



Going Online: R(e)imagining Teaching and Learning webinar series

May – June 2020

Responses to webinar questions

Learning communities

Students are usually more successful when they feel part of a learning community and there are many ways of producing this effect in online classes.

Firstly, make sure your unit housekeeping is in place. This is especially important when there are no chance meetings where students can follow-up on confusions and problems. Be clear about when recordings might be posted, when assignments are due, when you will be online to answer queries and so on. Ask for feedback on the discussion board and you may find out many small problems that can be easily fixed (broken links, sound quality and so on). If you are taking questions in a live lecture which will be recorded, make sure you repeat them for the recording. Acknowledge the asynchronicity of contributions.

Secondly, try to have at least one synchronous event, even if a short one. At the start of the unit, it might be a short welcome and interactive introduction to the unit. In the pandemic, you might like to acknowledge that you're working from home, and some of the advantages (coffee?) and disadvantages (interruptions?). Consider a synchronous question and answer (Q & A) session.

Thirdly, be a familiar and friendly presence in your subject. Make a weekly 5-10 minute video where you talk about what will happen in the week's work. Students often appreciate the unscripted and informal nature of these videos. Include a space for feedback and questions, audio or text based. Post regularly to the discussion board, acknowledge student contributions, refer back to other parts of the online offering. Make sure you keep your online office hours.

It's important for students to feel free to talk to each other, not only to the teacher/s. Make sure you hand out some simple house rules on Netiquette before this starts. You might like to set up virtual chat rooms where students can work privately in small teams, perhaps linked to an assessment task.

You should definitely make use of the analytics in your online learning platform to monitor student engagement and contribution. Gentle follow-up of students who have not logged on or contributed often helps.

And finally, try to have a good send-off in the last class, where you acknowledge the work the class has done together. Talk about some of the high points. This is rewarding for everyone.

