



Teaching Method

*Icebreaker—Selfie Introduction*

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# Icebreaker—Selfie Introduction

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## **Abstract**

In order to initiate and encourage social interaction within online collaborative teams, it is important for each group member (both staff and students) to introduce themselves. This can help to support informal and communal bonds from the outset of the course, thus reframing traditional student/teacher relations. Introductory activities can also help to support team composition, as students can highlight their specific skills and experiences. A didactic method developed during OnCreate involves the use of ‘selfies’ and social media communications as an introductory activity.

## **Description of method**

A number of OnCreate courses have utilised a closed Facebook group as a platform to disseminate learning materials, to facilitate group collaboration, and as virtual ‘coffee room’ for informal discussion and debate. This introductory ‘icebreaker’ task involves each participant posting a ‘selfie’ and some basic information about themselves to the group page in the opening stages of the course. The aim is to encourage and familiarise students with posting to the group page as soon as possible, and to generate momentum in terms of engagement with the course. This provides a fairly informal introduction to the course/ collaborative project, whilst also providing a sound basis to support the development of teams.

It must be noted that this activity is not exclusive to courses that utilise a closed Facebook group, and can work just as well using whatever communication platforms or learning management systems are chosen





for the course (providing all students have access to participatory features like discussion boards/forums/wikis that can facilitate group discussion with embedded image/video/URL's)

To facilitate social interaction and team bonding

- Post a selfie or short video with basic personal information dedicated Facebook group/alternative platform (getting students to post pictures of their pets also works very well!)
- Highlight key skills and aims/expectations for taking part in the course. This could generate a group discussion about learning objectives and potential direction of the course.

To support team composition and competence trust

- Students link to online portfolios or showcase previous work
- Students provide a self-assessment in form of a “trump” card or share their online resumes/CVs

## ***Implementation of the method into collaborative course***

It is recommended this method be implemented in the initial stage of a collaborative course/creative project, once students have access to the Facebook group/alternative platform. Ideally this could be run throughout the week/days leading up to the opening workshop as a preparatory/introductory activity. Instructions can be adjusted and delivered in whatever way is deemed necessary to each course/cohort of students.

It is a flexible task designed to ‘kick-off’ group discussion and introduce each student/faculty member participating in the course. The aim is to facilitate asynchronous communication via the Facebook group so that students feel comfortable and familiar with using this as a ‘hub’ for discussion and collaboration. It may also support initial team composition, as students are able to share their relevant skills, interests and experiences.





### **Analog/Classroom Variation**

When running blended learning courses that involve some classroom/ face-to-face teaching an alternative analog version of this task may be run (please see the 'Facebook' Profile Icebreaker task document > material). The time length for this task is flexible depending on student numbers, and can be extended by running a plenary/round-up (students could 'post' their profiles to a wall, followed by a group discussion that highlights the various skills amongst the cohort, as well as expectations for the course).

For this task, students will get into pairs and ask each other questions in order to complete their partner's profile:

1. Name
2. Where they are from? ('Location')
3. Education and relevant job history (this can include work experience or previous projects they are proud of)
4. Hobbies, interests, favourite TV/movies/photographers/designers/artists
5. Why they chose to take part in this course?
6. What expectations of the course they might have
7. Do they share work online via Flickr/YouTube/Vimeo, etc. ('Links')
8. Any other fun fact about your partner ('About')

## ***Experience Report***

Lecturers from University of Lincoln have utilised this method across a number of courses and projects, and it has been largely successful in building the foundations for an engaged cohort of students. Student feedback from a number of OnCreate courses indicates that the relatively simple act of posting a selfie and sharing key skills/projects helps to 'break the ice', inspiring confidence in students to 'get involved in the discussion'. It has also been shown to help students 'get to know' their team members, to feel more comfortable/sociable with other students and tutors before they begin collaborating, and to 'get a sense of what each member of the team might bring to the table'. Whilst the use of a closed Facebook group has been the preferred method for this task, there have





been some cases where students were excluded from group discussion as they did not have a Facebook profile (although the Facebook page in such instances was seen as a supplementary collaboration tool for intensive classroom teaching so not as problematic as if this had occurred in a purely online/remote course

## Material

**ICEBREAKER TASK**

**For this task, students will get into pairs and ask each other questions in order to complete their partner's profile:** 1) name; 2) where they are from ('Location'); 3) education and relevant job history (this can include work experience or previous projects they are proud of); 4) hobbies, interests, favourite TV/movies/photographers/designers/artists; 5) why they chose to take part in this course; 6) what expectations of the course they might have, 7) do they share work online via Flickr/YouTube/Vimeo, etc. ('Links'), 8) any other fun fact about your partner ('About')

Complete the profile by drawing drawing a simple sketch of your partner in the box (no prizes for quality!)

**IceBreaker** Home Profile Friends Inbox Settings Logout


Name \_\_\_\_\_

Wall Info Photos Video Notes +

Update Status Share Link Add Photos Add Video Write Note

Post

Education and Work Edit

 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Interests Edit

Hobbies \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Movies / TV \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Why I chose this course Edit

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Expectations Edit

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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