UBC Pilot Evaluation Outcomes

Mattermost

During the 2017/18 academic year, UBC piloted the **open-source team chat tool Mattermost** & collected feedback at the end of each term from participants in multiple, cross-discipline courses.

Using pilot outcomes from...

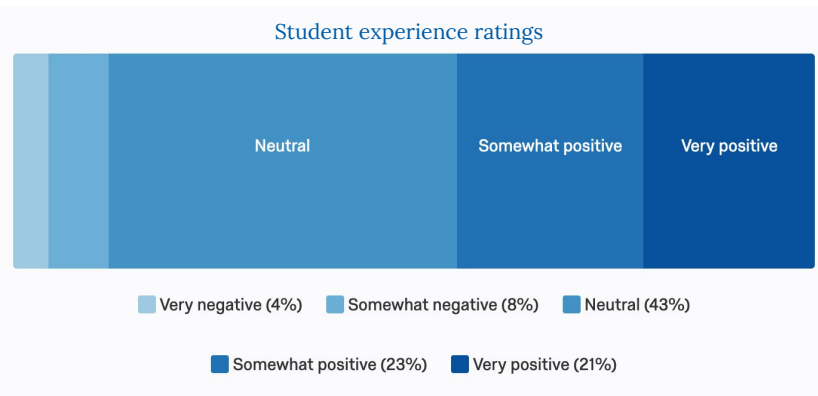| 11	8	202
Courses	**Instructors & TAs**	**Students**

...the evaluation team found:

Most students rated their overall experience as neutral or positive.

Students & instructors shared pros & cons of the tool that resulted in the following recommendations for maximizing pedagogical effectiveness of Mattermost.

Student experience ratings

Neutral | Somewhat positive | Very positive

■ Very negative (4%) ■ Somewhat negative (8%) ■ Neutral (43%)

■ Somewhat positive (23%) ■ Very positive (21%)

✔ Recommendations for Effective Course Use of Mattermost

1

Set up some channels for smaller groups (10-30) of students

Help students feel they can meaningfully contribute & interact without being drowned out or overwhelmed by the content of too many peers.

"liked the ability to connect & chat with classmates in real time"

BUT

"it's hard when 40 people are interacting"

2

Organize content into clear channels & guide organization

Model & explain to students how best to use the different areas & features, so everyone has a shared understanding of effective communication.

"public discussions were very helpful in directing me"

BUT

"it's not easy to sort through & find what's relevant to me"

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3 **Set explicit expectations around instructional team availability**

Tell students how & when instructors & TAs will interact in real-time. When outside of real-time availability, indicate the length of delay.

"from the get-go, provide a schedule"
BECAUSE
"reasonable expectations of how [the instructor] sought to use it... allowed us to use the platform more, as we understood the norms around it"

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4 **Integrate with or regularly prompt use from other course site(s)**

Make chat feel like an integral & useful part of the course by incorporating it into the primary course site(s), when relevant.

"if I am busy working on my course home page – I don't want to leave"
& THIS
"made it more difficult to make the effort each week to check up"

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5 **Set loose guidelines for student participation**

Decrease student stress & potential disengagement by suggesting norms *other than* 24/7 participation, e.g., specific times for real-time discussions, highlighting one aspect weekly, bonus marks for x amount of participation.

"helpful for quick messages regarding smaller course questions or content"
BUT
"checking it on a frequent basis makes me feel overwhelmed"

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6 **Emphasize private communication options for getting help**

Highlight the private, 1-on-1 student-instructor/TA engagement opportunities, particularly in fully online courses.

"we could just have a quick dialogue connection & move forward"
& THIS
"made me more inclined to ask questions"

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7 **Explain why Mattermost over other more established chat tools**

Justify asking students to learn a new interface by explaining & educating on the importance of privacy in social media.

"goes a long way in fostering a sense of community, a struggle that is not easily overcome in online education"
BUT
"it was on yet another platform"

PDF version also available at: bit.ly/mattermostrecs