

Welcoming Students to Your Course

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PURPOSE

This job aid outlines key strategies instructors can use to create a welcoming and supportive environment for students, regardless of whether the course is delivered face-to-face, blended, or fully online. Establishing a positive tone early in the course fosters student engagement, motivation, and a sense of belonging—critical factors for academic success.

BACKGROUND

Students' perceptions of instructor presence and clear communication of course expectations significantly influence their motivation and persistence. Providing a clear overview of course format, required materials, communication protocols, and support services reduces anxiety and helps students actively engage in their learning. Clarifying classroom expectations and routines early fosters accountability and respectful participation.

CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS AND ROUTINES

Instructors should clearly communicate what they expect from students and what students can expect from them. This includes outlining professional behavior, participation guidelines, and frequency of contributions. Discussing these expectations in early sessions—whether in-person or online—helps students feel prepared and connected.

HOW TO: WELCOMING PRACTICES

Introduce Yourself

Sharing an instructor introduction, both in person and via course platforms like Moodle, builds rapport and trust. Consider including:

- Personal background highlights (hobbies, interests) as comfortable.
- Professional credentials and teaching experience.

Such introductions help humanize the instructor and foster a welcoming learning community.

Send a Welcome-to-Class Email

A well-crafted welcome email sent before or on the first day sets a positive tone and builds early rapport. It should include:

- A warm greeting and brief instructor introduction.
- An overview of the course's purpose and relevance to students' academic and career goals.
- Key logistical details (format, schedule, materials).
- Information about how and when to contact you and available student support services.


REFERENCES

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