Magic with Moodle
10 Using forums to answer student questions (rather than email)

Claire Lawrence and Ellen Townsend

School of Psychology

Module: Forensic and Mental Health (C83FMH) (FYR 12-13)
Background

- A popular 3<sup>rd</sup> year module: 120-130 students each year
- Examined at the end of summer term
- Lots of students want to ask questions
- Students emailed one of us individually or came to our offices
- Found ourselves repeating the same information – often important enough for all students (not just the questioner)
- Email often unclear, not thought through and asking questions already answered online
What we did

Answer questions only on Moodle!

• Emailed all students to tell them
• Every time we received a question, we would post it on the module’s News Forum in Moodle and answer it there
• Everyone could benefit from the response
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>Views</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Last Updated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When to write the seen question</td>
<td>Ellen Townsend</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Thu, 2 May 2013, 12:34 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reminder revision session</td>
<td>Claire Lawrence</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Mon, 29 Apr 2013, 11:28 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interventions for victims of homicide risk</td>
<td>Claire Lawrence</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Mon, 29 Apr 2013, 11:26 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional reading</td>
<td>Claire Lawrence</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Mon, 29 Apr 2013, 11:24 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighting of seen question</td>
<td>Ellen Townsend</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Thu, 25 Apr 2013, 12:50 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many answers should I prepare?</td>
<td>Ellen Townsend</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Mon, 22 Apr 2013, 01:02 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sections in the FMH exam</td>
<td>Claire Lawrence</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Mon, 22 Apr 2013, 11:37 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual violence and sexual assault questions</td>
<td>Claire Lawrence</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Mon, 22 Apr 2013, 09:51 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewing witnesses - effective methods</td>
<td>Claire Lawrence</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Tue, 16 Apr 2013, 10:56 AM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How it worked with students

• The forum has been useful - a good way to communicate
• We received far fewer questions in general
  – students took more time to consider whether the question was already answered, either on the News Forum or elsewhere online.
• Students like the fact that they are notified by email each time a question or answer is posted.
• Students like seeing answers to questions that they hadn’t thought of themselves
• Everyone gains
Tips and recommendations

• State at the start of the module that this is the way to communicate with lecturers on the module

• Stick to the policy of posting questions to the forum and not answering individually (unless it is personal or confidential, of course); otherwise, you'll end up having two competing systems in place
Next steps

- Use a forum that allows students themselves to post the questions on Moodle
- Remember to check for and answer questions quickly
- Can set up the forum to have students opt into subscriptions (receiving emails) or set to forced subscription so they will always receive email alerts.
General
Forum name*
General forum

Description*
General forum or chill-out zone for questions and answers or chat between students

Subscription and tracking
Subscription mode
- Optional subscription
- Forced subscription
- Auto subscription
- Subscription disabled
- Optional
Learning Team Support

learning-team-support@nottingham.ac.uk


Moodle Help: bit.ly/uonmoodlehelp

(or search Workspace for “Moodle help”)