

# Mustering and Maintaining Student Morale

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# Q&A Norms

The **chat** is open to broadcast ideas or resources to all participants

There is a moderator monitoring the **Q&A**

If you have suggestions that you want to share with the group, please send them to Q&A. We will pause during the presentation to include your suggestions.

We are collecting resources to share (e.g., learning objectives, syllabus text passages, assignment descriptions) at the end of the conference



# Mustering and Maintaining Student Morale

## Motivation Matters

- Data on highly motivating and demotivating practices

## Mustering Student Morale

- Humanize yourself and recognize the students' humanity

## Maintaining Student Morale

- Ongoing acknowledgment of students and their work

## Fixing Demotivating Factors

- High Stakes Exams
- Breakout Rooms

## Maintaining Perspective

## Takeaways



# Mustering and Maintaining Student Morale

Motivation matters!



# UC Davis student survey Spring 2020

## Learning activities and reported motivation

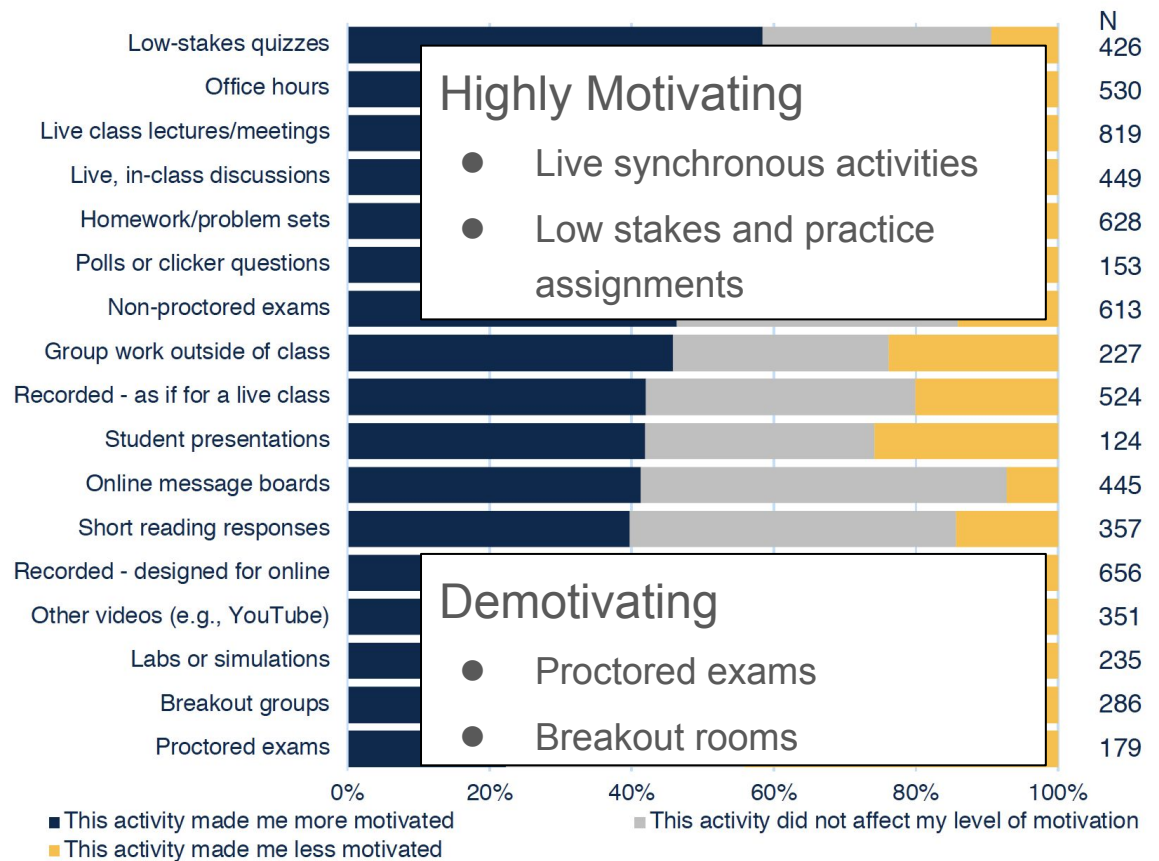


Figure 11. Activities and student motivation



# Mustering Student Morale

# ? What do you think?

Why are **live + synchronous** activities preferred?

Type your suggestions into the chat



# Mustering Student Morale

**Humanize** yourself and recognize the students' humanity

- Record a welcome message
- Acknowledge challenges and prime resilience
- Give a strong belonging message
- Be mindful of the language you use to describe students



# Mustering Student Morale

Record a **welcome message** and/or put a bio or description in your syllabus

- Personalize it for this term
- Reveal appropriate details about yourself
  - Bring your pets!

“By far the thing the students commented on the most was that my dog was so cute during my welcome video.” -- UC Professor





# Mustering Student Morale

**Acknowledge** that these are challenging times. **Prime** resilience and persistence in the face of adversity.

Communicate your...

- ...expectation for students to cope (e.g., an interruption of a few days)
- ...plan for when you or a TA is unexpectedly unavailable
- ...plan for disruptions to the LMS, Zoom, or other key technical resources

## Resilience

### Resilience and persistence in the face of adversity

These are exceptionally difficult times. We recognize that and have made significant changes to the course to enable students to continue to meet their educational goals.

If you are experiencing adversity from any source



- health
- family emergency
- political climate
- natural disaster
- access to computer, electricity, internet
- employment scheduling



#### 1. please be kind to yourself.

We are all stretched to our limits and things that we might have been able to cope with last year are enough to push us to the limit this year. Campus is here to support Aggies, here are some resources

- [Campus Crisis Support](https://healthy.ucdavis.edu/mental-emotional/support) (https://healthy.ucdavis.edu/mental-emotional/support)
- [Aggie Compass Basic Needs Center](https://aggiecompass.ucdavis.edu/) (https://aggiecompass.ucdavis.edu/)

#### 2. keep an eye on your personal goals.

You are engaged with your education for a reason. That reason is beyond today. It is beyond one assignment. It is beyond one course. It is beyond one term. There will be terms and courses and assignments and days where you will not be performing up to your potential. You will look back and say "under different conditions, I would have done better." You will tell your future employer or grad school major professor or constituents "that performance does not reflect my true abilities, but it shows what I can still achieve under adverse conditions."



# Mustering Student Morale

Give an explicit **belonging message** at the beginning of the course

Students who **struggle** in the course or who feel uncomfortable with the course terminology can see his, her, or their struggle as a message of not belonging and give up

Important Message



YOU  
BELONG  
HERE



EVERYTHING IS  
HARD  
BEFORE IT IS  
easy



# Mustering Student Morale

Importance of **how you characterize and name students** (Sharpe & Matsui 2020)

- Gendered language
- Pronoun awareness

Students **detection of attitudes and values based on what language you use**

- Communal vs agentic motivation match (Fuesting, Diekman, Boucher, Murphy, Manson, & Safer 2019) affect persistence in STEM fields



# Mustering Student Morale

? **What do you think?**

What do you do that **humanizes** yourself and your students?

Type your suggestions into the chat



# Mustering and Maintaining Student Morale

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# Maintaining Student Morale

## Ongoing acknowledgment of students and their work

- Notice students efforts
- Weekly communication (e.g., emails)
- Incorporate flexibility in assignments
- Remind them that they are not alone!
  - Connect with instructional team
  - Connect with peers



# Maintaining Student Morale: Noticing Students Efforts

In large or remote courses it is easy for students to become anonymized

- To maintain student motivation ***professors need to notice the students and their efforts in the course***
- This practice has been shown to increase student engagement and performance (Carrell, Kurlaender, and Bhatt 2020)
- Messages to students that ***notice engagement*** and ***offer support***



# Maintaining Student Morale: Noticing Students Efforts

How to create messages to students that *notice engagement* and *offer support*

1) Use your LMS to groups students by engagement

e.g. UCSB uses Moodle which has a reporting function for all posted activities

2) Write emails tailored to those specific groups of engagement

Make sure you assume the student needs support rather than didn't do the work out of laziness

3) Send emails targeted to 3-4 different levels of student engagement using your LMS group email feature





# Maintaining Student Morale: Noticing Students Efforts

Sample Groups of Students	Sample Email Text
Had been to all of the labs/online lectures	I just wanted to say thank you for being an engaged <insert class> student. I see that you have been to lab/section last week and both lectures this week. I am happy to see this engagement as it is one of the factors that is associated with success in my courses.

Students respond very favorably to being noticed for being engaged

“Thank you so much for this wonderful email! It means a lot to have someone check in even if it’s as simple as saying hi...”

“This is so sweet and very much appreciated!....”



# Maintaining Student Morale: Noticing Students Efforts

Sample Groups of Students	Sample Email Text
Had been to lab but not either online lecture that week	I just wanted to check in because I noticed you haven't been to either of the live online lectures for this week. I want to make sure you are not having any technical difficulties. Please let me know if you are so I can get you connected to resources. It is imperative for your success in the course that you stay up to date with the course material and missing this much can be problematic. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to support you.

It helps you foster student success by figuring out the roadblocks

“Thanks for checking in, I've been scrambling and slightly didn't understand the Zoom schedule as well as struggling with very bad internet connection at home...”

Or that they are listening to you on 1.5 speed to be efficient

“I'm actually taking a bunch of units this quarter and I realized that I am a lot more effective listening to your Zoom lectures at a prioritized time when I can speed them up....”



# Maintaining Student Morale: Noticing Students Efforts

Sample Groups of Students	Sample Email Text
Had not been to lab or online lecture all week	<p>I just wanted to check in because I noticed you haven't been to lab/section last week and didn't attend either of the live online lectures for this week. I want to make sure you are not having any technical difficulties. Please let me know if you are so I can get you connected to resources. It is imperative for your success in the course that you stay up to date with the course material and missing this much is very problematic. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to support you, and I am requesting you reply to this email as it is important to address this issue.</p>

It helps you foster student success by figuring out the roadblocks and providing resources

“I haven’t been to lab or lecture because my laptop broke and I don’t have money to buy a new one”

Our UC was able to lend and mail out Chromebooks to students who needed them however the students didn’t really know about this resource so this student got a Chromebook and was able to be successful with the proper equipment



# Maintaining Student Morale: Noticing Students Efforts

Messages to students that *notice engagement* and *offer support*



## Costs

- This took approximately 1.5 hours to do for a 150 person class
- Emails were sent three times over the course of the quarter (after week 2, and after both quizzes) so 5 hours total over 10 weeks

## Scalability

- Feasible as long as your LMS has a way to easily generate reports for the engagement you are interested in noticing (watching lectures, completing assignments etc.)



# Maintaining Student Morale: Weekly Communication

## Send students **weekly reminders**

- Push reminders are effective
  - Remote courses = fewer cues
- Help your students organize their studying
  - Remote courses = demanding time management
- Use this as an opportunity to decolonize
  - Take time to connect about current events
  - Add an inspirational quote

Hi PSYC 132,

Happy Tuesday! Here is your weekly update to help keep you on track with the course:

### Announcements

1. [Lab 10](#): Your last lab(!) has been uploaded if you would like to get started on it.
2. [NO Discussion Section This Week](#): Enjoy the week off! :)
3. [iEval Now Open](#): The final course evaluation for this class is now open! It will be open for the final two weeks of the course (closing on Friday of Week 10). Please take a moment to fill it out--I read every single one and use the feedback to improve my teaching.
4. [1 Point Back on Quiz 7](#): I have decided to add a point back to everyone's Quiz 7 score for confusing wording on the corollary discharge theory question. For clarification, the "positive" and "negative" were meant to refer to "input" and "no input," respectively, but since I never used that phrasing in class, there's no way for you to have known that. My apologies for the confusion. Still complete corrections for that problem to fully explain the concept in light of this information.

### Assignments Due This Week

1. Quiz 8 due Thursday 5/28 by 5:00pm
2. Lab 10 due Sunday 5/31 11:59pm

### Suggestions for Assignments to Turn In This Week To Stay on Track

1. Lecture notes for Tuesday 5/26 and Thursday 5/28 if you do not attend synchronously (final due date: 6/05 by 11:59pm)

As always, let me know if you have any questions!



# Maintaining Student Morale: Weekly Communication

Send students **weekly reminders**

- Cost is neutral
  - Time to compose and send a weekly email is more than rewarded by reducing clarification (panic) emails
  - Can be archived for future term
- Scalability
  - Easily scalable using email or LMS announcements



# Maintaining Student Morale: Incorporate Flexibility

Create room for intellectual struggle and recovery

- For example, **revise and resubmit major assignments**
  - Model our disciplinary practice
  - Students can demonstrate continued learning and improve their grade
- Ensure that students can see a path to success even after struggling

## Revise and Resubmit Cover Letter (Optional)

**DUE:** Night of Sunday, March 8, via Canvas (submission window closes 5am on March 9)

When a scientist submits a paper for peer review at a scientific journal, here's what usually happens:

- An editor at the journal finds other scientists in the field to anonymously evaluate the paper.
- The editor uses the reviewers' comments to decide what will happen to the paper, and sends that decision back to the original authors with the reviewers' comments. The three main decisions are:
  - **Accept:** Hooray! The paper will be published in the journal.
  - **Reject:** Rats, the paper will not be published in this journal.
  - **Revise and resubmit:** The editor uses the reviewers' comments to decide that the paper is not ready for acceptance to the journal, but that with significant revisions it may be acceptable. The paper's authors are requested to revise their paper according to the reviewers' comments and submit it again. When the authors resubmit their paper, they also include a **cover letter** that describes the changes they made to the paper in response to every one of the reviewers' comments.

## What to submit:

Thank you for submitting your Method and Results sections to the *Journal of Excellent Psychology Research*. Based on the comments from reviewers, I would like to ask you revise these sections and resubmit your full paper. When you turn in your paper, also submit a cover letter that **describes or quotes** every comment you received on your original submission (see Canvas for detailed comments), and **explains how you addressed each comment in your final paper**. You do not need to respond to positive comments or comments on sections where you did not lose any points (although you are still expected to address those comments in your final paper!).

## Grading:

You must revise your final paper in response to the comments you received, and you must describe the revisions you made in your cover letter. If you turn in this optional cover letter, you can earn **up to 3 points back on your Method and Results assignment score** (up to the maximum 30 points).





# Maintaining Student Morale: Incorporate Flexibility

Create room for struggle and recovery

## Cost

- Repeated grading takes time
- Adjusting grades takes administration

Promising practices regarding grading flexibility were covered in the 3Ss



## Scalability

- Depends on amount of TA and/or grading support for the course





# Maintaining Student Morale: Don't Try This Alone

Invite students to **connect with the instructional team**

Instructor and TA office hours

- Explicitly define office hours and invite students to attend
  - “You don’t need to have a question, just drop in and join the conversation.”
  - “Get to know us and give us an opportunity to get to know you”
- Send reminder emails as you ‘open your office door’
- Entice students with high interest themes
  - “how to ask for letters of recommendation”
  - “quiz night”
  - “pet show and tell”



# Maintaining Student Morale: Don't Try This Alone

## Connect with Instructional Team

### Costs

- Instructor and TA office hours are a requirement so making them useful really has not cost associated with it
- “Quiz night” takes more preparation - but can be archived for future terms

### Scalability

- Professor and TA office hours with clearly defined goals work well for large classes
  - Silver lining of remote: no seating limit and everyone can see the board!



# Maintaining Student Morale: Don't Try This Alone

Invite students to **connect with peers**

## Peer Tutors / Learning Assistants

- Assist with administrative tasks
- Schedule 1-on-1 tutoring sessions

## Connecting with other students

- Group work and presentations
- Online message boards (e.g., Piazza, Slack, Canvas)

Promising practices regarding Piazza were covered in the Synchronous Storytelling



# Maintaining Student Morale: Don't Try This Alone

## Connect with Peers

### Costs

- Peer tutors pay us for the opportunity (by enrolling for credit, e.g., 198 or 197T)
- Peer tutors need oversight + supervision (can you include them in a weekly TA meeting?)
- Peer tutors need access to zoom and a scheduling tool
- Piazza / Slack need oversight to keep on track and squash myths or misinformation

### Scalability

- Large teams take more management
  - use tiered leadership structure



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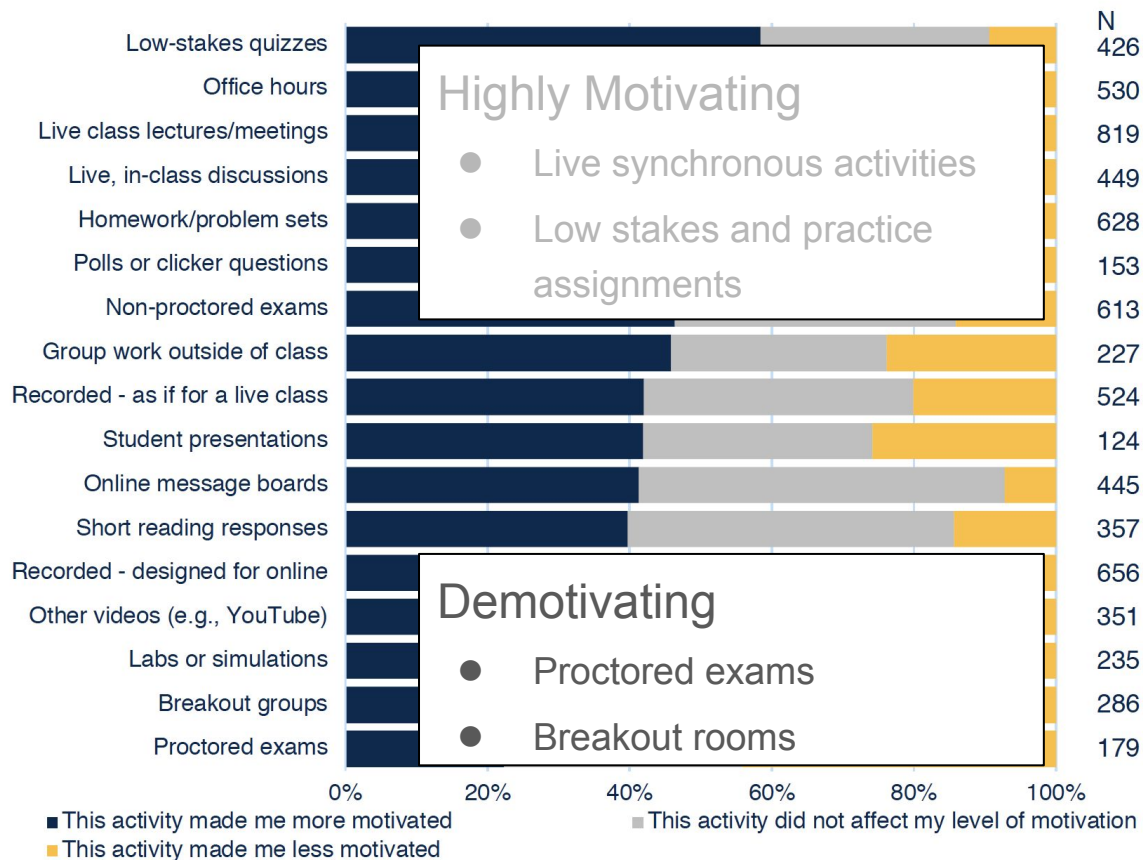


Figure 11. Activities and student motivation



# Maintaining Student Morale: Fix Demotivating Things

## High stakes exams

- What are the goals of setting exams?
  - Motivating serious studying
  - Assessing learning
- Can those goals be met with lower stakes assignments?
  - Gather multiple assessments of your primary learning objectives
- Avoid proctoring software
  - Embrace open book / open note (but individual effort)



Promising practices regarding changing grading structures were covered in the 3S's presentation



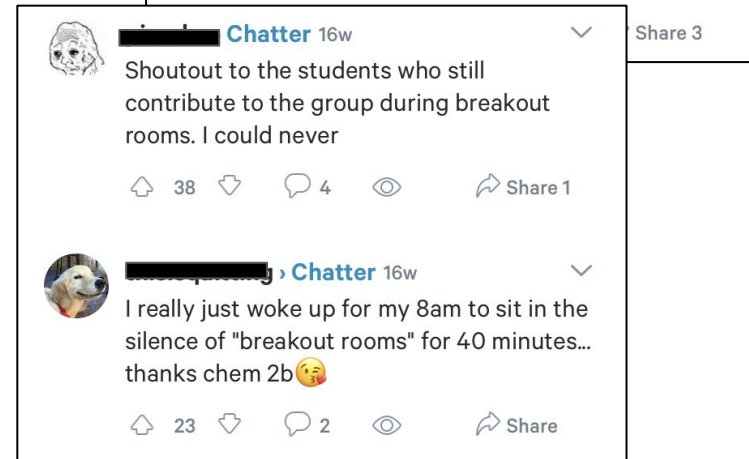
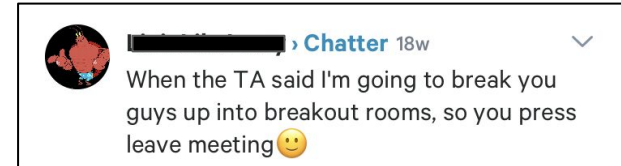


# Maintaining Student Morale: Fix Demotivating Things

## Breakout rooms

- What is the goal of using breakout rooms?
  - Peer interaction & active learning
- You must provide
  - Explicit norm setting and expectations
  - Clear instruction and/or activities
  - Participation that is graded (completion or content based)

Promising practices regarding breakout rooms were covered in the Reimagining Lab/Discussion Sections presentation





# If Things Go South: Help the Student Maintain Perspective

Life happens and sometimes persistence in education can no longer be a primary focus

Explain the options and normalize adjusting one's goals to reality:

- [Pass / No Pass](#) If you can't earn your target grade, can you salvage some credit and move on?
- [Incomplete](#) If you are nearly finished with the course work but you need to take a few weeks or months or up to a year to complete it
- [Late drop](#) Sometimes we just can't finish what we start. Things change. Priorities shift. This course will be here next term.
- [Repeat and replace](#) Even if you weren't able to plan ahead and there is a D or F on your transcript, you can repeat and replace to raise your GPA.



# Takeaways

- Teaching is so much more than content delivery
- Motivation and personal connections matter
- There are many ways the course norms, professor behaviors, and structure of the course influence student motivation
- Your attitude, actions, and words have great weight and influence with the students
- Don't try this alone--use your instructional team
- As with all teaching suggestions, consider cost, scalability, and fit within your teaching goals



# References and Resources

Carrell, S. E., & Kurlaender, M. (2020). *My professor cares: Experimental evidence on the role of faculty engagement* (No. w27312). National Bureau of Economic Research.

Fuesting, M. A., Diekman, A. B., Boucher, K. L., Murphy, M. C., Manson, D. L., & Safer, B. L. (2019). Growing STEM: Perceived faculty mindset as an indicator of communal affordances in STEM. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 117(2), 260.

Pugatch, T., & Wilson, N. (2018). Nudging study habits: A field experiment on peer tutoring in higher education. *Economics of Education Review*, 62(C), 151-161.

Sharpe, S. & Matsui, J. (2020). Actionable Steps Towards Equity in STEM. Talk at the Society for the Advancement of Biological Education Research (SABER) co-sponsored by Arizona State University, UC Santa Barbara, and Sloan Equity and Inclusion in STEM Introductory Courses (SEISMIC)

<https://cee.ucdavis.edu/news/insights-spring-2020-remote-instruction-results-surveys-remote-learning-and-teaching>



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# Piazza Poster/Video Session

You should have received an email invitation to join our Piazza page! We encourage you to view the posters/video during the break and write follow up questions.

The screenshot displays the Piazza website interface for the UCPSYCHConference. The top navigation bar includes 'PIAZZA', 'UCPSYCHConference', 'Q & A', 'Resources', 'Statistics', and 'Manage Class'. Below the navigation bar, there are tabs for 'LIVE Q&A', 'Drafts', 'posters', and 'videos'. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column shows a list of posts, including 'Instr 3. Effects of the Learning As...', 'Instr 11. Say my Name. The Impor...', 'Instr 8. Praxis Projects: Learn by ...', 'Instr 5. Teaching about Testing in ...', 'Instr 2. Test Anxiety and Metacog...', 'Instr 1. The Effects of Social-Emo...', 'Instr 4. Teaching Large Workshop...', and 'Instr 6. Bringing teacher-student I...'. The right column shows the abstract of a post, which discusses online instruction, student engagement, and the importance of assessment. Below the abstract, there is a 'followup discussions' section with a rich text editor for creating new discussions. The rich text editor includes options for 'Rich text editor', 'Plain text editor', and 'Markdown editor', and a toolbar with various formatting and editing tools.

