Edge Hill University

DISCUSSION BOARD NETIQUETTE

GUIDELINES FOR COURTEOUS AND EFFECTIVE WRITING

Key Things

In order to prevent misunderstandings and promote engaging and meaningful collaboration, extra care must be taken into how you express yourself in your written communication.

Remember where you are

The Discussion Board is a public forum and your posts will be viewed by the academic team and your fellow students. It is important that you consider this audience and ensure that your messages are respectful of everyone's views and opinions (even if you do not necessarily agree with them) and are polite, professional and lawful at all times.

Remember you will be held fully responsible (and potentially legally liable) for what you write and attach to your posts.

Remember your manners

- Always value other people's opinions
- Always be courteous
- Always keep your contributions professional and relevant
- Always respect other people's privacy

- Copyright, Plagiarism and Referencing
  - Always act lawfully and don't use the words or text of others without proper acknowledgement of the source.
- Confidentiality
  - Do not name any schools/establishments that have been associated with your assignment.
  - Do not name individuals – use pseudonyms as appropriate and include a statement as a preface to your writing to indicate that you have done this.
  - N.B. Confidentiality is a key ethical issue in its own right and it is worthwhile discussing this with tutors and fellow students as part of your course.
- Privacy
  - We do not recommend that you include any personal information in your postings on the Discussion Board.
  - Please also refrain from publicising details about other individuals.

Other Guidelines

Participate

- Contribute to the discussion.

- Try not to dominate the conversation.

- Be supportive.

- Interact with your peers – don't just post a 'statement'.

Keep the board professional

- **Respect the privacy of others**

  o NEVER refer to a pupil, a teacher or a school by name.

  o Do NOT post private mail publicly.

- **Respect the work of others**

  o Always reference your sources.

- **Use standard English**

  o Follow standard grammar and spelling rules and avoid slang (unless otherwise instructed - some situations, such as role play, creative writing, etc. may benefit from a deliberate language choice which veers from the Standard.)

- **Do not flame or troll**

  o Do not use the discussion board to harass others. Posting intentionally hostile and insulting messages is not acceptable.

  o Give people the benefit of the doubt - maybe you misunderstood?

- o Refrain from lashing back at a poorly behaving member (participating in a flame war). Instead, notify a member of staff (message board moderator) of the event.

- **Do not spam**

    - o Do not post advertisements, abusive, or unnecessary messages. (Spam is the internet version of junk mail)

Keep the board organised

- **Stay on topic**

    - o Make sure you post in the correct topic area. Don't post irrelevant or inappropriate material. Only post social, or off topic posts within the appropriate topic area. Remember that this is an academic community.

- **Stick to the point**

    - o When replying to a message you should generally keep focussed on the theme of the thread. If you want to launch a new subject for discussion, just start your own thread.

    - o Don't duplicate. Before creating a new thread, check whether a similar discussion already exists. If so…you should reply to the existing thread and add to the discussion rather than repeat what has already been said elsewhere.

- **Use a meaningful subject line**

    - o Summarise the message, being clear, precise, and concise. Don't leave the subject line blank or use meaningless phrases like 'Hi' or 'Help'.

Keep Subject Headers Updated

- This will help other members scan subject lines quickly to find information on a particular topic.

- When responding to a discussion thread, edit the subject line to reflect your contribution.

Consider the reader

- **Tone:**
    - Use CAPITAL LETTERS sparingly. Writing in all CAPS can be difficult to read and online is considered to be "shouting".
    - Be careful of using sarcasm, humour and irony. Expressions and meaning can be easily misunderstood online. Emoticons can be helpful but they also contribute to the tone of your message and would not be appropriate in formal writing.

- **Style:**
    - Tailor your message to reflect the purpose and audience. Are you writing to explain, entertain, express, persuade, inform, describe, analyse, recommend, summarize, instruct, hypothesize, or debate?

- **Post Length:**
    - Make sure your post length is appropriate. Some users find it difficult to read on screen; if your posting is particularly lengthy consider posting it as an attachment and providing a summary in the body of

the post. Consider the value of lists and single sentence comments as they might not add enough context or clarity to your contribution.

- **Language:**
  - o You will find you need to vary your writing depending on the formality/informality required. Are you posting an academic piece or a conversational piece?

- **Abbreviations and Acronyms:**
  - o Make sure your readers know what you mean. Provide definitions where required.

- **Structure:**
  - o As with all writing you will need to organise your argument/opinion logically.

- **Quotes:**
  - o When responding to a specific comment, quote the relevant part of the comment in your response. (Identify for example the Topic, Subject, Author, Date, and relevant portion of text.)

- **Format your posts:**
  - o Format your posts to make them easier to read.

- **Preview your posts:**
  - o Reread and edit carefully before posting. When proof reading your message check for accuracy and clarity. Ensure that your post conveys the message you intend.

Request support

If you experience any problems ask for help. Contact your Tutor or the Learning Services Helpdesk for advice. Remember to include as much information as possible when making a technical inquiry.

Report problems

If you believe that a message board contains a posting constituting copyright infringement or defamatory, obscene or otherwise unlawful material, please contact your Programme Leader.

If you break the rules

If you fail to abide by these House Rules you may be contacted by your tutor and the APRP (Academic and Professional Review Procedures) process may commence.

If you continue to misuse the course communication facilities you will receive a formal warning by email which may include temporary suspension of access. Persistent or serious misuse of the course communication facilities will be considered a breach of Institutional Regulation and will result in disciplinary action.