

Online Teaching Competencies

and the Community of Inquiry (COI) Model

“An educational community of inquiry is a group of individuals who collaboratively engage in purposeful critical discourse and reflection to construct personal meaning and confirm mutual understanding.

The Community of Inquiry theoretical framework represents a process of creating a deep and meaningful (collaborative-constructivist) learning experience through the development of three interdependent elements – social, cognitive and teaching presence.”¹

Faculty who teach successful online or hybrid classes have: Teaching Presence, Cognitive Presence, and Social Presence. Faculty accomplish these three presences via the following competencies.

Teaching Presence

The following skills support the development of a teaching presence in an online course. Teaching presence includes designing and administering learning activities, establishing and maintaining an active learning community, and providing direct instruction.

Faculty develop teaching presence by:

1. Making students aware of how to be successful in the course.
2. Communicating high expectations.
3. Modeling higher order critical thinking.
4. Leveraging and sharing expertise.
5. Serving multiple roles in the course (e.g., instructor, facilitator, coach, collaborator, co-participant, observer).
6. Using announcements to maintain a presence in the course.
7. Participating in discussions to maintain a presence in the course.
8. Checking in on the course at least every other day to prevent small problems from becoming large ones.
9. Monitoring student activity to ensure students are on a path to successful achievement of course learning outcomes.
10. Intervening when monitoring data indicate students are at risk for failure.
11. Adjusting course instruction as needed to improve student learning outcomes.
12. Using organizational strategies (e.g., timelines, calendars) to encourage student success.
13. Using the gradebook effectively.
14. Providing timely feedback to students.

¹ Garrison, D. R., Anderson, T., & Archer, W. (2000). Critical inquiry in a text-based environment: Computer conferencing in higher education model. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 2(2-3), 87-105.

Cognitive Presence

The following skills support the development of a cognitive presence in an online course. Cognitive presence is the extent to which learners are able to construct and confirm meaning through sustained reflection and discourse.

Faculty develop cognitive presence by:

1. Incorporating students' prior knowledge, interests, and goals with the course content.
2. Tailoring instruction to meet the diverse learning needs of students.
3. Ensuring the accessibility of all online content in the course.
4. Maintaining proper pacing of the course to allow adequate time for reading, practice, and assignments.
5. Using questioning effectively to promote meaningful learning outcomes.
6. Evaluating the effectiveness of the instruction during the course by soliciting student feedback.
7. Using appropriate technology and innovative approaches to help students achieve course learning outcomes.
8. Providing opportunities for students to get help with course work virtually (e.g., WebEx, phone, Skype).
9. Encouraging and developing critical thinking skills.

Social Presence

The following skills support the development of a social presence in an online course. Social presence includes the ability of learners to project themselves socially and affectively into a community of inquiry.

Faculty develop social presence by:

1. Fostering the formation of learning community.
2. Eliminating distance and feelings of isolation for the students in the course.
3. Creating cooperative learning opportunities to allow students to learn from one another.
4. Using group work to provide opportunities for collaborative learning.
5. Providing opportunities for students to take on a range of roles in group work (e.g., leader, contributor, editor).
6. Creating appropriately sized groups to maximize student achievement of learning outcomes.
7. Acknowledging learner contributions publicly and/or privately.

Community of Inquiry (COI) Model

More information can be found about the Community of Inquiry (COI) Model online at <https://coi.athabasca.ca> and how you can apply the model to your teaching practice at www.unlv.edu/teach-online.