

Online Engagement via Zoom Features and Pre-recorded Lectures

Online platforms including Zoom do not result in effective engagement if academics do not properly incorporate pedagogical approaches in their courses. Academics can plan for positive learning outcomes by utilising a wide range of teaching strategies to attract students' interests and motivate their engagement. Here are a few significant tips to increase student participation and learning retention:

Prior to the Class:

Give the students updates and set clear expectations, using the announcement section of your course before the first virtual class.

Consider providing easy guidelines about Zoom features including collaboration tools, breakout rooms, multi-sharing, polling, chat rooms, invited Q&A, the whiteboard, and the raise hand feature. Also, ask the students to practice using Zoom features prior to the first class and explain how you would like to use the features during the course delivery.

Explain what rules and norms will be adopted in Zoom online classes. Ask the students to mute their microphones unless they are speaking, and turn on their video (they can use Zoom's virtual background to improve their privacy).

Decide about when you want the students to engage in chat and communicate this with them. If necessary, ask the facilitator to enable its use only at discrete times.

When pre-recording the lectures, consider stand-alone videos of about 10 to 15 minutes long that focus on one or two key concepts only. Deliver the information with visually engaging concepts and integrating graphics, images, or animation. This will encourage students to pay closer attention to video lectures and consequently enhance their learning experience.

Add interactive open-ended questions to the lecture recordings, ask the students to reflect on them before class and share their understanding/answers with the entire class during the in-class sessions.

During the Class:

Take time to promote divergent questions that promote critical thinking skills and ask if anyone has any questions or more thoughts before jumping to the next topic or shifting between discussion topics.

When promoting comments or reactions, give the students a minute to utilize reactions and record their reflections.

To foster student-student interaction, use the chat tool or the Zoom's breakout room feature (either pre-assign or automatically assign participants into groups).

If required, ask the facilitator to choose a few questions asked in chat rooms for you to answer before moving to the next point.

Use warm calling rather than cold calling. Cold calling could result in further alienation and consequently less inclination to attend the classes in the following weeks. It would be a good idea to give a few students a heads up so they prepare for a one-minute speech about their opinions on the topics covered in the online discussion forums. Alternatively, send a private message to the students before calling on them and ask if they are ready to discuss a question.