

# Questions & Answers

## Effective Online Instruction: *Welcoming Students to Your Online Environment*

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Welcoming Students to your Online Environment with experts [Flower Darby](#), [Kevin Gannon](#), [Michael Wesch](#). Moderated by [Carmen Macharaschwili](#), regional academic director at ACUE.

**Webinar description:** Learn practices to effectively welcome students to your online course in ways that support them and let them know that you are committed to their continued success, including the usage of specific methods like video, Q&A and social forums, as well as effective online communication techniques.

This document is a compilation of questions that were posed during the webinar, but for which time didn't allow for response. This Q&A was compiled by the ACUE academic team, in collaboration with the expert participants listed above.

### A Note from the Moderator

My ACUE colleagues and I are grateful to have been able to provide some immediate support to faculty and institutions this spring, including development of a free [Online Teaching Toolkit](#) and recent launch of a free webinar series on [Effective Online Instruction](#). Our partnerships with higher education leaders, associations and experts made these collaborations possible.

Top of mind for ACUE over the past few weeks has been preparing for the coming months in which institutions may not have in-person classes. At a minimum, institutions need to be well-prepared to deliver online as a contingency—and many institutions don't have the internal resources to prepare faculty at meaningful scale for online teaching.

Last year, ACUE began development of a course in [Effective Online Teaching Practices](#). Never did we think that this program would have the urgency it does today, and never has ACUE felt a greater sense of responsibility to help the nation's faculty and students can succeed. After months of development, I can share that our new course is now available for institutions like yours to launch as soon as June.

In the meantime, if you are struggling with the question—am I doing this well? I recommend that you read the following article: <https://anygoodthing.com/2020/03/12/please-do-a-bad-job-of-putting-your-courses-online/>

## Question: What are some good questions to ask in order to get to know your online learners?

In our webinar, **Kevin Gannon** promised to share a link to the survey that he uses to “check in” with his students and gain an understanding of their situation. For a copy, see this link:

<https://forms.gle/KWTGjGTtoTqY2hCf7>. Please feel free to copy/remix/use however you wish.

### Reply from Flower:

Here are two favorites of mine:

1. Invite students to share any challenges they’re currently living with that may impact their ability to be successful. This can be optional/voluntary. Helps instructors understand more about other concerns students have and hopefully be more willing to be flexible as they work one-on-one with students who need different solutions.
2. Ask students to set two goals for their learning or engagement in the class, then ask them to identify two action steps they will take to reach their goals. This helps students take responsibility for their learning. Depending on class size, instructors could follow up with students who are falling behind. Or ask the whole class to revisit their goals and plans 3 or 4 weeks later to see how they’re doing and what they might want to do differently.

## Can I get proof of attending this webinar?

Many people asked if there was a certification or proof of attendance at this webinar to document their professional development time. For documentation, we recommend that you check your email inbox for a follow up email from ACUE on Friday morning, April 3, 2020. This email message can serve as your documentation of attending the webinar.

## Synchronous v. Asynchronous Learning

There were many questions about use of asynchronous learning vs. synchronous learning. First, to define the terms, see the following link from EDUCASE:

<https://er.educause.edu/articles/2008/11/asynchronous-and-synchronous-elearning>

A related question: Please comment on the different challenges faced in synchronous vs asynchronous modes? Some of my colleagues prefer the synchronous videoconference based class and other the fully asynchronous blackboard based teaching.

### Reply from Mike:

Go asynchronous. So much unnecessary struggle is going into creating the synchronous classroom experience. But I think there may be good reasons for the hesitation to go asynchronous. Maybe there are some classes/disciplines that are just unimaginable in an asynchronous format? I would love to know more about what people are teaching when they ask these questions.

## Reply from Flower:

General tips for building community in asynchronous online classes

- Create an introduction discussion forum; ask students to share a little about themselves, name, where they're from/are now, a hobby or leisure activity they enjoy, something related to the class content (goals for the class? something they're nervous or excited about?), picture of themselves or a pet, favorite vista, etc.
- Ask students to post a gif, emoji or a meme that shows how they're doing that day/what's on their mind/how they feel about an assignment or task
- Respond to students by name in the discussion forum and direct students to each other's posts
- Create study buddies or trios: pair up students manually or using the LMS group tool; have them exchange mobile numbers, WhatsApp contact info, etc., give them things to interact on each week; have each student submit a written or recorded reflection on what they learned from interacting with their buddy(ies) that week for points.
- Use Remind.com to text reminders to students without exchanging personal numbers.

Synchronous (not generally recommended, but if this is the best option): I'm sending a resource provided by Christine Harrington (to be included in the Additional Resources links) that includes some simple but effective ways to engage students during a synchronous session. In my experience, it's helpful to ask for a simple action or response every 4-7 minutes, including asking for a hands-raised, thumbs up or thumbs down (options in zoom); asking a question out loud and asking for a response in the chat box; asking a poll question using a tool in the platform or provide a link to a Google form, then pull up results using screen share; asking students to take notes using a guided notes worksheet provided ahead of time, then they submit that document. Also ask for a summary reflection: bulleted list of key takeaways, concept map, table or chart students can fill in etc.

## Reply from ACUE/Carmen:

Please note that [upcoming webinar](#) topics that will cover some of these questions: "Planning and Facilitating Quality Discussions," "Recording Effective Microlectures," and "Engaging Students in Reading and Microlectures"

**Mike can you later share some of your assignments?**

## Reply from Mike:

They are all available at [anth101.com](http://anth101.com)

## More Resources from Mike:

Animation software that's easy...

Answer: PowerPoint is actually pretty easy to make into a good animation software. Check out this class on Skillshare (Free for 30 days): <https://www.skillshare.com/classes/Create-Infographic-Video-with-Powerpoint/601665416>

Closed Captioning:

The fastest way is to use an automatic closed captioning service. There are a lot of free options, including:

- Upload to YouTube as an unlisted video. YouTube will try to provide a transcript which you can then edit.
- Just talk with a Google Doc open with Voice-Typing turned on.
- I also really like <http://closedcaptioncreator.com/>

## Questions about Inclusion

There were many questions about access and inclusion. For example:

- Beyond the welcoming piece, how do you address inclusion in an classroom environment that some of our students with learning challenges did not signed up for?
- Also I am very concerned about the issue of closed captioning...how do you handle that?
- What if I want or need to read what you are saying?

### Reply from Mike:

I strongly recommend making all of the week's materials available in a single download. I like to provide both an audio file and a pdf that includes all of the materials in one download. Students who have limited internet access can get the whole week in one click.

## Preparation and Online Presence

A few questions on this topic.

1. How much time does it take to prepare for an online lecture, in comparison to a similar one with physical presence?

### Reply from Mike:

Both way too long and no time at all. The "no time at all" version is to find a good documentary, video, podcast or other resource that already covers the same ground and just post it for learning and discussion. The "way too long" version is when you try to make your own. There are so many possibilities when making a video that it can easily become overwhelming and make you feel like you have to make an epic Netflix-quality documentary on the topic. Personally, I like to simply find good material for the students to watch or listen to and then make 1 "micro-lecture" video providing an overview of the material showing how they all fit together and why they are meaningful for the class.

2. I was wondering if we might get some input from the speakers on how students can overcome some of the challenges (technical but also feeling comfortable) of presenting through a virtual platform, as in a public speaking course.

### Reply from Mike:

Encourage students to:

- connect not perform
  - find their why and speak from that space
  - look at their classmates and not the camera (if possible, they can put the camera right in front of a picture of their classmates so it looks like they are looking at the camera)
3. I have created several videos and tutorials online (many hours) and am always thinking about ways to reuse them. Can you create a reusable introductory videos or should they be tailored for each class every semester?

### Reply from Flower:

A basic intro video can be reused. Consider adding a personal greeting for each new semester, can be 30 seconds, just say hi to the new group and post 'at the front door' of the class as I think Mike said.

## Any specific techniques/recommendations for curating such online discussion platforms?

**Reply from Flower:** Yes! We will be discussing this topic on Tuesday, April 14. Please join me for [Effective Online Instruction: Planning and Facilitating Quality Discussions](#) and/or check out the video recording and resources on this page if you cannot attend the live session. [Register here](#)

## Can you name some of the things you can do online that can't be done in an in-person classroom?

### Reply from Mike:

Students and teachers can be anywhere and share knowledge and experience from those places. For example, TAs for my online cultural anthropology class receive travel-abroad scholarships and run discussions and model the assignments from those places. They have worked from every continent except Antarctica. I recently went to Papua New Guinea, Vietnam, Thailand, and India to "teach" my class.

"Lectures" can be a mix of high-quality curated materials (videos, podcasts, etc.) that can be turned into a mobile friendly audio file that students can listen to while they commute, work, or work-out (etc.)

Asynchronous discussion allows for more thoughtful replies from more students. (Sometimes you don't hear from as many people in an in-person class)

In a true online course you get a greater diversity of students ... more students of different ages and from different backgrounds - many of them working in interesting careers or with interesting experiences that lead them to need to take courses online.

## Remote vs. Online teaching

### Reply from Mike:

Answer: Frankly, I worry that "remote" teaching is just an attempt to do classroom teaching remotely, rather than simply embracing the differences of the online environment. I worry that people are setting themselves up for a tough conclusion to the semester and that they could avoid a lot of pain and struggle by doing the following:

1. Do not expect students to show up 2 or 3 times per week on Zoom.
2. Do not expect yourself to prepare 2 or 3 video lectures per week. Curate, don't create.
3. Less is more.

A good minimalist weekly schedule might just do 4 things:

1. Each week, just put together 1 to 3 hours of high-quality content made by other people (videos, podcasts, books, articles).
2. Host an optional Zoom meeting in which you discuss why you chose the content and why it is exciting and interesting.
3. Have an asynchronous discussion on key ideas.
4. Consider a second optional Zoom meeting to discuss the big ideas that came up in discussion.

## Any suggestions or tips to handle nursing clinicals or science with labs using online teaching?

Here is a spreadsheet for resources for online "labs" (answer given in the live webinar Q&A)

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/18iVSleOqKij58xcR8dYJSrYvzZ4X1UGLWhl3brRzCM/htmlview#gid=0>

## Student Engagement

### Reply from Flower:

I always have a quiz or short written/recorded reflection for welcome and other non-course-content materials if I really want students to watch or read these things. Assign points for everything you want students to do.

### Reply from Carmen/ACUE:

There were a lot of questions about assessment and concerns about academic dishonesty. Please feel free to weigh in your replies to this comment. We will discuss some of these topics in our [Webinar Engaging Students in Readings and Micro-Lectures](#)