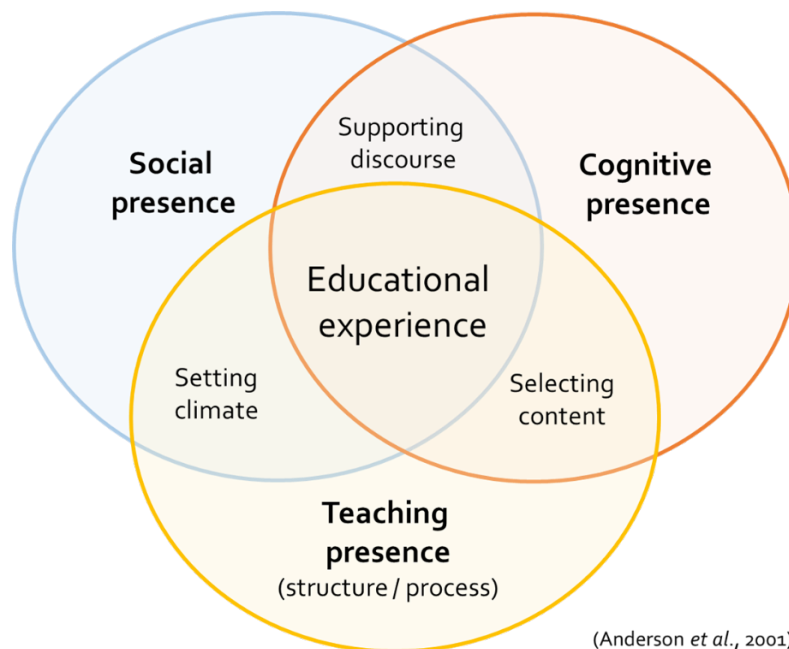




Communicating in Zoom

Communicating online using tools such as Zoom can be very demanding – exhausting even!

Besides using the technology itself, part of the reason why you may be feeling so tired from Zooming is that there are several inter-related dimensions to the teaching role that need to be presented when working online. This has been described as sharing your social, cognitive and teaching presence (Anderson *et al.*, 2001).



In this guide, we will look at each of these in turn and see how they apply to Zoom sessions and what you can do to maximise the educational experience for students.

Social presence

According to Anderson, social presence is the effort the teacher puts into creating a 'degree of comfort and safety' for students, such that they can take the risk to participate in discussions. Your communication in your Zoom classrooms should foster care, connection and community.



Incorporate pastoral care at the beginning of your Zoom sessions; a short “check-in” with students. You can take an anonymous poll on how students are doing (see the earlier *Guide*, [Taking the temperature of your online classroom](#)), or move them in to small breakout rooms just to chat, giving a sense of the on-campus tutorial. Sometimes your voice can be “silent”; creating an environment for student voices to emerge.

Remember a student may have lost their job, be struggling to pay rent, worried about their health or just coping with ‘cabin fever’ like all of us. And now they’re trying to learn online whilst for some of us we’re trying to teach online for the first time. We may have never had so much in common with our students! You can use this shared experience to build empathy and belonging, creating an attachment to UniSA – something that will survive beyond the current times.

Cognitive presence

The next presence described by Anderson and colleagues is cognitive presence. Cognitive presence is what you do as a teacher to help students develop critical thinking skills related to the study of the content of your course.

During your Zoom sessions, you can use your discipline expertise to guide student learning; remember what your experience was like when you were learning and help them be better learners, not content regurgitators. A key strategy to do this is to ask questions of students that will encourage them to dig deeper – and leave a space for students to answer (avoid answering your own questions – if no response, ask a related question). Cheri Toledo has some great examples of critical thinking questions that seek clarification, challenge assumptions, ask for evidence, change viewpoints and examine consequences that were devised for use in forums but that can be also used in the Zoom virtual classroom (Toledo 2006).

Teaching presence

The third type of presence that helps to build a ‘community of inquiry’ in online classrooms is teaching presence. Teaching presence involves ‘devising and implementing activities to encourage discourse between



and among students, between the teacher and the student, and between individual students, groups of students, and content resources' (Anderson *et al.* 2008, p345).

Some points to remember:

- You are in control – students will look to you for leadership – have clear instructions on what it is you want students to do in the session
- Use a calm and conversational tone
- Be concise with your words but don't use acronyms unless your students are familiar with them
- Check you're not speaking too fast, take breathing pauses
- If you're running out of time don't rush at the end as this will undo your good work.

For more ideas about how to create opportunities for students to interact within the Zoom virtual classroom, please see our earlier *Guide*, [Lesson plans for virtual classrooms \(Zoom\)](#).

It's also important to be in a room where your voice can be easily heard and there are no unfiltered noises. Using a good quality headset with a microphone is ideal if your environment is a little noisy. Most Unit offices will have information about obtaining one of these headsets if you don't have one.

If you would like to ask online teaching and learning questions related to your course, you can look through our [FAQs](#), write to TIU@unisa.edu.au, have an [online consultation with a member of the TIU](#) or complete the online modules as part of [Introduction to Engaging Learners Online](#).

References

Anderson, T 2008, [Teaching in an online learning context](#), In Theory and Practice of Online Learning, 2nd Ed., Edmonton: AU Press, pp 343-365.

Toledo, Cheri 2006, ["Does your dog bite?": creating good questions for online discussions](#), International Journal on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 18, 2, pp. 150-154.