#OpenTeach

Getting Started with Teaching Online

#OpenTeach Project Draft Resource

(version 3)

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T&L NATIONAL FORUM
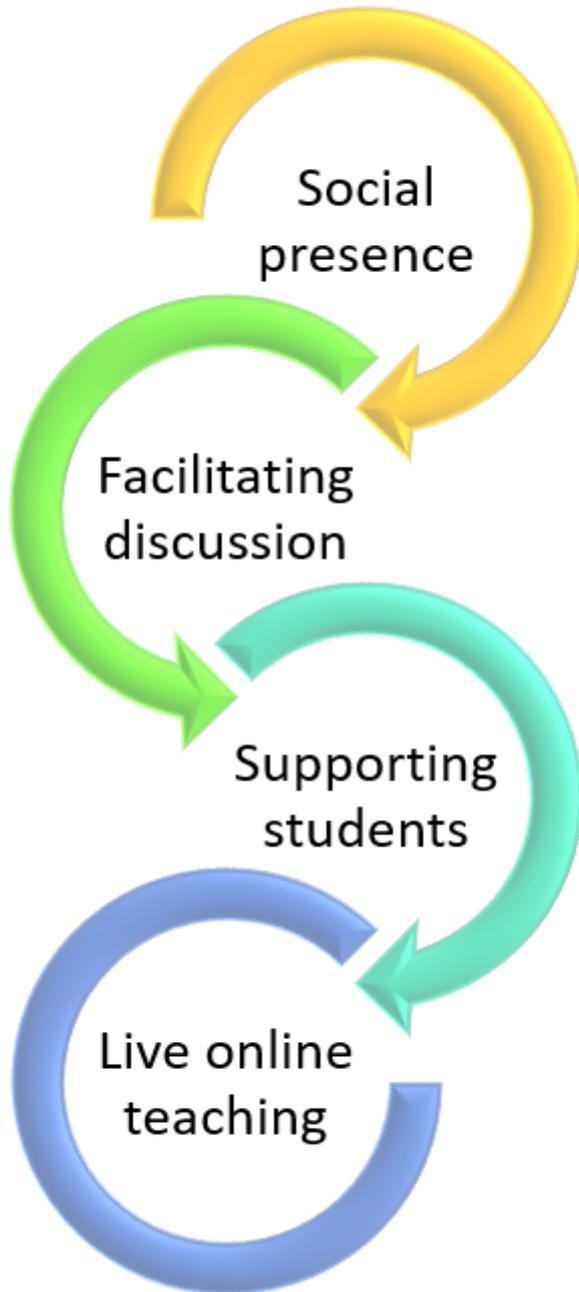FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF TEACHING
AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Anchoring Concepts:

Four Key Elements of Teaching Online

Social presence

Facilitating discussion

Supporting students

Live online teaching

Getting Started

Introducing yourself

The key to getting started in the online environment is to introduce yourself to your students in a friendly, sociable way. Make a short video about yourself, let the students see what you look like, hear your voice, and know how to contact you. Follow this by having an activity that engages all the students in an informal way, an icebreaker.

Follow this link from the University of Wisconsin for some icebreaker examples.
Read the quote below from an expert, Susi Peacock, on how she begins her online courses.

'As a module leader of postgraduate studies ... over 40 students, Peacock provides a short introductory video outlining her course and ensuring that learners know who she is, what she looks like, and how she can be contacted. Her language is informal and friendly; she concentrates on establishing a welcoming tone from the outset. She then launches an icebreaker activity within the online discussions area, wherein learners frankly share their current learning experiences pertaining to the subject and their apprehensions in relation to forthcoming tasks. Soon, they can build their confidence in online discussions, establish meaningful connections with peers, and develop personal relationships.'
(*Peacock, S., & Cowan, J., 2019, Pg 73*)

Getting Students Going

The online environment may also be a new adventure for your students. Make sure they know how to navigate the Learning Management System (LMS) and how to get help with technical and other institutional supports.

Follow this link to the Humanities student hub in loop and familiarise yourself with the students supports.
Read the quote from the literature.

'Faculty are expected to ensure learners' overall readiness by directing them to various institutional resources ranging from advising to technical requirements to library resources. In addition, students should be offered a learning management system (LMS) orientation which will explain the course's navigation and flow'
(*Abdous, M. 2011, page 66*).

Setting the rules of engagement

It is important to make clear to your students the time commitment, deadlines and input required of them. The quantity and quality of inputs to activities such as discussion forums and wikis need to be made explicit. Clear ground rules need to be established and agreed by all students. Online etiquette or Netiquette is very important.

Follow this [link from the Centre for Teaching and Learning at Wiley Education](#) for some examples.
Check out the [Guidelines For Online Interaction](#) in the OEU [Humanities Tutor Hub](#)
Read the quotes below that emphasise the importance of the ground rules.

'... faculty should welcome learners to the learning environment and should clarify expectations, weekly time commitment, and deadlines. During this phase, faculty should help learners take responsibility for their own learning, articulate their expectations, develop effective work study habits, stay organized, and remain focused on learning tasks (Bangert 2004). After they establish the ground rules of the course (including communication and feedback protocols), faculty should provide their students with clear guidelines and expectations in terms of the students' contribution and participation.'
(Abdous, M. 2011, page 66-67).

'Instructors should describe clear ground rules for forum behavior at the outset and design group forums—rather than class-wide forums—for particularly large classes (Ravai, 2007). In addition, it is important that instructors refrain from being the center of attention or mass-posting in the forum space (Mazzolini & Maddison, 2007)'
(Trammell, B. A., & LaForge, C. 2017,n.p)

Characteristics of an effective online tutor

Students rated one of their tutors in an online course very highly and the other tutor not so good. When comparing the two tutors activity within the online course it was found that the higher rated tutor had the following attributes:

1. Active and passive participation was significantly higher
2. Social presence was significantly higher.
3. Teaching presence was significantly higher.
4. Cognitive presence was similar, though there was a lack of cognitive based tasks overall.
5. Instructor response time was significantly shorter.
(Gorsky, P., & Blau, I., 2009, Page 15-17).

The community of inquiry model

The Community Of Inquiry (CoI) model is used to describe how the three elements of social, cognitive and teaching presence are used to facilitate learning in an online environment . Social presence is the ways in which students and teachers interact in the online community, allowing their individual personalities to come to the fore in a trusting environment. Cognitive presence allows the facilitation of students in constructing meaning using the online course materials and activities. Finally, teaching presence refers to the ever present teacher facilitation of the social and cognitive processes.

Social Presence

Social interaction is known to facilitate cognitive development. In other words, students learn well in social environments. It is influenced by the quality and quantity of interactions between students and teachers and helps establish a favourable learning space. It can be difficult to establish social presence in an online environment, as standard physical cues and interactions are not available. However, with careful consideration and management of the interaction in both asynchronous and synchronous online sessions, a good rapport can be established.
Follow this [link from Brigham Young University](link) for some tips.
Read these quotes from the literature

'Interestingly, the highest number of recommendations shared by experienced online educators fell into the "presence" theme. Online educators commented on the importance of connecting with students, helping students connect with each other, and helping students feel they are members of a supportive learning community.'
(Dunlap, J. C., & Lowenthal, P. R., 2018, page 84).

'Establishing a sense of a learning community among participants is a prerequisite for meaningful and in-depth interaction. This aspect is critical in overcoming some of the reported drawbacks of online teaching, including students' feeling of isolation and their lack of motivation and interaction (Bernard et al. 2009; Mullins-Dove 2006).'
(*Abdous, M., 2011, page 67)*

'Instructors in all online classes must work to increase "social belonging in the course (Picciano, 2002)... Swan and Shih (2005) noted that social presence is an important component to online success but that perceived connection to the instructor is even more important than peer connections. Student satisfaction correlated with knowing the instructor (Thurmond, Wambach, Connors, & Frey, 2002), yet many students express dissatisfaction with a lack of contact ...'
(Trammell et al., 2017, n.p)

'... took a nurturing approach and responded to students individually, encouraging them, and supporting their participation on the discussion boards...'
(Coker,H.,2018, page 134)

'...tries, as an online tutor, to be the first to visit any shared online learning space. He informally leaves a short, welcoming greeting and quickly departs. This corresponds with and amplifies Wildflower's advice (2010, p. 393) to check in on online realms frequently, if only briefly..."You cared enough to come to meet us (online) before we arrived. That set the tone for my course experience.'
(*Peacock & Cowan, 2019, page 72)*

'The content of … messages shows careful listening to the individual students as they acknowledge individual contributions and provide specific positive feedback.'
(Smits, A., & Voogt, J., 2017, page 109)

Facilitating discussion

Managing Discussion Forums

Discussion forums can go off track and/or stagnate. It is up to you, the tutor, to keep it on track. Use well structured prompts that elicit the types of responses you require. But don't hog the forum yourself.

Follow this [link](#) from the Colorado State University for some examples:
Read the quotes below from experts in the field

'If the lecturer stays out in the early stages the conversation reaches consensus and stops, the job of the lecturer in an online discussion is to take it outwards, to bring in a new idea, to ask a question and in some cases to share opinions, disclosure is really important in there as well … it's also being responsive to what's going around, what the students are interested in.'
(Coker, H. ,2018, page 136).

Subsequently, during the actual teaching of the course, facilitation, interaction, and feedback become the core activities of online teaching…During this phase, faculty are encouraged to initiate and keep discussions open, focused, and relevant. To this end, they need to share, listen, answer questions, and show enthusiasm, while paying careful attention to students' needs, providing direction, and drawing students toward active engagement and participation in the discussion. '
(Abdous, M., 2011, page 66).

'Vary the participants' amount of contribution. If there is a participant who appears overly outspoken, ask that person (privately) to wait for a few others' responses before contributing. Similarly, at some point, it may be appropriate to ask less-outspoken individuals to participate more actively.'
(*Berge, Z. L., 2008, page 411)*

Managing the workload
Responding to all discussion forums posting may become onerous in large classes. Encouraging students to respond to each other posts may help alleviate the burden. But make sure you give guidelines.

Follow this [link to the association for psychological science](#) blog with five tips for improving online discussion forums. See tip 4 for the 3C method.

Read the quote from the literature

Encouraging peer-to-peer interaction will help manage an instructor's workload in a large class while also meeting student's preferences.
(Trammell et al., 2017, n.p.)

Supporting Students

There are many different aspects to enabling student success in an online environment. We have already considered how to; ensure students are familiar with the technology, establish social presence and facilitate discussions. Academic support in the form of valid learning activities is also required. In the online environment student interaction and collaborative activities are key to effective learning.

Take a look at this diagram that illustrates these four elements (Roddy et al, 2017)

And remember that students supports are available in the link to the Humanities student hub in loop provided through loop.

Student Interaction in learning activities

Read the quotes from award winning online tutors

'…. mentioned interaction or community as a key element in designing learning activities. They gave examples of collaborative projects, discussion forums, or peer review activities as necessary for students to interact with each other and the course content in different ways. The structuring of student interactions with one another and their creation of digital content that demonstrated their learning was also important to faculty.'
(Martin, F., Ritzhaupt, A., Kumar, S., & Budhrani, K., 2019, page 39).

'Another advantage of the online medium is its ability to connect students with each other. This may seem to be no different than an on-campus class, but the faculty felt the sharing done in online discussions was different. In the online setting, students could share their experiences and, especially important for older students in the professional programs, their experiences on the job or in the workplace. For example, in the safety management program,...'

(Meyer, K. A., & McNeal, L., 2011, page 44).

Collaborative Activities
Collaborative activities are commonplace in higher education. Students form groups whose responsibility it is to engage in a project that has defined objectives.Online collaboration requires a bit more orchestration by the teacher, but the benefits to students are worth the effort. These types of activities reinforce the social presence required in online environments and enable the sharing of skills and the construction of knowledge.

Follow this [link from the eLearning Industry](#) for a few collaborative project ideas.
And consider using [Group Discussion Forums within Loop](#)
Read the quotes from the experts.

When asked about the nature of online collaboration...highlighted its pedagogic potential:
The nature of collaboration, I think I'd start by saying it's not instinctive and therefore it has to be contrived. The importance of collaboration, if we start from the point that collaboration is a part of this relationship of learning and teaching then to collaborate is about developing knowledge, learning, and constructing knowledge in a group.
(Coker, H.,2018, page 134)

'students should be offered concise and practical guidelines for collaborative activities to reduce the level of frustration with these activities'
(Gómez-Rey, P., Barbera, E., & Fernández-Navarro, F., 2018, page 126).

Creating collaborative assignments, rather than simply cooperative assignments, is crucial. Collaborative assignments require the students work together to develop ideas together and create a cohesive piece of work, whereas cooperative assignments simply allows each student to work on his or her part and then piece them all together at the end (Curtis & Lawson, 2001).
(Trammel et al., 2017. n.p.)

Feedback as part of learning
It is essential that regular feedback is given to students while completing the learning activities of the course. This feedback should be delivered as soon as possible after the student completes the activity. Actionable feedback is required to ensure that it is meaningful for the student.

Follow this [link in the Faculty Focus for feedback strategies](#) that work in the online environment.
Read the quotes from the literature.

'Faculty are expected to give timely feedback about a variety of aspects of the course. Students anticipate prompt and high-quality feedback about assignments and questions, complete with detailed explanations and justifications (Brindley et al. 2009; Rovai 2004). Faculty who provide constructive criticism and reassurance will motivate and engage students, particularly when the response is worded in a friendly and conversational tone. Along the same lines, faculty are encouraged to collect regular (weekly, mid-semester) feedback from students and to address issues promptly. Data collected from students provides a practical appreciation of the effectiveness of the course content and activities.
(Abdous, M., 2011,page 69)

'When asked about their day-to-day routine when teaching online courses, all eight faculty stated that they checked in to the course at least once a day. Six of the faculty specified that they began their work day by reading student messages or responding to student discussion posts in the morning, and then checked in again later in the evening and sometimes during the day. Timely responses and feedback were important to all the faculty – four faculty specified that they would respond to student messages within 24 or 48 h, and graded student work within 48 h
(Martin et al., 2019, page 40)

'Providing feedback helped students to learn by identifying errors in their thinking… One thing that I did very early . . . is to design reading quizzes using Blackboard (Blackboard calls them quizzes, but they are really guides to the reading, concepts and arguments that they should pay attention to). And the way I use those quizzes is students have to submit them by a certain deadline, which is usually right after the class period that we discussed the reading . . . they submit them and they are automatically graded by Blackboard but if they miss a question they can do a rewrite. On the rewrite they need to explain why they originally thought their answer was correct and then why they now understand what the correct answer is and why it is a better answer than the one they gave originally.'
(Meyer et al., 2011, page 47)

Creating Rubrics for feedback
Using rubrics can be effective in enabling students understand the criteria required for their posts to discussion forums. In addition it can facilitate quicker grading of student work.

Follow this link from Yale for creating and using rubrics.
Look at how to create these within Loop
Read the quote from the literature.

'Meyer (2006) reviewed numerous methods for creating rubrics, frameworks, and scoring criteria for forum assignments. He highlighted the importance of determining the purpose of the assessment—interaction, critical thinking, or content knowledge—before creating an evaluation method (2006). This maximizes the chances that students receive effective feedback and the instructor will have good assessment data for the course.'
(*Trammell, B. A., & LaForge, C., 2017, n.p.)*

The Online Classroom

15 tips to bear in mind for your online classroom.

1. Check out the technology well in advance, make sure you are familiar with the software and that your mic and camera work.
2. There are three standard pre-built layouts available in Loop Connect – Sharing, Discussion and Collaboration. Start with one and stick with it until you are comfortable moving around.
3. Have your document or powerpoint up and ready to go, opened on an introductory slide welcoming the students to the class.
4. Log in 10 to 15 minutes prior to the class, you can be on mute, but just let the students know you are there.
5. Record the class, put a reminder on your first slide.
6. Be prepared to talk students through setting up their mics and cameras.
7. Remind the students about the audio wizard for mic setup, familiarise yourself with this feature. Once mics are working ask students to mute them when they are not speaking. This prevents 'noise' in the classroom.
8. Sometimes audio feedback still persists. Try changing the audio settings in the Meeting menu. Select Preferences, Microphone and uncheck 'Use Enhanced Audio'.
9. Ask students to turn on their webcam, at least for the initial introductions.
10. Start the first class by asking everyone to introduce themselves one by one, or try an icebreaker activity!
11. Remember the Chat box. Put a reminder in your slides to check the Chat box every second slide or so, until it becomes a habit.
12. Create a friendly environment, allow students interact, create polls and other activities that will encourage student interaction.
13. In order to encourage student interaction, use the breakout feature and divide the class into smaller groups to complete short group activities.
14. Leave a few minutes at the end to allow for questions and to summarise the class.
15. Enjoy!

The Humanities Tutor Hub contains a number of resources that support online tutoring, one section is on Loop Connect - Online Classroom

In here you will find a number of resources that you can access for more guidance.

Reference List

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