



# How to Get a Campus Feeling in a MOOC

Written by [arjantupan](#) on April 25, 2014 in [Guest Posts](#).

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*This post comes to courtesy of Arjan Tupan. Arjan loves to learn about new things, and spends much of his spare time diving into the world of MOOCs. He's a nomadic European, an amateur poet, and also likes to run, read, blog and figure out this thing called parenthood. He loves to have a [conversation with you](#) on MOOCs and much more via Twitter. About.me reveals [more about him](#).*

You can never recreate or replace the accelerated learning effect of being able to interact with your teacher and fellow students in person - in physical proximity. At least, this is an argument that is often used by those who are not big fans of MOOCs (massive open online courses). The last time I saw it was in an article about the Intelligence Squared debate at Columbia University on the question: '[bricks or clicks?](#)' But, in our connected world, does that really hold up? Do we really need to be in the same room as our teacher to learn more than just the presented knowledge? I don't think so. It helps to be able to connect with fellow students and the teaching staff, but there are many ways to do this. In the world of MOOCs, it's not limited to the bricks of the university real estate. Here are four ways to connect with students in other places than a campus.

## **Join the conversation**

Sure, by just watching the lecture videos, maybe taking in some of the readings and then doing some of the quizzes, you'll learn a lot from MOOCs. But the fun and learning really starts when you dive into the conversation on the discussion forums. This is where you can meet your fellow students, exchange ideas, help each other and maybe even share or find links to resources to learn more about the subject. It's also a great place to test your ideas for a peer-reviewed assignment, if the MOOC you're taking has them. On top of all that, it's probably the best place to ask your questions to the teaching staff. Even though the sheer number of forum posts usually means that the lead instructor cannot participate in all threads, they do show up in the forums.

Pro tip: Be nice. No one likes unfriendly, grumpy or mean people, especially not on discussion forums. Being unkind will distract people from the topic, and will focus them on

getting back at you. When in doubt about your words, just ask yourself "what would my mother think of this?"

### **Go social**

For every MOOC I've been in, there was a Facebook (or LinkedIn) group. Sometimes they're started by the teaching staff, sometimes they're a student's initiative. In both cases, this is another place to hang out with fellow students and sometimes teachers and staff. Often, the conversations in the Facebook groups go a bit broader and further than the discussion forums of the MOOC, plus, they will still be there after the MOOC is closed or restarted. An added bonus: if a MOOC is rerun, new students will join, with a fresh view on the topic. Students you can help, and/or learn from. So, look out for the groups on Facebook or LinkedIn, especially when they are mentioned in update posts from the course organizers.

Pro tip: If there is no Facebook group yet, create one, and post the link on the discussion forum.

### **Follow the leader**

Twitter has an amazing ability to flatten the world. Someone who normally seems out of reach, like a MOOC professor, is just a mention away. Many MOOC teachers have Twitter accounts, some of them even tweet themselves, and some are even active tweeters. They all are worth following, and you can always try to ask them a question there. Don't always expect an answer, but you might be lucky and really connect.

Any self-respecting MOOC has a dedicated hashtag on Twitter. If you use a Twitter client, create a stream or column to follow that hashtag. You might find great links for further learning, or great fellow students to connect with.

Pro tip: to keep in touch with teachers after the course, why not write a Moocivity review of their MOOC and share the link in a tweet mentioning the teacher.

### **Go local**

Maybe the best way to really get a campus feeling, is to find a study group near you. In every single MOOC I have been in, one of the earliest threads or sub-forums is about study groups organizing local meetups. In some locations, [learning hubs](#) have been set up: meeting places dedicated to taking MOOCs together.

Pro tip: create a map on which people can indicate where they are located. This is not just a fun exercise, but also makes it easy to see where clusters of fellow students are. You can, for example, use [Zeemaps](#) for this.

As you can see, there are many ways to connect with students and teachers outside the boundaries of the campus grounds. In other words: the world is your campus. Enjoy it.

If you have found other ways, or have great tips to maximize peer-powered learning, let me know on [Twitter](#).