

Tip sheet – Incorporating Socratic questions into your FLO site

Socratic questioning is an approach that can be used to facilitate critical thinking. It is premised on asking questions for the purpose of identifying and challenging assumptions and perspectives, exploring new ideas, and analysing complex concepts (Easterling 1997). Although traditionally delivered orally, Socratic questions could also be delivered in writing or online for creating engaging learning activities or for conducting formative/summative assessments. The following table outlines the six different types of Socratic questions defined by Paul and Elder (2006).

Socratic question	Example
Clarifying thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does ... mean? • How does that relate to your previous statement? • What do we already know about ...? • Are you saying ... or ...? • What example can you provide to explain ...? • Please rephrase ...
Challenging assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is being assume by ...? • Can ... be verified or disproved? • Do you agree/ disagree with ...? • What might happen if ...? • What motivations might be behind ...?
Using evidence in arguments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there any evidence to support ...? • Is ... good enough evidence? • What do you think the causes are, and why? • How complex is the issue? • How might ... be refuted? • How do you know that ... is happening and not ...? • Why would ... be independently validated?
Exploring alternative perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Another perspective on this matter would be ... • What would you say if I told you ...? • Who benefits/is disadvantaged from ...? • How are ... and ... similar/different? • Explain the strengths and weaknesses of ... • Why is ... better than ...? • Imagine What might your position be then?
Considering the consequences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What might be the consequences of ...? • What would happen next? • What is the link between ... and what was earlier learnt on ...? • Why is ... important? • How could ... be used for ...? • The optimum solution would be ... because ...
Questioning the question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What consequences might result from ...? • Can a generalisation be made? • What did I mean by ...? • What else might I have been asking? • Why was it important to ask this question?

How can Socratic questions be used in FLO?

Within your FLO sites, you will see a wide range of tools and features that may be used to build resources as well as create and manage activities and assessments. Depending on what you want to achieve, you may be interested, at various points of your teaching, in strengthening the critical thinking skills of your students. The following section examines how four such tools – assignments, quizzes, discussion forums and Collaborate – may be used to incorporate Socratic questions into your FLO site.

Assignment

When constructing essay questions or other similar written assessments, this line of questioning is ideal to test the depth and breadth of knowledge your students have attained. The [assignment tool](#) is perfect for setting and managing this style of activity, allowing your students to craft their response outside of FLO, with plenty of reflection time, before submitting their document to be marked before receiving constructive [feedback](#) from their tutor.

Quiz

Should you decide to create a [quiz](#) in your FLO site, you will have sixteen different forms of quiz questions – many of which use automated answers – at your disposal. Of these, the **essay** question can be prepared to reflect Socratic questions, and is the only one that will require [manual marking](#). The use, number and size of essay questions as either summative or formative assessment items should be factored into workload considerations.

Discussion forums

[Discussion forums](#) are asynchronous spaces for communication which may be open to the entire enrolment cohort or limited to smaller, self-definable groups. FLO facilitates five different types of discussion forums, but all are driven by an initial input. Discussion forums have at times been used for summative assessment around participation. If this is your intention, in addition to preparing well defined and suitably rich questions, you will need to be mindful of student [needs and expectations](#) around assessment-based and [navigation-based considerations](#).

Collaborate sessions

[Collaborate](#) 'virtual classroom' provides opportunities for synchronous communication (in the form of video, audio or text) to occur between teaching staff and students. As Collaborate is an online alternative to communication that occurs in person and allows for real time, bi- or multi-directional communication between participants, it can be an excellent vehicle for delivering Socratic questions. Like discussion forums, you will need to undertake appropriate planning to determine and achieve your desired learning intent.

If you would like to find out more about how you might use Socratic questions within your teaching, please contact your College [academic developer](#). Further information on tools within FLO can be found in the [FLO staff support](#) pages, or by contacting your local eLearning support team via [Service One](#).

References:

Easterling, P E 1997, *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy*. Cambridge University Press, p 352

Parrish, D, Christie, A. and Campbell, C, 2020, *Teaching On-Line – What Students Want | Campus Morning Mail*. [online] [Campusmorningmail.com.au](http://campusmorningmail.com.au). Available at:

<<https://campusmorningmail.com.au/news/teaching-on-line-what-students-want/>> [Accessed 9 April 2020].

Paul, R and Elder, L 2006, *The Art of Socratic Questioning*, Dillon Beach, CA, Foundation for Critical Thinking