



Interactive videoconferencing

Learning and teaching strategies

Tips for effective lectures

Building learning and teaching relationships with remotely situated students is important for effective videoconferencing. These tips should help generate a supportive learning environment.

General principles

- Begin on time.
- State the intended learning objectives or expected outcomes.
- Try to stick to your lesson plan, including its time line. Keep the plan handy as a reference to bring discussions back on line if a side issue begins to dominate.
- Create opportunities to establish that students have understood the content of the learning activity.
- 15 - 25 minutes of didactic lecture style or of one person talking is enough. Vary the pace and range of learning activities.
- Conclude your session, if appropriate, with follow-up activities to be undertaken by students.
- Build links if you can that lead into the next scheduled videoconferencing session.

Personalise your videoconferencing teaching session

- With permission, circulate photo IDs of participants at participating sites.
- Call individuals by name if the group is small enough.
- Conduct sessions from each of the participating sites at least once per term or semester if possible – the value of even one face to face meeting with the students at each site is highly regarded and heightens students' sense of equity.
- Engender an inclusive atmosphere by making it known that the input of all participants is important and valued, and will be sought either individually or through a spokesperson.
- Use the unique opportunities afforded by videoconferencing to create a sense of community. This might involve collaborating on a particular subject with students at another campus or university or inviting an expert clinician or panel to field questions or contribute to a discussion.
- Create opportunities for both student-student and teacher-student interactions.
- Create opportunities for formal and informal feedback.

Tips for effective presentation of materials

- Use document presenters rather than whiteboards. Whiteboards are not easily visible at the remote sites, even if the students can zoom in on them. If the students at the far end do report a satisfactory view of the whiteboard with the zoom facility, it is worth saving this to one of the remote-control presets for future use
- Avoid white paper on document cams – pastel shades appear better on screen.
- Use a blunt-point texta and paper to place under document camera for impromptu, hand-written, “spur of the moment” documents. Clear acetate sheets, like overhead projector sheets, can be used but can reflect lighting.
- Use document cam only to show “headlines” – expanded text documents are better distributed ahead of the session e.g. handouts or Power Point notes for students to write on.
- Use an adequate font size and layout of text on slides: 24 pt, max. 4 to 6 words per line, 6 lines per page. Landscape (horizontal layout) paper orientation works best.
- Be aware of how lighting affects the presentation. Camera lenses are sensitive to direct light. Where possible, mute sources of direct light if they are intrusive.
- Avoid rapid movements (of hands, etc) which will appear distorted and jerky on screen
- Have the campus signage visible to the camera at each site to make for ease of identification when interacting between sites in a multi-point conference.

Working with large groups

The greater the number of sites involved, the harder to keep track of all participants. It might be difficult to detect whether a student is getting the best out of your lecture. Encourage students to feedback to you if they can't see your presentation or if there is some factor of videoconferencing etiquette that isn't working.

Clearly establish the learning needs for the large group ahead of the session. This might be achieved by considering:

- content of related education sessions,
- assessment results,
- student feedback
- seeking peer review of the appropriateness of the proposed session, from other staff teaching into the course

Think about what sort of activity will best suit a large group environment and how this relates to the overall curriculum. This could involve:

- Presentation of key topics that are common to a wide number of students.
- One-off access to a clinical expert lecturer
- Using large group work by videoconference to complement smaller group activities undertaken before the session i.e. to showcase one or two small-group student presentations to the wider student group

Videoconferencing does experience some time delays with data transmission and etiquette factors and generally only 2/3 of material can be covered compared to face to face teaching. Set realistic learning objectives or outcomes – do not try to cover too much material in the session

Employ a team teaching strategy when multipoint conferencing with a large group - aim for tutor presence at each site and ensure the team is well-versed with your lesson plan

If the group size and number of sites will make your planned lesson very difficult to teach, consider repeating your session 2 or 3 times to individual sites if timetabling permits. This is still cost effective compared to the alternative of the respective sites sourcing separate lecturers and each one having to prepare and teach the same material.

Resources

Australian Universities Teaching Committee, Teaching Large Classes Project.
www.tedi.uq.edu.au/largeclasses/

Notes adapted from

Andrews, Trish 2002. Using videoconferencing for teaching and learning. Teaching and learning in higher education series. The University of Queensland Available: <http://www.tedi.uq.edu.au/downloads/Videoconferencing.pdf>. Date accessed 20 June 2007

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