

Short Paper

Student Reactions to Announcements-Auditory and Visual (Email)

Michael F Shaughnessy¹

¹ Yetta Massey, Mark Viner, Eastern New Mexico University, Portales, New Mexico 88130

Received: March 25, 2023

Accepted: April 3, 2023

Online Published: April 20, 2023

doi:10.22158/fce.v4n2p1

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/fce.v4n2p1>

Abstract

For some instructors in some classes, it is difficult to engage students, prompt students to participate in Discussion Board and submit work on time. The present study utilized a counterbalanced study to explore the issue of announcements, prompts and supportive reminders with undergraduates and graduate students. Results of this preliminary study are provided and discussed.

Keywords

online learning, auditory prompts, Email reminder and spaces in the appendix between each week

Online education has become a permanent part of higher education and even secondary education in America and around the world. Yet some faculty report difficulty in terms of procuring consistent student involvement in online classes. It is perplexing and exasperating to faculty when students participate minimally, or discontinue their work only to re-appear shortly before grades are due and then there are other students who “vanish” from the course- never to be heard from again. Some students report this as the “ghosting” phenomenon. Instructors should be encouraging students to contact the instructor for any emergency-surgery, death in the family, hospitalization, car accident and the like. Some students may need more assistance in certain areas- for example, writing, grammar, punctuation, sentence structure and thus communication is imperative- if nothing else to refer them to the appropriate resources on campus. In the current zeitgeist-it may be that students are simply less aware of deadlines or there is a diminished seriousness of purpose. Some students may simply be overwhelmed or taking too many classes and may prioritize their time differently.

In the past, Huang (2021) attempted to address what he termed procrastination in Massive Online Open Courses via “optimal calls to action”. Jabeen (2015) looked at weekly announcements to try to assist students in sociology courses. Mathieson and Leafman (2014) looked at the construct of “social presence” as a factor in online classes and examined this construct both from the student and instructor

perspective. It is not clear what exactly “social presence” is and how it can be measured and what its impact is. Certainly many instructors provide a picture, a brief bio, perhaps a joke or funny story or two- but the construct of social presence and how it helps or hinders student involvement and success in an online class remains to be seen and investigated. This study also examined students and faculty’s feelings about the requirement of having to socialize online in the Discussion Board or coffee shop or provide feedback to each other.

In order to address some of the above concerns the first two authors established a series of encouraging, cordial, congenial reminders which were sent each Monday of an 8 week class to their students. These were counterbalanced- auditory then written via email. At the end of each course students were asked to complete a Qualtrics survey and respond to some factual questions. The reminders can be found in the appendix in Table 1.

Subjects

There were 8 males, and 25 females for a total of 33 subjects. In terms of grade level, there was one freshman, 1 sophomore, 2 juniors 6 seniors and 23 graduate students responding.

Some foundational questions were:

Do you prefer online, face to face or hybrid?

Online 51.00% n=17

Face to Face 24.24 % n=8

Hybrid. 24.24% n=8

How often do you check your school e-mail?

Every Day—22

Every other day—10

Every third day—1

Every fourth day—1

Every fifth day—0

On a scale of 1—5—How Helpful is Instructor Feedback?

Very Important—81%. N=26

Important—9.38% n=3

Neutral—3.13 n=1

Somewhat important. 6.25% n=2

Not at all important. 0

My preference for Instructor Feedback is:

Email: 46.88 n=5

Zoom: 6.25 n=2

Discussion Board. 3.13 n=1

Canvas Feedback Box—43.75% n=14

If I am happy with my grade, I ignore Feedback info—9%

The Announcement Board is considered by me to be:

Very Important. 25.00% n=8

Important. 56.25% n=18

Neutral 8.75% n=6

Slightly Important 0

Not at all Important 0

How important is Immediate Feedback or responses in Announcements

Very Important—22.58% n=7

Important. 58.06% n=18

Neutral. 9.68% n=3

Slightly Important. 6.45% n=2

Not at all important. 3.23% n=1

Receiving Announcements on my cell phone is:

Very Important. 16.13 n=5

Important- 48.39 n=15

Neutral. 19.35% n=6

Slightly Important. 12.90% n=4

Not at all Important. 3.23% n=1

In terms of communication I prefer:

Announcements. 22.58% n=7

Verbal Communications 3.23% n=1

Email. 74.19% n= 23

I do not check my communications regularly. 0%

In terms of instructor reminders, I find both Announcements and Verbal Reminders:

Very Important. 38.71% n=12

Important-54.84% n=17

Neutral. 6.4%. n=26

Slightly Important. 0% n=0

Not at all Important. 0% n=0

How helpful are Announcements that are encouraging?

Very Important. 51.61% n=16

Important-37.81% n=12

Neutral. 9.68% n=3

Slightly Important. 0% n=0

Not at all Important. 0% n=0

How helpful are Announcements stating deadlines?

Very Important. 70.97% n=22

Important-19.35% n=6

Neutral. 6.45% n=2

Slightly Important. 3.23% n=1

Not at all Important. 0% n=0

What type of voice do you prefer for audio feedback?

Male: 0.00%

Female 0.00%

No Preference. 100% N=31

2 no response

In terms of qualitative research one question was asked in an open-ended fashion-What do you see as the factors that contribute to your success in online classes? (Twenty two of the subjects chose to respond)

- 1) Canvas app on my phone
- 2) Responsive Feedback
- 3) Flexibility
- 4) Feedback and Feedback via Zoom
- 5) Timely and Useful Feedback /Strong Feedback
- 6) Constant Reminders /Clear Syllabus/ Consistent Feedback
- 7) Instructor Response ASAP

Summary and Conclusions

This is a very preliminary exploratory study examining the impact of verbal and email reminders to students given on a weekly basis. Much more research needs to be conducted in order to fine the optimal factors that assist in the completion of online classes,

References

- Huang, N., Zhang, J., Burtch, G., Li, X., & Chen, P. (2021). Combating Procrastination on Massive Online Open Courses via Optimal Calls to Action. *Information Systems Research*, 32(2), 301-317. <https://doi.org/10.1287/isre.2020.0974>
- Jabeen, S. (2015). Perceived effectiveness of weekly announcements in provision of learning support to sociology students. *European Journal of Open, Distance and E-Learning*, 18(1).
- Kimbrel, L. A., & Gantner, M. W. (2021). Student Perceptions of Instructor Made Videos with Quizzes in an Asynchronous Online Course. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 16(1), 24-44.
- Mathieson, K., & Leafman, J. S. (2014). Comparison of student and instructor perceptions of Social Presence. *Journal of Educators online*, 11(2). <https://doi.org/10.9743/JEO.2014.2.3>

Appendix

First Week Announcement

Welcome to this course. We hope that you will find it engaging and exciting and enthusiastic. Please review the syllabus carefully and please note the deadlines and let me know if you have any questions-you can contact me via email and I would be happy to respond. I hope you have procured the text and have begun reading.

Second Week-Presented Auditorially

By now, you should have begun reading and begun doing the assignments as indicated in the syllabus. We do hope that things are progressing well and that you are enjoying the reading and the requirements. Each week you will receive a brief reminder as to deadlines and requirements and a prompt to contact us for questions or concerns.

Third Week-On Announcements

By now you should have established a great routine and have been checking the requirements, navigating around Canvas and seeking assistance when needed. Since this is an 8 week class, time management is imperative and deadlines are important.

Fourth Week-Presented Auditorially

At this point, the class is almost half over. All students should be very careful of time management of the requirements and the deadlines. We realize that some of you are working or taking other classes but we do want to encourage you to reflect on the amount of time left in the class.

Fifth Week- On Announcements

As we approach the end of the class, we hope that it has been a meaningful enjoyable experience. At this stage, the end is in sight and hopefully deadlines have been met and requirements have been addressed. Please contact the instructor with any questions or concerns.

Sixth Week- Presented Auditorially

Nearing the end of the course, this is a good time to reflect on what you have learned from the text, from the Instructor, and from others. We hope that this has been an enjoyable learning experience and that you have benefitted from the class. As always, contact the instructor with any concerns or questions.

Seventh Week-On Announcements

Almost at the end of the class and hopefully deadlines have been met and your expectations have also been met for this learning experience. This is a good time to reflect on any last minute pending assignments and requirements of the class and to ask any last minute questions.

Eighth Week-Presented Auditorially

This is the final week of the class and we hope it has been a great learning experience. We realize the difficulty of taking an 8 week class and we applaud your tenacity and encourage you to review the syllabus and look for any last minute details or requirements. Please contact the instructor for any last minute concerns.