

Roles of the Online Instructor

Remains the Same as Face to Face	Is Unique to Online Courses
Good course design is central. Instructor role is significant in creating quality learning. Must possess appropriate credentials and experience to teach subject. (Rhode)	Instructor role can be re-examined; possibilities exist to shift to collaborative, facilitated, co-learning model. (Rhode)
Learners actively participate in collaboration and reflective thinking. (Rhode)	Necessarily contains a new element intrinsic to the course: computer systems. This adds a new “hat” to the Instructor, that of Technical guru. (Rhode)
Needs to guide interactions with content and between student peers. (Rhode)	Can have a broader reach (geographic, accessibility, etc). Community may not interact in real life. Course design must facilitate and create a social online community of learners. And, must also welcome and involve “lurkers” (Rhode, Berge)
Provide clear guidelines and course criteria for participation, success and assessment. Provide support and intervention when needed. Flexibility helps. Can adapt “on the fly” or “just in time” (Rhode).	Social role, without physical cues, is different; must be careful about tone, humor, sarcasm. Strong written communication skills needed. (Rhode) Be present in the discussions but if the students are active, pull back a bit. Instructor is more than just a moderator; more like a host (welcoming, patient, attentive). Or like a tour guide (Headley, Bull).
Pedagogical role; feedback, instruction, probing & asking questions, stimulating discussion, synthesizing student comments, summing up, bringing in outside resources. Assignments should be clear, relevant, specify required contributions, don't just lecture. (Rhode)	Technical role, in addition: guide in the use of technology; assist learners in finding what they need; make tech transparent. Develop study guide; allow time to learn; support peer learning; have clear direction (Rhode). But not too much direction / structure, or learners won't feel they have autonomy (Berge).
Social role: Affective support, sincere and positive tone, keeping communication going. Address problem behaviors and tangents, model exemplary behaviors. (Rhode)	Be specifically trained in online learning experiences. Probably best not to learn “on the fly.” (Rhode) Potential for negative consequences because of “transactional distance” (Vonderwell and Savery)
Managerial role: Coordinate learning units, oversee and grade assignments, oversee course structure. Make sure participants have info / resources they need to succeed. Be responsive; be patient; be mindful of level of instructor contribution. Allow appropriate prep time on your end (Rhode).	Pay careful attention to design of the pacing and timing. Need depth AND breadth. Discussions take MORE time than in face-to-face. (Headley). Release some at a time, as “valve control” or break down into smaller, manageable chunks (Bull).
Should pay attention to Bloom's taxonomy in varying and scaffolding tasks, as well as to “content density” of material (Berge).	EVERYTHING IS DOCUMENTED, for better or worse. Use this data to adjust, not to stalk or shame students (Bull).
Create “help documents” and resources; be available and responsive to your students at regular times / ways (office hours, .e.g). Use multiple forms of feedback (informal, formal, group, individual). (Headley)	Can create “interactive student spaces,” bio statements, a course “scrapbook” of images, avatar images; option of face-to-face meetings or Skype (Headley).

Roles of the Online Learner

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Students accept responsibility for their own and others' learning (Rhode).	May feel new, unfamiliar, daunting to students. It's different from face-to-face, in part because it requires so much self-motivation (Vonderwell and Savey).
Be open-minded, flexible, and supportive of others (ION).	Learners may adopt personas, not "be themselves" online (more or less communicative, for example), and aren't as motivated by social cues and pressures. Some students find it inhibiting, others find it liberating. (Vonderwell and Savey)
Be able to commit 4-15 hours a week to it. Online learning is not "easier" or takes "less time" than face-to-face courses (ION).	Students need specific skills: articulateness, self-regulation, self-evaluation, resilient repertoire of learning strategies. No online equivalent of showing up and sitting there, silent (Vonderwell and Savey).
Should be able to think through before responding. Have ability to communicate and disagree respectfully without ad hominem attack (ION).	Greater demands placed on learners (Vonderwell and Savey). Must be independent learners (Fairmont).
Need commitment and perseverance to finish what's started. Have realistic understanding of one's own time constraints and learning styles (ION).	On the other hand, OL provides greater opportunity for individual / customized learning in terms of pace, style and scheduling. More student autonomy (Vonderwell and Savey).
Have effective time management skills (ION).	Need base level of technological familiarity, keyboarding skills and "practically unlimited" computer & internet access (ION). Need to be comfortable in cyberspace (Fairmont).
Have a good study environment and a workable study plan. Don't multitask while supposed to be learning.	Must feel high-quality learning doesn't have to take place in a classroom. Student must have a basic buy-in to the premise of online learning (ION).
Should be able to meet deadlines, expectations, and signal help when needed (Fairmont).	Time management skills that are specific to OL learning = work consistently even without a synchronous schedule.
Students comfortable with expressing self in writing, in grammatically correct and effective communication (Fairmont).	Must be able to wait / be patient about not getting immediate response. Cannot expect instant gratification or 24/7 connectivity. It helps if the student is not easily frustrated (Fairmont).
Be disciplined and goal-oriented (Fairmont).	Be an average to above-average reader (Fairmont).

Reading / Resources

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