




Creating 'social presence' in online environments

Academic Practice, Trinity Teaching & Learning
RESOURCES



Enhancing Presence through Module Design

- Set and share clear learning outcomes.
- Set boundaries explicitly to manage expectations with email response times/office hours.
- Does your Blackboard layout make 'sense' to students? What does it look like in student view?
- Communicate your expectations for student participation in tasks and activities.
- Select content effectively: don't overload students with too many resources at once.
- In remote/online learning students ask more frequently for technical support. Set expectations about what you can and can't answer.

Why bother thinking about 'presence' when teaching in remote/online contexts?

- Without the surroundings of the university, learning can be lonely. Social presence can alleviate this.
- Lecturer presence online does not happen as organically: it takes planning.
- Gauging 'impact' of live teaching is harder when you/your students can't read feedback cues. You need to make 'virtual' interactions more visible.


Encouraging dialogue

- Prepare 'rich' prompts and open questions in advance for discussion boards/whiteboards/tutorials.
- Encourage 'thinking out loud' on discussion boards etc.
- Moderate with a light touch: don't respond to every post on a board.

The extent to which members of an online community perceive each other to be "real" and feel [a] connection to one another.

Cobb, S. Social presence and online learning: A current view from a research perspective. *Journal of Interactive Online Learning*, 8(3), 241-254.

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Humanising interactions

- Use early 'live' time to welcome students to a module.
- Build trust with and between learners: model and require rich introductions and icebreakers.
- Think about using less formal, more casual language than you would in face-to-face lectures.
- Encourage dialogue.

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