

Social Presence



What is Social Presence?

Both educators and students can feel isolated when teaching and learning online. Establishing a sense of a learning community is important to help overcome this sense of isolation, and enables meaningful and in-depth interactions where learning experiences can be shared. In order to build a learning community, it is important that both educators and students establish a social presence in the online course. Social presence is generally considered to be the ability of the individual to project themselves as a 'real person' in the online environment. The idea of online educator and student presence was discussed extensively within the Community of Inquiry (CoI) model, as put forward by Garrison, Anderson and Archer (1999). Students are more likely to be satisfied with their online courses when they get to 'know' their educator, and are more likely to engage in online interactions when their educator is regularly present in the course. In the context of online education, social presence promotes student to student and student to educator relationships that, hitherto, required physical classrooms.

How can Social presence be achieved?

It is important to establish social presence at the beginning of the course and to maintain this presence throughout the course. This can be achieved by you, the online educator, in several ways. Here are some best practice tips.



Getting social presence off the ground

Post a short welcoming introduction video, audio or text that includes a brief bio and a snippet of personal information. If using text or audio, post a picture of yourself.

Ask students to post a similar message about themselves and their desires/expectations of the course.

Respond to the students initial posts as soon as is immediately possible and include individualised feedback. Let them know you have read/listened to their post and that you care about them and their requirements.

Run an icebreaker activity prior to the first teaching and learning activity that will encourage student to student interaction, ensure everyone gets involved.

Ask the students how they are getting on, have they found everything and have they been able to figure out the technology

Maintaining Social presence

Establish, and agree with your students, the response times for any queries and/or postings, and stick to them.

Get to 'know' your students by listening to what they have to say both in online classes and online interactions such as discussion forums or emails. Get to know the names of the students and use them in online classes.

Make sure your students get to 'know' you by responding to them with individual personalised feedback that encourages them.

Regularly check if your students are on track and gently probe those who are in difficulty.

Organise an online collaborative activity and engage with each group, use verbal as well as textual communication.

Social Media Tools

Social media can be used to connect with your students, in addition to the tools available on your institutions VLE. The following tools are aligned with [DCU ABC to VLE app wheel](#).

Twitter



- A Twitter chat is a public Twitter conversation around one unique hashtag. This hashtag allows you to follow the discussion and participate in it. Twitter chats are usually recurring and on specific topics to regularly connect people with these interests.

Flickr



- Flickr is a photo sharing platform and social network where users upload photos for others to see. Students can create and share individual images or entire collection of images using Flickr

Slack



- Slack is a cloud based tool purposely designed for collaboration that is built for discussion based activities. It can facilitate persistent chat rooms (channels) organized by topic, private groups, and direct messaging. Content, including files, conversations, and people, is all searchable within Slack.

LinkedIn



- LinkedIn has two main ways to facilitate discussions; the commenting feature on LinkedIn posts and the discussion groups. The amount of expertise that is willingly shared via LinkedIn discussion groups is excellent and literally endless when it comes to topics covered by the discussion groups.

Instagram



- Instagram is a photo and video sharing social networking service. Use this to engage with students through the media of pictures. Student work can be showcased, educational memories recorded and unique projects created.

Further Resources:

Faculty Focus : [Tips for building social presence in your online class](https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/online-education/tips-for-building-social-presence-in-your-online-class/) (<https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/online-education/tips-for-building-social-presence-in-your-online-class/>)

eLearning industry: [Social presence in online learning: 7 Things Instructional Designers Can Do To Improve It](https://elearningindustry.com/social-presence-in-online-learning-7-things-instructional-designers-can-improve) (<https://elearningindustry.com/social-presence-in-online-learning-7-things-instructional-designers-can-improve>)

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