



# Best Practices for ONLINE TEACHING

## BE PRESENT

**Be visibly present in both asynchronous and synchronous classes. Some ideas:**

- ▶ Students need to see and/or hear your name and face throughout the course
- ▶ Welcome students with an introductory video
- ▶ Record micro-videos on key course ideas
- ▶ Share photos in forum posts
- ▶ Post regular updates to the class and comment on discussion posts (not necessarily all of them!)
- ▶ Maintain consistent office hours
- ▶ Check participation logs and reach out to absent or disengaged students

## CREATE COMMUNITY

**Plan consistent opportunities for community building. Some ideas:**

- ▶ Enable informal online spaces for students to connect
- ▶ Encourage peer support with strategies like **3 Before Me**
- ▶ Vary activities and assignments between individual, pair, small group and full class work

## DEVELOP CLASS GROUP AGREEMENTS

**On the first day of class, dialogue with students to set expectations about their presence in the course and create a collective group agreement. Reminder to re-visit it throughout the course.**

**Determine:**

- ▶ How often and in what form should students participate;
- ▶ Best modes of communicating with classmates and instructors
- ▶ Define online etiquette
- ▶ Ways to respect cultural, racial, linguistic, gender, sexual and other differences among students
- ▶ Processes to deal with conflict or challenges in the class
- ▶ Share the agreement prominently and re-visit briefly throughout the course

## USE A VARIETY OF LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Use a mix of synchronous and asynchronous class activities. For example:

- ▶ Blend of asynchronous (forums, quizzes, reflections, digital tasks, recorded videos) and synchronous (group brainstorming, live sessions with captioning, breakout rooms) activities.
- ▶ Transition static content such as Word documents into interactive documents such as clickable PDFs, Moodle lessons, plans, or digital glossaries.
- ▶ Make synchronous content accessible asynchronously (through posting agendas, recordings, and/or summaries).

## PROVIDE STRUCTURE & DEADLINES

Online learning allows for more flexibility and independence in how and when students learn. While this can be an asset for some students, it can be a challenge for others. Help students by designing an explicit structure (including deadlines and/or flexible deadlines) for all class activities and assignments from start to finish. Adding a weekly checklist can further support student in navigating the course.

## GIVE + RECEIVE FEEDBACK

Provide feedback to students throughout the course, and give students the opportunity to provide feedback to you about what is working or not working for them in the course. This can take the form of: quick check-ins, assignment or discussion point feedback, group feedback, or completion of short quizzes or surveys. Let students know your response time for email communications and assignment feedback.

Where possible, develop authentic assessments that give students the opportunity to apply learning in real-world contexts, such as case studies, problem-based learning, experiential learning, peer to peer learning, etc.

## AIM FOR ACCESSIBILITY

**Students can face challenges when taking courses online. These can include technical restrictions, and difficulties navigating the course and completing activities. Developing accessible content and activities will aid accessibility for students, such as:**

- ▶ Offer high and low bandwidth course engagement options for students with different connectivity and technology capabilities.
- ▶ Design course content with the understanding that students may be accessing materials via phones or tablets and/or with limited access to high-speed internet.
- ▶ Use captioning, transcriptions, and pre-recorded audio/video.
- ▶ Minimize the number of fonts and font colours to improve readability.



- ▶ Be flexible and allow students to engage in a variety of ways.
- ▶ Use lower-stakes micro-assessments to gauge student learning, identify challenges and offer students feedback.
- ▶ Record short video summaries of core learning for students who may have to complete coursework in smaller windows of time.

## USE MICRO-ASSESSMENTS + VIDEOS

Micro-learning can increase engagement and student participation in an online course. Micro-Assessments can be a useful way to gauge students understanding of course content. You can use the Moodle quiz to create short multiple choice, true/false, or short answer assessments. You can also create micro-videos or audio snippets to teach students simple concepts or do demonstrations. Micro-videos can be helpful for students that do not have quiet study space or face challenges learning online as they do not need to schedule long hours to engage with a course; they can engage throughout the day when they have quiet moments.

## CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CUSTOMIZED LEARNING

Give students the opportunity to customize their learning through flexible and creative projects. You can design projects with a few options to make them more accessible and engaging. This could include different modes of delivery (web-based, video, written etc.) or flexibility in artistic mediums and presentation.

## BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT LEARNING TECHNOLOGY

Learning technology can support online learners with community building, comprehension, and authentic learning experiences. But it can also be a barrier to learning if it is difficult to access with low-bandwidth internet, does not have accessibility features, or does not contribute to the wider learning outcomes of the course. When selecting learning technology for assignments or activities reflect on the following questions.

- ▶ Is this technology accessible to students?
  - Is it available on low bandwidth?
  - Does it work with screen readers or have accessibility features?
  - Is it FIPPA compliant?
  - If it does not meet the above, is there a technology that students have already been exposed to at the university that could meet the needs of the assignment?
- ▶ What is the purpose of using this technology?
  - Does it contribute to my learning outcomes for the course or assignments?
  - Will students use this technology again in course work, in their career field or in other real-world situations?

