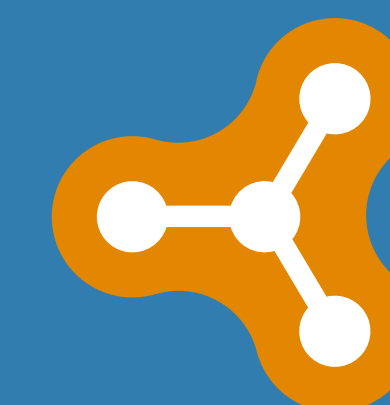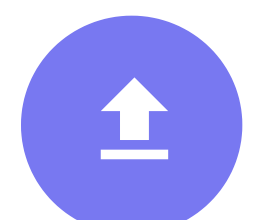# Breaking the Boards:
How Guided Peer-To-Peer Discussions Replace Traditional Discussion Boards In An Online Course

Peerceptiv®
Leaders in Peer Learning

Upload
Students anonymously upload their assignment to Peerceptiv

Review
Peers anonymously assess and provide qualitative feedback for peer documents based on the instructor's rubric

Feedback
Students hold each other accountable by evaluating the reviews received on their own work

Grades
Peerceptiv generates valid and reliable peer scores based on the quality of the submission, as well as the accuracy and helpfulness of reviews given

Jill Reid began using peer review to promote engagement and student motivation for 350 sophomore-level biology students in an online learning environment. Leveraging purpose-built peer-to-peer learning software provides students with an opportunity to engage in multiple deeper intimate conversations and receive specific feedback from their peers as opposed to traditional discussion boards that typically provide more surface-level interaction. Research shows discussion forums can be an engaging or disengaging factor in online courses, depending on the structure of the assessment and the level of participation from and with peers. Utilizing Peerceptiv, JIll facilitates double-blind, guided discussions that promote deep one-to-one student interactions. Jill's case study can be replicated to address the common challenge of student disengagement and provide a pathway for increasing student engagement, motivation, and interaction, especially in online or blended learning environments.

The course is designed to expose students to a comprehensive view of human biology based on key biological principles, concepts, and competencies. Each semester students are asked to complete several anonymously submitted peer-to-peer learning assignments that guide them through a sequence of anonymous interactions with their classmates. These activities are designed so that students participate in meaningful conversations about challenging course content. After the submission period, they will have the opportunity to read and respond to 3 of their classmates' posts using guided prompts that promote more thought-provoking responses. Following the response period, students have the opportunity to provide anonymous feedback on the quality of the responses that they received. These micro-interactions help to focus students on the topic in a deeper exchange as they follow guided prompts throughout the process, and the feedback on the responses provides students with helpful suggestions for improving future responses.

Leveraging peer review software elevates one-on-one student interactions, encouraging critical thinking and collaboration. Using both rating prompts and commenting prompts, students assess the quality of their peers' responses, while providing insightful responses to the discussion. Students interact with one another on a deeper level while assigning ratings for quality based on predefined criteria. Knowing that their work will be scrutinized by their peers, students are motivated to submit responses that aim for excellence.

Key Take Aways

1. Implementing peer review in online learning environments can significantly enhance student engagement and motivation.
2. Utilizing purpose-built peer-to-peer learning software allows students to engage in deeper, more intimate conversations and receive specific feedback from peers, surpassing the limitations of traditional discussion boards.
3. Jill Reid's course serves as a replicable model for addressing common challenges related to student disengagement, offering strategies to boost engagement, motivation, and interaction in both online and blended learning settings.
4. Structuring peer interactions through guided prompts encourages meaningful conversations about challenging course content, and provides students with opportunities for anonymous feedback.
5. Peerceptiv, with its rating and commenting prompts, not only facilitates the assessment of peers' work but also promotes critical thinking, and constructive critique, ultimately fostering a culture of thoughtful engagement among students.

"Not only has Peerceptiv allowed me to easily provide meaningful student-to-student engagement for my large-enrollment online courses, but it has also made the grading process a breeze - what used to take me hours to do can now be done in minutes."

Contact Owen Brittan at **obrittan@peerceptiv.com** to learn more.