

OLTD 503  
Reflection on Evidence of Learning 1

**OLTD Program Learning Outcomes:**

- Undertake engagement with environments through online facilitation for effective learning.
  - Moderate and mediate online communication.
  - Understand how to build rapport and manage groups.
  - Engage in building learning communities and communities of practice.

**Evidence to Support Outcomes:**

I have selected the Weebly site that my team and I created during our facilitation week focused on building online communities as evidence of my ability to undertake engagement with environments through online facilitation for effective learning. This site was the main tool through which we chose to communicate the content and instructional activities for the week. My group chose the website as our starting point as we felt the format was familiar to our learners and we wanted the technology itself to not be the primary focus and challenge of the week. Throughout our planning we found that there did not seem to be single online communication tool that would suit all of our purposes, so we also decided to supplement our communications with additional tools including discussion threads in our G+ community, a discussions forum, and email messages. The website itself was great for the transmission of information, but did not allow for the back and forth conversations that we knew were important to establishing and maintaining social presence, an essential component of building community online (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000).

The facilitation week as a whole was an excellent opportunity to practice what we had been learning about, so my team and I tried to incorporate strategies for developing and maintaining social presence into our week, and support the ability for each of us, teachers and learners, to see one another as real people and feel a connection to the wider learning community. Some specific strategies applied included using a synchronous Zoom session to start the week, email check-ins throughout the week to individual learners and the whole group, and the use of video and audio recordings for providing one another feedback. I believe that we were fairly successful overall as most learners were active participants throughout the week, and we received some positive feedback both the email and our seminar surveys. A major takeaway from this experience for me was the amount of time and thought that needs to be put into the creation of the learning environment and planning for the learning activities prior to the actual teaching phase of the course, and the need to continue to dedicate time consistently, each day, throughout the course itself. I believe that having a clear structure in place to begin the course allows for the primary focus during the course to be on communication and interaction with the learners, supporting them through the tasks, rather than putting out fires and fixing problems within the course itself. The process of bandaging the course as you go can be quite frustrating for both teachers and learners and distract from the desired learning. Determining the correct

balance between the teacher providing feedback and the learners providing one another with feedback to create the ongoing sense of teaching presence (Garrison, Anderson and Archer, 2000) will be a goal that I will continue to explore and experiment with.

Attending carefully to the clarity of online communications and considering strategies to build and maintain online community, both during the design phase and the facilitation phase of an online course, can significantly impact the learners' experiences during the course. Inconsistent or ineffective communication and a lack of connection to the instructor and other members of the learning community can be frustrating, isolating, and lead to decreased learner engagement and motivation. Building strategies to enhance social presence into the course, and ongoing attention to the quality of the teaching presence are now ingrained into my philosophy for effective online facilitation.

Reference:

Garrison, D.R., Anderson, T. & Archer, W. (2000). [Critical Inquiry in a text-based environment: computer conferencing in higher education model.](#) *The Internet and Higher Education*, 2(2-3), 87-105.