

## Sequencing Questions Toward Higher Order Thinking Online

### Single Forum Discussion

Some online instructors create a single discussion forum for each week of their course and require that students post and reply to each other throughout the week. In these cases, instructors will want to post a multi-part question or sequence of questions requiring responses to each part.

Here is an example of sequenced questioning for a single discussion forum that explores a new topic (Boettcher & Conrad, 2016). Although the questions in this example are designed to have students demonstrate foundational understanding, the questions are sequenced to be gradually more challenging. To score this type of discussion, use the General Grading Rubric and assign a relatively low point value.

#### Instructions to Students:

To receive full credit for this discussion forum post, you must respond to all three parts of the discussion forum prompts. Remember that your participation is also based on your interactions with your classmates. See the Discussion Rubric for details.

**Part 1:** State your response or reaction to the reading. In other words, answer the question, “What do you think about the author’s ideas?” or “What do you think about the topic?”

**Part 2:** State why you think what you think. Provide citations from the reading that you are responding to, and include other references or resources that explain or support your perspective.

**Part 3:** State what you wish you knew more about in relation to the topic or what problem, challenge, or application the topic generates.

### Sequenced Forum Discussions

Another approach is to develop a set of discussion forums throughout the week with progressively more cognitively challenging questions. You can use the same General Rubric for Online Discussion Forums and change the point value based on the cognitive level required to address the question.

Below is an example of a set of sequenced questions in separate discussion forums with progressively more cognitively challenging questions.

**Discussion Forum #1 (Prior Knowledge)** – At the beginning of the week or new unit, post a forum question that prompts students to think about their current belief or knowledge about a topic or issue. This activates prior learning and encourages them to explore their thinking about the topic. This initial exploratory post can focus on personal reactions or past experience with the topic and not require deep thinking or reading. For example,

*What knowledge, opinions, or previous experience do you have with this topic? (Open Question)*

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The student responses provide you with information about what students already know, do not know, or are confused about regarding the topic. This information can inform how you approach the next activity.

**Discussion Forum #2 (Comprehension)** – After the due date for an assigned reading or other course activity, post a forum with discussion questions that require students to demonstrate understanding of the assigned content. For example,

*Compare and contrast the arguments made in the first article to the one made in the second article. (Comprehension Question)*

*Summarize the concept in your own words. (Comprehension Question)*

**Discussion Forum #3 (Higher Level Thinking)** – This forum may require students to apply knowledge to, analyze, or evaluate a concept, problem, case study, or real-world situation. For example,

*How would you apply the concept described in the article to resolve a real-world problem? (Application Question)*

*Choose one main concept from this week's module, and explain how it would need to be modified if it were to be applied to a completely different context. (Analysis Question)*

*Evaluate the potential positive and negative outcomes that could result from your suggested application. (Evaluation Question)*