain a careful

balance between prompting and leaving participants to engage amongst themselves.

Some participants might experience problems with effectively using the private messages tool. Monitor if other participants contribute the required advice during the forum and, if not, provide some additional guidelines by responding in the forum. If any participant still has a problem, contact him or her telephonically and resolve the problem.

Provide regular summaries of discussions to highlight main themes and stimulate further discussion. Remember to acknowledge contributions of participants and consider modelling the use of the 'quote' button when doing so once or twice.

If some participants have not posted towards the end of the time frame for the activity, consider sending them an email to check in with them. Your contact with them will demonstrate that they are valued as part of the community and that their presence is missed. Encourage them to consider completing the activity and contributing to the forum.

Facilitator reflections

It is important for you to reflect on your role as a facilitator and on the course. Some questions that you could consider are:

- Have you been an effective as a community builder in encouraging people to make contact?
- What worked well?
- What difficulties did you encounter in encouraging participants to share their experiences of making contact with one another?
- What do you need to do differently?

Extension activities

Set up an informal discussion space such as a lounge forum where participants should feel free to engage with each other outside the formal course space. The lounge is another place to forge connections between participants and, therefore, contributes to community building.

Variations to the activity

As a variation to this activity, you could create other questions for Part 1 of the 'Who are we?' survey. Keep these questions fun and interesting to ensure that the 'ice-breaker' feel of that part of the survey is maintained.

Activity 2.2 Developing shared goals

Preparation

Check that the following have been done in preparation for this activity:

- set up the new topic in the discussion forum and create a link from Activity 2.2;
- upload the file 'The purpose of online facilitation' to the appropriate folder in the library;
- upload the file 'Part 3 of survey results' to the appropriate folder in the library;
- seed the topic with an invitation to discuss shared goals; and
- send out a daily activity update by email or use the announcement tool to remind participants of this task and the time frame of the task.

Activity description

This activity encourages participants to reflect on their individual learning goals and objectives and how they compare to the learning goals of other participants, as well as the stated purpose of the online facilitation course. During the discussion, participants share their insights and work towards developing a shared group purpose, which could be used to focus interactions during the rest of the course.

Outcomes

At the end of this activity, the participants should be able to:

- identify the alignment between their own learning goals, other participants' goals and the overall online facilitation course purpose; and
- work collaboratively to develop a shared group purpose.

Tools

The tools used in this activity include:

- library; and
- discussion forum.

Core readings

- 'Part 3 of survey results'; and
- 'The purpose of online facilitation'.

Facilitation roles and strategies

You continue playing the role of community builder. Here you have another opportunity to encourage all participants to take part in online discussion. Remind participants to read the core readings. If it becomes clear that participants have not done the required readings or are not referring to the readings in their postings, direct specific questions to the group to focus their attention on the readings.

Encourage contributions from all participants, otherwise there might not be full buy-in to the shared goals that are developed. Make sure you summarise at regular intervals to try and support the group in reaching consensus about their shared goals. It is quite possible that you may not reach full consensus. In this case, participants should be made aware that differences between individual goals and course purpose could possibly put the onus on the participant to ensure that these goals are met during the course. The end of discussion summary should provide a statement of the agreed goals of the group.

Facilitator reflections

It is important for you to reflect on your role as a facilitator and on the course. Some questions that you could consider are:

- What worked well?
- What difficulties did you encounter facilitating a group to achieve the aim of developing a shared group purpose?
- What do you need to do differently?

Extension activities

Task one participant to summarise the group's shared goals and to post this to the forum or a wiki page. Other participants could be asked to adapt or add to the shared goals.

Variation of the activity

You could set up this activity as a chat. Ask participants to come to the chat with a proposed short and catchy statement of shared goals. Start the chat with general reflections about alignment between own and other participants' learning goals, as well as with the stated course purpose. Towards the end of the chat, encourage participants to share their proposed statements of the shared group goals and invite comments.

Activity 2.3 How to work together

Preparation

Check that the following have been done in preparation for this activity:

- set up the chat room;
- establish an appropriate time for the chat;
- prepare a text file of questions or prompts before the chat takes place; and
- send out a daily activity update by email or use the announcement tool to remind participants of this task and the time frame for the task.

Activity description

The aim of this activity is to provide participants with the opportunity to develop guidelines for interaction. They are given the option of looking at the principles underlying the course as a discussion starter and then of sharing their own thoughts in the discussion forum.

Outcomes

At the end of this activity, participants should be able to:

- articulate appropriate ways of working together as a group.

Tools

The tools used in this activity include:

- chat.

Core readings

- The principles underlying the online facilitation course.

Facilitation roles and strategies

Continue playing the role of community builder, allowing participants to post several contributions about how they want to be and work together. Summarise points made and stimulate further participation by asking whether the guidelines for working together will be the same for all the online interaction spaces (for example, discussion forums, chat rooms, social spaces like the lounge and reflection spaces such as the journals).

In Activity 1.6 you might have demonstrated different facilitation strategies, by first allowing a minimally guided chat, which possibly resulted in somewhat chaotic and directionless discussion, and then taking a more directive role.

However, for the group to develop guidelines for working together by the end of the chat, you will have to direct the discussion and contributions carefully.

Encourage contributions from all chat participants, otherwise there might not be full buy-in to the guidelines. Be in the chat room at least 10 minutes before starting the chat to welcome early arrivals and, again, make sure that you start the chat on time and give yourself enough time to wrap up the chat. Welcome latecomers and encourage them to have a quick glance through the discussion points made already before joining the chat, to minimise disrupting the flow of conversation or covering points already made.

Make sure you summarise at regular intervals to try and support the group in reaching consensus about shared guidelines for working together. If the participants have succeeded in completing their task, congratulate them at the end of the chat. If not, you can ask a few volunteers to review the chat discussion and work together to develop proposed guidelines, which they can post in the Week 2 forum for comment.

Facilitator reflections

It is important for you to reflect on your role as a facilitator and on the course. Some questions that you could consider are:

- What worked well?
- What difficulties did you encounter?
- How did the participants give feedback to each other? Did their feedback contribute towards encouraging future participation in the course?
- What do you need to do differently?

Extension activities

You could capture the main points of the chat in a wiki. This will serve as a guideline for working together as a group, which participants can refer to regularly or be reminded about.

Variation of the activity

None

Activity 2.4 Encouraging participation

Preparation

You will be required to do the following in preparation for this activity:

- set up the new topic in the discussion forum and create a link from Activity 2.4;
- seed the topic with a message encouraging participants to share ideas about how best to respond to the disgruntled student; and
- send out a daily activity update by email or use the announcement tool to remind participants of this task and the time frame for the task.

Activity description

This activity encourages participants to practice developing strategies that will enhance participation in an online environment.

Outcomes

At the end of this activity the participants should be able to:

- develop and apply strategies to encourage online participation.

Tools

The tools used in this activity include:

- discussion forums.

Core readings

None

Facilitation roles and strategies

In this activity, you shift from your main role as community builder to that of teacher and guide, acknowledge the suggestions made about how to respond to an irate participant, and ask questions to help participants to reflect on their chosen strategies and how these will impact on such a course participant. Encourage participants to give each other constructive feedback.

From time to time, summarise the strategies used or the suggested points made about encouraging participation. At the end of the discussion forum, summarise the strategies developed.

Facilitator reflections

It is important for you to reflect on your role as a facilitator and on the course. Some questions that you could consider are:

- What worked well?
- What difficulties did you encounter facilitating the discussion forum?
- What do you need to do differently?
- If particular difficulties were experienced by the participants, are there changes that can be made to the course?

Extension activities

You could assign the task of summarising the discussion on strategies to a participant. The summary could be put into the library as a resource for participants or could be entered into a wiki, thus allowing the group to add to the strategies later.

After the chat recommend a reading on 'lurking' to the participants, such as Barbara Pirie, Pirie Associates (2001) *Some speak with silence: Facilitating mixed silent/verbal groups*. Available at: http://Facilitatedsystems.com/Facilitating_Mixed_Silent_and_Verbal_Groups.pdf or <http://tinyurl.com/acnkle>

Variation of the activity

You may want to consider running this activity in a chat room or using the discussion forum in a semi-synchronous mode with messages rapidly following each other.

Activity 2.5 Scheduling facilitation

Preparation

Check that the following have been done in preparation for this activity:

- prepare the schedule in the wiki; and
- send out a daily activity update by email or use the announcement tool to remind participants of this task and the time frame for the task.

Activity description

This activity is intended to give participants the opportunity to choose an activity to facilitate as facilitators in training and to practice using a wiki to fill in a facilitation schedule. Participants have the choice of facilitating individually or with a fellow participant in either the lead or co-facilitation role.

Outcomes

At the end of this activity, participants should be able to:

- use a wiki as an information sharing tool.

Tools

The tools used in this activity include:

- wiki.

Core readings

None

Facilitation roles and strategies

In this activity, you maintain your role as teacher and guide. Monitor contributions to the schedule in the wiki and be prepared to assist participants who might be unfamiliar with using a wiki. This will be the first time participants in this course use a wiki, and they are required to complete only the basic tasks of adding and saving information. During Week 3, in Activity 3.1, participants will get another opportunity to use a wiki to create a document collaboratively.

It is essential that each participant facilitates at least one activity during the course, to develop their skills as trainee facilitators and to give you the opportunity to see them in action and to provide them with feedback. If some participants have not completed the schedule, gently remind them in a private email and encourage them to do so. Some participants may be reluctant or shy to facilitate on their own. Encourage these participants by suggesting that they co-facilitate with either you or another more experienced participant. Encourage participants who choose to co-facilitate to have a discussion on how to prepare for the co-facilitation and to clarify roles and responsibilities.

Facilitator reflections

It is important for you to reflect on your role as a facilitator and on the course. Some questions that you could consider are:

- What worked well?
- What difficulties did you encounter?
- What do you need to do differently?

Extension activities

None

Variation of the activity

If your course environment lacks a wiki you can easily use a free online wiki from a service like Wikispaces or PBwiki or the wiki-like functionality of Google Docs. You could also ask participants to post their offers to a discussion forum, which becomes the raw material for a schedule to be drawn up and posted by one of the participants.

Week 2 Reflections

Preparation

Check that the following have been done in preparation for this activity:

- set up the new topic in the discussion forum and create a link from the Week 2 reflection activity;
- seed the topic with a message inviting participants to share their reflections; and
- send out a daily activity update by email or use the announcement tool to remind participants to complete the reflection task.

Activity description

Participants are required to share some reflections on the week's activities and their participation on the course both in their learning journals and in the communal space, at the Week 2 'Reflections' topic.

Tools

The tools used in this activity include:

- discussion forums.

Facilitation roles and strategies

You play the role of guide in reminding participants that reflection is a crucial component of the course and their development as online facilitators. Participant reflections are also important for the course leader to assess the progress of the course. Week 2 focuses on building community. This entails the course community as well as reflections on strategies to build communities in future courses of which participants will become leaders. Assist participants who struggle to share their reflections by asking open ended questions or by drawing attention to the links between different participants' reflections.

Facilitator reflections

Your reflections on the course are as important as those of the participants. You need to model the practice of reflecting on a regular basis. Some questions that you could consider are:

- How well have you played the role of community builder?
- Has this group connected and are they behaving as a community?
- Have the activities worked in the way that you envisaged? What changes would you make in future?

Week 3 Facilitating

During Week 3, your role shifts to that of coach and mentor as the participants learn about summarising, weaving and questioning as key practices of online facilitation. It is vital that you are able to ensure that all the participants take advantage of the opportunities to practice these skills and that you provide helpful feedback to participants. Many participants may hold back from posting summaries or weaves, so you will need to provide good examples and to encourage more reticent participants to post their attempts. Some groups may require a lot more coaxing, if participants fear criticism. Then you should provide constructive feedback, which acknowledges what is useful and offers advice for improvements.

Table 6.3 Overview of Week 3 Facilitating

Task	Activity 3.1 Exploring facilitation	Activity 3.2 Preparing summaries	Activity 3.3 Preparing weaves	Activity 3.4 Effective online facilitation
Preparation	Place participants into groups Set up wiki page Upload screen movie on wiki editing Send out daily update	Set up the new topic in the discussion forum Seed the topic Upload reading to library Send out daily update	Set up the new topic in the discussion forum Seed the topic Send out daily update	Set up the chat room Arrange a time for chat Read the required readings Prepare prompting questions Send out daily update
Activity description	Participants compare face-to-face facilitation with online facilitation, and work in groups on this comparison in a wiki page	Participants begin developing the skill of summarising discussions, and then reflect on the process of preparing summaries and different styles of summarising	Participants begin developing the skill of weaving discussions, and then reflect on the process of preparing weaves and different styles of weaving	Participants reflect on guidelines for effective facilitation by drawing on their experience of the course and key readings
Outcomes	Use a wiki as an information sharing and collaborative tool Articulate the unique characteristics of online facilitation Develop a knowledge resource collaboratively Work collaboratively and acknowledge contributions of other participants	Summarise discussions and identify different styles of summarising Acknowledge contributions from others Write clearly and concisely online	Weave threads across different discussions and identify different styles of weaving Acknowledge contributions from others Write clearly and concisely online	Identify effective facilitation strategies
Tools	Wiki	Discussion forum	Discussion forum	Chat
Core readings	None	Creating effective summaries	Gilly Salmon's 'How to weave'	'The art of hosting good conversations online' by Howard Rheingold 'The do's and don'ts of online facilitation'

Facilitation roles and strategies	Mentor and coach	Mentor and coach	Mentor and coach	Mentor and coach
Facilitator reflections	Record your reflections of facilitating the activity and participant engagement	Record your reflections of facilitating the activity and participant engagement	Record your reflections of facilitating the activity and participant engagement	Record your reflections of facilitating the activity and participant engagement
Extension activities	One participant summarises the contributions from different groups	None	None	Participants could find other interesting articles or websites related to online facilitation, adding these to the library, or you could create a wiki page to which they can contribute
Activity variations	All participants contribute to one document	None	None	None

Activity 3.1 Exploring facilitation

Preparation

Check that the following have been done in preparation for this activity:

- divide the course participants into groups of four and inform them of which groups they are in;
- set up and prepare a wiki page for each group to complete a comparison of online facilitation and face-to-face facilitation (the page should also contain space for participants to add suggestions about face-to-face teaching skills that are useful in online facilitation);
- upload the screen movie of how to edit a wiki to the appropriate folder in the library; and
- send out a daily activity update by email or use the announcement tool to remind participants of this task and the time frame for the task.

Activity description

In this activity, participants compare face-to-face facilitation with online facilitation. Participants are required to work together in a group and are required to use a wiki page to complete the task.

Outcomes

At the end of this activity, participants should be able to:

- use a wiki as an information sharing and collaborative tool;
- articulate the unique characteristics of online facilitation;
- develop a knowledge resource collaboratively; and
- work collaboratively and acknowledge contributions of other participants.

Tools

The tools used in this activity include:

- wiki.

Core readings

- None

Facilitation roles and strategies

In this activity, you begin to shift responsibility to participants to take on roles as facilitators. Your role, therefore, shifts to that of mentor or coach. Since the participants are divided into groups, they need to appoint a leader of their group.

This activity focuses on comparing face-to-face strategies with online facilitation strategies. Therefore, participants with more online experience will be in a better position to contribute. Take care when constructing the groups of participants to ensure a mix of those with experience of online facilitation with those who have no or limited experience.

Your role is to prepare the wiki pages so that students have little difficulty in editing the page. You will need to monitor whether the groups are adding to their wiki pages and whether all participants are participating in the task. Provide guidance to groups that may be stuck or where one person in the group seems to be the sole contributor. Remind participants that this is a collaborative activity.

Since participants may not be familiar with editing a wiki, you may need to help particular individuals. A screen movie appropriate for your learning environment will help these individuals.

Facilitator reflections

It is important for you to reflect on your role as a facilitator and on the course. Some questions that you could consider are:

- What worked well?
- What do you need to do differently?
- What difficulties did you encounter in playing the role of coach and mentor while a learner facilitator hosted the discussion?
- How well did the groups function? Were some groups better than others?

Extension activities

This activity could be extended by assigning one individual the task of summarising and synthesising an overview of the contributions across all of the groups. You may also want to suggest the following reading: Educause Learning Initiative (2005) *7 things you should know about wikis*. Available at: <http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI7004.pdf> or <http://tinyurl.com/5tfoc3>

Variation of the activity

A variation of this activity could involve the entire group contributing to one document.

Activity 3.2 Preparing summaries

Preparation

Check that the following have been done in preparation for this activity:

- set up the discussion forum in your online environment and create a link from Activity 3.2;
- seed the forum with a summary of a previous discussion topic as a model for participants;

- upload the article 'Creating effective summaries' into the appropriate folder in the library; and
- send out a daily activity update by email or use the announcement tool to remind participants of this task and the time frame for the task.

Activity description

In this activity, begin developing the skill of summarising discussions and then reflect on the process of preparing summaries and different styles of summarising.

Outcomes

At the end of this activity, the participants should be able to:

- summarise discussions and identify different styles of summarising;
- acknowledge contributions from others; and
- write clearly and concisely online.

Tools

The tools used in this activity include:

- discussion forums.

Core readings

- 'Creating effective summaries'.

Facilitation roles and strategies

You continue your role as coach or mentor as participants begin to develop the key skill of summarising discussions. However, since this is a skills activity, you are also acting as a teacher or guide. Your initial summary should serve as a model for participants who may be unclear about what is expected. Participants need to be given feedback on whether their summaries are effective. If participants produce lengthy summaries, provide guidance on ways of shortening the summary. Care needs to be taken when providing feedback to participants, since participants may have varying skills in summarising discussions. Take care to avoid rushing in too fast with your comments for all the summaries, since this will undermine the interaction between participants. However, you may need to model the process of reviewing a summary.

Facilitator reflections

It is important for you to reflect on your role as a facilitator and on the course. Some questions that you could consider are:

- Have you been an effective teacher or guide in assisting participants to create effective summaries?
- What worked well?
- What difficulties did you encounter?
- What do you need to do differently?

Activity 3.3 Preparing weaves

Preparation

Check that the following have been done in preparation for this activity:

- set up the new topic in the discussion forum and create a link from Activity 3.3;
- seed the topic with an example of a weave; and
- send out a daily activity update by email or use the announcement tool to remind participants of this task and the time frame for the task.

Activity description

In this activity, begin developing the skill of weaving discussions and then reflect on the process of preparing summaries and different styles of weaving.

Outcomes

At the end of this activity, the participants should be able to:

- weave threads across different discussions and identify different styles of weaving;
- acknowledge contributions from others; and
- write clearly and concisely online.

Tools

The tools used in this activity include:

- discussion forums.

Core readings

- Gilly Salmon (2004) *'How to weave': Resources for practitioners*. Available at <http://www.atimod.com/e-moderating/resources.shtml> or <http://tinyurl.com/d38p2y>

Facilitation roles and strategies

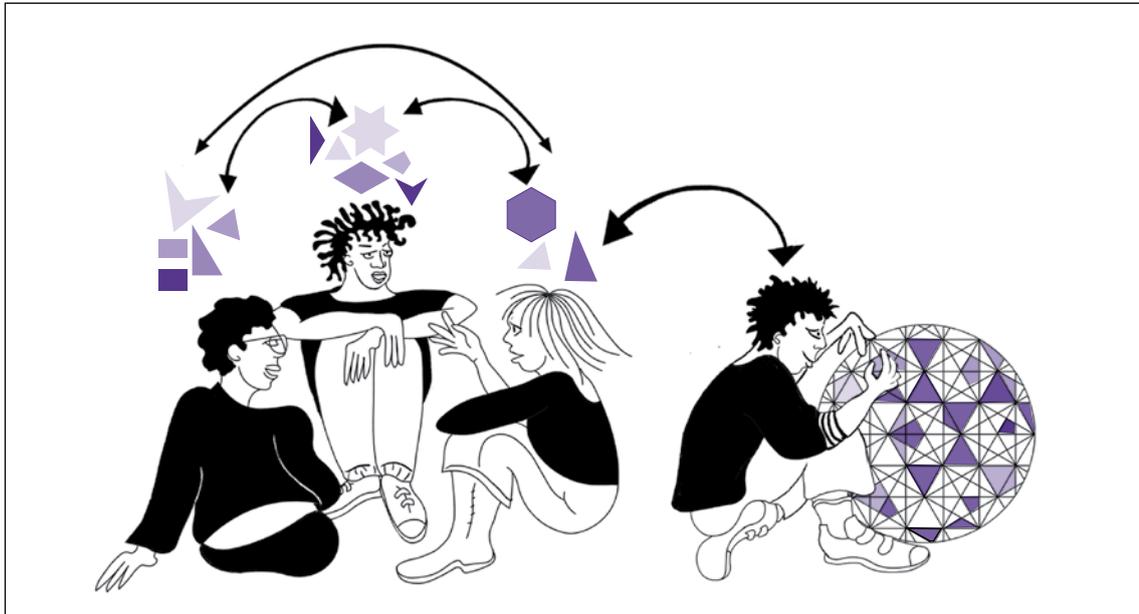
You continue your role as coach or mentor, as participants begin to develop the key skill of weaving threads across discussions. Since this is a skills activity, you are also acting as a teacher or guide. Your initial weave should serve as a model for participants who may be unclear about what is expected. Participants need to be given feedback on whether their weaves are effective. If participants produce lengthy weaves, provide guidance on ways of shortening the weaves. Care needs to be taken when providing feedback to participants, since participants may have varying skills in weaving discussions. Participants need to be made aware of the difference between weaving and summarising. A weave of an entire topic may initially be daunting for many participants, so encouraging participants to start with smaller weaves of two or three posts may provide a useful step towards larger weaves.

Facilitator reflections

It is important for you to reflect on your role as a facilitator and on the course. Some questions that you could consider are:

- Have you been an effective teacher or guide in assisting participants to create effective weaves?
- What worked well?
- What difficulties did you encounter?
- What do you need to do differently?

Figure 6.2 Weaving



Activity 3.4 Effective online facilitation

Preparation

Check that the following have been done in preparation for this activity:

- set up the chat room;
- arrange a suitable time with all participants for the chat;
- upload the link to 'The art of hosting good conversations online' by Howard Rheingold and the article 'The do's and don'ts of online facilitation' into the appropriate folder in the library;
- read the articles in preparation for the chat and prepare a text file of questions to guide the chat; and
- send out a daily activity update by email or use the announcement tool to remind participants of this task and time frame for the task.

Activity description

In this activity, participants reflect on guidelines for effective facilitation by drawing on their experience of the course and key readings.

Outcomes

At the end of this activity, participants should be able to:

- identify effective facilitation strategies.

Tools

The tools used in this activity include:

- chat; and
- library.

Core readings

- 'The art of hosting good conversations online' by Howard Rheingold; and
- 'The do's and don'ts of online facilitation'.

Facilitation roles and strategies

Your role in this activity is as a mentor and coach. This activity is set up as a synchronous chat. Therefore, it is important to encourage all participants to participate in the chat. You may need to set up two time slots for chats if participants are drawn from different time zones or if their schedules do not allow everyone to participate at the same time.

This chat is a focused chat, since it deals with two key readings. Remind participants to read the articles before the chat so as to maximise the discussions. You could assign an article to a particular participant to provide a brief summary of the article. You will need to have questions prepared to stimulate discussion, and perhaps to elicit questions from the participants about points that require clarification or points that are contentious.

Make sure that you start the chat on time, giving people enough time to join the chat and giving yourself enough time to wrap up the chat. Welcome latecomers to the chat, but you should encourage participants to be on time for scheduled chats, since latecomers may not have sufficient time to catch up with the discussion and may cause the discussion to revert to points already covered. If your chat room allows you to send private messages to specific participants, then make use of this back channel to draw in latecomers and to encourage 'lurkers' to post in the chat.

If this chat is facilitated by one of the participants, make sure that the person is prepared for the facilitation of the chat.

Facilitator reflections

It is important for you to reflect on your role as a facilitator and on the course. Some questions that you could consider are:

- What worked well?
- What difficulties did you encounter facilitating the chat?
- What do you need to do differently?
- What difficulties did you encounter in playing the role of coach and mentor while a learner facilitator hosted the discussion?

Extension activities

You could ask participants to find other interesting articles or websites related to online facilitation. They could add these to the library or you could create a wiki page to which they can contribute.

Variation of the activity

For one of the core readings you can substitute Backroad Connections Pty Ltd (2002) *Effective online facilitation* (Version 101), Australian Learning Framework Quick Guide series. Australian National Training Authority. Available at <http://pre2005.flexiblelearning.net.au/guides/facilitation.html> or <http://tinyurl.com/at2xcv>

Week 3 Reflections

Preparation

Check that the following have been done in preparation for this activity:

- set up the new topic in the discussion forum and create a link from the Week 3 reflection activity;
- seed the topic with a message inviting participants to share reflections; and
- send out a daily activity update by email or use the announcement tool to remind participants to complete the reflection task.

Activity description

Participants are required to share some reflections on the week's activities and their participation on the course both in their personal learning journals and in the communal space, at the week 3 'Reflections' topic.

Tools

The tools used in this activity include:

- discussion forums.

Facilitation roles and strategies

You play the role of guide in reminding participants that reflection is a crucial component of the course and their development as online facilitators. Participant reflections are also important for the course leader to assess the progress of the course. Week 3 focuses on strategies for facilitating discussions. Assist participants who struggle to write down their reflections by asking open ended questions or by drawing attention to the links between different participants' reflections.

Facilitator reflections

Your reflections on the course are as important as those of the participants. You need to model the practice of reflecting on a regular basis. Some questions that you could consider are:

- How well have you played the roles of mentor and coach?
- Were you able to step back to allow participants to facilitate discussions?
- Have the activities worked in the way that you envisaged? What changes would you make in future?

Week 4 Creating

At the end of this week, participants should be more effective as facilitators. As a course leader, you will assist them in considering strategies for dealing with differences and conflict and building trust in online communities. Towards the end of the week, you will provide encouragement, guidance and feedback on online activities developed by the participants. One of your challenges here will be to engage participants in providing feedback to their peers. Throughout this week, you will maintain the roles of coach and mentor.

Table 6.4 Overview of Week 4 Creating

Task	Activity 4.1 Deepening connections	Activity 4.2 Dealing with diversity	Activity 4.3 Managing conflict	Activity 4.4 Creating an online activity
Preparation	Set up the new topic in the discussion forum Seed the topic Send out daily update	Set up the new topic in the discussion forum Seed the topic Upload reading to library Send out daily update	Set up chat room Arrange suitable time for chat Prepare questions for the chat Upload reading to library Send out daily update	Set up the new topic in the discussion forum Seed the topic Upload 'Activity design template' to library Send out daily update
Activity description	Participants respond to a mini-case and practice developing and applying strategies for building trust in an online environment	Participants begin developing the skill of valuing and dealing with diversity in an online environment	Participants participate in synchronous chat to discuss how to manage conflict online	Participants practice designing an online activity or adapting an existing one, and then give and receive feedback on each other's designs
Outcomes	Develop and apply strategies for building trust online	Articulate strategies for dealing appropriately with differences and diversity in an online environment Demonstrate skills in valuing and managing diversity online	Describe the source of conflict and some solutions proposed by the Non-Violent Communication model Identify a few strategies for managing conflict online	Design or adapt an online activity for use in own context Reflect on and give feedback on activities designed by other participants Engage in multi-modal forms of communication by using photographs, drawings, 'mindmaps' or audio files.
Tools	Discussion forum	Library Discussion forum	Library Chat	Discussion forum
Core readings	None, except for mini-case within activity	Article 'Why diversity matters'	Article 'Non-violent communication model'	None, except the 'Activity design template'
Facilitation roles and strategies	Mentor and coach	Mentor and coach	Mentor and coach	Teacher and guide
Facilitator reflections	Record your reflections of facilitating the activity and participant engagement	Record your reflections of facilitating the activity and participant engagement	Record your reflections of facilitating the activity and participant engagement	Record your reflections of facilitating the activity and participant engagement
Extension activities	None	Reading additional articles by Nancy White on dealing with diversity online	None	None
Activity variations	Develop your own alternative mini-case of a student who feels excluded or unappreciated in a course	Participants post own definitions of diversity and its management in forum, then read article and continue with discussion	None	None

Activity 4.1 Deepening connections

Preparation

Check that the following have been done in preparation for this activity:

- set up the new topic in the discussion forum and create a link from Activity 4.1;
- seed the topic with a welcome message (consider including the 'mini-case', which forms part of the activity, in the welcome message and asking a few open questions to trigger responses);
- send out a daily activity update by email or use the announcement tool to remind participants of this task and the time frame for the task; and
- ensure that the learner facilitators have rights to circulate announcements.

Activity description

This activity uses a mini-case of a participant feeling left out of the course community to provide a context within which the course participants can practice developing and sharing strategies for building trust online. Here, one or two participants will also have another opportunity to play the role of learner facilitator by facilitating the discussion forum.

Outcomes

At the end of this activity, participants should be able to:

- develop and apply strategies for building trust online.

Tools

The tools involved in this activity include:

- discussion forum.

Core readings

- Mini-case in the activity

Facilitation roles and strategies

During this activity, one or two participants will have the opportunity to sharpen their skills as online facilitators. You will maintain your role as coach and mentor and be available if and when a learner facilitator requires support. Later, during the discussion, you can post an entry where you acknowledge the learner facilitator's performance and, in the role of mentor, provide a short summary of what you perceive to be the main points in the discussion. You might also highlight anything important that the discussion is missing and end with a thought-provoking comment or question.

Whenever a learner facilitator takes the opportunity to facilitate a discussion, remind him or her that creating a summary in the discussion topic and circulating it as an announcement is part of the task. Make sure that you provide some constructive feedback to the learner facilitator in a private email.

This activity focuses on building trust. Although you need to give the learner facilitator space to facilitate independently, monitor and guide the discussions. You may need to communicate with the learner facilitator privately if there are facilitation issues that you need to address.

Facilitator reflections

It is important for you to reflect on your role as a facilitator and on the course. Some questions that you could consider are:

- Have you been effective as a coach and mentor in supporting participants to hone their abilities to foster online trust?
- What worked well?
- What difficulties did you encounter in playing the role of coach and mentor while a learner facilitator hosted the discussion?
- What do you need to do differently?

Extension activities

None

Variation of the activity

Develop your own alternative mini-case of a student who feels excluded or unappreciated in a course.

Activity 4.2 Dealing with diversity

Preparation

Check that the following have been done in preparation for this activity:

- set up the new topic in the discussion forum and create a link from Activity 4.2;
- upload the file 'Why diversity matters' to the appropriate folder in the library;
- seed the forum with a welcome message; and
- send out a daily activity update by email or use the announcement tool to remind participants of this task and the time frame for the task.

Activity description

This activity encourages participants to develop their skills to value and deal with diversity in an online environment. The article 'Why diversity matters' provides a view on dealing with diversity that aims to elicit different opinions and debate in the discussion forum.

Outcomes

At the end of this activity, participants should be able to:

- articulate strategies for dealing appropriately with difference and diversity in an online environment; and
- demonstrate skills in valuing and managing diversity online.

Tools

The tools used in this activity include:

- library; and
- discussion forum.

Core readings

- The article 'Why diversity matters'.

Facilitation roles and strategies

Here, another participant or two will have an opportunity to play the role of facilitator in training. Your role will be to be available in the background to support the learner facilitator(s) as coach and mentor. Make sure you check in with the learner facilitators before the discussion forum takes place to clarify their understanding of their roles and responsibilities during and after the discussion forum. The learner facilitator needs to remind participants to read the required reading and ensure that participants refer to the reading in their discussions.

In an unobtrusive but supportive manner, acknowledge the facilitator(s) and give some encouraging feedback on their performance. If necessary, highlight areas of agreement as well as dissent on how to deal with diversity that you noticed from contributions in the forum. After the forum, you can provide the learner facilitator(s) with more detailed private feedback on their performance and make some suggestions if necessary. Remind the learner facilitator(s) to post the summary of the discussion in the forum.

Facilitator reflections

It is important for you to reflect on your role as a facilitator and on the course. Some questions that you could consider are:

- What worked well?
- What difficulties did you encounter in playing the role of coach and mentor?
- What do you need to do differently?
- Are there any diversity issues that have arisen in this course? How have you dealt with these issues?

Extension activities

Offer a reading on diversity in online communities for interested participants, e.g. Joitske Hulsebosch, Ancella Livers and Meena Surie Wilson (2008) *Cultural crossings: Using stories to inform your learning journey*. Available at: <http://cpsquare.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/07/culturalcrossings.pdf> or <http://tinyurl.com/ctxucy>

Variation of the activity

Participants could be asked to first contribute their own understandings of diversity and how to respond to diversity in the forum, and then to read the article and continue with the discussion.

Activity 4.3 Managing conflict

Preparation

Check that the following have been done in preparation for this activity:

- set up the chat room;
- arrange a suitable time with all participants for the chat;
- prepare a text file of questions or prompts before the chat takes place;
- upload the file 'Non-violent communication model' to the appropriate folder in the library; and
- send out a daily activity update by email or use the announcement tool to remind participants of this task and the time frame for the task.

Figure 6.3 Conflict



Activity description

During this activity, participants take part in a synchronous chat to discuss developing ways of managing conflict during online learning events, after completing the pre-reading of an article that outlines one approach to managing or transforming conflict.

Outcomes

At the end of this activity, participants should be able to:

- describe the sources of conflict; and
- identify strategies for managing conflict online.

Tools

The tools used in this activity include:

- chat.

Core readings

- The article 'Non-violent communication model'.

Facilitation roles and strategies

Playing the role of coach and mentor, you will help to prepare and support the next learner facilitator who has signed up earlier to facilitate this synchronous chat. Highlight the need to start on time, to welcome latecomers and encourage them to browse over the discussion to catch up and to leave enough time to summarise the discussion before the scheduled end of the chat. Encourage the learner facilitator to read the required readings and to prepare questions based on the reading for the scheduled chat. After the chat, you can provide the chat facilitator with more detailed private feedback and make some suggestions if necessary. If the discussion is vigorous then consider continuing it in a discussion forum set up for this purpose.

Facilitator reflections

It is important for you to reflect on your role as a facilitator and on the course. Some questions that you could consider are:

- What worked well?
- What difficulties did you encounter?
- How did the participants give feedback to each other? Did their feedback contribute towards encouraging future participation in the course?
- What do you need to do differently?

Extension activities

Ask for two volunteers to devise and role-play an online conflict in the chat room. Then ask the group to apply the non-violent communication model.

Variation of the activity

Devise your own mini-case of conflict in an online course.

Activity 4.4 Creating an online activity

Preparation

Check that the following have been done in preparation for this activity:

- set up the new topic in the discussion forum and create a link from Activity 4.4;
- upload the 'Activity design template' to the appropriate folder in the library;
- seed the topic with a welcome message encouraging participants to share their activities; and
- send out a daily activity update by email or use the announcement tool to remind participants of this task and the time frame for the task.

Activity description

This activity provides participants with the opportunity to design or adapt an online activity for their own context and to receive feedback. Participants have the choice of using the activity design template provided, designing an activity or adapting one of the existing activities. They are asked to share their activities by posting them in the forum and then to give constructive feedback to a few fellow participants on their activities.

Outcomes

At the end of this activity, participants should be able to:

- design or adapt an online activity for use in own context;
- reflect on and give feedback on activities designed by other participants;
- engage in multi-modal forms of communication by using photographs, drawings, 'mindmaps' or audio files.

Tools

The tools used in this activity include:

- discussion forums.

Core readings

None

Facilitation roles and strategies

In this activity, your role shifts from coach and mentor to teacher and guide. Ideally, this forum should not be facilitated by one of the participants. Since the activity involves creating or adapting activities, you will need to play a key facilitation role. When people try a creative task, they might be sensitive about the result, so be tactful in the feedback provided. Monitor feedback from other participants about posted activities and intervene if unhelpful or judgmental comments are made. Model how constructive feedback can be given by providing a few enabling questions and meaningful suggestions. You can provide the course participants with more detailed feedback privately.

Facilitator reflections

It is important for you to reflect on your role as a facilitator and on the course. Some questions that you could consider are:

- What worked well?
- What difficulties did you encounter in providing constructive feedback to participants about their online activity designs?
- What do you need to do differently?
- If particular difficulties were experienced by the participants, are there changes that can be made to the course?

Week 4 Reflections

Preparation

Check that the following have been done in preparation for this activity:

- set up the new topic in the discussion forum and create a link from the Week 4 reflection activity
- seed the topic with an invitation to share reflections; and
- send out a daily activity update by email or use the announcement tool to remind participants to complete the reflection task.

Activity description

Participants are required to share some reflections on the week's activities and their participation on the course, both in their personal learning journals and in the communal space of the week 4 'Reflections' topic.

Tools

The tools used in this activity include:

- discussion forums.

Facilitation roles and strategies

You play the role of guide in reminding participants that reflection is a crucial component of the course and their development as online facilitators. Participant reflections are also important for the course leader to assess the progress of the course. Week 4 focuses on sensitive issues of trust, diversity and conflict in online learning communities. Assist participants who struggle to write down their reflections by asking open ended questions or by drawing attention to the links between different participants' reflections.

Facilitator reflections

Your reflections on the course are as important as those of the participants. You need to model the practice of reflecting on a regular basis. Some questions that you could consider are:

- How well have you played the roles of coach and mentor?
- How well do you think participants grasped the issues of trust, diversity and conflict?
- Have the activities worked in the way that you envisaged? What changes would you make in future?

Week 5 Applying

In this week, you will prepare participants to leave the course and become independent online facilitators. You will also assist participants to look at ways of building networks and finding resources as part of their personal development plans. At the end of the week, you will facilitate the sharing of closing reflections and farewells across the learning community. As a course leader, you will face some interesting challenges of supporting journeys beyond the confines of the online learning environment. You will be able to stay aware of some of the key experiences shared by participants but you will also need to accept that much of their activity during Week 5 will be invisible to you. And then the closing activities at the end of the week will provoke a range of reactions across the class. Some people just do not like endings but it is your responsibility to facilitate an ending that is both reflective and celebratory.

Table 6.5 Overview of Week 5 Applying

Task	Activity 5.1 Adventures into the World Wide Web	Activity 5.2 Further adventures into the World Wide Web	Activity 5.3 Creating a personal development plan	Activity 5.4 Creating an online activity	Our closing event
Preparation	Set up the online facilitation group on Facebook Send out daily update	Set up folder 'Our recommendations' in library Enable blogs and give participants rights to start their own blogs Set up screen movie Send out daily update	Upload the 'Personal development plan template' to library Send out daily update	Ensure that you have responded to participants' draft personal development plans Set up discussion forum Seed the forum Send out daily update	Establish a time for chat Set up the new topic in the discussion forum Seed the topic Set up chat room Send out daily update
Activity description	Participants join and engage in an online social network	Participants do a web search or use Google Blogsearch or Technorati to find resources, create a personal blog to share experiences and upload resources to library	Participants take time to reflect on priorities for continued growth as online facilitators and create a personal development plan to share with the facilitator and a fellow participant for feedback	Participants share enhanced personal development plans with each other and provide and receive feedback	Participants upload pictures, sound files and creative writing pieces to forum and participate in chat to share what they have gained from the course as closing event

Outcomes	Use social networking sites such as Facebook Join and participate in online social networks	Access and evaluate resources on online facilitation Set up a personal blog Upload a resource into a designated online folder in the library	Create a personal development plan for continued learning about online facilitation Provide constructive feedback on other participants' personal development plans	Create a personal development plan for continued learning about online facilitation Provide constructive feedback on other participants' personal development plans	Upload a resource to a designated folder in the library Engage in multi-modal forms of communication
Tools	World Wide Web Websearch Facebook	World Wide Web Websearch Blogs Library	Email Private message tool	Discussion forum	Discussion forum Chat
Core readings	None	None	Other participants' personal development plans	Other participants' personal development plans	None, except looking at, listening to and reading each other's creative contributions
Facilitation roles and strategies	Host and facilitator Peer Mentor and coach	Peer Mentor and coach	Mentor and coach	Peer Mentor and coach	Host Facilitator Peer
Facilitator reflections	Record your reflections on facilitating the activity and participant engagement	Record your reflections on facilitating the activity and participant engagement	Record your reflections on facilitating the activity and participant engagement	Record your reflections on facilitating the activity and participant engagement	Record your reflections on facilitating the activity and participant engagement
Extension activities	Participants explore other social networking sites such as Classroom 2.0 or look for other online communities or networks	Participants comment on each other's personal blogs	Participants can start completing the course evaluation form	None	None
Activity variations	Use Facebook mobile for low bandwidth participation using either a computer or a mobile phone	Instead of using blogs, ask participants to post to an online discussion. Instead of the screen movie on blogging, use a slideshow or a Word document with screenshots	None	None	None

Activity 5.1 Adventure into the World Wide Web

Preparation

Check that the following have been done in preparation for this activity:

- set up the online facilitation course group on Facebook and a link from Activity 5.1; and
- send out a daily activity update by email or use the announcement tool to remind participants of this task and the time frame for the task.

Activity description

This activity encourages participants to step beyond the comfort zone of the course site and to join and engage in an online network. During the first part of the activity, participants who are not members of Facebook yet are encouraged to join the Online Facilitation Group on Facebook. Then participants get to practice using Facebook by communicating within the Facebook group for the course, exploring other groups and by extending their network of Facebook friends.

Outcomes

At the end of this activity, participants should be able to:

- use social networking sites such as Facebook; and
- join and participate in online social networks.

Tools

The tools involved in this activity include:

- World Wide Web;
- Websearch; and
- Facebook.

Core readings

None

Facilitation roles and strategies

Here, you will return to your role of host to welcome participants on Facebook and to facilitate some of the discussion that takes place there. You also take on a peer role, as the Facebook group might continue meeting after the course as a space where online facilitators can meet, share experiences and learn from one another. Not everyone might be familiar with the use of Facebook, so be prepared to play a mentoring and coaching role to support participants who might experience some challenges.

There is also an extension activity where participants can venture and explore other social networks or even practice setting up a social network. Some of those participants might need your guidance in the role of mentor and coach.

Facilitator reflections

It is important for you to reflect on your role as a facilitator and on the course. Some questions that you could consider are:

- Have you been effective as a host and coach and mentor in supporting participants to join and participate in social networks?
- What worked well?
- What difficulties did you encounter?
- What do you need to do differently?

Extension activities

Participants familiar with Facebook might want to choose to explore other social networking sites such as Classroom 2.0, a social networking site for people interested in applying Web 2.0 technologies in education. The site also uses a service called Ning, which allows anyone to set up their online social networks for free. Those participants who are even more adventurous can surf the Web and look for another online community or network that appeals to them. Participants who choose to do the extension activity are encouraged to share their experiences in the online facilitation Facebook group.

Variations of the activity

Use Facebook Mobile for low-bandwidth participation from computer or cellphone. If the speed of the Internet connection is a severe constraint, then your course participants may well have access to connectivity through their cellphones. GPRS access to the Internet will permit the use of a mobile social networking programme such as MXit or mig33.

Activity 5.2 Further adventures into the World Wide Web**Preparation**

Check that the following have been done in preparation for this activity:

- set up a folder called 'Our recommendations' in the library and create a link from Activity 5.2;
- enable the blogs and ensure that participants have rights to start their own blogs;
- set up the screen movie and create a link to Activity 5.2; and
- send out a daily activity update by email or use the announcement tool to remind participants of this task and the time frame for the task.

Activity description

In this activity, participants are encouraged to venture out on the World Wide Web and look for and find resources that they can use to apply what they have learnt as an online facilitator and teacher. During the first part of the activity, participants have the choice of either doing a general Web search or using the Google Blogsearch or Technorati search engines to find specialist blogs that might have information and resources of interest. The second task is to set up their own personal blogs, and a screen movie is provided to guide them through the process. In the last part of the activity, participants share their experiences in their personal blogs and have the option to upload any useful resources they might have found in the 'Our recommendations' folder in the library so that other participants also have access to them.

Outcomes

At the end of this activity, participants should be able to:

- access and evaluate resources on online facilitation;
- set up a personal blog; and
- upload a resource into a designated online folder in the library.

Tools

The tools used in this activity include:

- World Wide Web;
- Web search;
- blogs; and
- library .

Core readings

None

Facilitation roles and strategies

Your role as peer of your course participants continues and you have the option to participate here by also completing the activity. However, there might be some participants who will still require your assistance as a mentor and coach in supporting them to complete the Web searches and to set up their personal blogs. You can also encourage more experienced participants to support others who may need support.

Facilitator reflections

It is important for you to reflect on your role as a facilitator and on the course. Some questions that you could consider are:

- What worked well?
- What difficulties did you encounter in playing the role of peer as well as coach and mentor when required?
- What do you need to do differently?

Extension activities

Participants comment on each other's blogs.

Variation of the activity

Instead of using blogs, ask participants to post to an online discussion. Instead of the screen movie, use a slideshow or a Word document with screenshots to guide participants through the steps of starting a blog.

Figure 6.4 Adventures into the World Wide Web



Activity 5.3 Creating a personal development plan

Preparation

Check that the following have been done in preparation for this activity:

- upload the 'Personal development plan' template to the appropriate folder in the library; and
- send out a daily activity update by email or use the announcement tool to remind participants of this task and time frame of the task.

Activity description

During this activity, participants take time to reflect on their priorities and plans for continued learning about online facilitation after the course. They are provided with a personal development plan template as a tool that they can use to complete the process. After completion, participants then send their plans to the course facilitator and another course participant of their choice for feedback, using email or the personal messages tool. They, in turn, respond to the draft plans of fellow participants who have requested feedback.

Outcomes

At the end of this activity, participants should be able to:

- create a personal development plan for continued learning about online facilitation; and
- provide constructive feedback to other participants' personal development plans.

Tools

The tools used in this activity include:

- email; and
- private messages tool.

Core readings

Other participants' personal development plans

Facilitation roles and strategies

Playing the role of coach and mentor, you will support the course participants in tweaking, enhancing and completing their personal development plans for continued learning about online facilitation. Your role is also to model the art of giving constructive and enabling feedback by using words of acknowledgement and encouragement, as well as providing clarifying and enabling questions and providing suggestions to participants.

Facilitator reflections

It is important for you to reflect on your role as a facilitator and on the course. Some questions that you could consider are:

- What worked well?
- What difficulties did you encounter in providing support to participants on their draft personal development plans?
- What do you need to do differently?

Extension activities

Since participants enter a reflective and evaluating frame of mind during this activity, encourage them to start completing the course evaluation form. Most participants would need to reflect on what happened during the different weeks of the

course to identify which competencies they feel they have developed sufficiently, as well as which competencies they would like to enhance. So, while they are doing that for the purpose of completing their personal development plan, it seems like a good space for them to start completing the evaluation form as well.

Variation of the activity

None

Activity 5.4 Sharing plans and discussing the way forward

Preparation

Check that the following have been done in preparation for this activity:

- ensure that you have responded to participants who have submitted their draft personal development plans within 24 hours;
- set up the new topic in the discussion forum and create a link from the Activity 5.4;
- check that learner facilitator(s) who have undertaken to facilitate the forum are clear about their roles and responsibilities;
- seed the topic with a welcome message encouraging participants to share their personal development plans; and
- send out a daily activity update by email or use the announcement tool to remind participants of this task and the time frame for the task.

Activity description

This activity provides participants with the opportunity to share their enhanced personal development plans with all fellow participants and to receive as well as give some helpful feedback, comments, questions or even suggestions. Here the learning community collaboratively supports all participants to work towards completing and leaving the course with effective plans for future growth as online facilitators.

Outcomes

At the end of this activity the participants should be able to:

- create a personal development plan for continued learning about online facilitation; and
- provide constructive feedback to other participants about their personal development plans.

Tools

The tools used in this activity include:

- discussion forums.

Core readings

The posted development plans of other participants.

Facilitation roles and strategies

You take on the roles of peer, coach and mentor. Course participants will be giving each other feedback about their personal development plans, so without running the risk of stifling participation, monitor how constructive and enabling their feedback is and be prepared to intervene if necessary.

Facilitator reflections

It is important for you to reflect on your role as a facilitator and on the course. Some questions that you could consider are:

- What worked well?
- What difficulties did you encounter?
- What do you need to do differently?
- If particular difficulties were experienced by the participants, are there changes that can be made to the course?

Extension activities

None

Variation of the activity

None

Week 5 Reflections**Preparation**

Check that the following have been done in preparation for this activity:

- set up the new topic in the discussion forum and create a link from the Week 5 reflection activity;
- seed the topic with an invitation to share reflections; and
- send out a daily activity update by email or use the announcement tool to remind participants to complete the reflection task.

Activity description

Participants are required to share some reflections on the week's activities and their participation in the course in both their personal learning journals and in the communal space at the week 5 'Reflection' topic.

Tools

The tools used in this activity include:

- discussion forums; and
- learning journals.

Facilitation roles and strategies

You play the role of guide in reminding participants that reflection is a crucial component of the course and their development as online facilitators. Participant reflections are also important for the course leader to assess the progress of the course. Week 5 focuses on the participants' progress and his or her next steps as an online facilitator. Assist participants who struggle to share their reflections by asking open ended questions by drawing attention to the links between different participants' reflections.

Facilitator reflections

Your reflections on the course are as important as those of the participants. You need to model the practice of reflecting on a regular basis. Some questions that you could consider are:

- How well have you played the roles of coach and mentor this week?
- How well did you get to know your participants?
- Have the activities worked in the way that you envisaged? What changes would you make in future?

Our closing event

Preparation

Check that the following have been done in preparation for this activity;

- email participants to establish a time for the closing event chat at the end of the week;
- set up the new topic in the discussion forum and create a link from the closing event activity;
- seed the topic with a welcome message encouraging participants to upload their pictures, sound files or pieces of creative writing;
- set up the chat room and create some questions or prompts to guide the chat; and
- send out a daily activity update by email or use the announcement tool to remind participants of this task and the time frame for the task.

Activity description

The closing event activity is an opportunity for participants to share what they have gained from the course and each other and to celebrate what has been achieved. It is a social and interactive closing ritual with the aim of gently guiding participants to acknowledge that the learning community as it existed within the course is now coming to an end. The activity has two parts. Participants can upload pictures, sound files or creative writing pieces in the forum space before the synchronous chat, which forms the second part of the activity, or thereafter. Therefore, participants who have missed the chat will have a further chance to say their goodbyes to fellow participants in the discussion forum, which closes on the Monday of the following week.

Outcomes

At the end of this activity, participants should be able to:

- upload a resource to a designated folder in the library; and
- engage in multi-modal forms of communication.

Tools

The tools used in this activity include:

- discussion forums; and
- chat.

Core readings

None

Facilitation roles and strategies

In this final part of the course, your role is to host and facilitate the closing event with the course participants. However, you also play the role of a peer sharing your own thoughts and emotions about your participation in and facilitation of the course and your engagement with others. Your aim is to create a space where people celebrate what happened and reach a sense of closure before leaving the course.

After the synchronous chat, you can encourage participants who have missed the chat to take the opportunity of participating in the forum as a way of participating in the closing event. Remind people that the forum will be open for a few days after the chat and that they are welcome to stay around and socialise with each other during that time.

Facilitator reflections

It is important for you to reflect on your role as a facilitator and on the course. Some questions that you could consider are:

- What worked well?
- What difficulties did you encounter?
- What do you need to do differently?

Appendices

Appendix 1 Opening survey

Getting to know each other

Introductory survey for the Online Facilitation Course

Part 1: About me

These questions ask about who we are

01: What is your name?

02: Where do you live?

03: What do you do for a living?

04: What is your favourite place in the world?

05: What is your favourite music?

06: What is your favourite hobby or interest?

07: I love chocolate

- Yes
 No

08: I enjoy playing or watching sport

- Yes
 No

09: I can speak more than two languages

- Yes
 No

10: I have brown eyes

- Yes
 No



11: I like wearing red

- Yes
- No

12: I have children

- Yes
- No

13: Cooking is my passion

- Yes
- No

Part 2: My online technologies

A: How I use technology

These questions ask about how you use technology

14: Which of these technologies do you use regularly? (Choose all that apply)

- word processor
- email
- web searches
- online discussions
- online chats
- none of these

15: Which of these technologies have you used?

(Choose all that apply)

- blogs
- wikis
- instant messaging
- Voice over Internet Protocol (e.g. Skype)
- none of these

16: How do you access the Internet?

(Choose all that apply)

- dial-up connection
- broadband connection
- internet cafe
- cell phone

B: My online experience

These questions ask about your experiences of online teaching, learning and community

17: What are your experiences of learning online?

- no previous experience
- have taken part in an online course
- have taken part in a mixed-mode/blended course



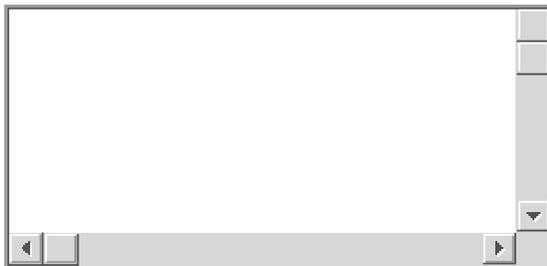
18: What are your experiences of teaching in an online or mixed-mode course?

- no previous experience
- teaching an online course
- teaching a mixed-mode/blended course
- designing online or mixed-mode/blended courses

19: What are your experiences of facilitating online?

- facilitating online or mixed-mode courses
- facilitating online communities
- leading a virtual team
- no previous experience

20: What would you like to learn from this online facilitation course? (Please write a few sentences)



Submit your survey

Thank you for completing this survey.

Appendix 2 Online facilitation course model

The course is based on the following model, which illustrates the learning pathway that you will travel as you progress through the course. Initially, you will be a newcomer to online learning facilitation. We hope that the course enables you to become a facilitator capable of facilitating an online course or conference independently. You will be given opportunities to facilitate activities during the course.

The model rests on the principles outlined in Section 1 of the course and assumes particular forms of engagement that are agreed upon by participants in the online learning community. At each level, you take on particular roles and develop specific skills, which are outlined in more detail below.

Level 1: Arriving

At this stage, you enter the online space. Your role is to show presence in the online learning environment, noticing the

presence of others and becoming familiar with the online space. The course leader plays the role of the host easing your access to the course and welcoming you to the online learning space.

Level 2: Conversing

At this stage, you will get to know the other participants and the course leader better. You will be introduced to basic online facilitation skills and begin to develop strategies for building online learning communities. The course leader takes on the role of a community builder and a guide.

Level 3: Facilitating

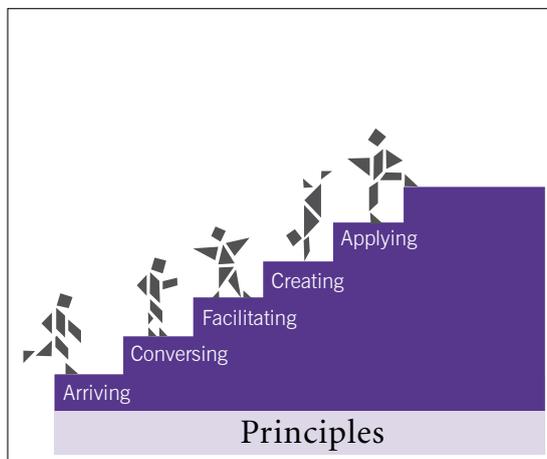
At this stage, you will begin to take on a more active role as novice facilitator as you increase your knowledge of facilitation skills and strategies. The course leader takes on the role of coach and mentor.

Level 4: Creating

At this stage, you will be given opportunities to sharpen your skills as a facilitator. Opportunities are created to raise your awareness of diversity, conflict and building trust in online learning communities. You will also adapt or design learning activities for your online learning course. The course leader maintains the role of coach and mentor.

Level 5: Applying

At this stage, you will prepare for leaving the course and becoming an independent online facilitator. The focus is on building networks and finding resources that will serve as a support base outside this course environment. You and the course leader engage as peers within an online facilitation community of practice.



Appendix 3 Capabilities of online facilitators

The capabilities outlined here are indicators of what expert online facilitators are expected to be able to do. These capabilities required for facilitating learning online are organised into five categories:

- supporting online learning;
- social skills;
- online communication skills;
- technical skills; and
- social networking skills.

While the course addresses some of these capabilities, we do not expect you to emerge from the course as an expert facilitator. You will become an expert facilitator over a long period of time through practicing online facilitation in different contexts. Each activity addresses a few specific outcomes and builds towards the capabilities outlined below. The specific outcomes and their relation to the capabilities are contained in the tables preceding the activities for each week of the course.

Quality Stage	Beginner	Intermediate	Expert
Supporting online learning	Recognises challenges faced by participants	Recognises challenges faced by participants and provides support to participants	Recognises challenges faced by participants, provides support to participants and anticipates participants' challenges
	Engages in knowledge construction by participating in discussions	Facilitates knowledge construction by using questioning and providing feedback to participants	Facilitates knowledge construction by using stimulating questioning, providing generative feedback to participants, exploring ideas by stimulating debate and knowing when to be silent
	Participates as a group member and uses time effectively	Manages individuals and groups, uses time effectively and paces discussions	Manages individuals and groups with ease, uses time effectively and paces discussions appropriately
Social skills	Participates in making a welcoming and enabling learning environment	Creates a welcoming and enabling environment and attempts to build trust amongst participants	Creates a welcoming and enabling environment with ease and builds trust easily amongst participants
	Recognises why individuals are not participating	Possesses some strategies for engaging individuals who are not participating	Possesses a range of strategies for engaging individuals who are not participating
	Acknowledges diversity and is aware of personal role in potential conflict	Acknowledges diversity, is aware of interpersonal dynamics and attempts to manage diversity and conflict	Acknowledges diversity, is aware of interpersonal dynamics and manages diversity and conflict constructively
Online communication skills	Writes clearly and concisely online	Writes clearly and concisely online and produces engaging messages encouraging participation	Writes clearly and concisely online, produces engaging messages encouraging participation and communicates in multi-modal forms

Technical skills	Navigates learning environment	Navigates learning environment easily and is able to provide basic technical support in relation to learning environment to participants	Navigates learning environment easily and knows how to deliver support to participants quickly
	Uses basic tools such as email, chat and discussions in online environments	Uses advanced tools such as wikis, blogs and online meeting rooms in online environments	Uses advanced tools such as wikis, blogs and online meeting rooms in online environments and manages learning environments
Social networking skills	Participates in social networks by participating in discussions and accessing resources	Participates in social networks by participating in discussions and accessing and sharing resources	Participates in social networks by participating in discussions, accessing and sharing resources and initiating and facilitating groups



Appendix 4 Course purpose

The purpose of this course is to:

- develop knowledge, skills and attitudes of online facilitation with application in online components of formal courses and online collaboration projects;
- provide an awareness of and develop skills in the toolsets available to support online facilitation (e.g. online discussions, blogs, podcasts and synchronous communication software); and
- develop knowledge and skills in designing online activities using an appropriate combination of technologies in online components of formal courses and online collaboration projects.

Appendix 5 Course principles

This online facilitation course adopts an active and experiential approach to learning. The course is based on the following principles.

Fostering online learning communities

This course fosters the capacity to build online learning communities and communities of practice within the context of courses and conferences. This course is also designed to provide participants with an experience at engagement in an online learning community. Online learning communities are encouraged through developing online interaction and learning conversations amongst participants. Acknowledging, valuing, respecting and accommodating diversity as a combination of similarities and differences plays a central role in fostering and maintaining online learning communities. The course creates awareness of the benefits of online facilitation as a step towards becoming leaders of online learning communities.

While the Facilitating Online course mostly uses online discussion, chat and e-mail, it also introduces the opportunities afforded by Web 2.0 technologies for developing and maintaining online learning communities.

Playful learning

The course uses play as a bridge to learning by attempting to make learning fun. Playful learning involves participants taking small risks, playing with ideas, keeping an open mind and making connections where they are not obvious. Participants are encouraged to express their creativity through developing their ability to challenge, question and explore.

Reflective learning

A key principle underpinning this course is the emphasis on reflection as a learning process. Reflection on your own learning helps you to take ownership of your learning process. Articulating your reflections makes your thinking available for comment and feedback.

Reflection is an important facet in the development of online facilitation skills and strategies required for the establishment and maintenance of online learning communities. Reflection enables participants to become aware of themselves both as learners and as facilitators.



Appendix 6 Creating effective summaries

Adapted with permission from Nancy White

<http://www.fullcirc.com>

Online discussion boards/forums, email lists and blogging often suffer from too much volume. This has been labelled the 'tyranny of recency over relevancy'. The most recent post or message is the one that gets attention. In discussion boards, even threads highly focused and on topic, gems quickly get buried and action items forgotten. Important side topics either dominate or die. Critical blog posts get lost in archives. This creates the need for systems to harvest or organise information, gems, action items and decisions. Two possible options are creating summaries and creating indexes.

Who does this work?

This 'harvester' role often falls to the facilitator. In larger communities or diverse, multi-threaded situations, this is rarely an achievable option because of volume, and the work needs to be spread between more people.

Purpose

Before you start to harvest, think about the following questions:

- Who will use the summaries or indexes?
- How will they use the summaries?
- What is the desired action outcome from summaries?
- Where will they reside (resources, summary page, etc.)?
- Is there a tag or category associated with the material you will be working with?

It is important to recognise that summarisation can be both useful and harmful. A summary can often stop a conversation. It can create the sense of closure prematurely. It can misrepresent the conversation and cause alienation. So think carefully about not just why you are summarising, but when!

Timeliness

If you have ever tried to summarise a hot and heavy thread after a week or a month, you know what a daunting challenge that can be. The longer you delay summarising, the harder it can be. It is often good to keep up daily in heavy discussions, regardless if they are in a forum, email list or blog. Keep notes in a separate word file; use a wiki or

other tool where you can copy and save useful snippets from the conversations.

Content

Based on your determined purpose, there are a number of content approaches you might take, including:

- summary of discussion;
- analysis of tagged items;
- action plan updates;
- list of outstanding discussion or action items;
- lists of insights, techniques or issues;
- leading questions for next phase/discussion;
- direct hot-links to key postings (index);
- text analysis; and
- analysis of who contributed, frequency, etc. to capture the interaction process.

Some online interaction spaces have protocols for participants, which aids in the creation of summaries and searching for content. Participants can be asked to annotate each of their postings with key words or tags, or to provide a 'title' for their post. Then harvesters can more easily skim or search through material for relevant citations. If your software tool has tags, check to see if there is an RSS feed of the tags that you can follow. This allows you to see the material in a topical, rather than strictly chronological, view.

Process and presentation

Summarisation forms include the following:

- **Harvesting** – Extracting information from conversations. This might be harvesting tasks, specific information or even responses to questions. It is straight collection of information (vs. synthesis).
- **Weaving** – Looking for and linking relevant information, thoughts or comments between different conversations. This helps build coherence when there are multiple conversations and helps connect subgroups at opportune moments. Links between relevant threads support connection.
- **Summarising** – Regular recaps done during online interactions, which provide overviews and synthesis of conversations. These help reinforce work, ideas and processes and help to build stronger groups. They allow people to 'catch up' if they have fallen behind without reading 'everything'!



Appendix 7 Do's and don'ts of online facilitation

Tony Carr (inspired by Nancy White and Gilly Salmon)

Some do's of online facilitation

There are several ways that you can improve your effectiveness as an online facilitator. You may want to add to this list or to expand on what is already here:

- **Have a clear purpose** – Without this your hard work will have no obvious direction and may be wasted.
- **Know your community** – Try to become familiar with their aspirations, aims and culture(s). Establish which issues will influence their use of communication technologies.
- **Know your tools** – You will be seen as a role model by many participants, so you will need to communicate some confidence and competence in your use of the communication technologies that you expect participants to use.
- **Communicate clearly using language that the participants will understand** – This helps participants, including second language speakers of your language, feel included and effective. It also tells participants that you are making an effort to engage with them.
- **Create an environment that supports both a warm, fuzzy community feeling and productive collaboration** – Most participants want to come away from the learning experience with skills and products that will be useful in their day-to-day work. Moments of connection with their peers support this, but they are not the primary goal.
- **Decide to like your participants** – This choice allows you to make a significant difference, because you will be better able to notice them as people with hopes, fears, strengths and struggles. This will help to motivate you and the participants to persist through any difficulties.
- **Lead by example** – Much of what you want to communicate is tacit knowledge (i.e. it is not enough just to say it, you will need to model good practices).
- **Respond thoughtfully to feedback** – Quite often, participant feedback that initially feels like venting may help you to introduce improvements in a community or course. Sometimes, participants just need to know that they are heard by the facilitator.
- **Value participant contributions** – A community process becomes sustainable when participants start contributing willingly to conversations, and even more so when they are able to initiate and peer facilitate conversations.

- **Use enabling questions to open and revitalise online interaction** – The participants need to find their own answers so, even if you know, it is often best to hold back a bit and ask questions that deepen the conversation or provoke a shift of phase.
- **Support effective leadership within the community** – In the later stages of a course (and in a maturing community), most of the action should come from participants and this includes leadership by participants. These participants will then be able to operate with greater confidence outside the course/ community as well.

Some don'ts of online facilitation

Adapted from: UNDP Waterwiki at <http://waterwiki.net/index.php/Welcome>

BRAINSTORM on “How to make a Community of Practice sleep” available at <http://tinyurl.com/crvucz>

Here is a selection of online facilitation no-nos from a brainstorm in April 2006 by members of an online facilitation course

- **Communication**
 - Never answer to member mails, and when you answer be very, very critical
 - Write Looooong emails
 - Bombard participants with lots of non-relevant information
 - Give very short answers (yes, no, rubbish, etc.)
 - Give very long answers ‘bla...bla...bla’
- **Motivation**
 - Strongly comment on members’ mistakes
 - Never give ideas – try NOT to be creative
 - Never help those who have a problem
 - Be very negative about people asking the same thing
 - React once very critically and then not again for 2 weeks or longer
 - React strongly and emotionally like: ‘NEVER DO THIS AGAIN!!!! NEXT YOU WILL BE *& ^ % \$ # !!’



- Tell everybody that your expectations will never be met, that you don't believe the group can succeed
- **Management**
 - Never give deadlines, never define task and goals
 - No structured communication, no milestones, never define roles of each member, etc.
- Give people very strict guidelines for contribution or long and complicated (and impossible) guidelines
- Do not give enough time to contribute
- Promise outputs/contributions, but don't deliver



Appendix 8 Why diversity matters

Jeanne Smuts, Human Development Africa

What is diversity and why does it matter? In some parts of the world, 'diversity' became just another word for 'difference'. In many societies and groups, ideas are developed of what is 'normal', 'good', 'valued', 'acceptable'. For example, in some societies, the acceptable and valued way of greeting another person is to kiss him or her on both cheeks. In other societies, any physical contact between strangers and especially strange men and women is not acceptable.

In situations where people with different ideas of what is acceptable behaviour came together, a growing demand developed to manage these relationships more effectively. In some circles, this practice of managing relationships is referred to as diversity management.

However, the focus on 'difference' as something to be managed also created the impression that differences were problematic and had to be minimised or tolerated. We live on a continent where a different understanding of diversity existed many years back. There lived a people called the /Xam who had a saying in their Khoisan language, *!ke e: /xarra //ke*, literally meaning 'diverse people unite'. As people living close to the earth and animals and other natural resources, they valued diversity. They knew that each plant, each insect, each mineral and all the creations of earth had a *specific purpose* in the bigger system of life. Each creature's life and the resources of the earth served other creatures. When a child was born, the people celebrated and supported the child to find out in which special way he or she could use his or her gifts to serve the people and the earth. *Service gave meaning and value to life.*

The diversity ensured the survival of all, so the /Xam people knew they were the guardians of the earth and its resources. They saw the disastrous effects on the system of living where each part of that life system depended on another if one of its diverse resources or creatures were affected in such a way that it could not fulfil its purpose. The /Xam had an *abundance mentality* and believed there were *enough resources* for all the inhabitants of earth. They only took what they needed to survive, to leave enough for the other creatures of the earth.

These people knew that diversity was not only about differences, it was also about seeing the interconnections and similarities between what seemed different. We also

have something else here in Africa that Bishop Tutu calls 'the gift that Africa is going to give to the world' (quoted in Mbigi 2005: 20–21).

Ubuntu means 'I am a person through other persons' or 'I am because you are, you are because we are' (Khosha 2004). This is the basis of self and community identities: it is with this understanding that each person *finds purpose through their unique relationship with other people, their unique contribution to the human community.*

As an online facilitator, one of the biggest challenges is to encourage and manage the participants' desire to engage and contribute. The online environment is for many people still a space where they feel vulnerable. Some feel vulnerable, because there is no face-to-face interaction, others because they might be new to some of the technology or because what is written in print stays there for a long time and is seen by many people.

Trust forms the basis of our drive to contribute and engage online and trust is even referred to as the glue of relationships. The basis of a lack of trust is fear, lack of confidence and a feeling of suspicion. Building an online community where there is open and enthusiastic interaction by as many as possible of the participants requires of the facilitator to be a trust and relationship builder.

So, for some of us, when we join a new group, there might be that question: 'Will they include, accept and value me? Can I show all of who I am to them?' It is the task of the facilitator to help create an enabling and safe environment where people will feel safe enough to engage as their authentic selves.

So how does a facilitator do that? The first step requires the facilitator to develop greater self-awareness about his or her own needs, beliefs, behaviours. It is important to model the behaviour and engage with participants as your authentic self. Having developed self-knowledge through enhanced self-awareness will help you to show your real self in interactions.

Step two is to develop your awareness of your course participants. You need to make an effort to understand their specific needs and how they are similar and different to you. For example, you might be a person who finds it easy to interact and you might experience a participant as a bit quiet or hesitant to participate. Instead of making assumptions or putting too much pressure on that individual, it might be a good idea to find out what he or she needs to participate



more easily. It is also important to show respect and to validate the different contributions of participants.

Step three is to encourage participants to move beyond the safe spaces of who and what they know and to be open to new and different experiences. One way of encouraging curiosity is to support participants to see the value that different ideas, perspectives and ways of doing things can add to group interaction.

Building relationships and trust has at its core: Can you understand and value what I need and contribute? Being able to recognise what you have in common with others

creates a sense of familiarity, a safe bridge across which you can then encounter the others and develop some trust to glue the relationship. On the other side of the bridge, it becomes easier to acknowledge what is different, to develop a better understanding which will contribute to the ability to see the value of those differences.

References

- Khoza, R. (2004) *Let Africa lead*. Johannesburg: Eskom
- Mbigi, L. (2005) *The spirit of African leadership*. Randburg: Knowres.



Appendix 9 Non-violent communication model

Source:

http://www.nwcompass.org/compassionate_communication.html

Adapted from *Compassionate Communication* by Marshall Rosenberg

One thing that is a certainty when people get together is that sooner or later there will be disagreements and those disagreements might turn into conflict situations. It is wonderful to have a diverse group of participants in an online learning event. However, the more diverse a group, the more likely there could be differences of opinion.

The aim is not to avoid conflict at all cost, but to see conflict as a natural part of human interaction and even great opportunities for learning and growth. Not all of us sit comfortably with conflict, but what if we told you that you could develop the ability to handle conflict in a constructive way? Would you be interested to know more?

There are many conflict resolution and management methodologies, but we would like to share with you a model that we believe helps to transform conflict. The model is called the Non-Violent Communication Model and was developed by Dr Marshall Rosenberg, founder of the international non-profit Center for Nonviolent Communication. He has taught these empowering skills for over 30 years to the general public as well as to parents, diplomats, police, peace activists, educators, and managers. Based in Switzerland, Dr Rosenberg travels worldwide in response to communities that request his peacemaking services and skills. He has provided mediation and training in over two dozen countries, including war-torn Rwanda, Croatia, Palestine, Sierra Leone, and Ireland.

According to the Non-Violent Communication model (hereafter referred to as NVC), the reason why people have conflict has a lot to do with the way we were taught to think and speak. As a way of explaining the ideas behind NVC clearly, Dr Rosenberg uses the metaphors of the Giraffe and the Jackal to distinguish between non-violent communication and a form of communication that could lead to conflict and even violence. So let's introduce you to the Jackal and the Giraffe.

Dr Rosenberg says that at an early age, most of us were taught to speak and think 'Jackal'. The Jackal moves close to the ground. It is so preoccupied with getting its immediate needs met that it cannot see into the future. The Jackal believes it is

other people's responsibility to meet our needs. The Jackal is preoccupied with getting its needs met by making demands. When someone does not meet the Jackal's needs and demands, the Jackal experiences this as a form of rejection. Similarly, Jackal-thinking individuals believe that in quickly judging, classifying or analysing people, they understand them. Unhappy about what's going on, a Jackal will label the people involved, saying, 'He's an idiot' or 'She's bad' or 'They're culturally deprived'.

This language is from the head. It is a way of mentally classifying people into varying shades of good and bad, right and wrong. Ultimately, it provokes defensiveness, resistance, and counterattack.

But, says Dr Rosenberg, there is also the language of the heart, a form of interacting that promotes the well-being of ourselves and other people. He calls this means of communicating the language of the Giraffe, because it has the largest heart of any land animal, is tall enough to look into the future, and lives its life with gentility and strength.

Giraffes are aware that they cannot change others. They are not even interested in changing people; rather, they are interested in providing opportunities for them to be willing to change. One way of providing such an opportunity would be to approach the other person with a message such as: 'Please do this, but only if you can do it willingly – in a total absence of fear, guilt, or shame. If you are motivated by fear, guilt, or shame, I lose.'

'Giraffe' bids us to speak from the heart, to talk about what is going on for us – without judging others. In this idiom, you give people an opportunity to say yes, although you respect no for an answer. 'Giraffe' is a language of requests; human beings the world over say they want to contribute to the well-being of others, to connect and communicate with others in loving, compassionate ways. The reality, however, is that we were taught to speak and think Jackal and many of us still operate from that space.

Whereas Jackals say, 'I feel angry because you...,' Giraffes will say, 'I feel angry because I want...'. As Giraffes, we know that the cause of our feelings is not another person, but rather our own thoughts, wants, and wishes. We become angry because of the thoughts we are having, not because of anything another person has done to us.



Jackal, on the other hand, views others as the source of their anger. In fact, violence, whether verbal or physical, is the result of assuming that our feelings are caused not by what is going on inside us but rather by what is going on 'out there.' In response, we say things designed to hurt, punish, or blame the person whom we imagine has hurt our feelings. Aware of this tendency, a Giraffe will conclude, 'I'm angry because my expectations have not been met.'

As Giraffes, we take responsibility for our feelings. At the same time, we attempt to give others an opportunity to act in a way that will help us feel better. For example, a boy may want more respect from his father. After getting in touch with his anger over the decisions his father has been making for him, he might say: 'Please ask me if I want a haircut before making a barbershop appointment for me.'

Giraffes say what they do want, rather than what they don't want. 'Stop that', 'Cut it out', or 'Quit that' do not inspire changed behaviours. People can't do a 'don't.'

Giraffes ultimately seek a connection in which each person feels a sense of well-being and no one feels forced into action by blame, guilt, or punishment. As such, Giraffe thinking creates harmony. So how do we use NVC and speak in Giraffe?

Stating a request clearly

Stating a request in simple Giraffe is a four-part process rooted in honesty:

1. Describe your observation (instead of making a judgement).
2. Identify your feeling (which is different from sharing your thoughts).
3. Explain the reason for your feeling in terms of your needs (there are always very specific needs behind feelings).
4. State your request.

In describing the situation, do so without criticising or judging. If you have come home from a busy day and your partner seems preoccupied with the newspaper, simply describe the situation: 'When I walked in the door after an especially trying day, you seemed busy reading.' Identify your feelings: 'I feel hurt.' State the reason for your feelings: 'I feel hurt because I would like to feel close to you right now and instead I'm feeling disconnected from you.' Then state your request in do-able terms: 'Are you willing to take time out for a hug and a few moments of sharing?'

In Jackal culture, feelings and wants are severely punished. People are expected to be docile, subservient to authority, slave-like in their reactions, and alienated from their feelings and needs. In a Giraffe culture, we learn to express our feelings, needs, and requests without passing judgment or attacking. We request, rather than demand. And we are aware of the fine line of distinction between these two types of statements.

In Jackal, we expect other people to prove their love for us by doing what we want. As Giraffes, we may persist in trying to persuade others, but we are not influenced by guilt. We acknowledge that we have no control over the other person's response. And we stay in Giraffe no matter what the other person says. If she or he seems upset or tense, we switch into listening, which allows us to hear the person's feelings, needs and wishes without hearing any criticism of ourselves. Nor does a Giraffe simply say no; as Giraffes we state the need that prevents us from fulfilling the request.

Responding to a 'no'

Responding to a refusal is a four-part process rooted in empathy:

1. Describe the situation.
2. Guess the other person's feelings.
3. Guess the reason for that feeling, together with the unmet need; then let the person verify whether you have correctly understood.
4. Clarify the unmet need.

When people say no in a nasty way, what they invariably want is to protect their autonomy. They have heard a request as a demand and are saying, in effect, 'I want to do it when I choose to do it, and not because I am forced to do it.' Sighing, sulking, or screaming can likewise reflect a desire to protect one's freedom of choice, one's need to act from a position of willingness. If people scream at us, we do not scream back. We listen beneath the words and hear what they are really saying – that they have a need and want to get their need met.

If we have been Jackalish and demanding in the past, the people close to us may need a lot of empathy at first. So we listen and listen, reflecting back with guesses about what they are feeling and wanting, until they feel heard and shift out of being defensive. We don't take anything personally, for we know that upset, attacking, defensive statements are tragic expressions of unmet needs. At some point, the person's voice and body language will indicate that a shift has occurred.



In the end, Jackals are simply illiterate Giraffes. Once you've learned to hear the heart behind any message, you discover that there's nothing to fear in anything another person says. With that discovery, you are well on your way to compassionate communication. This form of dialogue, although offering no guarantees of agreement between disputing parties, sets the stage for negotiation, compromise, and most importantly, mutual understanding and respect.

For more information:

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<http://www.cnvc.org>

This article is an adaptation from an article printed in the Autumn 1995 (Number 11) edition of *Miracles Magazine*. As described here, Giraffe language is shorthand for Nonviolent Communication and is not related to the Washington-state based group that honours people who stick their necks out.



Appendix 10 Activity design template

Activity title

Give your activity a clear and relevant title.

Learning outcome(s)

Decide what you want participants to learn by doing this activity. Take into account participants' prior knowledge and experience and their current contexts.

Purpose

Identify the purpose of the activity. State the purpose clearly and concisely.

Task

Outline the task that participants will be required to do. The task should be short enough to enable most participants to

complete the task with ease in the given time period.

Provide clear instructions.

State whether students will be required to work individually or in groups.

Tools

Identify the tools that participants will require to perform the task (e.g. chat, discussion forums, email, wiki).

Time

Provide guidelines on when the task should be completed and how much time will be required by the participants.



Appendix 11 Personal development plan template

To support your continuing development as an online facilitator, you can draw up a personal development plan for yourself. We have provided you with a template for creating your development plan below. Just follow the steps to complete your template.

STEPS	<p><i>Step 1: NEEDS – Identify what you feel you need to develop further</i></p> <p>Sit quietly and think back about your participation in the course and then think about where you are now. Identify 3–4 things you would like to develop further.</p>
	<p><i>Step 2: CAPABILITIES – Check needs against online facilitation capabilities</i></p> <p>Go to the 'Online facilitation capabilities' (Week 1) and do a self-assessment of your online facilitation skills now that you have completed the course. Compare the results with your developmental needs, which you have identified above. Decide if there is a close match and whether you would like to adapt your needs somewhat.</p>
	<p><i>Step 3: GOALS – Identify a SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound) goal</i></p> <p>Next, you have to identify a goal, a statement of how you want to meet that need for each of the needs you have identified. Write the goal and then identify if it is SMART.</p>
	<p><i>Step 4: STRATEGY – Create a realistic strategy or action plan statement for yourself</i></p> <p>Write a short sentence to identify how you will achieve each one of your goals.</p>
	<p><i>Step 5: EVALUATE SUCCESS – Decide how you will know that you have achieved your goal</i></p> <p>We seldom know if we have achieved a goal if we do not decide how we will measure or evaluate success, so go ahead and complete the last column.</p>

Example:

ONLINE FACILITATION PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT OF: TINA TOLKIEN			
NEED 1: To be able to use advanced online tools in online environments			
GOALS	STRATEGY	ACTION STEPS	HOW WILL YOU EVALUATE SUCCESS?
To practice using at least four advanced online tools, twice a week during the first month after the course	Identify four advanced online tools and practice to use them in online environments	To identify which four advanced online tools I will use most in my online interactions	I have successfully completed all the action steps I will be able to effectively use the four chosen advanced online tools in online environments within one month after the online facilitation course
		To ask a colleague with advanced online expertise to support me with advice when needed	
		To practice using one of those advanced online tools twice a week during the first month after the course	

Blank template

ONLINE FACILITATION PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT OF: (please fill in your name above)			
Need 1:			
GOALS	STRATEGY	ACTION STEPS	HOW WILL YOU EVALUATE SUCCESS?
Need 2:			
Need 3:			



Appendix 12 Evaluating the course

End of course survey

The end of course evaluation survey for the Online Facilitation Course.

Course evaluation

01: If you are willing to tell us, we'd like to know your name:

02: Was pre-course correspondence adequate?

- Yes
 No

03: How would describe your initial access to the course?

- Very difficult
 Difficult
 Easy
 Very easy
 N/A

04: How would describe the organisation and management of the course?

- Excellent
 Requires slight improvement
 Requires major improvement
 A disaster

05: The course activities encouraged active participation and reflective learning.

- Yes
 No

06: Was enough time allocated for each activity?

- Yes
 No

07: Any comments on the time allocated to activities?

08: Were the learning activities presented in an appropriate order?

- Yes
 No

09: How would you rate the interaction amongst participants?

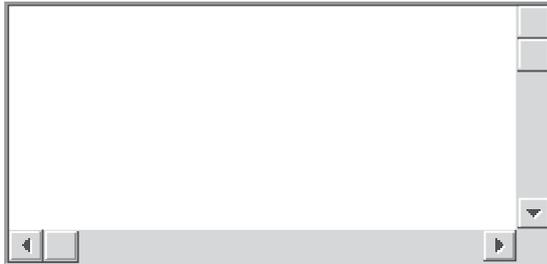
- Excellent
 Requires slight improvement
 Requires major improvement
 Poor

10: How would you describe the facilitation of the course?

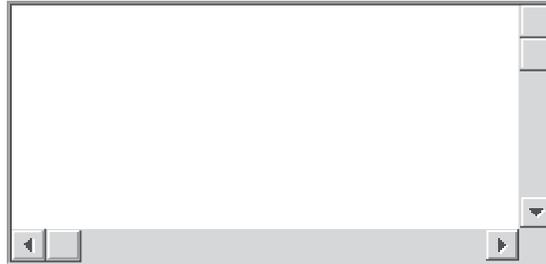
- Excellent
 Requires slight improvement
 Requires major improvement
 Poor

11: Which part of the course did you find especially useful?

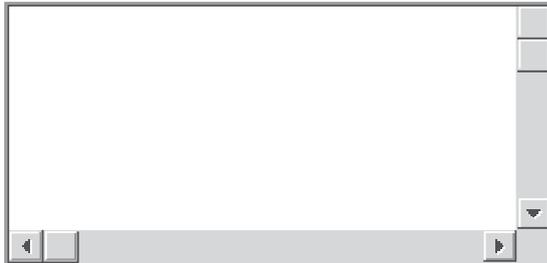
12: Which part of the course did you find least useful?

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15: Any further suggestions for improvement?

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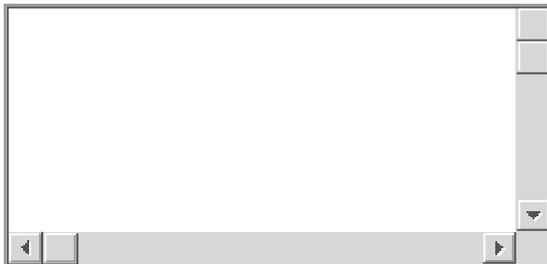
13: What else would you have liked to see included in the course?

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16: Any other comments?

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14: What would you leave out?

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Submit your survey
Thank you for completing this survey.

Appendix 13: Recommended readings

These are some of the books which inspired us in the development of this course. During the course we have only suggested readings that will be readily available to anyone with an Internet connection. If you want to progress faster as an online facilitator and online teacher or if you are looking for ways to customise activities in the course then these books are likely to prove very helpful to you.

- Barkley, E.F., Cross, P. and Major, C.H. (2005) *Collaborative Learning Techniques: A Handbook for College Faculty*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.
- Bender, T. (2003) *Discussion-Based Online Teaching to Enhance Student Learning: Theory Practice and Assessment*, Stylus Publishing, Sterling, Virginia.
- Bennett, S., Marsh, D. and Killen, C. (2007) *Handbook of Online Education*, Continuum Press, London
- Collison, G., Erlbaum, B., Haavind, S. and Tinker, R. (2000) *Facilitating Online Learning: Effective Strategies for Moderators*, Attwood Publishers.
- Conrad, R.M. and Donaldson, J.A. (2004) *Engaging the Online Learner: Activities and Resources for Creative Instruction*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.
- McVay Lynch, M. (2002) *The Online Educator: A Guide to Creating the Virtual Classroom*, Routledge/Falmer, London and New York.
- Paloff, R.M. and Pratt, K. (2007) *Building Online Learning Communities: Effective Strategies for the Virtual Classroom*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.
- Richardson, W. (2006) *Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts and other Powerful Tools for Classrooms*, Thousand Oaks, California.
- Salmon, G. (2002) *E-tivities: The Key to Active Online Learning*, Routledge, London.
- Salmon, G. (2004) *E-Moderating: The Key to Teaching and Learning Online*, Routledge, London.



Appendix 14 Free software

As far as possible, we have tried to recommend software that is available in versions for both Windows and Mac machines. Please note that some of the downloads may involve large files. You may also want to use a more general download site such as Tucows <http://www.tucows.com>, which keeps the latest versions of software on local servers in several continents.

The following software is freely available on the web:

- *Word processor, spreadsheet and presentation software* – These are all available in the Open Office, which is available from <http://www.openoffice.org/>
- *Internet browsers* – Latest versions of leading browsers such as Internet Explorer <http://www.microsoft.com/windows/internet-explorer/beta/worldwide-sites.aspx>, Firefox <http://www.mozilla.com/en-US> and Opera <http://www.opera.com> are all available for free download
- *Email client* – Thunderbird is available at <http://www.mozilla.com/en-US/products/thunderbird/>
- *Sound editing software* – Audacity is available at <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>
- *Image editing software* – Try the basic image editor installed on your computer; alternatively, you can use Picasa <http://picasa.google.com/> if you want something that's easy to use, or GIMP <http://www.gimp.org/> if you want more power.
- *Flash plug-in* – this is now standard with most Internet browsers; it is also available from <http://www.adobe.com/products/flashplayer/>
- *Screen capture software* – Try Faststone Screen Capture Version 5.3 (last version that is free for the education sector) at <http://www.aplusfreeware.com/categories/mmedia/FastStoneCapture.html> or Easy Capture at <http://www.xydownload.com/easycapture/>
- *Screen movie software* – Jing <http://www.jingproject.com/> is currently the best free option.
- *Tutorial creation software* – Wink <http://www.debugmode.com/wink/> makes it easy to create step-by-step tutorials for the use of software



Appendix 15 Announcements and updates

An announcement from Week 4

Today on the course:

There is a chat led by K on Activity 4.3 Managing conflict from 2–3 pm.

It is time to create an online activity using the template provided in Activity 4.4. Post this to the forum when you're ready and provide thoughtful feedback to colleagues.

And yes it is that time again. Post your end of Week 4 Reflections and reply to those of other participants. Share some of your reflections of what you have learnt this week. In particular, share insights or a question on issues of trust, diversity and conflict in online facilitation. Tell us what have you liked so far and what you suggest to the facilitators to improve the workshop.

An update from Week 4

Yesterday on the course:

In Activity 4.1 Deepening Connections, J and B have pointed out trust-building is a core activity in this process. J raised the issue of whether Lee's feelings of exclusion were real or perceived and B responded that the student's email clearly shows that that he/she feels excluded. Maybe the issue is rather whether Lee's experience of exclusion is factual? J points out that a facilitator could track the recorded interactions to check what happened. There seems to be agreement that acknowledging Lee's feelings (N, C, H, J

and B), valuing his/her contribution and inviting him/her to participate are good strategies for deepening connections. (Thanks to M for her flexible, reflective, affirming facilitation and for this summary).

In Week Three Reflections, G appreciates the range and quality of the weaves and summaries and T learns about how weaving is "on the higher level of analytical, application, creativity and innovative aspects". He also finds wikis "quite engaging and intriguing". W emphasises the importance of personality in facilitation styles. She is "enjoying the practical hands-on activities". J notes that it is different facilitating a course for adults. F is learning from the group and takes on weaving as a "positive challenge where one learnt to be concise whilst not losing the essence of what was said". K reflects on the role of humour in online facilitation and asks how the roles of participants and facilitator are changing in this course.

It is well worth visiting the other wikis from Activity 3.4 Effective Online Facilitation if you haven't done so. Well done to all for these summaries of your facilitation wisdom to date. In the Open Space forum, the discussion on lurking has started well. H suggests lurking is more about interpersonal aspects than technology, C asks about chatting addiction, P talks about both technology barriers and lack of time for maths teachers, and K suggests the advantages of asynchronous discussions. In the Lounge, J is a Bollywood fan and M schedules a recipe. Lots of activity in the Journals. I'll send through an update this evening.

