

FOSTERING ACADEMIC TENACITY: ONLINE CONNECTION

Research indicates that there is an important link between students' learning environment and their feeling of a sense of social belonging (Braxton et al., 2000; Meeuwisse et al., 2010). There are many tools and activities, that promote cooperation and collaboration, that could be employed in the online environment to foster connection. Peer assessment is one example of a collaborative activity that could contribute to higher levels of psychological safety, trust, and interdependence among peers (Van Gennip et al., 2010).



PLAN

Promoting connection in online learning environments can be done in a variety of ways.

- How can you facilitate opportunities for connection in online components of your course?
- What kinds of tools and activities are students familiar with?

IMPLEMENT

When implementing this strategy, consider spaces, timing, office hours, and activities as different areas that you can adapt.

- Are there certain times in the course that make sense for different kinds of activities?
- What kinds of activities can be both meaningful for your students and make sense within the context of your learning environment?



REFLECT

As you try this strategy, make time to reflect on your practice.

- How has the strategy been working for you?
- How has it been working for your students?
- What might you try next?

Scan here to
view this
toolkit online.



PLAN

As you consider how you would like to promote connection in the online aspect of your course and what tools and activities might work best, consider the following.

WHAT

- What would you like students to take away from these online tools and activities?
- What kinds of connection would you like to facilitate?
 - With you?
 - With the TA(s)?
 - With each other?
- Would you like these activities to be optional or required?

WHEN

- Are there certain points across the term that you would like to have these activities?
- If the activity or tool is new to students, will students need time to become familiar with it?
- Are there opportunities to incorporate low-stakes interactions with the online tool throughout the course?
- Consider time zones and students' access to internet.

HOW

- Would you like students to engage with the activity independently or collaboratively?
- Which tools are available and supportive of your learning goals?
 - Explore the [Learning Technology Hub's tool guides](#), [organized by their uses](#). For example:
 - Discussions.
 - Peer-based assessment.
 - Video conferencing.
- How does this activity fit with the other requirements for your course?
 - Consider how these activities fit within students' workload.
- How familiar are students with the tool? How familiar are you with the tool?
 - Students can learn about technology from the [Chapman Learning Commons](#) [↗](#).
 - As an instructor, you can receive support from the [LT Hub, instructional support units](#) [↗](#).



IMPLEMENT

Implementing a new approach for the first time is an experiment. As you consider how you will promote connection in the online aspects of your course, drawing on these sample activities, may help you determine ways to foster connection in your teaching and learning environment.

Hold office hours online

- During office hours students could have the opportunity to connect with the instructor, the TA(s) and/or, each other.
- The content of office hours could be driven by student questions or prepared discussion questions.
- [Collaborate Ultra Web Conferencing](#)  is one tool that can facilitate online office hours
 - This tool is integrated with Canvas.
 - Students can participate via video, audio or chat.



Assign projects that facilitate online group work

- Assigning projects that facilitate online group work create spaces for students to connect with each other.
- A variety of online platforms are available to facilitate collaboration including [UBC Blogs](#)  and [UBC Wiki](#) .
- Another tool that can facilitate group work and understanding of online course material is the [Tapestry Tool](#)  - which was developed by students, staff, and faculty at UBC.



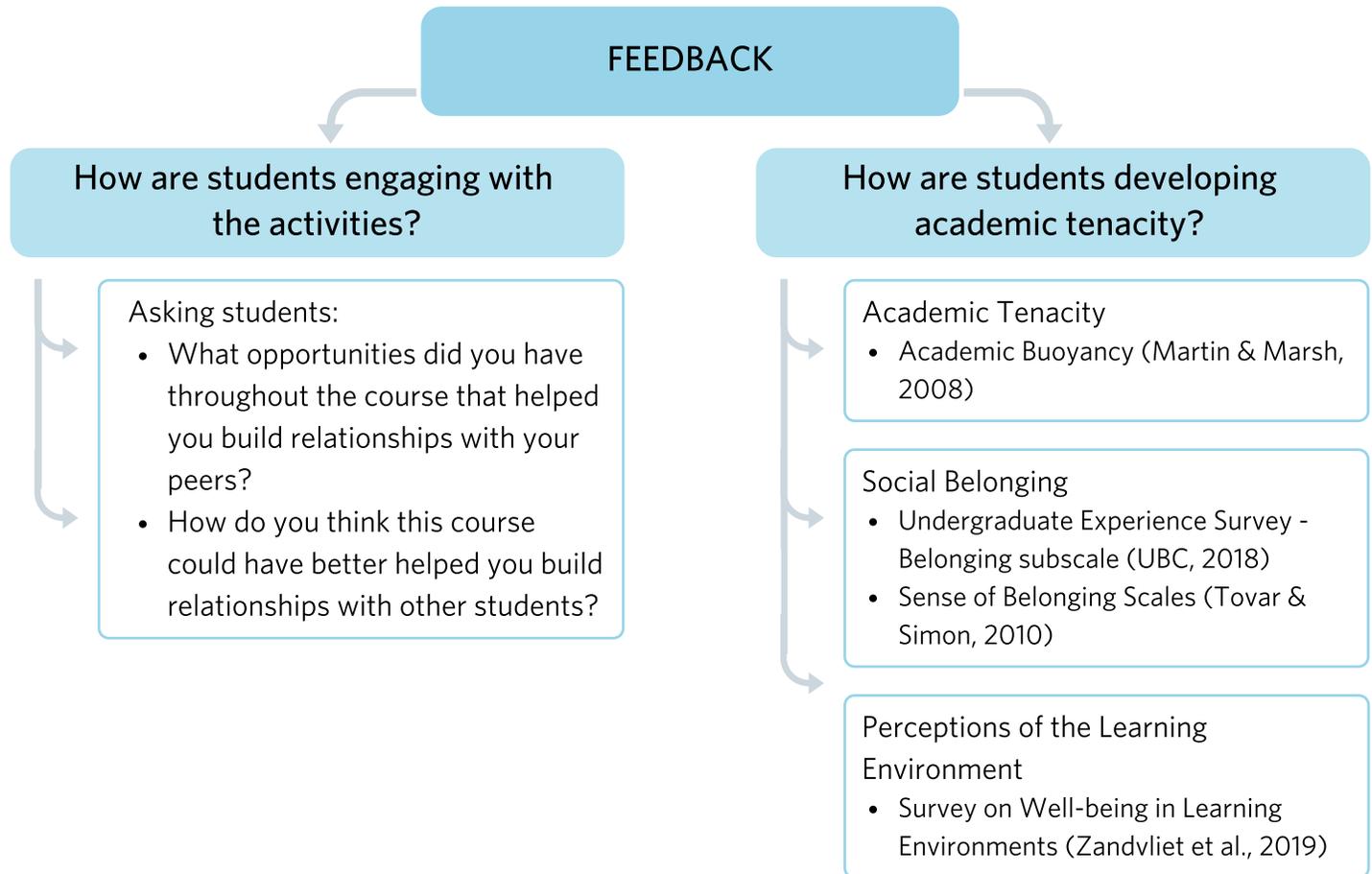
Provide opportunities for peer assessment

- Through peer assessment activities, students have the opportunity to see their peers' work.
- [ComPAIR](#)  is one tool that prompts students to both reflect on their own work and provide feedback on their peers' work.
 - This tool can be integrated with Canvas .
 - You can try out the application from the perspective of both instructor and student on the demo site .
- Check out the [comparison chart](#)  for additional peer assessment tools.



REFLECT

As you consider how this strategy is working for you and your students, consider gathering feedback to inform what you might try next.



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