

Best Practices in Facilitating Discussion & Questioning Techniques

In asking good questions, we aim to:

- 1) Increase student engagement
- 2) Develop higher-order cognitive skills

To encourage the greatest student engagement:

- 1) Design the questions of high level, divergent (more than one possible answer), structured and straight forward (clear and addressing only one issue at a time).
- 2) Display the question on the board, overhead or data projector (**prepare ahead of time**)

Use appropriate **wait time** when asking questions. It is suggested to have the students write their answer on notepaper or tablet while you are waiting for engagement. After they have had time to consider the question and write something down, **THEN** ask for volunteers to share their answers either to the large group or share with partners sitting next to them.

Do not answer your own questions, ever. This will terminate their involvement for the rest of the term.

Give other students a chance to answer a student's question rather than it always being you.

Move around the room, closer to those who you want to encourage to participate and further from those who are dominating the discussion.

To moderate the students that dominate the discussion, ask to hear from someone else after acknowledging their ideas and participation, or get students to nominate the next speaker and they continue to pass it on to other students for answers.

Make sure to summarize or conclude a discussion to re-enforce main points/concepts.

Explain ground rules for discussions:

- 1) How do students participate – raising their hand, speaking, standing, online?
- 2) Are they being assessed based on their participation?

References:

Gross Davis, B. Tools for Teaching. 1993

Rasmussen, R.V. AACE Journal. 1984, 12(2), 38-47