



Online students need time to get to know each other

Students working in online classes are often strangers and hesitate to participate in online group work.

Dr Anneke Venter is an education consultant in online learning at UNISA.

https://ujcontent.uj.ac.za/vital/access/manager/Repository/uj:28075?site_name=GlobalView

Students working in online classes need a little time to get to know their virtual classmates for optimal online learning.

With universities looking for ways to connect their students, they are increasingly using online learning to provide a platform for remote students to study together. However, students struggle to collaborate with others in an online learning environment because they are not used to online learning and are often strangers to one another. Lecturers can see that the students are not active in the online space and that the university, as a result, is not making good use of the inherent collaborative qualities of online learning.

“Novice students go through a process of becoming online students and need to have several opportunities to try online group work,” says Dr Anneke Venter.

Given sufficient time and opportunity, students can get to know each other, establish a sense of belonging and become more active and vocal in the online environment.



Students working online need some time to get to know each other.

“The research indicates that there are various learning-related benefits for online students with social ties, including finding emotional support and increasing their understanding of the work.”

Students will be won over to the online setting when there is a safe

space for students to form social ties and experience cohesion while they move from being novices to experienced online students.

“Without the benefits of online socialising, online students may remain isolated and inactive.”