

## Inclusive & Equitable Teaching Online: Supporting Your Students

Mason has one of the most diverse student populations in the nation, and our online students reflect this diversity as well. Students enroll in online courses for many reasons. They seek flexibility, specific programs, cost, and convenience in order to balance their studies, work, and families. For inclusive & equitable teaching, it's essential that you get to know your students and recognize the guidance and support they need to be successful online learners.

In our [“Getting Started”](#) newsletter issue, we shared strategies for getting to know your students and how to build quality relationships for learning. Here we will consider how to meet and support the learning needs of your online students. That’s the goal of equitable teaching -- to make sure every student has the support they need to be successful learners. In this issue, we’ll focus on needs of **contemporary students** and **first-generation students**, groups who now represent the “new normal”, *i.e.*, the majority of postsecondary students in higher education, particularly online.

### WHO ARE CONTEMPORARY STUDENTS & FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS?



#### CONTEMPORARY STUDENTS

Formerly known as "non-traditional students", Contemporary Students today represent the majority of post-secondary students, including those in online education. They bring their diverse life experiences to the Mason community.

Contemporary students include students 25+ years of age, working professionals, active-duty military or veterans, parents of dependent children, etc. Contemporary students may face challenges to balance their studies with other priorities and responsibilities in their lives.



#### FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS

"First-Gen" Students are students whose parents did not attend college or complete a post-secondary degree. First-Gen students are often the first in their families to attend college or university.

First-Gen students may face challenges navigating higher education, *e.g.*, understanding policies, procedures, jargon, and expectations. They also may need guidance about how to access university resources, including student support services.

#### ALSO RECOGNIZE THAT

a student's identity is not limited to a single group or dimension; each student has multiple identities, all of which intersect and together affect online learning readiness and success. For example, an individual student may identify as a contemporary student, a first-gen student, a multi-lingual learner, and as well as a member of underrepresented or minoritized student population.



We need to create inclusive & equitable academic online environments that allow all online students including contemporary & first-gen students the flexibility, guidance, and support to succeed.

[Use this link to view the infographic online](#)

Also Learn More About  
[Contemporary Students](#) | [First-Generation Students](#)

## What Are Needs of Contemporary & First-Gen Online Students?

### What can you do to support contemporary and first-gen online students?

- **Review:** Use the Table (below) to review their needs -- as individual learners, specific needs in the online course, and their needs for overall academic success.
- **Reflect:** Reflect on what you can do to address these needs and support your online students, including contemporary & first-gen students.
- **Plan:** Download the Planning Worksheet (from the link found below the table) which will provide you with examples of online teaching practices you can use to address their needs.

Support Their Individual Needs as Learners	Support Their Needs in the Online Course	Support Their Academic Success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To feel respected, acknowledged, heard and valued</li> <li>• To have flexibility in courses, assignments and due dates</li> <li>• To be active partners with instructors and classmates in their learning</li> <li>• To feel included; to have a sense of belonging &amp; feel part of a learning community</li> <li>• To have opportunities to ask questions without judgment</li> <li>• To learn in a supportive atmosphere which promotes health &amp; well-being</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To learn from accessible, engaging and relevant content and resources</li> <li>• To be taught by instructors who are present and responsive online</li> <li>• To complete assignments &amp; assessments which relate to the real world</li> <li>• To become self-directed learners, tracking their own learning progress</li> <li>• To share and apply their knowledge and prior experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To seek guidance &amp; support of instructors, advisers, academic coaches, tutors, and mentors</li> <li>• To access <b>Mason online student resources</b> to strengthen academic skills</li> <li>• To feel welcome to participate in the <b>Mason community</b></li> </ul>

**Learn Examples of Practices for Supporting Online Learners!**  
**[Click to Download Planning Worksheet](#)**

#### Contact Us!

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