

Basic Approaches to Communicating with Students Online

	Descriptions	Pros / Cons
One-to-many	<p>This is effectively 'broadcast' communication: Your message goes out to a large number of people at one time. Generally one-way communication.</p> <p>Example: Class announcements.</p>	<p>Pros: Highly efficient. Many people can be reached with a single message.</p> <p>Cons: Personalisation is limited. Particular individual needs may not be addressed. Can feel 'impersonal', cold, sterile. Confusion may result from lack of contextual cues.</p>
One-to-few	<p>This is communication within or amongst a small group (2-20). Can be used with groups within the group if you divide a large cohort into more manageable groups, like tutorial groups.</p> <p>Example: Group discussion posts, or emails.</p>	<p>Pros: Messages can be tailored to the context or situation common to the group.</p> <p>Cons: Messages may take extra time to compose to achieve contextualisation. In larger groups, this can be time consuming. Watch out for the expectation of one-to-one communication following this.</p>
One-to-one	<p>For teaching, this is basically a form of one-to-one tuition.</p> <p>Example: Individual emails, office hour consultation.</p>	<p>Pros: Messages can be highly personalised and tailored to a particular individual's context, problem or question. This makes one-to-one messages highly meaningful to recipients and supports relationship building. Importantly, two-way communication is possible and interaction may follow.</p> <p>Cons: Highly labour intensive, particular amongst groups of 10 or more. Must be used strategically and managed to avoid workload blowout. Nuanced one-to-one online communication takes practice.</p>
Many-to-many	<p>This is complex communication within a group or network or across multiple groups and has simultaneous multi-directional movement of messages.</p> <p>Example: Class discussion forum, peer teaching sessions.</p>	<p>Pros: Can be powerful and very productive with multiple sites of productive activity and participants taking on multiple roles.</p> <p>Cons: Can be very difficult to set up, initiate and manage. Not as well understood as some of the other communication scenarios.</p>