

School of Business and Technology Online Discussion Guidelines

Throughout the course, you will be expected to engage in discussions that are designed to:

- Engage students in the course materials and resources in order to enhance their understanding of the course content,
- Foster lively debates which serve as a platform for students to learn from each other,
- Enable students to share their understanding and expertise with their classmates,
- Allow students to work collaboratively and create a sense of community among themselves, and
- Enable the instructor to evaluate students' understanding of key course concepts and outcomes and to clarify important points identified in readings and assignments.

When posting, your goal should be to prepare and submit substantive and meaningful comments, which demonstrate critical thought that is informed by evidence. The goal of critical thought is to assess the good and bad qualities of your own and others' ideas, and to use evidence to justify your opinions or thinking. As such, you should examine whether the point you are making—or responding to— is consistent or inconsistent with what you have learned so far. Additionally, you should think about the potential implications of your idea.

Listed below are some tenets of what is included in substantive posts:

- Focus on ideas and concepts relevant to the course content and objectives
- Integrate or apply relevant readings. When referencing materials external to the class, you should select current, reliable and accurate sources of information, which are based in real research.
- Challenge the ideas presented by other students and the instructor (without being combative)¹
- Constructively disagree with the material using evidence to support your claims
- Ask insightful questions to further discussion or clarify key ideas
- Provide meaningful answers to others' questions
- Utilize real-world scenarios and events to exemplify a point, concept, or idea.

Other important elements of discussion posts are:

- Initial discussion posts should be submitted early to facilitate engagement and academic discourse among students.
- You should reread and edit your responses carefully before finalizing your submission, making sure you use spell check prior to submitting your post.
- A reasonable font size for discussion board posts is 11-12 point font or size 3-4 in HTML. Smaller print is difficult to read; larger and it may come across as yelling.
- Please properly cite, quote, and reference your resources (plagiarism is not acceptable in discussion posts any more than it is in a paper you are submitting for grading.² You are expected to cite material using standard APA style formatting.

¹ You should keep in mind that the class discussions are designed to be collaborative, and not combative. Even an innocent remark in an online environment can be easily misconstrued. Generally, you should remain positive in your approach and aim to be diplomatic. The foundation of successful online discussions is respect, which is demonstrated in two ways: what we say (the **words** we use) and how we say it (the **tone** we use to make a point).

² If you are not sure how to reference something, please ask or refer to the "Free Writing Resources" available to you by clicking the link found on the left hand side of your screen. In addition to your APA Manual, please refer to Excelsior's Online Writing Lab for sets of resources on citing and using sources.