

Top 7 Strategies to Make Asynchronous Learning Effective

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Asynchronous learning refers to a type of online education that allows students to work through the content and assignments at their own pace instead of attending classes or logging in at specific times.

While asynchronous learning comes with various other benefits, such as learning flexibility and 24×7 access to information, making learning engaging is a challenge in this format.

One of the most important questions that instructors face is, *“How can I build a connection with my students and engage them better when we aren’t face-to-face?”*

In this blog, we will address this question and explore some of the strategies you can use to keep your asynchronous class productive yet engaging.

Here’s how educational institutions can make asynchronous learning engaging

1. Set clear expectations and define learning objectives

In an asynchronous learning setup, it is important to set clear expectations and learning objectives. To keep learners engaged, the syllabus should clearly outline what is expected of them, what skill sets they will develop throughout the course, and the deadlines they must adhere to.

Some of the other factors to consider include –

- How much time should students set aside every week to spend on coursework?
- When are activities and assignments due?
- Where can students look for Q&A, announcements, and updates about the course?
- When should students expect feedback on their submitted assignments?
- Which are the activities that are mandatory, and which ones are optional?
- What is the average time frame for replies to questions and email communications posted on discussion forums?

Having a clear idea of the objectives will help learners to be on track and encourage them to become active participants in their own learning process.

2. Include interactive elements in the course

Including various interactive elements help you design asynchronous classes that are much more engaging, exciting, and informative.

Some of these elements include –

- Podcasts
- Videos
- Gamification
- Simulations

Unlike the traditional text-based material, these online learning solutions appeal to a variety of different learning needs. Further, to boost interactivity, you can also consider game-based learning and scenario-based learning. This allows learners to see how they can apply their acquired skill sets or knowledge and resolve the given problems.

3. Facilitate engaging and dynamic online discussions

Dynamic discussion boards are an essential aspect of engagement in asynchronous classes. Once you decide the learning outcomes of the discussion and what it is that you want students to discuss, start with effective prompts. Here are some tips you can use here-

- Include questions that ask students to analyze or interpret the content
- Keep the number of questions between three to four so that students can respond thoughtfully
- Make sure that students put forth their opinions based on their personal experiences, allowing them to connect with the subject effectively.

Additionally, you can encourage students to participate in discussion forums and learn by providing targeted feedback. This will help

- Identify misconceptions without any delay to avoid further confusion
- Provide timely responses to all the questions and comments
- Promote openness and allow varied opinions to exist

4. Include a variety of resource links within the course

One of the most important elements of an asynchronous learning strategy is reliance upon a variety of online resources.

When you include relevant resource links in the online course, it allows learners to access important documents, articles, and websites to understand the subject matter better.

For instance, you can hyperlink relevant TED talks or webinars that you think might be useful in a particular course.

5. Dedicate an online facilitator to monitor and guide the eLearning experience

Although the concept of asynchronous learning is not instructor-led, dedicating an online facilitator who can guide the overall learning experience and offer regular assistance can be helpful.

What is important to keep in mind here is that the facilitator you appoint should not necessarily be an active participant in the learning process, but just an individual who initiates discussion and encourages students to interact with their peers and the course content.

Further, the facilitator could also act as a moderator of the online forums and help move the discussion forward by asking important questions.

6. Design activities that encourage learners to think critically

Although asynchronous classes involve students completing assignments remotely, that doesn't mean they merely need to watch a recorded lesson or read passively from the textbook.

One of the best ways to encourage students to think critically is to design activities and assignments that teach them to be active participants and take notes as they go through new courses or content. By creatively designing these activities, you can ensure that students remain engaged in asynchronous classes, irrespective of their location.

7. Break up long sessions

In asynchronous learning, there are chances that some students may have difficulty paying attention to long-format or lengthy lecture content. This often results in students getting distracted and focusing on something else.

It is best to record several 5-10 minutes of micro-sessions instead of creating lengthy recorded videos of lectures. This helps in keeping the engagement level high because –

- Students are more likely to watch several short videos as compared to one very long video
- Students find it easier to locate and review a specific topic that they find particularly difficult
- It is much easier for students to organize and retain knowledge that is delivered in smaller, bite-sized chunks

Final thoughts

Building a sense of community in an online asynchronous learning environment can feel overwhelming, given the physical distance that separates students from instructors and each other.

However, the fact remains that asynchronous classes offer unique opportunities for community-building among learners. In this post, we've shared some of the best strategies to encourage engagement and participation and create a meaningful asynchronous classroom.