

Virtual facilitation fundamentals

How do we coordinate

Facilitators vs. Mentors



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Session Objectives



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By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- ✓ Understand key elements and skills of facilitation and mentoring roles in online settings/AGRIMOCK MOOC
- ✓ Understand key elements of a successful implementation of the e-internship
- ✓ Understand the key characteristics of the two groups of participants (students and youths)

1. Definitions: Facilitator



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A facilitator in the Agri-MOCKS MOOC is a **person who guides and structures the collective learning process**, fostering inclusive participation and meaningful interaction among the diverse, geographically distributed group of learners who will participate in the e-internships.

People learn better when they participate

1. Definitions: Mentor



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A mentor in the Agri-MOCKS MOOC is a person who **supports individual learners' development** by offering personalized guidance, experience-based insights, and encouragement tailored to their contexts and goals.

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People learn better when the experience is tailored for them

1.1 Facilitator and Mentor: Key differences



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Aspect	Facilitator	Mentor
Focus	Group learning process	Individual learner development
Interaction	Many-to-many	One-to-one (or small group)
Main function	Enable discussion, engagement, inclusion	Provide guidance, advice, and support
Role in MOOC	Bridges cultural interaction <u>Process-oriented</u>	Adapts guidance to individual contexts <u>Person-oriented</u>

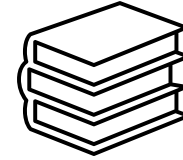


But...

Is it just about 'class vs. one-to-one'?

(breakout rooms)

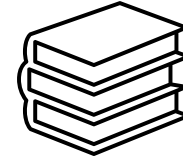
1.2 Facilitator: Key elements



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- **Process-oriented role:** Focuses on how learning happens rather than what is taught.
- **Manages interaction:** Encourages participation across cultures, time zones, and communication styles.
- **Creates inclusive space:** Ensures all voices (including those from different linguistic, cultural, and professional backgrounds) can be heard.
- **Supports group learning:** Moderates fora, prompts discussion, and helps participants learn from each other.
- **Bridges diversity:** Helps addressing differences in digital skills, educational backgrounds, and cultural expectations between learners.

1.3 Mentor: Key elements



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- **Person-oriented role:** Focuses on the learner's growth rather than group dynamics.
- **Provides individualized support:** Offers advice, feedback, and encouragement tailored to the learner.
- **Shares expertise and experience:** Helps participants connect course content to real-world contexts (which may differ significantly across African countries, and between African and European settings).
- **Supports goal achievement:** Helps learners clarify goals, overcome challenges, and stay motivated.
- **Builds relationships:** Often involves more personal or sustained interaction than facilitation.



Facilitator vs. Mentor ...tasks and behaviours Whiteboard





Discussion and Participants' presentation



Tell us who you are



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Instructions

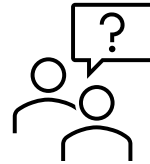
- Introduce yourself:
 - Name
 - Institution, Country
 - One soft skill you have, and will use here

2. Facilitation skills



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What to look at for a successful implementation of the Agri-MOCKS e- internships?



Effective facilitation in our setting requires a blend of pedagogical, intercultural, and digital skills (all soft skills)

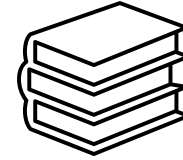
2. Facilitation skills: Core skills overview



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- ✓ Inclusive Engagement
- ✓ Cross-cultural Sensitivity
- ✓ Clear and Accessible Communication
- ✓ Active Listening and Synthesis
- ✓ Questioning Skills
- ✓ Digital Facilitation Skills
- ✓ Adaptability and Responsiveness
- ✓ Conflict and Power Dynamics Management

2.1 Facilitation skills: Core skills (1)



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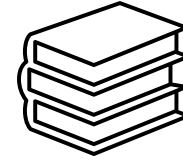
Inclusive Engagement

- Ability to create a safe space where participants from different regions feel comfortable contributing
- Actively balances participation (e.g., avoiding dominance by one region or group)

Cross-cultural Sensitivity

- Understands differences in communication styles (direct vs indirect, hierarchical vs informal)
- Avoids assumptions about knowledge, resources, or context

2.1 Facilitation skills: Core skills (2)



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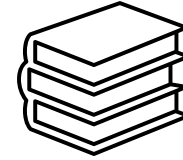
Clear and Accessible Communication

- Uses simple, jargon-free language
- Rephrases key concepts when necessary (e.g., for non-native English speakers)

Active Listening and Synthesis

- Identifies themes across diverse contributions
- Summarizes discussions in a way that integrates multiple perspectives

2.1 Facilitation skills: Core skills (3)



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Strong Questioning Skills

- Uses open, reflective questions (e.g., ‘How does this apply in your local community?’)

Digital Facilitation Skills

- Effectively uses forums, live sessions, and collaborative tools
- Designs for low bandwidth (asynchronous options, downloadable materials) – Options made available by the project

2.1 Facilitation skills: Core skills (4)



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Adaptability and Responsiveness

- Adjusts facilitation based on participation levels or emerging needs
- Responds quickly to confusion, disengagement, or conflict
- Keeps all discussions on topic, making explicit any change of topic

Conflict and Power Dynamics Management

- Recognizes inequalities (e.g., resource differences, perceived expertise)
- Intervenes **constructively** when misunderstandings and conflicts arise

2.2 Facilitation skills: Context



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Discussions are expected to be highly applied. Facilitators should also understand the content's context.

Then:

- Encourage context comparison (not competition!)
- Validate local knowledge and lived experience
- Link theory to real-world practices

Mentor or facilitator?

What role you like the most, and why

What skills are your forte, and where you need to work a bit on

Break-out rooms

3. A successful e-internship

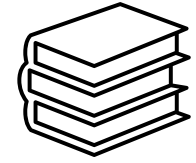


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A successful experience is a mix of:

1. Participation and Engagement
2. (Good) Quality of interactions
3. Inclusion and equity
4. Cross-cultural learning and group collaboration
5. Learning outcomes and applications
6. Completion and retention
7. Participants' feedback and satisfaction

3.1 A successful e-internship: What to look for (1)



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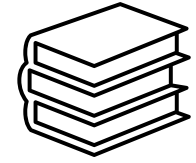
Participation & Engagement

- High and sustained activity in discussion fora
- Contributions from all participants
- Evidence of peer-to-peer interaction (not only facilitator-driven)
- **Red flag:** One region dominates discussions or many participants remain silent

Good quality of interactions

- Learners respond to each other (not just posting individually)
- Discussions include experience-sharing and context comparison
- Respectful tone across cultural and professional differences
- **Red flags:** Superficial comments (“I agree”) without deeper engagement or no comment at all

3.1 A successful e-internship: What to look for (2)



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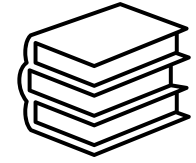
Inclusion and equity

- Participants with different levels of experience feel comfortable contributing
- Language and culture barriers are managed (clarifications, paraphrasing)
- Examples from different regions are discussed and valued
- **Red flag:** Certain voices consistently ignored or undervalued by the rest of the group

Cross-cultural learning and group collaboration

- This is a key success indicator
- Participants reference each other's countries or examples (ideal scenario)
- Collaboration in group work across participants of different areas
- Emergence of shared insights, not just parallel discussions

3.1 A successful e-internship: What to look for (3)



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Learning outcomes and applications

- Learners apply concepts to the agribusiness/social enterprise presented. Solutions reflect local adaptation of knowledge
- Evidence of critical thinking across contexts

➤ Examples: ...?

Participants' feedback and satisfaction

- Participants report feeling heard and respected
- Positive feedback on facilitation quality
- Perception that the e-internship is relevant to their context

3.1 A successful e-internship: What to look for (4)



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Completion and retention

- Strong course completion rates (for MOOCs, even moderate rates can be good)
- Continued participation beyond the first week or two

Retention Red flags:

- Rapid drop-off after initial modules
- Uneven drop-off rate between students and youths

Students and youths are different: our goal is to satisfy the needs of both

3.2 A successful e-internship: Key success factors



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Success depends on:

- + Active, inclusive facilitation
- + Recognition of context and participants diversity
- + Strong interaction by design
- + Practical relevance
- + Continuous engagement support

Risks:

- Passive moderation
- One-size-fits-all
- Fora, group tasks, reflective moments underused or skipped

3.3 A successful e-internship: Evaluation checklist



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Regularly ask yourself:

- ✓ Are all participants from all cultures actively participating?
- ✓ Is engagement sustained over time?
- ✓ Are discussions interactive (not isolated posts)?
- ✓ Are cultural/contextual differences being acknowledged properly?
- ✓ Is the link with the entrepreneur's problem always present?



**A look to the participants:
'Students vs. youths'**

How do they differ?

4. Students and youths: key differences



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Area	Students	Youths
Learning focus	Theory + structured learning	Practical application
Time availability	More predictable	Limited, less predictable
Motivation	Academic progress	Career/business impact
Experience level	Limited practical experience	Often hands-on experience
Expectations	Clear guidance and feedback	Flexibility and relevance

4.1 Students and youths: Common characteristics



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- Are motivated by future opportunities.
- Benefit from interactive, practical learning rather than passive content.
- Bring diverse cultural and regional perspectives.
- Need clear guidance and supportive facilitation.
- Value peer exchange, especially when it connects to real-world challenges.

4.2 Students and youths: Key differences



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Orientation to Learning

- Students → Learning is academic and future-oriented (building knowledge for later use)
- Youths → Learning is immediate and practical (solving current problems).

Experience Base

- Students → Stronger in theoretical knowledge, limited practical experience
- Youths → Stronger in practical experience, less formal theory

Expectations from the Course

Students → Expect clear structure, instruction, and feedback.

Youths → Expect relevance, applicability, and efficiency

Motivation Drivers

Students → Driven by learning, grades, and future career *preparation*.

Youths → Driven by income generation, business development, and career *progress*



Q&A

