# Use of Teams in Academic Spaces

Feedback given from academic lecturer in Marketing

## Background

For a number of years, I have utilised some form of online blended element in all my courses but I wasn’t entirely satisfied with the platforms available.

I have also found the number of student emails overwhelming in recent years and so I started to look into chat-bots, slack and other communication tools.

I gave Teams a trial in semester 2 (2018/19) with two MSc courses, and I am currently using it for my fifteen dissertation students.

## Lecturer Motivation

My main motivation for using Teams is that it provides an alternative hub to Announcements or class emails for students on my courses. It helps to streamline communications with students, whether that be in private chats, group chats or through channels.

Teams is really quick and easy to use, breaking away from the formality and cumbersome nature of emails. I use it every day to communicate with my students, and all correspondence is in one place so you can easily see previous interactions. Teams is less formal than email but still has a professional and official slant to it as it is linked to the students’ university accounts.

It also helps towards creating a student learning community, which is a major issue within the Business School, particularly with larger courses.

## Student Engagement

Students themselves have reported a mostly positive experience using Teams, and it is easy for them to navigate. I have pushed for them to create groups for their projects on Teams so they can communicate, meet and engage with one another in an educational setting rather than switching between multiple Facebook or WhatsApp groups.

Teams has enabled me to setup several channels for each course, such as:

* **General channel** where students and I can post relevant announcements, links or materials
* **Assessment channel** for coursework materials, relevant links and questions
* **Homework Tasks channel** where materials specific to that task can be posted each week
* **In-class participation channel** so students could type in, post comments or answers questions during lectures, and undertake mini-quizzes

Students required little prompting in posting or commenting. They were able to maintain conversations and threads themselves, which is great since they were engaging with the concepts and topics discussed in class.

They also used the chat function a lot more than I had anticipated, especially those hesitant to use the public channels: answering questions privately was quicker and more efficient than through emails. In groups, it was easier to answer questions and provide formative feedback on projects while ensuring that everyone in the group was included.

Finally, I have found it really useful to be able to share files, such as lecture notes or other course materials, without the size restrictions of emails; students were able to send and share their assignment videos on Teams, with no major issues.

Overall, engagement has been higher than with other platforms that I have used before. This is because it is fully integrated into the university system and does not require a separate log in.

## Moving Forward

My plan for the forthcoming academic year is to set up Teams for all my undergraduate and postgraduate courses, dissertation students, and personal tutees.

I am hoping to utilise other functions of Teams, namely Class Notebook, Assignments and Meetings. Particularly with Meetings, I want to allow students to sign up for meetings or office hours directly through Teams.

I am hoping to push all student emails that I receive in the next year to be on Teams only. This will be a slight culture shift for students but one that is ultimately achievable.

Full questionnaire transcript linked [here](https://uoe.sharepoint.com/sites/TeamsAdminResources/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2Fsites%2FTeamsAdminResources%2FShared%20Documents%2FGeneral&FolderCTID=0x0120006DF4A47DF936204F80F4300F13AD7428)