

## Holistic collaborative learning experience

Through digitally enhanced collaborative learning the students are actively engaged with the information and new input in synchronous and asynchronous activities to develop collaborative, communicational skills, as well as critical thinking and creativity. The holistic (Orooji & Taghiyareh, 2015) approach attempts to shape a collaborative learning context, where all aspects and elements of this context work together to enable a successful learning experience. It starts with defining the goals that are to be achieved and goes on with thoroughly selecting topics that are to be included, describing the milestones of the learning process, and putting in the spotlight the collaboration, reflection, and feedback. The students' readiness to learn in a collaborative setting, where they undertake an active role has an important influence on the development of the learning context and its acceptance (Orooji & Taghiyareh, 2015). On the other hand, the supporting role of the educator is crucial and therefore the guidance with supporting strategy has to be planned carefully.

The collaborative learning experience can be rolled out for the whole course, one module or unit or just a single activity. In the following table, you can find the planning tips.

### Planning holistic collaborative learning experience

Planning tips	Description
Learning goals	Start with learning goals: what should the students be able to do by the end of the course / unit.
Topics	What are the topics of this learning experience? How will the students get the input? What is the form of the input? Is delivery synchronous or asynchronous?
Milestones	What do you want to achieve with the activities? What are the benchmarks? What are the interim results? How will the process be documented and shared among groups? What are the deadlines?
Collaboration	<p>What is the activity? How will students deal with the content? How will they collaborate? How much time will they have to complete the activities?</p> <p>Here some tips (Kovarik et al. 2022) for designing the collaborative strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In this activity the students work in groups. An optional setting is to assign different roles in the group.</li> </ul> <p>(A setting for the future: <a href="#">Grouping learners using virtual teaching assistant – EDUdig</a>)</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The formulation of the task is open-ended, and the educator may not be familiar with the outcome of the activity. Here some ideas: <a href="#">Collaborative learning – EDUdig</a></li> <li>• The activity takes into consideration the prior knowledge and experience of the students and invite them to actively use the resources <a href="#">Expectations and prior knowledge – EDUdig</a> <a href="#">Information and media literacy – EDUdig</a>.</li> <li>• The formulation of the activity engages the students to collaborate as well as to discuss the steps in order to develop the results, to critically question the information, formulate hypothesis, test them and draw conclusion. Here some ideas how to implement: <a href="#">Digital communication and collaboration – EDUdig</a></li> <li>• The students are aware that the documentations of the developing process and sharing with other groups is important. The documentation (reporting, summarizing or other form depending on the question or problem defined in the activity) can be done by using templates, tables, graphics, etc. <a href="#">Collaborative files – EDUdig</a> <a href="#">Collaborative search of information – EDUdig</a> <a href="#">Joint editing of documents – EDUdig</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Supporting and guidance</b></p>	<p>When you plan interactive and collaborative activity, your students may need more support than usually because they need to be actively engaged. As we already mentioned that the students’ readiness plays an important role, in order to enhance it, it is advisable to plan how will you provide support and guidance for the students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer clear instructions and explain why it is important</li> <li>• Announce office hours where you are available for direct questions.</li> <li>• Give your students a guideline for electronic communication When can you be reached? How can students contact you personally and through which channels?</li> <li>• Provide supportive discussion-forum</li> <li>• Get the students familiar with the technology and tools that you are using</li> </ul> <p>Here some ideas <a href="#">Guidance – EDUdig</a></p> <p>Active involvement of students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the peer feedback activity: students give each other feedback.</li> <li>• You can facilitate joint work, e.g. by jointly creating a glossary - Moodle activity - (collection of terms, definitions and methods).</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Peer interaction – EDUdig</a> <a href="#">Digital activity checklists – EDUdig</a></p>
<p><b>Reflection</b></p>	<p>At the end of the activity students will usually report on their findings in written and/or oral form.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The learning objectives are assessed using other appropriate methods as well. <a href="#">Reflection – EDUdig</a></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You can include portfolios, learning evidence in your teaching. Students should document the planning and progress of their learning processes and outcomes. <a href="#">Learning reflection and evidence – ePortfolio – EDUdig</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Feedback to students</b></p>	<p>How will the students get the feedback? Here some tips:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback evaluates students' work against the standards.</li> <li>Feedback has to be constructive (points out strengths and weaknesses), timely (while the work is still fresh) and meaningful (addresses a specific intended learning outcome)</li> <li>Define the goal of the feedback. Is feedback formative, you give the feedback during the activity so that the students can implement and correct the steps if necessary? Do you give summative feedback for the performed activity?</li> <li>Define the activities where you plan to give feedback: quiz, assignment, forum, group work, exercise, essay, etc. For some activities, such as quizzes, is possible to create automatic feedback</li> <li>Decide when do you give feedback: during the activity, at the end of an activity, at the end of a block, at the end of the course</li> <li>Choose a tool for feedback</li> <li>Define feedback method: comment, audio, oral, summary, group feedback, template, rubric</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Providing feedback – EDUdig</a></p>
<p><b>Feedback from students</b></p>	<p>How will you get feedback from students?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare the questions for the teaching process where you want to receive feedback</li> <li>Offer the students multiple ways to express their meaning: a feedback template, open ended questions, different channels</li> <li>Define the time when do you want to receive feedback.</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Learner feedback – EDUdig</a></p>

### References:

Orooji, F., & Taghiyareh, F. (2015). Supporting participants in web-based collaborative learning activities from a holistic point of view: a tale of seven online and blended courses. *Journal of Computers in Education*, 2(2), 183-210.

[Supporting participants in web-based collaborative learning activities from a holistic point of view: a tale of seven online and blended courses | SpringerLink](#)

Kovarik, M. L., Robinson, J. K., & Wenzel, T. J. (2022). Why Use Active Learning?. In *Active Learning in the Analytical Chemistry Curriculum* (pp. 1-12). American Chemical Society. [ACS Symposium Series \(ACS Publications\)](#)



Adrijana Krebs  
TOP Lehre FHOÖ  
Zentrum für Hochschuldidaktik und E-Learning  
Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#)