

Managing Students Online

Managing students online is not much different from managing students in your classroom, except that you can't see them. Just like in a face-to-face classroom, your students need encouragement and timely feedback on assignments. And just like in a face-to-face classroom, you may have to manage students who either participate in discussions inappropriately or who don't participate at all. Here are some tips for working with students in an online classroom:

- Think about how you would respond to different scenarios in a face-to-face classroom.
- Respond to student postings to keep them on task, to discuss specific responses, to ask follow-up questions and to summarize points.
- Let your students know how, when and how often you will be interacting with them in the discussion groups.
- Provide clear guidelines for discussions up front. For example, include tips on how long postings should be, how much students need to respond to other postings, how they should word postings, how they should respond (with follow-up questions, with what they liked or agreed with), etc.
- Involve your students in creating guidelines or "agreements" for appropriate interaction in your online classroom. For example, ask students for their ideas on what constitutes appropriate use of language, confidentiality and sharing, respectfulness, etc. Then from their comments, post a copy of the final "contract" for everyone.
- Encourage students to respond to postings. You can encourage the group generally, or encourage individuals through direct messages.
- Create an open question and answer discussion area where students can post their questions about course material, assignments, and other course-related activities.
- Ask your students to post course or topic-related websites. You can also ask them to submit a review of the sites if you would like to incorporate an activity like this into an assignment (get them involved).