

Faculty Communication & Student Engagement Framework

Supporting Effective Communication in Online Learning Environments

Purpose

This framework was developed to support educators in creating consistent, supportive, and student-centered communication practices within online and hybrid learning environments. The goal is to improve student engagement, reduce learner isolation, encourage persistence, and foster clear instructional communication throughout the academic term.

Core Communication Principles

1. Establish Instructor Presence Early

Students are more likely to engage and persist when instructors create a visible and supportive presence at the beginning of a course.

Recommended Practices

- Send a welcome announcement before the course begins
 - Introduce communication expectations clearly
 - Provide a short instructor introduction video
 - Share office hour or support availability information
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2. Maintain Consistent Weekly Communication

Predictable communication structures help students remain organized and engaged.

Recommended Weekly Communication Elements

- Weekly overview announcement
- Key learning objectives
- Upcoming deadlines and pacing reminders
- Encouragement and motivational messaging

- Clarification of commonly missed concepts or questions
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3. Use Supportive Outreach Strategies

Early outreach can improve student persistence and reduce disengagement.

Suggested Outreach Indicators

- Missed assignments
- Lack of login activity
- Incomplete participation
- Patterns of confusion or frustration

Recommended Outreach Practices

- Use supportive, non-punitive language
 - Offer specific next steps
 - Encourage communication and help-seeking
 - Connect students with available resources
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Student Engagement Support Strategies

Encourage Active Participation

- Use discussion prompts that encourage reflection and connection
 - Incorporate collaborative learning opportunities
 - Provide opportunities for low-stakes participation
 - Use interactive tools to support engagement
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Reduce Cognitive Overload

- Chunk instructions into smaller steps
 - Use visual organization and consistent formatting
 - Provide models and examples when possible
 - Clarify priorities and due dates
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Promote Belonging & Motivation

Students engage more effectively when they feel connected and supported.

Recommended Practices

- Acknowledge student effort and progress
 - Encourage growth mindset language
 - Normalize help-seeking behaviors
 - Foster respectful and inclusive communication
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Faculty Reflection Questions

Educators may consider:

- Are communication expectations clear and consistent?
 - Do students know how to seek support?
 - Is outreach proactive or reactive?
 - Are instructional messages supportive and actionable?
 - Do communication practices promote student confidence and engagement?
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Areas of Focus

This framework supports:

- Faculty coaching and professional learning
 - Student engagement initiatives
 - Online and hybrid teaching practices
 - Instructional communication strategies
 - Faculty onboarding and support
 - Student persistence and success efforts
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Sample professional learning resource developed to support instructional communication and student engagement practices in online learning environments.