ACE Your Online Teaching with Quality Course Delivery

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Ace Your Online Teaching with Quality Course Delivery

According to the Iowa Board of Regents Distance Education Strategic Plan, distance education should follow Quality Matters standards to assure alignment of practices and ensure that faculty and staff are highly trained in pedagogy and technology needs for effective distance education (Source).

Quality Matters includes pedagogy, assessment, and social presence as three of their seven competencies for their Teaching Online Certificate. We are all aware that pedagogy is the method and practice of teaching and assessment is the evaluation of student ability, but social presence is a bit of a newer concept having been most recently defined as salience, or the “state of being there”, in communication, particularly in today’s world that of online communication.

Social presence has become increasingly important in the realm of online learning where it influences student satisfaction, perceived learning, and the development of a community of learners (Lowenthal, 2009). Good social presence encourages learners to interact in a way that promotes their individual and collective learning (Garcia-O’Neill, 2016). It makes sense, then, that our online courses should include not just excellent teaching and assessing, but also salience.

In 2017, New Mexico State University Alamogordo created a set of online delivery standards to address the need for quality in not just the design of their online courses, but also in their delivery. These eight standards can be summed up in three areas of focus to show that one is an “ACE” online instructor.

Online instructors should demonstrate:

**Active Presence**

Students need to know that you are teaching this course live, not phoning it in with a course that you auto-programmed. Show them that you are teaching this course with current commentary, summaries of student posted information, or tips in the help forum.

**Clear Communication**

Provide constructive and supportive information to students, using the discussions as much as possible so that all students can learn from individual student questions. Encourage students to help one another, and provide them with multiple ways to connect with you.

**Effective Feedback**

Students need descriptive feedback that is timely and relevant to a goal. Use rubrics and automated responses on quizzes to facilitate giving them more detail about their performance. Ensure that formative assessments are scored before summative assessments are due.
Active Presence

- Post a video introduction.
  - Use Arc, Zoom, or your phone. Help students see that you are a real person.
- Have students introduce themselves, and reply to their posts. This builds community, especially when related to a course goal.
- Check your course on multiple days per week.
- Post a “live” weekly academic announcement to the whole class. Ideas:
  - Provide a helpful instructor tip.
  - Address a common question or misconception.
  - Make a current event connection.
  - Include a summary post in discussions.
- Give feedback on every assignment – or at least once per week if you have numerous submissions in a single week.
- Keep your grades current in Canvas. Scores should be posted weekly at a minimum.

Clear Communication

- Respond to email within 48 hours during regular academic calendar days.
- Use ISU email or Canvas inbox for all communications. Be consistent.
- Share your expectations.
  - Will you respond to email during weekends, holidays, or evening?
  - Do you have a virtual office?
  - How frequently will you check the course coffee shop discussion?
- Encourage students to help one another by posting in the coffee shop discussion.
  - When students answer one another, verify that the response is correct, or provide more accurate details.
- Remind students to contact you personally via email or phone with questions about grades.
- Consider making an individual connection with each student at least 2x per course – send a “nice work” or a “keep trying” email.

Effective Feedback

- Provide feedback within 1 week of due date.
  - Even if the feedback is that you are only ½ done with the grading, students will appreciate hearing from you.
- Provide descriptive feedback.
  - Rubrics are great for helping to give students more details about where they are in relation to the goal.
  - Quizzes can also be set to provide more detailed responses when using them for formative assessment.
- Use formative assessments to prepare students for summative assessments. Make sure that formative assessments are scored and returned before summative assessments are due.
- If you use non-Canvas resources, ensure that feedback is provided within Canvas.
- Consider giving points for course interaction. Students often equate points with importance.
- Reach out to struggling students.