

3 EVIDENCE-BASED TIPS TO INCREASE YOUR REMOTE TEACHING PRESENCE

As we face another semester of remote teaching, we need to find meaningful ways to connect with our students and continue to facilitate their learning, despite being physically apart from them. Research indicates that *teaching presence* has an impact on students' success and satisfaction in online courses.^{1,2}

In the Student Online Learning Experience (SOLE) survey conducted in summer 2020³, SFU students highlighted what was most important to them in remote courses:

- Instructors responding to emails within a few days.
- Receiving regular feedback about how well they're learning the course material.
- Having opportunities to provide feedback about the course during the semester.

Also of note: Of FENV students surveyed (n = 169), only 58% reported that they understood how to participate in class activities for all their courses.

The results of the SOLE survey underscore the need to expand our definition of teaching presence in the remote teaching and learning environment.

TIP 1: GO BEYOND SPEAKING PRESENCE

Students perceive teaching presence to be more than just your recorded or synchronous lectures. In remote courses, you demonstrate your presence through any kind of communication that you have with students^{1,2}. Consider these suggestions:

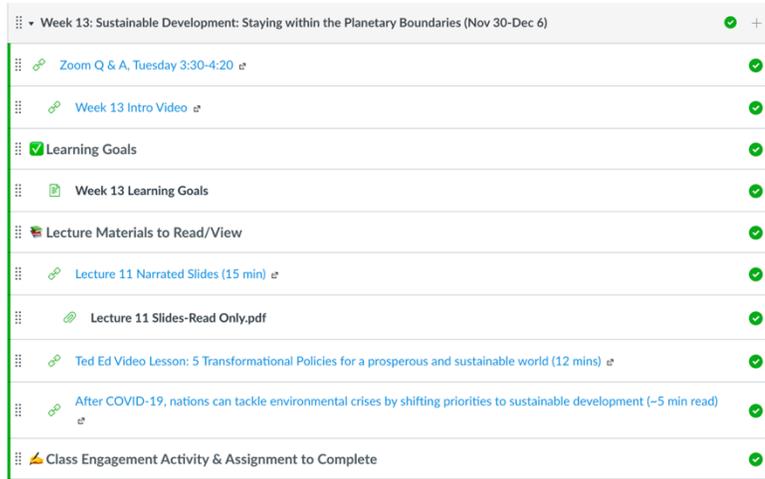
- On or before the first week of class, send students a **Welcome Announcement** through Canvas, orienting them to the course Canvas site, the syllabus, and course expectations.
- Make your **email policy** clear on your syllabus and adhere to it; i.e. that you will check your emails only once a day; will respond within 24-48 hours, etc.
- Build a **dedicated discussion board on Canvas** for Q & A that you (or your TAs) check and respond to once daily. If students regularly use and read this board, it will reduce the number of emails you receive.
- Send a **weekly Announcement** through Canvas, orienting students to what they have coming up this week. Schedule it to post at the same time every week (use the "delay post" feature to do this).
- Set **weekly office hours on Zoom** (or whichever platform you're using), and be willing to make alternate appointments with students who cannot attend those times.

TIP 2: BE CLEAR AND ORGANIZED

Your teaching presence extends to how well your course is organized². For students to succeed in your class, they must know how to navigate your Canvas site to find the information they need, know what they need to do from week to week, and understand your expectations. To achieve this:

- Use **Modules** to organize lecture materials. Separate the Module with **Text Headers** into important parts (e.g. Lecture Resources; Readings; Assignments Due). Week to week works well, or if your course has clear sections/topics, make a Module for each section.

Here's an example of how a Module can look:



- Build (or have your TA build) an **FAQ Page** in Canvas for particular assignments. Have a dedicated Module where these and assignment instructions are housed.

TIP 3: GIVE (AND GET) FEEDBACK

- Build in **low-stakes assignments** on which students can get regular feedback (from you or your TAs) on their understanding of course material.
- Have your TAs compile **Common Errors and Feedback** on assignments, and post them as **Pages** to the Assignments Module (especially helpful in large classes where it is impractical to give feedback to every student individually).
- Give students opportunities to give you feedback about how the course is going for them. See Tip Sheet #2 (<https://www.sfu.ca/fenv/covid-19/remote-learning-resources.html>) for suggestions on running and addressing **mid-semester surveys**.

**QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS? CONTACT YOUR FACULTY TEACHING FELLOW,
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Tips adapted from Youki Terada (2020): <https://www.edutopia.org>

¹Wise, A., Chang, J., Duffy, T., & del Valle, R. (2004). The effects of teacher social presence on student satisfaction, engagement, and learning. *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 31(3), 247-271.

²Sheridan, K., & Kelly, M. (2010). The indicators of instructor presence that are important to students in online courses. *Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, 6(4).

³SOLE survey results: <https://www.sfu.ca/vpacademic/learnteach/announcements/sole-survey.html>