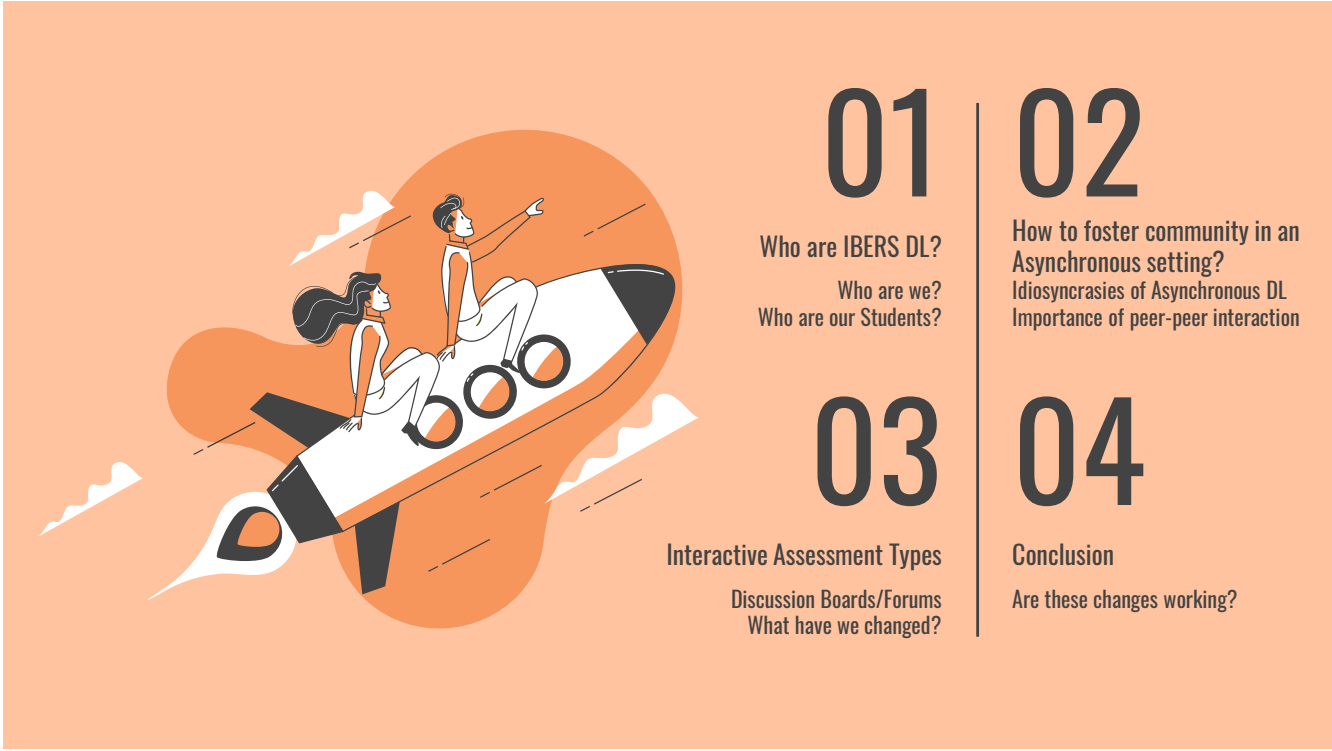




E-LEARNING

COMMUNITY BUILDING IN
ASYNCHRONOUS ONLINE LEARNING

1



01

Who are IBERS DL?
Who are we?
Who are our Students?

02

How to foster community in an
Asynchronous setting?
Idiosyncrasies of Asynchronous DL
Importance of peer-peer interaction

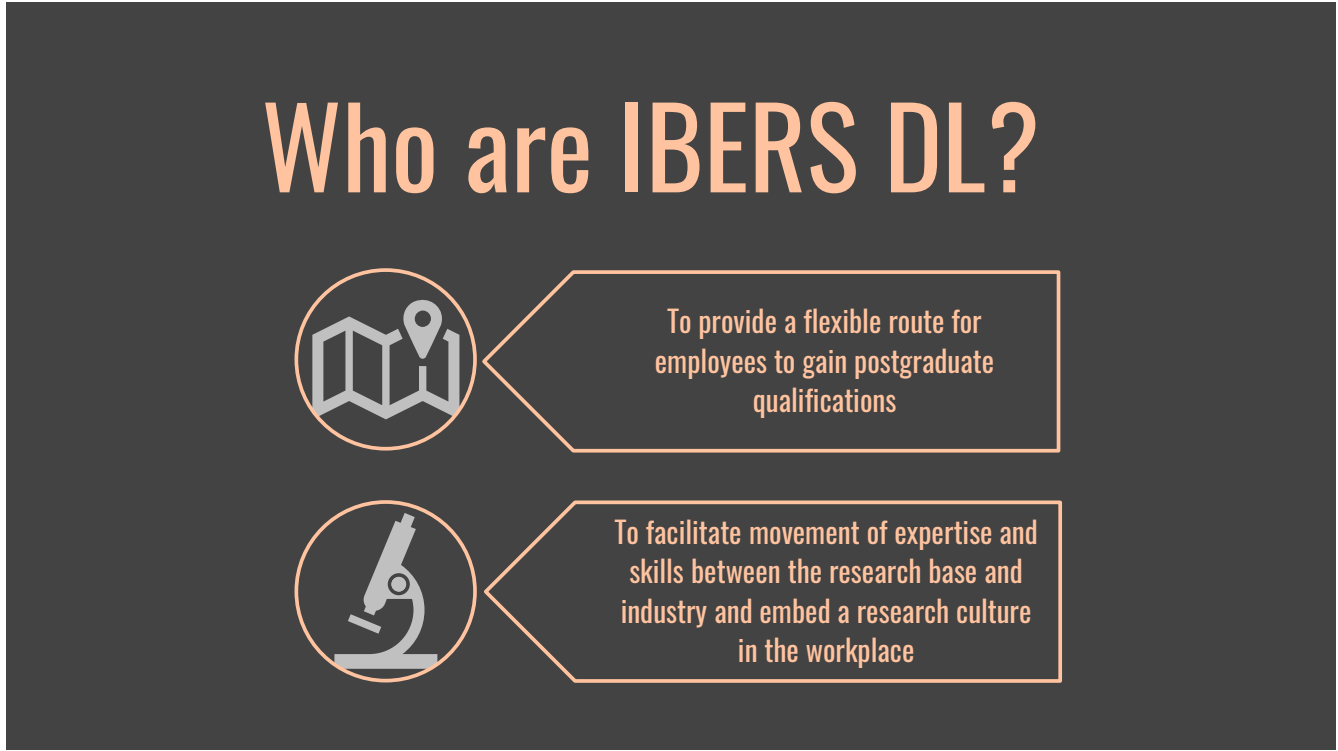
03

Interactive Assessment Types
Discussion Boards/Forums
What have we changed?

04

Conclusion
Are these changes working?

2



Who are IBERS DL?



To provide a flexible route for
employees to gain postgraduate
qualifications



To facilitate movement of expertise and
skills between the research base and
industry and embed a research culture
in the workplace

3

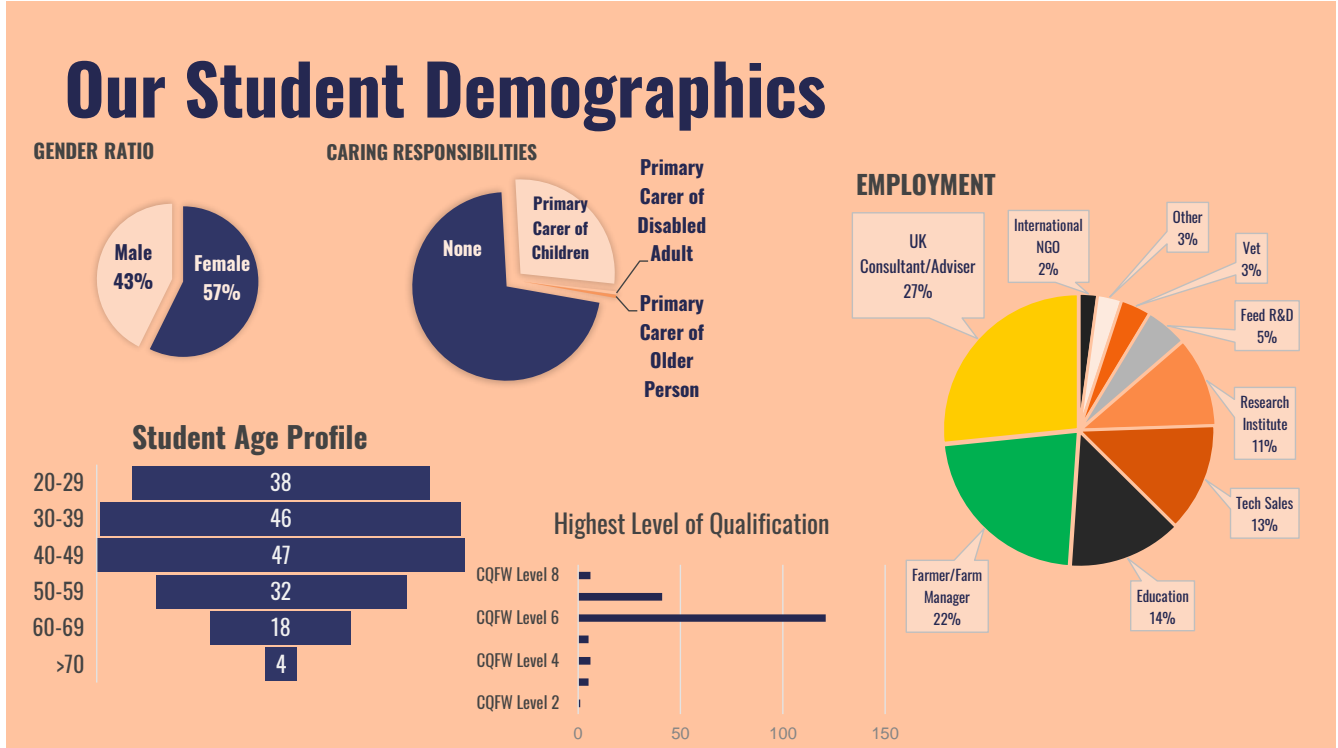


IBERS Distance Learning

BDM8320

Business Management for Rural
Entrepreneurs

4



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Idiosyncrasies of the Asynchronous Model

- Study at times that suit them – fitting around work and home
- Self-driven learning
- Difficult to judge level of engagement outside of Assessments/Coursework (Some insights through Blackboard analytics, but not very detailed, and materials also available offline)
- Limits to regular Peer-to-Peer, and Instructor-Student Interaction
- Some students might not need the interaction, hence the choice of DL, study just for the information

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Benefits of Peer-to-Peer Interaction in DL

Knowledge Exchange

- Useful for students to exchange experiences and work-related research and learning.
- Career Progression

Community

- Asynchronous DL can be **isolating**, most students between 30 and 50, and possibly coming to HE for the first time.
- External work and family commitments.

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The Discussion Board / Forum

A Venn diagram with four overlapping circles. The top-left circle is labeled 'participation', the top-right 'provision of affective feedback', the bottom-left 'response', and the bottom-right 'short, focused messaging'. The circles overlap in various combinations, with a central area where all four overlap.

Thurmond, V., & Wambach, K. (2004). Understanding interactions in distance education: A review of the literature. *International journal of instructional technology and distance learning*.

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Livestock Health and Welfare (AB3 2024-25)

Interactive Task

Visible to students

Discussion

Student Activity

Discussion Topic

Use this forum to discuss what you have learnt about how technologies can benefit health and welfare in your livestock sector of choice.

Posts should be around 200 words and you should make multiple posts. Consider talking about similarities and differences between your post and others' posts within the forum. These could include:

- Different focuses highlighted from the same livestock species paper
- Differences or similarities between roles in different livestock species between different papers
- Any really well articulated points that others have made, and why you think they are of interest

Pick at least one from the following to discuss

- Pigs - A Systematic Review on Validated Precision Livestock Farming Technologies for Pig Production and Its Potential to Assess Animal Welfare *by Gomez et al., 2021*
- Poultry - A Systematic Review of Precision Livestock Farming in the Poultry Sector: Is Technology Focussed on Improving Bird Welfare? *By Rowe, Dawkings and Gebhardt-Henrich (2019)*
- Ruminants - Animal Welfare Implications of Digital Tools for Monitoring and Management of Cattle and Sheep on Pasture *by Herlin et al., 2021*

Post a response to the discussion

Post

Frances Helen Thomas

NEW

27 Oct 2024 14:50 (Edited by Frances Helen Thomas on 27 Oct 2024 14:53)

Unlike monogastrics, ruminant production often remains extensive, particularly in Wales where grazing livestock makes use of less productive areas of land (Edwards-Jones et al., 2009). Therefore, naturally, the perception of consumers is that red meat is produced to a higher standard on pasture-based systems which are viewed to be more natural production systems. This idea discussed by Herlin et al. (2021) is also reinforced by Silva et al. (2021) when

Discussion Settings

Marking

Discussion isn't marked

Author

David Cutress (Creator)

INSTRUCTOR

No Responses | 3 Replies

Engagement

Total posts: 11 | Total replies: 18

Find participants

Meirion Roberts (Me)

No Responses | No Replies

Jenni Elizabeth Hughes-Ellis

5 Responses | 4 Replies

Rosie Cudmore

3 Responses | 3 Replies

Cerys Evans

1 Response | 3 Replies

Frances Helen Thomas

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Forums / Discussion Boards

An illustration showing a central orange cloud-like shape with several circular icons inside. Each icon contains a stylized person's head and shoulders, connected by dashed lines, representing a network or community.

Prompted discussions based on Learning Materials, new topic every week

Incentivised Posting: 25% of Discussion Board mark based on interaction, choose best 4 posts for assessment.

Main Positives:

- Own Learning:**
"Forum discussion on this module was particularly stimulating, the pace and standard set by fellow students took some keeping up with!"
- Engagement with others:**
"...The forums showed each students varying thoughts and opinions."
- Format/Structure:**
Not too formal, different to other types of Coursework Assessments, short posts

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Forums / Discussion Boards

An illustration showing a central orange cloud-like shape with several circular icons inside. Each icon contains a stylized person's head and shoulders, connected by dashed lines, representing a network or community.

Main Drawbacks from Student Survey:

- "discussion in the forum difficult and somewhat contrived at times"
- "found the forums very intimidating, having a peer looking at my work!"
- "No interaction until just before the deadline, limiting the discussion opportunities"
- Found the forums a means to an end (achieving grade) rather than motivation to learn.

Tsoni, R., Paxinou, E., Gkoulalas-Divanis, A., Karapiperis, D., Kalles, D., & Verykios, V. S. (2024). Exploiting Properties of Student Networks to Enhance Learning in Distance Education. *Information*, 15(4), 234. <https://doi.org/10.3390/info15040234>

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NEW INTERACTIVES!!

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DISTANCE EDUCATION
2023, VOL. 44, NO. 1, 162-189
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2022.2150391>

ARTICLE

Interaction in online postgraduate learning: what makes a good forum?

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ABSTRACT
Online postgraduate courses for professionals often use discussion forums to promote engagement and interaction. Equivalency theory suggests that student-student interaction may increase satisfaction but is not necessary for achieving desired learning outcomes. Therefore, costs, as well as benefits, should be ascertained. We used data from student feedback and interviews to assess the perceptions of part-time postgraduate distance learners, and analyze their views of the role, benefits, and drawbacks of discussion forums. The aim was to assess forum efficacy in the context of the specific needs of these learners, to inform forum use and design. Thematic analysis revealed complex interactions between student context and experience, forum design and management. Structurally tweaking forums to control engagement may be particularly ineffective, stimulating unhelpful grade-focused participation and highlighting forum opportunity costs. The study revealed the importance of designing and managing forums, with direct reference to their costs and benefits for specific student groups.

KEYWORDS
distance education
discussion forum
online learning
postgraduate study

MCQ responses about forums (n=193)

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
A positive part of the experience	~68%	~5%	~27%
Helped me feel connected to other students	~50%	~12%	~38%

“The biggest challenge was fitting the workload into my schedule!”

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New Interactive Assessment Types

Peer-to-Peer Presentations and Podcasts

- Students assess and learn from each other's presentations with peer-assessment and Q+A

Forum Report

- Students gather information together which is compiled into individual reports using only materials placed in the forum

Student Led Discussion

- Students propose discussion topics for the forum to improve engagement and interest.

Behaviour Change Intervention

- Students help each other to design, and share progress on, individual behaviour change interventions

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Early signs of success?

I found the **forums** helped me feel connected to other students 2023-24

Response	Percentage
Agree	69%
Neither agree or disagree	25%
Disagree	6%

I found the **interactive components** helped me feel connected to other students 2024/25

Response	Percentage
Agree	85%
Neither agree or disagree	15%
Disagree	0%

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Student Quotes



Anonymous comment on Module Feedback

'This is the first time when taking one of the modules that I have actually enjoyed the interactive part of it... it encouraged me to interact and gave me useful feedback also from my fellow students. I definitely found this a positive experience this time'



George Peart, Sustainability Adviser at Promar

'they offer the flexibility of distance learning, but still allow you to get to know the other students'



Nathan Shirely, Approval Officer at Natural Resources Conservation Board, Canada

'I feel a part of the University even with the distance, which makes it just that much more enjoyable.'

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Lessons Learned

- Structure matters. Clear guidelines and rubrics are essential.
- Giving Student more control over discussion direction increases ownership
- Peer review and feedback builds trust and community
- Discussions that form part of a bigger assessment make students more willing to participate
- There needs to be visible benefits of interaction (grade incentive)



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THANKS!

Does anyone have any questions?

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