

Connecting with large cohorts during remote learning: Scaling personalised feedback and encouragement

A primer on OnTask




Students need to feel a sense of connection and belonging in order to engage optimally with study.


However, with most instruction continuing entirely online in these COVID-normal times...

- How can you build connection and belonging even out-of-class?
- How can you know your students when they are geographically dispersed?
- How can you show your care, and foster the engagement of students who seem invisible?
- How can you know your students' progress with their study, and communicate personalised feedback to them based on this?
- How can you do all that, when you are teaching in a high-enrolment subject to students from diverse backgrounds?

As part of an OLT-funded national consortium, UTS co-developed an educational platform called OnTask to help educators connect more personally with students out-of-class, monitor their progress, and communicate personalised feedback to high-enrolment cohorts.

Example of OnTask feedback personalised to class participation




Dear 

We're now in **Week 3**, I trust that you are settling in well with your studies! I'm just checking in with you today, with regards to your attendance at our [32558-Business Intelligence](#) weekly classes.

It's great that you've been able to attend at least one of our virtual classes over the last couple of weeks! I trust that you have enjoyed meeting your classmates, and learning together with your team. Please continue to keep up with the classes, and if you know anyone who has not been attending, do encourage them to join the weekly classes as well so that they don't miss out.

I do hope the rest of the week goes well for you, and see you at our next virtual class!


Kind regards,
Amara Atif, PhD
Subject Coordinator
School of Information, Systems & Modelling
Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology
University of Technology Sydney
Email: amara.atif@uts.edu.au




[Was this feedback helpful?](#)

[Email Amara](#)

(a) Feedback message as it appears to a student who attended at least 1 class



Dear 


We're now in **Week 3**, I trust that you are settling in well with your studies! I'm just checking in with you today, with regards to your attendance at our [32558-Business Intelligence](#) weekly classes.

I noticed you haven't attended week 1, 2, and 3 classes. Your attendance at weekly classes is an important way to connect and learn with your class, as well as to ask any questions that you may have about the subject. I am concerned that if you continue to miss our classes, you may be missing out on opportunities to learn together with your class. For example, each week we have related in-class activities which students do in groups and is an opportunity to interact with your peers and polish soft skills such as communication, collaboration, active-listening, problem-solving, critical thinking, empathy, and time management to name a few.

Please do let me know if you're facing any difficulties (technical or otherwise) making it to the online classes - feel free to drop me an email.

I do hope the rest of the week goes well for you, and see you at our next virtual class!

Kind regards,
Amara Atif, PhD
Subject Coordinator
School of Information, Systems & Modelling
Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology
University of Technology Sydney
Email: amara.atif@uts.edu.au

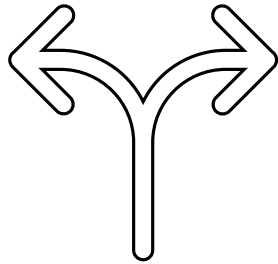


[Was this feedback helpful?](#)

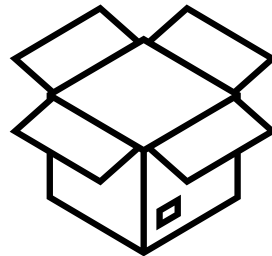
[Email Amara](#)

(b) Feedback message as it appears to a student who has not attended any class

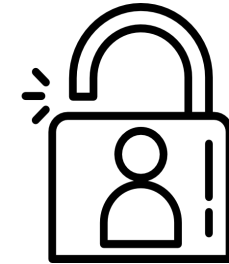
More about OnTask



The personalised messaging system is based on “if-this-then-that” rules. And because academics are the ones writing the message, students get a sense of that personal connection and belonging which might be hard to achieve when they feel that they are just a number.



OnTask is an open system, meaning that academics can differentiate feedback based on what students are (or are not) doing in multiple platforms — Canvas, Teams, or [“micro-surveys” to get to know your students](#) to find out how they are coping with their learning over the semester.



OnTask is available to all academics at UTS. If you would like to explore how OnTask can be used in your subject, please contact cic@uts.edu.au with “OnTask” as the subject line, and we’ll get in touch with you. In the meantime, you can [learn more about how OnTask is being used at UTS](#).