

INSTRUCTOR COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS ONLINE

INTRODUCTION

Instructor presence and communication with students in an online course is surprisingly important. The instructor presence online has been shown to:

- Provide valuable, expert guidance of the learning process
- Help keep students on track with the course
- Increase student persistence in the course
- Increase student's perceived learning
- Improve overall student satisfaction



(Jones, P., Kolloff, M., & Kolloff, F. (2008). Students' Perspectives on Humanizing and Establishing Teacher Presence in an Online Course. In K. McFerrin et al. (Eds.), Proceedings of Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education International Conference 2008 (pp. 460-465). Chesapeake, VA: AACE.)

CREATING A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

Humanizing a course can help students feel more comfortable and invested in the learning process. There are several simple things instructors can do to greet their students online and create a welcoming environment in the course. These include:

- Providing an introductory video or audio welcome
- Sending a welcome email or posting online announcement
- Conducting a synchronous online meeting
- Having students post pictures and profiles on class website
- Assigning students to smaller discussion or work groups
- Creating an online class lounge or discussion forum



What Are Some Types of Instructor Communication?

- Course logistics
- Content delivery
- Questions about content
- Moderation of discussions
- Feedback and assessment

KEY IDEAS FOR INSTRUCTOR COMMUNICATION

Online instructors are called upon to communicate a variety of different types of information to their students. It is important to select the right communication mode for the information being conveyed.

At the beginning of the course, it is important to set clear expectations for how students can expect to interact with you. Students benefit from regular communication and timely feedback on their progress throughout a course.

COMMUNICATION TOOLS FOR VARIOUS COURSE INFORMATION	
Course Logistics Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course homepage • Class email • Discussion board • Course overview video • Online announcements • Course calendar 	Content Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture videos • Podcasts • Readings • Interactive modules • Assignments • Activities • Live webcasts
Content Questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual student emails • Class emails • Live webcasts • Discussion boards • Online office hours • Video message to class • Video lecture tagging 	Student Feedback <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graded assignments and exams • Embedded questions in lectures • Individual emails • Discussion board posts • Peer assessment

FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS OF COMMUNICATION

As you offer your online course the first time, take note of what questions students have about the course design and logistics. This may help you improve your course website and streamline your course logistics communication in future offerings. If you can make the communication of logistics within the course happen more efficiently, you can devote more time to the other forms of communication about the actual course content.

Another thing to consider as you teach your course is how well the communication tools that you have selected work for their intended function. Many instructors find that their course communication with students improves as they make small refinements in future course iterations. By analytically observing your course in progress, you can be sure to catch those changes you can make to the communication to improve student learning and the course experience.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Ten Best Practices for Teaching Online: Quick Guide for New Online Faculty](#)
- [Hutchins, H. \(2003\). Instructional immediacy and the seven principles: strategies for facilitating online courses. *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*, VI \(III\).](#)