Establish Expectations for Your Teaching Presence

The most important aspect of any student's learning is you, the instructor. Students look for you to be involved in discussions, respond to questions, provide feedback and encouragement, and reach out when you notice they may need additional assistance. This does not mean that you need to be online 24/7. Establishing expectations and routines around your online time can help students feel more supported and engaged in your course.

- *Schedule your online time.* Establish a regular schedule for when you will log into the course.
- *Be available at high-traffic times.* Students will most likely be online around the times that discussion posts and assignments are due. Scheduling your time online around students' high-traffic times can ensure that students are able to receive support when they need it most.
- *Communicate your availability.* Let students know when you plan to be online or checking in on their progress. For example, letting them know that you will be online between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. and again between 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. will help to manage their expectations for receiving a response to emails. Consider setting up an automatic reply for the hours you are not online. This reply might suggest that students post their question to the question-and-answer forum, see if others have already posted or replied to the same question, or see if other classmates are able to answer their question.
- *Provide a response to student inquiries within 24 hours.* Because online learners must manage their time carefully, timely instructor responses to emails or questions posed in the discussion forums are especially important to them. If you cannot provide a detailed response within 24 hours, consider responding to the student to simply let them know when a more detailed response will be provided.
- *Provide timely and meaningful feedback on student work.* Students are usually anxious to receive feedback on their work, so setting and meeting expectations for when they can expect feedback will help them to manage their expectations. To make grading a bit more manageable, set due dates for times when you are available to provide feedback. If you are teaching multiple courses, consider staggering due dates to allow time for grading.