# **Assessing Online Teaching and Facilitation (AOTF)**

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Please attribute the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology at the University of British Columbia, Point Grey Campus, Vancouver

The “Assessing Online Teaching and Facilitation” can be used to provide feedback to a colleague about an online course. It can also be used by an instructor who wants to self-assess the quality of their course and teaching.

Depending on the stage at which your review takes place (i.e., before the course, at the beginning of the course, etc) and what you are focussing on during your review, you can use different parts of this tool.

AOTF categorizes the roles of an online instructor as follows:

* Managerial: Handling organizational, procedural, and administrative tasks.
* Social: Creating a welcoming online community in which learning is promoted.
* Pedagogical: Guiding student learning with a focus on concepts, principles, and skills.
* Technical: Assisting participants to become comfortable with the technologies used to deliver the course.

These categories are presented below in 4 stages:

1. Before the course begins
2. During the first week
3. Throughout the course
4. During the last week

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| **Before the course begins**  | **Comments** |
| Managerial |   |
| **Update Course Settings in Canvas**  o Decide when and how you want to reveal your course to students.o Set the time zone to PST from your personal settings.o See [*Course Settings*](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-26420-how-do-i-use-course-settings) and [*How do I set a time zone in my user account?*](https://guides.instructure.com/m/4214/l/719376) for help. |  |
| **Update Syllabus in Canvas** : Update the syllabus with your/facilitator’s name and contact information, preferred communication method, expected response times to messages and assignments, and other policies specific to this course or facilitator. * + See [How do I edit the Syllabus description in a course](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-1862)? and how to create a [student-centred syllabus](https://canvas.ubc.ca/courses/52088/pages/2-dot-2-creating-a-student-centred-syllabus-for-online-learners?module_item_id=1877074) for your online learners.
 |  |
| **Send Students a Welcome Message/Email**  Send a welcome and informational message to your class at least once per week during the first two weeks of the course in order to catch any students who have registered after the official start date. Your welcome letter should be sent outside of Canvas and should include the following information: o The URL/location of the courseo The URL/location of the syllabuso How to log in (Using their CWL)o What materials students need to purchase and where they can make the purchaseso Whom to contact if they need technical assistance. Please see the [*Get Support* section of the Keep Learning site](https://keeplearning.ubc.ca/support/) for information on where students can find academic, technical, and more support. [You can show you support for students, their learning, and their wellbeing by also including links to:](https://students.ubc.ca/about-student-services/centre-for-accessibility) [·](https://students.ubc.ca/about-student-services/centre-for-accessibility)  [Keeplearning.ubc.ca](https://keeplearning.ubc.ca/)·  [Student Health and Wellbeing](https://students.ubc.ca/health)·  [Centre for Accessibility](https://students.ubc.ca/about-student-services/centre-for-accessibility)·  [Finances: Student Services](https://students.ubc.ca/enrolment/finances) |   |
| **Update Course Calendar in Canvas** * + Add [events/assignments](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-12797-415241296) to the calendar
	+ If you have imported from one Canvas course to another Canvas course, you can set up the dates upon import by clicking the "Adjust events and due dates" checkbox. It is important to verify that the dates imported correctly, and be sure to adjust for midterm break (Term 1 and Term 2), official holidays etc., as needed.
	+ As you add/change due dates to assignments, quizzes, etc., the Calendar will be built automatically.
	+ Remove extra dates as necessary. Keep in mind that if you have more than one course, you will see those dates, too. Make sure you don’t delete a Calendar entry from a different course. See [How do I filter the Calendar view by course?](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10693) to avoid this problem.
	+ See [What is the Calendar for instructors](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10710) for help.
 |   |
| **Hide Select Class Materials From Student View in Canvas** (only if required)Some faculty members opt to lock Module items so they are automatically hidden until a certain date. o See [How do I lock a Module?](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-2853) for help. |   |
|  **Set your Personal Notifications in Canvas**You can set notifications in Canvas to be sent to your email or your cell phone. You can choose to be notified "right away," in a "daily summary," in a "weekly summary," or "not at all." Keep in mind that these settings are global, so they **apply to all of your courses and cannot be set by course**. You are not able to set preferences for your students, but you can recommend that they do so themselves. The following are recommendations for notification settings for optimal teaching.o Discussion and Discussion Posts - set to "Daily Summary."o Conversations - Set to "Right Away" so you don’t miss anything. This is Canvas’ version of email, but it doesn’t work exactly like a typical email. It is more like a group text.o All Submissions - If you want to see when students are submitting assignments and quizzes in real-time, set this to "Right Away."o Submission Comment - If a student responds to a comment that you make while grading, you may want to be notified of that "Right Away."See [How do I set my Canvas notification preferences?](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-1286) |   |
| **Review Course Content**Enure your course content is up to date and accessible. Review the [Online Content to Promote Learning](https://canvas.ubc.ca/courses/52088/pages/5-dot-0-introduction?module_item_id=1880846) module of the Online Teaching Program to explore synchronous and asynchronous approaches to online lectures, open educational resources, and designing for accessibility. |   |
| **Reactivate Library Reserves**If applicable, use the [UBC Library Online Course Reserves (LOCR)](https://services.library.ubc.ca/borrowing-services/using-course-reserves/) to reactivate course e-Reserves.  |   |
| **Review Gradebook and Gradescope** * + View [Grades/Gradebook](http://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-4131#jive_content_id_Grades) and [Gradescope](https://lthub.ubc.ca/guides/gradescope/) for help.
 |   |
| **Pedagogical** |   |
| Review past course evaluations to determine if enhancements for instructional strategies are required. |   |
| Make enhancements to course design where necessary. |   |
| Publish your class so students are able to see and interact with your course. See [How do I publish a course?](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10395-415257126) for details. |  |
| **Technical** |   |
| Update hyperlinks to remove dead or broken links. (Use the Link Validator in Canvas under the Settings) |   |
| Check all media for proper display (broken images, video playback, etc.). |   |
| Test the course navigation and content for accessibility and correct any accessibility issues. |   |
| Update course to reflect new features of the course management software. |   |

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| **During the first week …** | **Comments** |
| **Managerial** |   |
| **Contact students who have not yet accessed your online course**. In Canvas, you can easily see who has, and has not, accessed your class through the Performance Dashboard. If a student hasn't accessed the class yet, there may be a problem that needs your attention. |   |
| Minimize delays to accessing course materials for students added to the course late and un-enroll students promptly when they drop the course. |   |
| Provide support information when needed, e.g., how to get remote access to the library, register for credit/no credit, drop the course, or use publisher’s study materials. |   |
| **Social** |   |
| **Make your own "personal introduction" post** to the class to build rapport with your students. In your post, tell students what information you would like them to include in their own introductions. |   |
| **Review the personal introductions:** Design a forum for students to post introductions and share experiences. Respond to each student’s introduction or to the entire class in a single note, to help all feel welcomed.Encourage students to share pictures or other representations (e.g., avatars) of themselves. |   |
| **Summarize the postings for your class** by posting a note to the appropriate discussion forum or send an e-mail to all students, sharing what you've learned about the class make-up and addressing their class expectations (e.g., "Several of you stated that you hoped to learn more about XYZ in this class. While we won't be covering XYZ specifically, we will address the more general issue of..."). |   |
| Model discussion response behavior and tone. Use a conversational tone for responses that is inviting, personal, friendly, and encouraging. |   |
| Use humor sparingly and carefully; use emoticons to express jesting. |   |
| Invite and encourage students to use online office hours and/or to make appointments. |   |
| Add a social forum for non-class related topics. (e.g. Coffee Time forum) |   |
| **Pedagogical** |   |
| Create an ice breaker activity related to a course key objective or concept. |   |
| Communicate with students daily to maintain a positive rapport and a health classroom climate. |   |
| Determine areas in which students are doing well and areas in which students need to improve. Communicate this information to students. |   |
| Challenge the students by asking questions which apply to the readings and communicating high expectations. |   |
| **Technical** |   |
| Provide detailed tutorial links and/or instructions on using the technology within the assignment information to help the students feel comfortable with the technology. |   |
| Assist students with login/access difficulties. |   |

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| **Throughout the course you/the facilitator …** | **Comments** |
| **Managerial** |   |
| Update the online grade book promptly after assignment due dates. |   |
| Conduct course according to designated schedule with any deviations communicated in advance. |   |
| Enforce guidelines for learner behaviors such as netiquette and due dates. |   |
| Remind students of upcoming deadlines. |   |
| Post group rosters before the group project begins. |   |
| Create environments/opportunities for group members to work on group projects. |   |
| Monitor attendance in class in order to follow up with missing students. |   |
| Maintain privacy of student grades and feedback. |   |
| Announce absences to students with guidance on what to do during absence. |   |
| **Social** |   |
| Organize collaborative projects/activities to achieve strong social interaction. |   |
| Monitor, contribute and reply to the Class Discussion Forums daily. In Canvas, you can have all discussion forum posts forwarded to your email, if you wish. With large classes your email may become overwhelmed. |  |
| Monitor discussions for respectfulness based on netiquette standards and University behavior policies. |   |
| Immediately contact students with inappropriate posts for explanation and clarification; Immediately make disrespectful posts unavailable to the class at large. |   |
| Take time to assess the classroom climate |   |
| Connect with learners’ interests, support self-reflection and foster collaboration  |   |
| Use announcements to keep class current and personal. Announcements may include holiday wishes and real world social issues (e.g. COVID 19) as well as course information. |   |
| Continue to maintain daily presence in discussion forums. |   |
| Provide individual messages (email, postings, announcements) of encouragement. |   |
| **Pedagogical** |   |
| **Post a message in the class announcements area**, letting the students know what topics will be covered in the coming week and remind them of any assignment or quiz/exam due dates. |   |
| Respond to student questions promptly--consistent with timeline for feedback stated in syllabus. (Recommended: within 24 hours) |   |
| Provide practical suggestions to students to complete their work on time. |   |
| Incorporate [principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion](https://inclusiveteaching.ctlt.ubc.ca/resources/resources-for-faculty/) into overall curriculum. |   |
| Ensure that [Universal Design for Learning](https://canvas.ubc.ca/courses/31444/pages/1-introduction-to-universal-design-for-learning?module_item_id=1153605) principles are applied. |  |
| Summarize discussion forum conversations, since it can be hard to bring a close to those discussions and/or call out the important points before moving to other discussions. |   |
| Assign groups or create a method for students to select groups before beginning group projects. |   |
| Grade all assignments and provide feedback in a timely manner. Provide feedback indicating areas in which the students have succeeded as well as areas that require further development in a timely manner. |   |
| **Consider using Early Alert**Early Alert helps faculty, staff and TA’s provide better support for students who are facing difficulties that put the academic success at risk. View Early Alert at UBC at<https://facultystaff.students.ubc.ca/systems-tools/early-alert> for help. |  |
| **Consider holding online (virtual) office hours**Giving your students a chance to communicate with you in real-time can help build strong relationships and motivate students to fully engage in the class. Two popular options for conducting live office hours with geographically dispersed students are Zoom and Collaborate Ultra. Just let your students know when and how to join your office hours! Check the [Keepteaching.ubc.ca](https://keepteaching.ubc.ca/) site to determine which communications tool is best for you and how to set it up in your course. |  |
| Gather mid-class feedback from your students. There are several options for gathering this information.* Create a Canvas survey where you ask personalized, class-specific questions. See [How do I create a survey in my course?](http://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-2938) for directions.
* Create a survey using the [UBC Survey Tool](https://lthub.ubc.ca/guides/survey-tool/)
* Use UBC Mid-Course Feedback. For more information, see the [Instructor Resources for Mid-Course Feedback](http://midterm.teacheval.ubc.ca/resources/).
 |  |
| Create transitions from one topic/module to the next to help students recognize time on task. |   |
| Create an environment that promotes learning by using [group agreements](https://tatp.utoronto.ca/teaching-toolkit/effective-strategies/community-agreements/).  |   |
| Invite and encourage students to complete a peer review of individual and group projects. |   |
| Utilize specific teaching/learning strategies which promote self-directed learning. |   |
| Focus discussions on specific issues and use discussion questions and problems to actively engage students in the learning process. |   |
| Implement rubrics established in course design. |   |
| Use illustrations and examples to clearly explain important concepts. |   |
| Provide helpful, constructive suggestions to students to complete assignments |   |
| **Technical** |   |
| Announce information related to interruptions of access to servers delivering course materials in advance (when possible) or after (when necessary). |   |
| Make reasonable accommodations due to technical difficulties beyond the students’ control consistent with policies in the syllabus. |   |
| Model competency with course management system delivery tools and uses tools appropriately. |   |
| Use other technologies for the course appropriately. |   |
| Consistently address universal accessibility. |   |
| Provide instructions/materials/resources in easy-to-use formats, providing details for successfully downloading if necessary. |   |
| Receive and respond to completed student assignments electronically. |   |
| Direct students to links and information on technical support (LT Hub, Service Desk, Web, Trouble Tickets) |   |

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| **During the last week, You/the facilitator …** | **Comments** |
| **Managerial** |   |
| Provide general information concerning the nature and format of the final assessment(s). |   |
| Alert students on how long course materials will continue to be available after the end of class. |   |
| Informs students on availability of course evaluation, and encourages students to complete the Student Experience of Instruction surveys (or equivalent). |   |
| Post final grades promptly. |   |
| **Social** |   |
| Post an end-of-class announcement to wrap-up to the class. Include a final request to complete the Student Evaluation of Online Instruction (in Fall 2021, change to Student Experience of Instruction).  |   |
| Encourage students to share their class experience and say goodbye in a closing forum. |   |
| Remind students to download/print their work, if they desire. If the class utilizes an e-portfolio, recommend that students download a copy of their e-portfolio, especially if this is their last class in the program. |  |
| **Pedagogical** |   |
| Provide feedback on the final project/assignment and make it available to students even after the class is over. |   |
| Help students celebrate/recognize their learning and accomplishments in the course and during the term. |  |
| Handle any deferred grade requests (see [Standings for Grading Practices](http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/?tree=3,42,97,0)) |  |
| Post final grades to the Faculty Service Center as per University policy.* [Faculty Service Center FAQ](https://facultystaff.students.ubc.ca/enrolment-services/student-records-systems-management/sis/fsc)
* [Uploading students grades to Faculty Service Center from Canvas (how to)](https://facultystaff.students.ubc.ca/files/FSCUserGuide.pdf)
 |  |
| **Technical** |   |
| List technical aspects that worked well and those that need improvement. Forward to, or discusses with, technical support staff. |   |

Credit:

AOTF was created by the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver. We modified and adapted, with permission, a tool from the [Tigers Project.](http://www2.humboldt.edu/aof/index.html)

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