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...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>Instructors &amp; TAs</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>202</td>
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</tbody>
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...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.

### 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”
## UBC Pilot Evaluation Outcomes

### 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”*

### 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”*

### 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”*

### 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”*

### 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”*