



What makes Discord so successful? Quantifying the key aspects of this non-traditional teaching platform

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ABSTRACT

CONTEXT

The use of non-traditional teaching platforms in Engineering education has been on the rise in recent years, was accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and has remained useful as we return to face-to-face teaching. Discord is one such platform, originally designed for communication by video gamers. This platform has shown promise in supplementing traditional delivery pre pandemic, as a primary communication platform during emergency teaching situations, and as an integrated part of mixed mode delivery post pandemic.

Discord is now used extensively throughout undergraduate engineering courses at [Our Regional Australian University]. Student engagement and satisfaction has been positive, and academics using this platform have seen an increased ability to teach effectively and a reduction in administrative load.

PURPOSE OR GOAL

In this work, we will determine the key criteria for successful utilisation of this platform for communication and mixed-mode delivery, and contribute an introductory onboarding package.

APPROACH OR METHODOLOGY/METHODS

To determine these criteria, we will survey and interview students across multiple year groups regarding their experience using Discord. We will also survey and interview teaching staff, focussing on any shift in/reduction of administrative load and/or increase in teaching capability.

ACTUAL OR ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

We hope to better understand what factors contribute to the success of Discord as a teaching platform. Based on prior feedback, we anticipate themes around; growth of positive culture, low barrier to entry, single point contact, global and personal communication in the same platform, and, overall increased functionality/automation capacity compared to traditional approaches.

We also aim to provide an introductory training package for academic staff adopting Discord for their courses. This package will include instructional guides to the technical and cultural aspects of a successful server, a one-click-to-implement, open-source, starting template, and instructions for customising this for specific applications.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS/SUMMARY

The aspects that make this informal teaching platform successful will be identified and quantified from both student and teaching staff perspectives. This knowledge will then be used to produce resources that reduce the upfront cost for new academics to adopt these teaching practices.

KEYWORDS

Discord, mixed mode delivery.