

Supporting Inclusive Online Classrooms

TA Institute July 2020

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Your role as a TA in creating inclusive classrooms

- Our session will focus on how inclusion intersects with your role as a TA
- We want this session to be useful as you take on more responsibility in instruction
- If you feel that your instructor is putting too much responsibility on you, please feel free to reach out to the union: advocate@cupe2278.ca

Learning Outcomes

- Identify barriers to inclusion that may become highlighted within online teaching environments
- Develop solutions to mitigate challenges and barriers in online teaching
- Examine the role of the TA in supporting diversity and inclusion in online teaching

Icebreaker & Think-Pair-Share

- We'll be putting you in groups of two
- In your group start by: (3 min.)
 - Introducing yourself (name, discipline)
 - How has inclusivity in classrooms affected your learning in the past?
- In your same pair:
 - Discuss:
 - What barriers and challenges might there be in creating an inclusive online classroom?
 - Why are these barriers and challenges in an online environment?
 - Post your answers on this padlet:
<https://padlet.com/nataliewestwood22/qt010inzry5xyqjq>
 - Read over others' answers and feel free to ask questions in the comments section

N Natalie Westwood + 7 • 1m

Inclusion in Online Teaching

What barriers and challenges might there be in creating an inclusive online classroom?

ONE MINUTE TO WRAP UP!

 Add comment

Breakout group 4: Tiana & Rosie




- Making sure all students feel they have an opportunity to be heard (non-verbal communication, video vs. no-video)
- Understanding diversity needs without being able to see/speak directly to students
- Accommodating student's access to technology

 Add comment

hi there


trying this out

4 comments

-  **Anonymous** 1m
size of classes
-  **Anonymous** 1m
how to use all the tools effectively
-  **Anonymous** 1m
let everyone know that we are all doing this for the 1st time - we are all learning

Engagement





Not being able to read students' expressions when they have their cameras turned off

 Add comment

Barriers and challenges

Encouraging participation knowing student's needs for diversity

4 comments

-  **Anonymous** 1m
Group 7: Ice breaker, engagement, create an open environment for discussion, use different tools: reactions, raise hand function, poll function, chat. Find right time for different time zones.
-  **Anonymous** 1m
Technology issues
-  **Anonymous** 1m
different comfort levels in technology use and level of participation
-  **Anonymous** 1m
many different types of platforms used in courses-> can be difficult to understand them all
-  Add comment


Technology - not all students have private spaces or laptops with webcams/mics

 Add comment

Breakout Group 5 Summer and Mira

- Students not feeling comfortable participating over video/verbally/chat.
- Internet access issues, scheduling issues.
- Time zone issues
- English as another language
- Students busy applying for jobs or other activities
- Loss of "community" without in person classes.
- How to make students feel safe in online discussions or feel safe communicating needs

1 comment




-  **Natalie Westwood** 1m
What might this look like?

 Add comment

Group 6:

Challenge of including "non-verbal" participants AND "verbal" participants, especially to include different cultural styles

3 comments






-  **Anonymous** 1m
Cultural values in connection to participation - what values are integrated in western teaching styles may be uncomfortable to others of non-western cultures - ex. constant vocal participation
-  **Anonymous** 1m
Recognizing there are a lot of students that are engaged but not necessarily vocal about it, therefore must implement strategies and tools that promote non-verbal engagement as well
-  **Anonymous** 1m
Solutions: opportunities to submit written/recorded "participation" activities - mitigates connectivity & personal comfort barriers, then synchronously share as a "show & tell" or small group discussion to clarify without singling anyone out. Can also set expectations of who might be presenting/sharing to remove unexpected "panic" at being singled out to speak

 Add comment

Link to the slides with the questions

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1uhurcBmBEmME4C-fYZBulxXtp4RYhHf2NzbPzVMzyQU/edit#slide=id.p>

4 comments

-  **Anonymous** 1m
this isn't an open link - it says we need to request access!
-  **Natalie Westwood** 1m
try this one
-  **Natalie Westwood** 1m
<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1uhurcBmBEmME4C-fYZBulxXtp4RYhHf2NzbPzVMzyQU/edit?usp=sharing>
-  **Anonymous** 1m
that one works, thanks!
-  Add comment



Pass the Problem Instructions

You will have opportunity to consider a variety of scenarios individually as a small group. You will have approximately 5 mins for each scenario.

First Scenario:

- **Why might this be a barrier to learning?**

Second Scenario:

- **What assumptions am I making about student learning in this context?**

Third Scenario:

- **What are strategies that we can both in the moment and in advance to potentially mitigate/prevent this barrier?**
-

Scenario 1

You are the teaching assistant of an undergraduate class of 100 students. The professor has decided to offer video recordings of his lectures, but you learn that one of the students in the class is hearing-impaired.

- In CANVAS there is a tool to make the recording accessible OR contact A&D to transcribe
- This is not just for hearing-impaired but also ESL or those who learn better from seeing the words
- Make PPT more comprehensive - include more information for reference
- Contact UBC equity and inclusion office (caption, notes ect...)
- Assumption: one form of learning or way to present information is universal to all students.

Scenario 1 Continued

- Set expectations before start of term so all students are aware of what the course will require (set up Diversity & Inclusion accommodations well in advance)
- Use Camtasia (Canvas partner app) to annotate slides/transcribe subtitles
- Use Kaltura (Canvas integrated platform) to host/embed video into Canvas Pages so students have smoother streaming (don't have to link out to another platform or download large videos)
- Be mindful that any extra resources may not be accessible in some countries or meet UBC privacy/PII regulations (ex: YouTube not accessible in China - embed videos, GoogleDrive may not satisfy PII - use Stormboard)

Scenario 2

You are teaching an undergraduate tutorial of 20 students. This tutorial offers opportunity for extensive discussion and exploration of student ideas. As the semester unfolds, there are few students actively participating in the discussions comprising this class. Further you realize that most of the students who are not participating are international students.

- Students feeling intimidated or nervous about participating either through voice/video or text in real time
- Would be helpful to offer pre-lecture/pre-discussion questions
- Have continuous check-ins with students
- Offer multiple ways to participate - for instance, asynchronous opportunities, anonymous ways of participating (while enabling TAs, instructors to still know who is participating)
- Ensuring that discussions are framed/prompted in such a way as to create a safe learning space and that encourage a diversity of views
- Assigning discussion leaders - invite students that haven't been as active to take on this role

Scenario 2 Continued

Have verbal and non-verbal ways to interact/asynchronous discussion forum

Flexible office hours

Use tools like padlet or Google Docs, Jamboard

Assumptions: definition of participation between students and for the TA/Instructor,
level of comfort in verbal discussions/participation

Scenario 3

You are a TA in a graduate course of 30 students. Consistently, within the class, students invisibilize their screen on Zoom. Further, there is little interaction between the students themselves and many “leave” the class when you move them to break-out rooms.

- Barrier to learning: if content is structured to require participation, students lose the opportunity to synthesize knowledge if they do not participate.
- Without visual, hard to know how much, if at all, students are engaging with the material
- Solution: incentivize participation; drop in on groups/monitor so you know who is and isn't participating. Communicate to students and ask “what would make you more comfortable participating”. Solicit solutions from students themselves? Is material not engaging enough?
- Provide multiple ways for students to participate - so could find the way that is most comfortable and inclusive.
- Graduate course - send out a poll to ask what students want from the class.
- Facilitate feedback from students on what type of learning would be most beneficial to them. More asynchronous?
-

Scenario 3 Continued

- Assumptions: students unprepared, avoidant, uninterested in material; that invisible screens and leaving rooms is actually a sign of “checking out”; assuming that online spaces are “neutral” (pre-existing interpersonal dynamics may exist, or new dynamics may exist that make it challenging for students to participate fully)
- Things to consider: we don’t know what is going on in students’ lives, cannot assume to know if they’re engaged or not; we should set up clear expectations and goals so students know what they need to do; ask students for feedback in class; that there may be technical problems with breakout rooms; “monitoring” breakout groups and doing constant check ins
- Offer other ways to communicate - chat/
- Ice breakers
- Have fun things to do - zoom games
- Have an animation of yourself
- Have deadlines/credits for participating
- Community codes - active work to foster a safe space, and welcome open communication (understanding that this is a pandemic, and we are all coming from different places)

Scenario 4

You are a TA in undergraduate class. On zoom, you are viewing two students in the midst of a heated debate that you are noticing is beginning to feel personal between the participants.

- “I’m going to interrupt here, and suggest that we take a step back to refocus on the learning outcome/ remind that our language needs to be more objective.”
- Pivot to a new activity, like a poll of understanding of the day’s lesson or asking new questions
- As the host, if necessary/last resort can mute the participants or remove them
- Reiterating standards, what is acceptable behaviour and language - reiterating you can prove your point/everyone has a right to their opinion but personal attacks will not be tolerated
- Assumptions: the topic is personal or trauma-inducing to one of the students; assume students are responding to each other vs. something happening in the background that is not visible; could assume the interaction is negative whereas they are friends and they often debate heatedly; assuming that it is personal when it isn’t;
-

Scenario 4 Continued

- Crucial to set up *classroom climate expectations* to avoid these types of scenarios - and to keep reminding students throughout term
- Try not to “single anyone out” - if absolutely necessary, disable chat or audio for *everyone*, and also to check in with students individually after class
- Need to acknowledge student perspectives and be respectful at all times
- If possible have someone (a TA) monitor in real-time
- Acknowledging potential harm immediately but not in a way that singles anyone out

Scenario 5

You are a TA in a class that has an online lab component. The instructor has modified a lab that would normally take place in a class setting so that students are able to do it independently from their own homes. The students are responsible for finding the materials necessary to do this experiment. You notice that there seems to be a couple of students who aren't completing the labs.

- We would contact the 2 students.
- Ask what type of difficulties they may have
- Contact the instructor with these key issues
- Try to find a solution
- Set roles, responsibilities prior to class.

Scenario 5 Continued

May be assuming:

- Student has tech access/ability to complete the work -> ideally teaching team should set expectations and solicit feedback by 1st class day to mitigate barriers
- Student is 100% invested/prioritizing MY class -> ask student what THEIR goal is for the course (*potentially may open the conversation to problems outside academia; be prepared with help resources).
- Student has time management or coping skills with new environment - may need help delegating time/tasks

Strategies to mitigate/prevent:

- In the moment: Reach out to students and inquire why they aren't completing the lab. IF because they don't have the materials, pair them with students (or groups) that do have them. If unable to get materials due to resources or access, find a way to make up for missing work that they were unable to do without the materials (give a pass on those sections, make up group where they watch me work with materials, etc.)
- In advance: Provide list of materials required so they have time to get them and/or tell you they don't have access to them. Design lab so there are multiple options, or so additional materials are no required at all. Online tools? See first assumption. Send out surveys to create environment that welcomes feedback.

What areas do you as a TA have the most control over? Who else can help?

- TAs often have more personal relationships with our students
 - Informal coffee chats
 - Allow for diverse ways for students to approach us to allow for connection
 - Counts as TA time (track your hours)
 - Have some resources on-hand to help students find support
- Helping to set the tone to welcome feedback in our teaching
 - Ask for it regularly with our students
 - Polling students to see how they're feeling at that time
 - Can be anonymous as well
 - Setting up expected regular emails to check in with students
 - Intentional accessibility
- We might not have enough time to set it up
 - Make sure to talk to your instructor about the allocation of your hours
- Cannot force students to engage

Resources

- **Keep Learning UBC**
 - <https://keeplearning.ubc.ca>

- **Create an Online Environment**
 - <https://teaching.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Creating-an-Inclusive-Online-Environment.pdf>