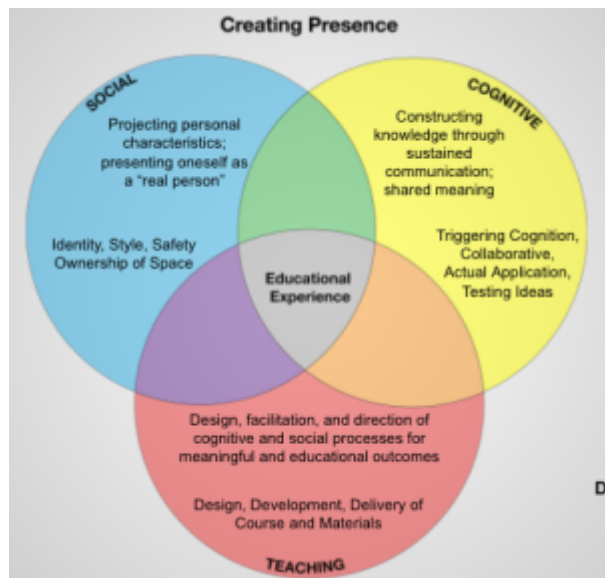


## Strategies for Promoting Teaching Presence in your Online Courses <sup>[1]</sup>



Office of Digital Education <sup>[2]</sup>

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Presence contributes greatly to creating meaningful and impactful learning experiences. This blog series will give you some tried-and-true strategies for building teaching, social, and cognitive presence in your classes. Also provided are some suggested approaches to addressing common challenges. These challenges and solutions have been collected from the literature surrounding the Community of Inquiry (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000), and from faculty contributions over the years as participants in professional development communities led by the Office of Digital Education. This post will wrap up the series by focusing on **teaching presence**.

### Teaching Presence

Teaching presence consists of instructional design and organization, facilitation of discourse, and direct instruction. It has often been described as “the glue that makes a community of

inquiry function” (Garrison, 2021).

## **The components of Teaching Presence are:**

*Instructional Design and Organization*

*Facilitation of Discourse*

*Direct Instruction*

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### **Instructional Design and Organization**

Instructional design and organization, “which involves the planning and design of the structure, processes, interaction and evaluation aspects of an online course”(ibid).

- Before class starts, consider your course design and structure online:
  - Consider how your assignments align to your course goals or outcomes
    - Intentional alignment creates a distinct purpose and path for students. Highlight these purposes to students, and reinforce the “why” for each assignment.
  - Group content logically with meaningful labels.
    - Use headers and labels to organize weekly content/activities in Canvas. This helps students better understand the expected workflow
    - Have someone who will give you honest feedback about the structure look through the course to make sure the organization is logical to other people
  - Use consistent organization in weekly content and activities
  - Create a linear workpath, moderating how/when students access content in your modules in Canvas
- Well organized and student-focused syllabus
  - Highlight the “must know” information up front
  - Set expectations
  - Syllabus scavenger hunt or quiz
  - Revisit relevant information from the syllabus at appropriate points during the semester
- Detailed, clear assignment and/or assessment prompts
  - Use naming conventions and title assignments to signpost work and set expectations
  - Purpose of the assignment from the student perspective (aka, why is this part of your learning experience)
  - Provide examples of student deliverables
  - Include additional resources that might be useful in completing projects
- When possible, use a flexible approach and be ready/willing to tweak strategies to better suit a current cohort
- Have as much of the course built as possible before the start of the semester to free up time for interactions with students and your facilitation and instruction of the course as the semester starts

**Challenge: Logistically administering a course**

- Make a plan
  - Build out static course elements in advance
  - Get feedback along the way
  - Walk a peer or colleague through your plan (or even your developed course) and ask them for feedback
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## Facilitation of discourse

Facilitation of discourse “is described as the means by which students engage in interacting about and building upon the information provided in the instructional materials” (ibid).

- Provide options for online (or via phone) office hours where students can speak to you one-on-one
- Be a presence in class discussions
  - Model good responses
  - Balance of being present without taking over
  - Assess needs of audience
  - Be willing to adjust strategies as the semester progresses
  - Ask thoughtful follow-up questions
  - Provide additional resources for students to follow identified interests
- Weekly introductions or overviews/Regular communications
  - Include information to help students navigate activities
  - Bridge concepts between modules and/or highlight important takeaways
  - Summarize any important key points arising from students discussions
  - Use to help paint a bigger picture and keep students looking at the course holistically
  - Consider if video and/or audio to help students connect with you as an instructor
- Use narrative to bring additional context to course topics
  - Annotate the weekly reading list with a quick note on why each reading is important
  - Be explicit about how topics are related and/or why they will be important for students as they develop their understanding of the topic
- Regular assignments and/or check ins to help students stay on track
  - Weekly assignments
  - Scaffolded projects
  - Standardize deadlines (even if they’re not hard deadlines)

***Challenge: Building teaching presence, creating connections with students, and coming across as a 'real person'***

- Humor!
  - Showing vulnerabilities as an instructor, and also as a person
  - Modeling the sense of community you’re trying to create
  - Welcome videos at the start of the semester, which outline how the online format will work, and emphasize that we are all in this “new normal” together (during COVID, specifically).
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## Direct Instruction

Direct instruction “is described as providing intellectual and scholarly leadership from a subject matter expert in order to diagnose comments for accurate understanding, inject sources of information, direct useful discussions, and scaffold learner knowledge to a higher level...”(ibid).

- Provide regular, timely feedback on student work
  - Multi-modal feedback (audio/video/written/rubrics)
  - Tie into self-evaluation and/or peer feedback when appropriate
- Practice reflective teaching by asking clarifying questions, responding to students needs/feedback, and making adjustments to your instructional approach as needed.
- Use a conversational tone to help establish connection with students
- Short lecture videos to dive deeper into important concepts
  - Consider if adding interactive features will help students process and retain information/explore a concept in more depth
  - Provide opportunities for students to comment or ask follow-up questions

### ***Challenge 1: Reading the room and being responsive to all students***

- Offer multiple routes for interacting with you
- Recruit students to help bring your attention to questions or side conversations
- Use polls or surveys to help collect feedback and make adjustments
- Ask your students how they’re doing/feeling about the course!
- Invite feedback at any point about any aspect of the course
- Set expectations for different routes of communication and make sure to follow through

### ***Challenge 2: Giving meaningful feedback, especially when forced with a large student audience***

- Make use of peer-to-peer feedback
- Use “highlight reel” feedback to identify broad strengths or areas for improvement for the whole group; encourage students to utilize office hours when they need more individual discussion
- Scaffold assignments to make feedback more incremental rather than needing to address all areas at one time

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## Works Cited/Additional Resources

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[presence](#) <sup>[5]</sup>, [teaching presence](#) <sup>[6]</sup>, [online learning](#) <sup>[7]</sup>

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