

## Online Teaching Quality: Being Present in Your Online Course

**Quality Indicator 4.2** ([Stearns Center Online Quality Checklist](#)): *The instructor checks on the course regularly, per departmental standards. The instructor participates in the course and engages with students.*

Presence in your online course is essential to establish your role & relationship with your students, but doesn't mean that you need to be available 24/7. Throughout an online course, your presence and engagement are critical for effective course management, learner success, and overall satisfaction. It is essential that instructors be active and visible throughout the semester to maintain engagement. In this issue of Online Teaching Newsletter, we share some strategies for how you can be present and visible to students in your online course.

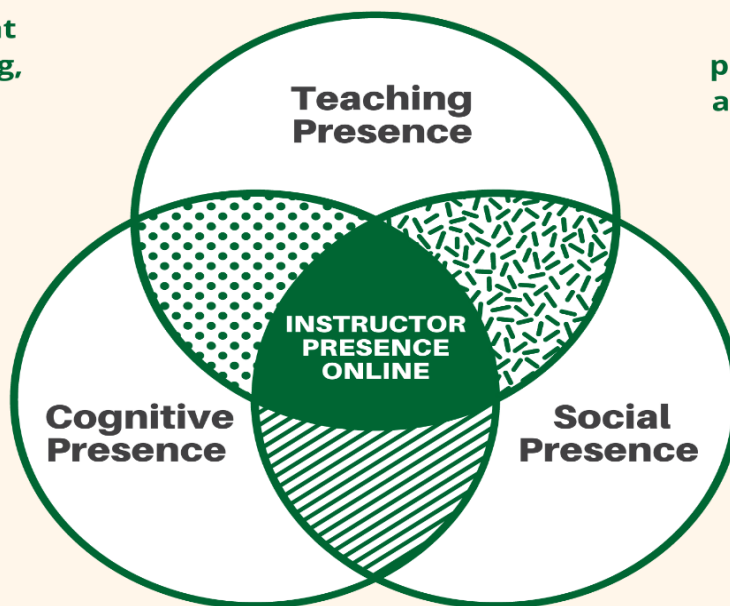
In research, (e.g., [Garrison et al. 2000](#); [Beck, 2015](#)) presence is described three different dimensions: **Teaching Presence**, **Cognitive Presence**, and **Social Presence**. Your role as instructor incorporates all of these to show students that you are right there with them, setting the climate, selecting content, and providing guidance to support their learning. Work to find balance among these dimensions to maintain a frequent, visible, and active presence in your online classroom. And, when in doubt, be sure to leave some *bread crumbs* in your course to help maintain your visibility: leave a comment, answer a question, or post an announcement so your students can see that you're also engaged in their learning.

### How are You Present in Your Online Course?

How do you present content in engaging, effective and focused ways?

How do you communicate expectations, and promote student success?

How do your students actively learn & reflect on their learning?



How do you provide frequent and constructive feedback and guidance?

How do you regularly communicate with your students?

How do you add a "human dimension" to your online course?

*Through the different dimensions of instructor presence, make sure that your students see that you are there to support their online learning experience.*

## Strategies for Instructor Presence in Your Online Course

Remember, instructor presence in your online course does not mean that you must be always logged into your course. Set up a regular schedule for when students can expect that you will be communicating and interacting with them. Whenever you check your online course, always leave some evidence to your class that you've been there, such as an announcement or posting. Keep students updated about assignments and grading with regular announcements. It's best to check your online course daily or even more often, particularly when covering challenging content or when major assignments are due.

By planning effective and efficient strategies for your presence, you can balance your teaching presence (*i.e.*, instructor's persona, direct instruction, and teaching style); cognitive presence (*i.e.*, how the instructor guides students through the learning process); and social presence (*i.e.*, how the instructor creates an online learning community) in your online course.

Please see some of our examples of strategies and best practices for creating instructor presence through your teaching presence, cognitive presence, and social presence listed below.

| Teaching Presence  | Cognitive Presence   | Social Presence   |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be present in your course, keeping your postings to a regular, predictable schedule, so that students know that you are there with them.</li> <li>• Be visible and active in the instruction of the online course, <i>e.g.</i>, record &amp; post audio, video, and media; contribute to discussion boards; promptly answer e-mails; provide frequent class and individual feedback.</li> <li>• Communicate and post regular announcements which provide your students with course updates, notifications, as well as encouragement.</li> <li>• Ask students for their informal feedback throughout the course, and act upon their feedback to improve their online learning experience.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create, guide, and facilitate the learning process for your students through transparent course &amp; assignment design.</li> <li>• Use a mix of large group, small group, and individual activities and assignments in your online course..</li> <li>• Include optional synchronous sessions to meet in real time.</li> <li>• Prepare discussion prompts that invite thoughtful responses, questions, discussions, and reflections.</li> <li>• Give students opportunity to check their knowledge and learning through self-graded quizzes, self-assessments, and/or reflective journals.</li> <li>• Plan an inclusive classroom in design, engagement, and assessment.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence starts with authenticity. Post your introduction to the course, sharing things about yourself, <i>e.g.</i>, bio, photo, and why you enjoy your discipline and teaching.</li> <li>• Start off course with icebreaker activity for students to get to know each other, and also to get to know you as instructor.</li> <li>• Share your own personal stories and experiences in order to build social and emotional connections with your students in the course.</li> <li>• Create a supportive online course community, directing Mason resources for student success (<i>e.g.</i>, Libraries, Learning Services, ATI).</li> <li>• Provide encouragement to your students, showing compassion and pedagogies of care..</li> </ul> |

### Contact Us!

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