

BYU-IDAHO

ONLINE INSTRUCTION HANDBOOK



BYU
IDAHO

Online Learning

INSTRUCTOR TRAINING

Table of Contents [\(click to navigate\)](#)

1.	Welcome to BYU-Idaho	4
2.	The History of Online Learning at BYU-Idaho	5
3.	BYU-Idaho's Mission Statement	8
4.	BYU-Idaho Institutional Framework	8
5.	Personal Honor: the BYU-Idaho Honor Code	10
5.1.	Integrity	11
5.2.	Willing Obedience	11
5.3.	Spiritual Strength.....	11
5.4.	Central to Our Lives	11
5.5.	Become Like the Savior.....	11
6.	The BYU-Idaho Learning Model	13
7.	Preparing Disciple Leaders	15
7.1.	“A Steady Upward Course,” President Henry B. Eyring,	15
7.2.	“Disciple Preparation Center,” Elder David A. Bednar	15
7.3.	Inaugural Address, Elder David A. Bednar	15
7.4.	Inaugural Address, President Kim B. Clark,.....	15
7.5.	Inaugural Address: President Clark G. Gilbert.....	15
8.	BYU-Idaho Online Instructor Standards.....	16
8.1.	Instructor Standard #1: Build Faith in Jesus Christ	17
8.2.	Instructor Standard #2: Develop Relationships with and among Students	19
8.2.1.	Establishing a Strong Presence in the Online Course	20
8.2.2.	Establishing a Strong Presence in Online Class Discussion Boards	21
8.2.3.	Respond Clearly, Respectfully, and Promptly to all Student Correspondence.....	24
8.2.4.	Cultivate a Student Community that Follows the Learning Model....	30
8.3.	Instructor Standard #3: Inspire a Love for Learning	35
8.3.1.	Demonstrate High Love and High Expectations	35
8.3.2.	Challenge Students to Think Critically.....	36
8.3.3.	Cultivate an Environment Where Learners Teach One Another.....	38
8.3.4.	Express Enthusiasm for the Subject Matter and Demonstrate Continual Growth in Related Discipline.....	43
8.4.	Instructor Standard #4: Embrace University Citizenship	45
8.4.1.	Uphold the University’s Mission and Honor Code, and Exemplify the Spirit of Ricks	45
8.4.2.	Actively Participate in Teaching Groups.....	46

8.4.3. Improve BYU-Idaho Online Programs.....	46
8.4.4. Review Communications and Respond Promptly to Administrative Inquiries	47
8.5. Instructor Standard #5: Seek Development Opportunities	49
8.5.1. Learn and Effectively Implement Trustworthy Facilitation and Teaching Skills	49
8.5.2. Master Tools that Enable Effective Communication and Promote Learning Online.....	50
8.5.3. Increase Content Knowledge, Depth, and Expertise in Respective Discipline	50
9. Appendix: Additional Resources.....	52
9.1. Disability Services	52
9.2. Student Services.....	52



1. Welcome to BYU-Idaho

Welcome to BYU-Idaho Online. You have joined BYU-Idaho online instruction at an exciting time of growth and change as the reach and influence of this work is extending throughout the world. We are glad that you have joined us in this important effort.

This Online Instruction Handbook is designed as a valuable resource to help you prepare and progress during your new instructor training and beyond as you teach online courses at BYU-Idaho. The information contained here will help you understand the history of online learning at BYU-Idaho as well as the foundational elements of the University's Mission, Framework, and Learning Model. Here you will find seminal addresses from church and university leaders who have helped direct the vision of BYU-Idaho over the past decades. You will learn about the important work at BYU-Idaho of not only teaching students but preparing disciple leaders who will have influence throughout the world. You will learn about the BYU-Idaho Online Instructor Standards and the best practices that support those standards.

We hope this Handbook will be an enjoyable and useful resource as you teach online at BYU-Idaho.





2. The History of Online Learning at BYU-Idaho

It's difficult to identify a precise date of birth for Pathway and online learning at BYU-Idaho, but with hindsight their roots can clearly be traced through President Bednar and President Eyring all the way back to Jacob Spori, the first principal of the institution that preceded Ricks College and BYU-Idaho. In fact, it was on the very day the Bannock Stake Academy was created (November 12, 1888) that Spori audaciously declared, "The seeds we are planting today will grow and become mighty oaks, and their branches will run all over the earth." For the next eight decades, there was no reason to believe Spori's words would be fulfilled by anything other than students serving missions throughout the world and a relatively small number of international students coming to the Rexburg campus.

Over the years Ricks College grew dramatically, but in 1971 it was still a junior college serving just a few thousands students drawn primarily from Idaho. Against that backdrop, comments made by Ricks' new 38-year-old president, Henry B. Eyring, at his inauguration were just as audacious as were Spori's 1888 comments:

Finally, I believe that the community which education should serve is the whole world. . . .

Just as our obligation is to our local students, to prepare them to serve the world, we must also find ways for this college to serve young people whose needs are shaped by a great variety of cultures and situations, and who may not be able to come to this campus We must serve a world community.

Rick's College would become a "mighty oak" . . . [that] will reach around the world to bless many more than the students who can come to the campus. We will find direct ways to move the blessings of education—the struggle for perfection—from this campus out into the service and lives of men and women everywhere.

Twenty-seven years later, with Ricks College still a two-year institution, then President David A. Bednar stated in his 1998 inaugural address:

New technologies, innovative pedagogies, and more sophisticated students are challenging us to rethink and reevaluate many of our most fundamental assumptions about the process of learning and teaching. . . . It will be necessary for us at Ricks College to serve ever better the thousands of students we have on campus while simultaneously reaching out to bless the lives of tens of thousands of young Latter-day Saints throughout the world. We have an ever increasing responsibility to use the resources of this great campus to assist in the building of the kingdom of God in all the world. . . .

All worthy youth of the Church deserve a Ricks College experience, yet an increasingly smaller percentage of them will ever have that opportunity. . . . We must learn how to assist and bless institute students and other LDS youth in Rhode Island and Rome while effectively serving our students on campus in Rexburg.

Two years later, in June, 2000, President Gordon B. Hinckley announced that Ricks College would become a four-year university called BYU-Idaho. Embedded in that announcement was a statement that didn't get much attention at the time: "BYU-Idaho will operate on an expanded year-round basis, incorporating innovative calendaring and scheduling *while also taking advantage of advancements in technology* that will enable the four-year institution to serve more students."

Five years later, in his 2005 inaugural address, President Kim B. Clark began to outline the potential of BYU-Idaho and its educational possibilities:

The second great imperative is to make a BYU-Idaho education available to many more of the young people of the Church. . . . As we do so, I am convinced that we will find new ways to use information technology to reach more students and to deepen the learning experience of those we touch. In a day not far from now, we will be able to break down the barriers of time and space and connect our students on internships or between semesters to the university and to each other and create outstanding, interactive education experiences. . . . This capacity to educate effectively across time and space will allow us to leverage the capacity of the university and reach many more young people. . . .

It may come through educational activities and programs initiated by the Church-in wards and branches, in stakes, and in seminaries and institutes. . . .

Two years later, President Clark began assembling a team that would oversee the development and implementation of the online initiative to "serve more students," "reduce the relative cost," and "increase the quality of the learning experience." Clark Gilbert, Alan Young, and Peter Williams were all instrumental in the creation and

development of the online courses program at BYU-Idaho. Soon, JD Griffith was on board to develop the Pathway program that would serve students age 18 to 30 who “typically did not attend college.” With the program’s planning and development guided by Rob Eaton, President Clark, and President Henry B. Eyring, the Pathway program was launched, in conjunction with Seminaries and Institutes, in the fall of 2009. There were approximately 50 students enrolled in the new program.

Following an impression that came during the October 2009 General Conference, President Clark began seeking Board approval to expand the fledgling Pathway program internationally. Board approval came in April, 2010 and the first international Pathway sites were started in Puebla, Mexico and Accra, Ghana. In May, 2011, the Board approved the proposal for Pathway students over the age of 30, and “by Spring 2013, 52 percent of Pathway students were over 30 years old.”

The BYU-Idaho Fall semester enrollment reports show the result of the inspired events that have lead to the beginnings of the BYU-Idaho online program where continued growth is expected:

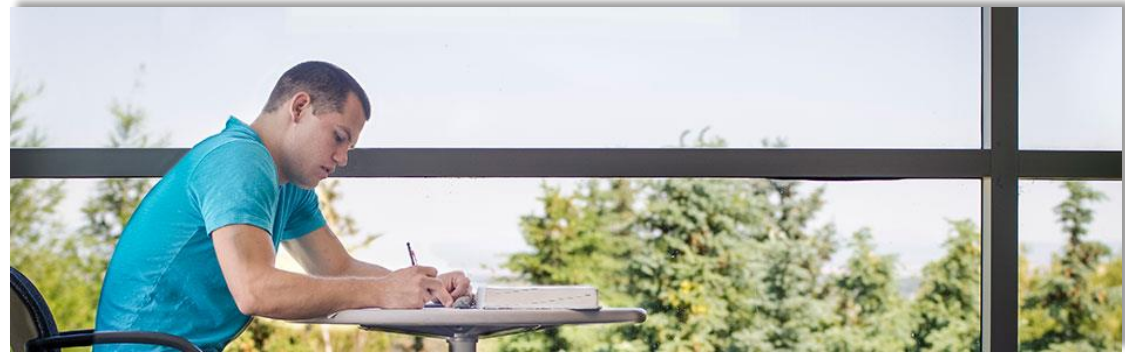
“Enrollment in the university's online courses and programs continues to grow, making a BYU-Idaho education available to a greater number of students across the United States and around the world. The number of enrolled students not on campus during Fall Semester 2013, including online and Pathway students, is 11,987. For Fall Semester 2012 that number was 6,882.”

Three years later, in the fall of 2016, significant growth in the online program is apparent in the enrollment report: Enrollment in BYU-Idaho's online courses and degree programs is also growing rapidly, with the university continuing to serve more students off campus than on campus. The number of online students, including Pathway, for Fall Semester 2016 is 26,864, an increase of 13.4 percent over last fall's comparable online student enrollment of 23,691.

(Content: “A Brief History of Online and Pathway” and the BYUI website, “Online Learning: Extending and Deepening the BYU-Idaho Experience”).

Additional Resources:

- [“History of BYU-Idaho”](#) (to access a history of the school and surrounding area)
- [“Our Heritage”](#)
- [“A New Kind of University”](#)



3. BYU-Idaho's Mission Statement

BYU-Idaho is affiliated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Its Mission is to:

1. Build testimonies of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and encourage living its principles.
2. Provide a quality education for students of diverse interests and abilities.
3. Prepare students for lifelong learning, for employment, and for their roles as citizens and parents.
4. Maintain a wholesome academic, cultural, social, and spiritual environment.

Additional Resources:

[“Our Mission”](#)

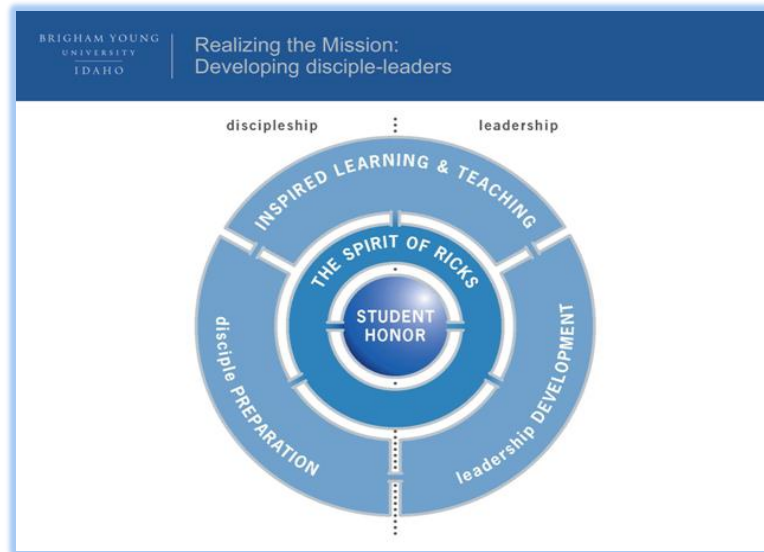
4. BYU-Idaho Institutional Framework

The BYU-Idaho Institutional Framework is directly related to the BYU-Idaho Mission and is centered on Personal Honor while also focusing on the Spirit of Ricks and defining principles of discipleship, leadership, and teaching.

Explaining the underlying principles of the framework, former President Kim B. Clark said, "The development of disciple leaders is the focus of every aspect of BYU-Idaho. It is important for us to understand that as the University is pursuing this

mission in the 21st Century, we are developing generations of disciple leaders for the Church and for the world in the dispensation of the fullness of time." (All-Employee Meeting, May 11, 2007)

The following diagram illustrates the components of the Framework where Personal Honor, The Spirit of Ricks, Inspired Learning and Teaching, disciple Preparation, and leadership Development interact together to form the character of BYU-Idaho.



Inspired learning and teaching is an essential component of the BYU-Idaho Framework, and it is a critical aspect of being an effective online instructor for BYU-Idaho. President Clark has stated, "Inspired learning and teaching is the symbolic keystone to the overall campus experience. It brings discipleship preparation and leadership development together in one great whole" (President Kim B. Clark, All-employee Meeting, May 11, 2007).

As you learn the basic skills for online facilitation, you will be able to see how those skills fit into context with the BYU-Idaho Framework.

Additional Resources:

- ["Realizing the Mission of BYU-Idaho: Developing Disciple-leaders"](#)



5. Personal Honor: the BYU-Idaho Honor Code

Personal Honor is at the center of the BYU-Idaho institutional framework. President Kim B. Clark notes that Personal Honor “represents the consecration, obedience, and faithfulness of everyone who works and studies [at BYU-Idaho . . .]. Obedience and faith create an environment in which the Holy Ghost can minister. This ministry is what we call the Spirit of Ricks” (“Personal Honor,” BYU-Idaho all-employee meeting, January 14, 2010).

BYU-Idaho’s Personal Honor statement has five principles:

- 1) Personal honor is integrity in fulfilling commitments, responsibilities, and covenants.
- 2) Personal honor begins with willing obedience and is fully developed when we consistently govern ourselves by true principles.
- 3) Personal honor increases spiritual strength through the ministry of the Holy Ghost.
- 4) Personal honor is central to every aspect of our lives, including the BYU-Idaho experience.
- 5) Personal honor brings us joy and happiness; deepens our desire to love, serve, and lift others; and ultimately helps us to become more like the Savior.

Application of Personal Honor in the online classroom comes when you are eligible to be guided by the Holy Ghost in acts of inspired learning and teaching. Because BYU-Idaho is an LDS Church institution, administrators “select employees and students who voluntarily live the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Living by those standards is a condition of employment and admission . . . By enrolling at BYU-Idaho, or accepting appointment as an employee, individuals show their commitment to observe the Honor Code standards approved by the Board of Trustees ‘at all times ... and in all places’ (Mosiah 18:9)” (“University Standards”).

The following breakdown of the five principles of personal honor offers examples of how these principles might apply in your role as facilitator in your online classroom.

5.1. Integrity

Personal honor is integrity in fulfilling commitments, responsibilities, and covenants.

- Application of this principle in the online classroom might include attending to student needs, meeting grading deadlines, submitting reports on time, and following the Instructor Standard guidelines without fail.

5.2. Willing Obedience

Personal honor begins with willing obedience and is fully developed when we consistently govern ourselves by true principles.

- Willing obedience as an online instructor indicates a consistent desire to facilitate the course with strict adherence to the best practices and Instructor Standards. Actively engaging the course, assisting the students in their learning processes, and participating in teaching groups are ways to show willing obedience when facilitating online.

5.3. Spiritual Strength

Personal honor increases spiritual strength through the ministry of the Holy Ghost.

- Facilitating through the ministry of the Holy Ghost is an essential component of the BYU-Idaho online classroom. The Lord has said, in D&C 42: 14, “the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith; and if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach.” This instruction is clear and guides us in our facilitation in the BYU-Idaho online classroom.

5.4. Central to Our Lives

Personal honor is central to every aspect of our lives, including the BYU-Idaho experience.

- Being central to every aspect of our lives allows us to live lives of personal honor not only when we are engaged in our online classrooms but when we are away from the classroom as well. A BYU-Idaho online instructor who lives a life of personal honor will be more receptive to the Spirit while facilitating his/her course.

5.5. Become Like the Savior

Personal honor brings us joy and happiness; deepens our desire to love, serve, and lift others; and ultimately helps us to become more like the Savior.

- This principle has roots in Alma 53:20 and the phrase referring to the 2000 Stripling Warriors who “were true at all times in whatsoever things they were entrusted.” President Clark has said, “I believe BYU-Idaho should be a living model of the highest standards of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Being part of this

community, whether as an employee or as a student, should be itself a tremendous educational experience in the principles of the gospel and the power of personal honor” (“Personal Honor,” All-employee Meeting, January 14, 2010).

BYU-Idaho Online Instructors embrace and exemplify the standards of the gospel of Jesus Christ and uphold the University’s Principles of Personal Honor and Honor Code.

Additional Resources:

- [BYUI Honor Code for Employees](#)
- [Student Honor](#) Office page



6. The BYU-Idaho Learning Model

The BYU-Idaho Learning Model is a key component of every BYU-Idaho course, online and on campus. The foundational assumption of the Learning Model is that everyone is a learner and a teacher and that learning is the result of study and faith.

The Learning Model principles and processes enable inspired learning and teaching and support the mission and framework of BYU-Idaho to develop disciple-leaders.

Learning Model Principles require that learners and teachers at BYU-Idaho:

1. exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as a principle of action and power;
2. understand that true teaching is done by and with the Holy Ghost;
3. lay hold upon the word of God—as found in the holy scriptures and in the words of the prophets—in all disciplines;
4. act for themselves and accept responsibility for learning and teaching;
5. love, serve, and teach one another.

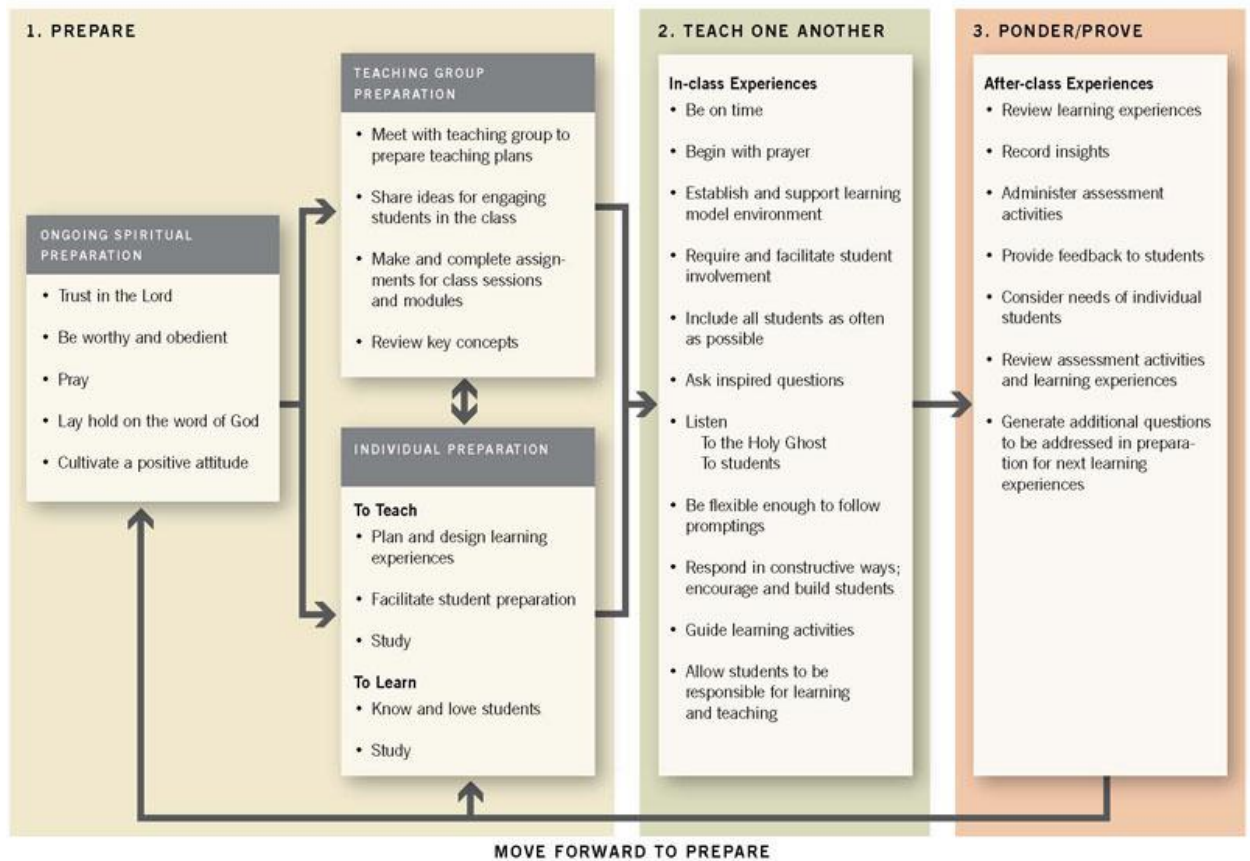
Learning Model Principles are enabled by the **Learning Model Processes**:

1. Prepare
2. Teach One Another
3. Ponder/Prove

Review the Learning Model Teacher Process (below) to determine how to prepare alongside your students. (To access the full-page version of this process, go to the last page of the Learning Model document; use the link below):

BYU-Idaho Learning Model: Teacher Process

Figure 2



Access the full text of the [BYU-Idaho Learning model here](#):

Access the [BYU-Idaho Learning Model website here](#):

Additional Resources:

- [Learning Model Principles and Processes](#)
- [University Learning and Teaching website](#)

7. Preparing Disciple Leaders

Under the guidance of church and university leaders and with the support of the BYU-Idaho Mission, Framework, and Learning Model, Online instructors at BYU-Idaho participate in the important work of developing disciple leaders in their day-to-day teaching activities. The purpose of this university is “to prepare young people for the marvelous work the Lord has in store for them. Two companion principles define this mission: discipleship and leadership. The development of ‘disciple-leaders’ is the focus of every aspect of BYU-Idaho. We are preparing young people to be disciples of the Savior and effective leaders in their homes, in the Church, and in the communities where they live” (“BYU-Idaho’s Mission,” BYU-Idaho).

The following talks are seminal addresses in the history of BYU-Idaho and should be well known and frequently studied by all BYU-Idaho Online Instructors (click on the title to be directed to the address).

[7.1. “A Steady Upward Course,” President Henry B. Eyring,](#)

[7.2. “Disciple Preparation Center,” Elder David A. Bednar](#)

[7.3. Inaugural Address, Elder David A. Bednar](#)

[7.4. Inaugural Address, President Kim B. Clark,](#)

[7.5. Inaugural Address: President Clark G. Gilbert](#)

Additional Resources:

To learn more about President Clark G. Gilbert, click [here](#).

To learn more about past Ricks College and BYU-Idaho presidents, click [here](#).

8. BYU-Idaho Online Instructor Standards

Online instructors at BYU-Idaho embody the Spirit of Ricks. As consecrated teachers and learners, they build faith in Jesus Christ, develop relationships with and among their students, they inspire a love for learning, embrace university citizenship, and continually seek development opportunities.

The BYU-Idaho Online Instructor Standards are baseline requirements for teaching online at BYU-Idaho. Your initial application of the Instructor Standards will help you facilitate your course according to the approved guidelines. As you become more comfortable with your students and your classroom, you will be able to find ways to do more than the minimum standard as you reach out in a spirit of inspired learning and teaching. The Online Instructor Standards will remain your foundational guidelines, but you will develop your own style of teaching that will enhance your personal facilitation skills and allow you to have a greater impact on your students.

The five **BYUI Online Instructor Standards** are:

1. Build Faith in Jesus Christ
2. Develop Relationships with and among Students
3. Inspire a Love for Learning
4. Embrace University Citizenship
5. Seek Development Opportunities

Following is a brief discussion of each Online Instructor Standard accompanied by online course facilitation skills applicable to that Standard. It is intended that each online instructor at BYU-Idaho will pursue a personal study of the Standards and develop strength in each area. Additionally, each Online Instructor Standard will be discussed and developed in depth in Teaching Group conversations and in the Online Instructor Community. Personal application of each Online Instructor Standard should be accomplished with prayer and faith toward improving online facilitation skills and ongoing personal and professional development.



8.1. Instructor Standard #1: Build Faith in Jesus Christ

1) Build Faith in Jesus Christ

Demonstrate that faith is a principle of action and power, including building “testimonies of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.”

1. Apply gospel insights in class discussions
2. Bear testimony to students and invite them to act as disciples of Christ
3. Seek and follow the Spirit in teaching
4. Never do anything to undermine students’ faith
5. Embrace principles of personal honor, and exemplify the standards of the gospel of Jesus Christ

As the First Principle of the Gospel, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the “foundation of all righteousness (“Lectures on Faith,” p. 1) and should be the fundamental element in all that we do, including working in our roles as online instructors for BYU-Idaho. Application of faith and its inherent doctrines should be tantamount in our interactions with our students and the facilitation of the courses that we teach.

Acknowledging that faith is “the principle of action in spiritual things as well as in temporal” (“Lectures on Faith,” p. 7) will help us understand the role that faith can and should play as we facilitate online courses in secular subjects while simultaneously striving to develop disciple leaders among our students.

Each Online Instructor at BYU-Idaho should pursue a lifelong study and strengthening of faith as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and as a steward over the students and course materials in his or her online classrooms.

Additional Resources:

View President Kim B. Clark's address, ["Building with Faith."](#)

Explore the first Principle of the BYU-Idaho Learning Model, [Faith](#), as a principle of action and power.



8.2. Instructor Standard #2: Develop Relationships with and among Students

2) Develop Relationships With and Among Students

Encourage relationships with students that strengthen opportunities for learning and teaching.

1. Establish a strong presence in the online course
2. Respond clearly, respectfully, and promptly to all student correspondence
3. Cultivate a student community that follows the Learning Model

Developing relationships with and among students requires best online course facilitation practices such as consistent and effective instructor engagement, professional and respectful communication, and establishing and fostering a safe and engaging learning environment. Following are some excellent online instructor best practices that support this Online Instructor Standard to develop relationships with and among students.

Faculty Titles at BYU-Idaho: Official Policy from the University's Faculty Guide (book):

3.3.3 Names and Titles

Remembering students' names and becoming acquainted with them is an ideal way for faculty members to show they care about the students in their classes.

Faculty members are encouraged to ask students to address them as either *Brother* or *Sister*. Faculty members are considered unranked professors. The use of the academic title *Professor of* or *Doctor of* in external communications, including email signatures, is permissible.

8.2.1. Establishing a Strong Presence in the Online Course

BYU-Idaho Online Instructors engage their courses at least five days a week (Monday-Saturday) and establish a strong presence in the classroom by effectively facilitating class discussions and demonstrating Learning Model processes.

Online Learning experts, Rena Palloff and Keith Pratt summarize what they have learned about online students this way: “What the virtual student wants and needs is very clear: communication and feedback, interactivity and a sense of community, and adequate direction and empowerment to carry out the tasks required for the course” (*The Virtual Student* 129-130). Meeting these needs is impossible without a dedicated, engaged instructor.

But what does it mean to be engaged? We are counseled in the scriptures to “be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of [our] own free will” (D&C 58:27). But online instructors are faced with so many tasks. Which are most needful?

Establishing presence in the classroom is a critical practice and is accomplished by using good time management and providing regular course access and activity. Using planning tools, time management strategies, and effective I-Learn tools will allow you to show a strong presence in your classroom. Establish classroom presence by accessing the course daily and engaging regularly in student discussions and activities.

While time spent in a course does not guarantee quality instruction, quality instruction requires, at minimum, regular course access. We ask that instructors engage their courses five days out of the week (Monday-Saturday) and commit 3 to 4 hours a week per credit hour.

We have found that time in the course is most effective as it focuses on three key student needs: contact, feedback, and community building. In practice, maintaining that focus means that instructors manage their time so as to allow active participation in student discussions and other activities, regular feedback on student work, and an active awareness of students’ progress and needs.

If you would like your relationship with students to extend beyond grading their assignments, take the time to provide direct, individual contact.

- **Enhance the contact with students with weekly announcements and Notes from Instructor.** The announcements are the first communication students have with instructors when they access I-Learn, and the Notes from Instructor are the first pages the students see in each weekly lesson. Use these opportunities to connect students to what is going on in the classroom. Post links to news articles or examples of student excellence. Point students to helpful resources or fun commentaries on current course content. Make the

most of these contact resources to build and strengthen your online community.

- **Initiate regular contact to build quality relationships.** Initiate contact more than once a semester by sending each student an e-mail, perhaps at the beginning of the semester, mid-semester, and at the end of the semester for closure. Use information provided in ice-breaking activities to make these e-mails personal. Think about the specific student behind the e-mail address.
- **Instructor Availability vs. “Office Hours.”** In contrast to campus courses, there is no clear distinction in online courses between “class time” and “office hours.” Thus, online adjunct instructors should be available to their students throughout the week, spending their “office hour” responding to student e-mails, making and receiving phone calls, reaching out to struggling students, and engaging in other activities that help them connect with individual online students or student groups. **Online instructors must clearly indicate their contact information and availability to students.** Due to the typical profile and distributed nature of our online student body, a regularly scheduled office hour may be utilized, but is not recommended for most courses.

Make contact count. Contact is limited in an online setting, so each interaction with a student is important. Friendly, professional communication, whether in the Notes from the Instructor, routine e-mails, or discussion board posts set the tone and model relationships for students.

8.2.2. Establishing a Strong Presence in Online Class Discussion Boards

In a traditional classroom, class discussions often center on the instructor. It takes a good facilitator to step aside and turn students to each other. Certainly, some questions require content knowledge and experience in the discipline that students simply don't have. But even in those cases, skilled facilitators can provide students with the necessary context to guide them in the right direction without providing all the answers. In discussions, as in other learning activities, the journey to find answers is often as important as the answers themselves.

Following are several key principles you can use to help students more effectively engage course content and each other.

Ask Effective Questions: A key way to deepen learning is to ask good, well-thought-out questions and then allow students to be responsible for their own thoughts and ideas. There are wonderful examples of this in the scriptures. The Savior often asked questions to encourage people to ponder and apply the principles he taught (see, for example, Matthew 16:13-15, Luke 7:41-42, 3 Nephi 27:27). Consider also how the Spirit of the Lord used questions to guide Nephi when he desired to see the things his

father had seen in the vision of the tree of life (see 1 Nephi 11-14). As a skilled questioner, you can guide students to discover new ideas and to make connections with things they already know. Consider the following guidelines:

- **Plan and write your questions in advance:** It is important to realize that anyone can ask questions, but that not all questions are created equal. Effective questioning requires skill and thought. Build your questions from core concepts you want your students to explore. Often, a single well-structured question can capture all of the main principles or concepts that a given issue or problem offers. A central question is also a way to establish the boundaries of inquiry. Plan and write out your questions in advance, as part of your preparation, so that you can effectively facilitate exploration in Teach-One-Another activities.
- **Use different types of questions:** Think about when you will use different types of questions. Factual questions can be used to establish basic facts and help students recall and recognize information. Yes and no questions can be used to determine a commitment or if someone agrees or disagrees. Otherwise, they have limited use. Questions that prompt deeper thinking usually promote deeper learning. Such questions often begin with words such as what, how, or why.
- **Tie questions to key principles:** Tie your questions to the key principle, concept, or idea. Guide the conversation towards the heart of the issue by asking questions that focus and deepen the topic. Limit central questions to one or two per topic. Questions that help explore the topic are used more frequently, but should still be used thoughtfully and judiciously.
- **Allow students to wrestle and explore.** Once you have carefully planned and asked a question, wait for responses. Allow students to think and explore possible answers. Your job is to articulate the right question. Their job is to take guidance from the question and use it to further their own learning. Don't be so anxious to get a response that you move on after the first halfhearted response or answer the question yourself. If no one responds, it might mean that students are focused on other activities or that they do not understand the question. Find out the reasons and respond accordingly. But, if it is a critical concept, don't give up on them. Help them wrestle through the issue.
- **Ask follow-up questions:** Ask follow up questions to help you understand where the students are in their thinking while at the same time helping to direct their thoughts. Good follow-up questions deepen the learning by pushing the student to deeper analysis. Such questions often seek to move knowledge of facts to comprehension of ideas, and comprehension of ideas to application of wisdom.

- **Actively listen to students:** When students answer, listen to how students respond. Active, engaged listening is an invaluable tool in understanding the learning process of your students. Listen for insights. Listen for misconceptions. Listen for clues on how they are thinking and feeling. Listen.
- **Be open to pursue promptings:** Questioning and listening often lead to unexpected insights and fleeting opportunities to deepen student learning. While preparation is critical and helpful, rigidity is not. It is possible to lock-in to an overly formulaic path for the discussion. Be open to varying your direction and pursue opportunities or promptings of the Spirit as they arise (D&C 50:20). If your discussion is built around key ideas and questions, it can be profitably explored from many directions.
- **Don't Respond to Every Post:** While this may seem a simple matter of survival in a large online class, it's tempting to feel that if you do not respond to every student, he or she will not think you are listening and attentive. Not only is responding to every post unhealthy, it can easily squash discussion as students wait for your response rather than engaging each other—putting the focus squarely back on you, and with it, the responsibility to sustain and develop the discussion.
- **Deepen the Discussion:** A balanced approach is more effective. Resist the urge to respond to the first post and let the discussion develop before chiming in. As you do so, look for ways to deepen the discussion by posting selectively:
 - Identify key underlying assumptions and ask students to re-examine them.
 - Summarize the discussion's main points, identifying contributing students by name, and then ask a follow-up question that leads students to explore the topic or issue in a new or alternate way.
 - Offer an example or brief case and ask students how they would apply the principles they have discussed to this new situation.
 - Identify connections between discussion threads that students have not explored and ask students to respond to each other.
 - Offer an example that seemingly contradicts the current course of thinking and ask students to respond.
 - Ask student with differing views to switch sides of the issue and continue their discussion from different perspectives.
- **Contribute consistently to course discussions.** Students will follow your lead. Set expectations for discussion participation by modeling the kind of participation you would like to see from the students. Participate actively and then encourage students to follow your lead.

8.2.3. Respond Clearly, Respectfully, and Promptly to all Student Correspondence

BYU-Idaho Online Instructors respond clearly and respectfully to students within 24 hours and ensure regular, proactive contact with each student. Clear communication and consistent contact are vital to the success of any online class.

While online courses can employ a wide variety of learning activities, they often favor verbal learners—learners who are adept at gleaning and applying principles from what they read. Students who favor another learning style may become frustrated when nearly all course communication—course content, assignment instructions, and even interaction with peers and the course instructor—is mediated through the written word.

In addition, online learning requires students to take the initiative for their own learning success, a frustration for students who have come to depend on instructors and classmates for guidance and validation. Without weekly face-to-face meetings to reconnect with peers and reinforce course goals and deadlines, they can quickly become isolated and fall behind.

Online learning also strips away the visual cues we rely on to clarify and contextualize communication. Misunderstandings can result as students misinterpret the intent of a post or the tone of an instructor's email. In addition, many online students are engaging in new and unfamiliar technologies—another hurdle to clear communication.

Below, are a few suggestions for incorporating effective online communication into your classroom:

Set Clear Boundaries: One way to establish effective communication in an online classroom is to make the rules about what is and is not acceptable online behavior explicit. Such policies, often referred to as netiquette policies or guidelines, define rules for good online behavior.

They often include expectations for student participation, encourage courtesy and good manners, identify behaviors to avoid—like SHOUTING or bullying—and outline consequences for breaking community rules.

As you create your own class policy, remember to keep the list brief and professional. You may want to introduce these guidelines as part of the first class discussion or post the guidelines as part of the first class discussion or post the guidelines in your Notes from Instructor space and ask students to comment on their importance.

Another option is to ask students to formulate the netiquette policy for the classroom. Ask them to discuss and identify the guidelines that should govern their interaction.

Practice Professionalism: It is very easy to misinterpret the tone and intent of written communication, particularly in the quick, often informal world of e-mail correspondence. To help alleviate such misunderstandings, try sandwiching whatever information or comment you have between two positive statements.

- Start out with a positive affirmation—“Great question” or “I’m glad you contacted me” or “I can see what you mean.”
- Respond to the question or concern in a brief, professional paragraph. If you find it will take you several paragraphs to respond, a quick phone call may be more effective.
- End on a positive note—“Thank you for contacting me” or “Let me know if you have further questions” or “Keep up the good work.”

Never leave students in doubt that you are listening and that you care. Since they can’t see your face or hear your voice, positive affirmations coupled with professional confidence and reassurance go a long way in making sure you are not misunderstood.

Finally, remember that presentation matters. A student once wrote to thank an instructor for helping her improve her “riting.” The presentation undermined the message entirely. We all make mistakes but reading the finished message aloud and completing a quick spell check will help you avoid unnecessary errors. In many cases, misspelled words are identified and underlined for you automatically; but if that is not the case, use a spell-check tool to check your spelling.

Defuse Conflict: Student frustrations, whether directed at you or the course, may sometimes erupt in inappropriate discussion board posts or personal e-mail attacks. While we hope such instances are rare, it is important to know how to respond when a student lashes out at you or another student.

While it may be tempting to lash back at students who make unfounded accusations or appear to be actively working to undermine the course, you have a small window of opportunity to defuse the conflict before it escalates and affects the entire tenor and culture of your online class.

Of course, each situation is unique. Counsel with your teaching group as necessary, and follow these guidelines when addressing conflict.

- **Don’t respond to personal attacks publicly.** While a disruptive student may post cutting remarks on a public discussion board, responding in kind will only escalate the conflict and may draw other students into the fray. Instead, respond with a general acknowledgement of the students’ concerns with a note that you will respond more fully in a private e-mail. This makes it clear that private grievances should be handled privately while acknowledging the students’ concerns.

- **Respond to the content of the complaint rather than the personal attack.** This tip is tied to the previous suggestion. It is easy to get sucked into trading accusations, particularly when you feel a student is attacking you personally without cause. Resist the urge to defend yourself and, instead, focus on the content of the complaint.
- **Never call a student out in public.** While it is good practice to ask students specific questions to deepen their learning, if a student is combative or belligerent, respond to the behavior in general terms. For example, if a student engages in a heated discussion with another student and steps over the line, a quick post to remind everyone to conform to the netiquette policies you've adopted and to refrain from personal attacks will send a clear message that the conduct is unacceptable without engaging the student in public. A private e-mail to the student will reinforce expectations.
- **Show that you are listening.** Even when a student is combative, showing that you are listening and understand his or her concerns can go a long way to defusing potential conflict. Active listening techniques like acknowledging the student's concerns and restating them will often help alleviate the student's anger or frustration. Many times, conflict is the result of miscommunication, and offering students the chance to enter back into a civil dialogue with you will resolve the conflict.
- **Remain professional.** Use a friendly, professional tone in all correspondence. Don't engage in rebutting personal attacks; do respond to specific course related concerns.
- **Offer choices.** Help students explore their options. If a student is angry about recent grades, help her explore options for additional help—tutoring services, online study groups, a change in study habits—without capitulating to demands that fair grades be altered.
- **Keep a record of all correspondence and keep your Teaching Group Leader informed.** As soon as a student becomes combative or breaks with the code of conduct that you have established for your class, keep a record of all online and e-mail correspondence and inform your teaching group leader of the situation. Make copies of any offensive discussion board posts before deleting them.
- **Use campus resources.** If you find you cannot resolve the conflict, do not continue to engage the student further. Contact your teaching group leader. The student may need to be removed from the class and/or referred to the Honor Code Office.

Provide Timely Feedback: BYU-Idaho Online Instructors post grades within seven days of the assignment submission and provide appropriate, substantive feedback to individuals, classes, and administrators.

With feedback, timing is everything. Because students have become accustomed to immediate online response or perhaps because they may feel more isolated and insecure without face-to-face contact, online students crave prompt, helpful feedback.

Much as instructors don't know if the online students have questions unless they communicate those questions in a discussion board post or e-mail message, online students don't know if the instructor has reviewed assignments or seen their work unless he or she offers some type of feedback. Without that feedback, students may well disengage from the course.

This need for timely feedback poses a challenge in the online classroom because instructors often must respond to multiple student tasks each week. How does an online instructor balance the need for prompt feedback with limited time and resources?

Following are three principles for providing timely, substantive feedback: Remembering the One, Varying Feedback Strategies, and Offering Selective Feedback.

Remember the One: Demonstrate kindness and respect when responding to student work.

Feedback is always personal to the one receiving it. It's often easy to lose sight of the person behind the product, particularly when faced with a virtual pile of student work to assess. John C. Bean, who teaches writing across the curriculum workshops and is the author of *Engaging Ideas* uses the following quote from William Zinsser in his writing workshops: "The writing teacher's ministry is not just to the words but to the person who wrote the words" (239).

Though Bean works with writing, the principle is universal. We can't lose sight of the individuals we teach. In previous units, we have discussed how easy it is to be misinterpreted. Here are some tips for building students through feedback.

- **Accentuate the positive.** While it's natural to assume that we need to point out errors in order for students to improve, the opposite is often true. I have a colleague who only writes positive comments on writing assignments. At first, I wondered how students could possibly improve if they were unaware of the weaknesses in their writing. Yet his positive comments actually encourage students to bring all their writing to that higher level. He sets their sights high, and they rise to meet the challenge. Now while it may not be practical to adopt my colleague's approach, it is a good practice to offer more positive comments than negative. Another colleague, drawing on her recent studies in interpersonal communications, suggests reversing the usual order of feedback. Whereas she once made several positive comments and then ended with suggestions for change, she now begins with suggested improvements and ends with several positive comments. Simply shifting the emphasis has had a significant impact in the way her students perceive her feedback.
- **Be selective.** When we're in the mode of identifying and correcting errors, we value thoroughness—we want to identify all the errors. But experienced instructors recognize that most of us can only focus on one or two key

suggestions for improvement at a time. The impetus is well-intentioned. We want to be helpful—to identify any impediment to student progress—but too much feedback can be as damaging as too little. One or two specific comments that help students focus on what is most significant will often lead to far greater improvement than a comprehensive list of all errors.

- **Be Kind.** We may have seen an error repeatedly—perhaps a dozen times in the last half hour of grading—but it’s the first for each student. Some students may be facing challenges away from the classroom that prevent them from doing their best work or leave them particularly vulnerable to unkind words or criticism. While we can’t lower course standards or alter grades based on personal circumstance, we can be kind and respectful. We can address students by name, assume they are doing their best, and reach out to strengthen and lift them. One online instructor keeps a copy of the course photo directory posted in her work area to remind her of the individuals behind all the names in her course.

Vary Feedback Strategies: Employ a mix of feedback strategies that can save time while offering substantive feedback for students.

- **Use Class-Wide Feedback.** Many instructors do this naturally in face-to-face classrooms but neglect it in an online setting when it may seem more natural to interact with each student individually. Class-wide feedback allows instructors to identify trends in student performance and offer feedback designed to strengthen the class as a whole. This approach has the benefit of reaching a large number of students and is often less threatening than individual feedback. Students have the chance to see their own work in the context of the performance of the class as a whole. Here are four ways online instructors might use this type of feedback:
 - 1) **Class-Wide Announcement.** Instructors can use a class-wide announcement to review a recent exam or project, identifying areas that need improvement across the entire class while offering specific praise. Keep in mind, however, that feedback posted in an announcement should be brief. If you find you want to offer in-depth feedback, use one of the other strategies.
 - 2) **Model Feedback.** This is a strategy John C. Bean suggests. Identify an excellent student example and, with the student’s permission, share it with the rest of the class. Point out what makes the model assignment effective and use positive feedback to reinforce key principles.
 - 3) **Narrated PowerPoint or Screencast.** This approach is particularly helpful if you are teaching a discipline that lends itself to more visual explication. For example, rather than posting individual comments in a math exam to help students improve, you might opt to post two or three problems that most students found difficult in a PowerPoint presentation and narrate a brief explanation that provides the necessary feedback. Or, you may opt to use screen capturing software like Jing to record your

work as you work through the sample problems. While the initial presentation may take time to prepare, it can be adapted and reused in successive semesters and provides students with what, for many, is a more effective form of feedback.

- 4) **Podcast Response.** Share class-wide feedback in a podcast. A podcast allows students to hear your voice, and some instructors find they can offer much more focused, substantive feedback in a recorded podcast than in written comments.
- **Use Rubrics or Grading Scales.** Rubrics or grading scales identify the criteria instructors will use to evaluate an assignment. Analytic rubrics assign a score or point value to each grading criterion while holistic rubrics look at the quality of the work as a whole, generating a general description for different levels of execution. Some grading scales reflect specific requirements unique to an assignment while others identify key characteristics shared by all assignments of that type. Grading scales can save instructors a great deal of time because the feedback on the assignment is embedded in the grading criteria.

Many assignments in your courses will include built-in rubrics. If rubrics are not provided for key assignments, you may wish to request them. Work with your teaching group and course improvement council to create rubrics that will be available in all sections of the course. The Rubrics article cited in the resources box at the end of this unit includes sample rubrics for review.

- **Framed Responses.** Using Framed responses (identified as Template feedback in the I-Learn gradebook) works well if you would like to offer more personalized comments but find that many students require the same general feedback. In a framed response, you create feedback that applies to most of the students and then personalize it with specific detail for each individual's work. The repeated feedback serves as a frame for the individual comments you would like to add, and you can save, adapt, and reuse the framed responses.

Online instructors can't respond to each student activity or assignment with lengthy, personalized feedback. But even if they could, it would be unwise to do so. Too much feedback can quickly shift the responsibility for learning from the student to the instructor. Using a variety of feedback strategies can save time while still offering students the guidance they need.

Offer Selective Feedback: Manage how and when students receive feedback. While students often see feedback as a justification for grades, it's actually a powerful tool that informs all aspects of the learning process.

- **Separate Feedback from Grades.** One way to emphasize the role of feedback in improving performance is to separate feedback from the grade.

So, for example, students might receive scores on their exams, but rather than embedding feedback in response to an exam—which will be interpreted as a justification or explanation for a specific score—instructors can post scores in the grade center and then offer class-wide feedback designed to help students better apply key principles. Removed from the grade, the feedback becomes a means to improve rather than an explanation for missing points.

- **Be Selective.** Provide the feedback that will most benefit students. During any given week, a student might complete three or four different tasks. As an example, in one week students might participate in small group discussions, post an entry in a journal, take a lesson quiz, and submit a proposal for a research project. While a student might benefit from feedback on all these tasks, focusing on the proposal makes sense. Instructors can offer feedback at this stage that can have an impact on future performance.
- **Manage Students.** Clearly communicate what type of feedback students can expect. Drawing on the previous example, letting students know you will be participating in the discussion, that you will post feedback in the gradebook on the proposal, and that you will offer some general feedback on their quiz results in the class-wide announcement will help manage their expectations. It also helps them recognize and value different types of feedback.

Students do need feedback each week, but they don't need individual feedback on every task they complete. Varying feedback strategies will offer several options for providing students with timely, substantive feedback while allowing you to manage your time and resources efficiently.

8.2.4. Cultivate a Student Community that Follows the Learning Model

An important aspect of online course facilitation is building and maintaining a strong community where students feel comfortable contributing and where testimonies can be nurtured and strengthened. There is no substitute for a strong online presence that welcomes and nurtures student involvement and fosters ongoing collaboration and learning. Strong online communities encourage the type of active learning described by Elder David A. Bednar:

Are you and I agents who act and seek learning by faith, or are we waiting to be taught and acted upon? Are the students we serve acting and seeking to learn by faith, or are they waiting to be taught and acted upon? Are you and I encouraging and helping those whom we serve to seek learning by faith? You and I and our students are to be anxiously engaged in asking, seeking, and knocking. (David A. Bednar, Address to CES Religious Educators, February 2, 2006)

While we know that committed instructors can easily dedicate more than the prescribed time to their courses, we prefer instructors focus on those tasks most meaningful to students and most instrumental in their success and manage their time efficiently so that the coursework does not become overwhelming.

Susan Ko and Steve Rossen observe “that many who teach online automatically fall into a pattern of very intense instructor-generated activity and a great deal of one-on-one interaction. In fact, the workload issue is usually the number one complaint of first-time online instructors” (*Teaching Online* 220-221). This temptation to invest inordinate time in a course is aggravated by the ease and rapidity of one-to-one communication in discussion boards, through e-mail, and even synchronous chats. While individual interaction with students can be gratifying, it can quickly sap your strength and lead to burn-out.

Because online students can feel isolated from classmates, students who might normally turn to peers for help or reassurance will turn to their instructors. While we want each student to have a positive experience in the course, if each student relies wholly on you for instruction, support, and feedback, you will quickly become overwhelmed. Addressing the needs of the one *is* vital, but instructors can do that best by setting clear expectations that reinforce learning model principles and using course management tools effectively.

Work in the first few weeks of the course to establish the course itself as the hub for communication. Each course will include a Notes from Instructor space where you can communicate frequently with the class; you will also have general discussion forum options for student questions or comments. Ask students to post their course related questions to that community board before contacting you. During the first few weeks of class, you will most likely need to reinforce this rule. If a student sends you a general question connected to the course, compliment him or her on the question and then ask that the student post it to the course discussion board so that everyone else in the course can review it and your response.

To establish a student community in your classroom and create an effective Learning Model culture, you may find the following suggestions useful:

- **Turn technical problems over to technical support.** You are certainly the first line of contact for technical issues directly related to the course (broken course links, inaccessible assignments, or missing course content.) However, students often have technical questions that are not directly tied to the course. You may well be able to answer student questions about software applications or other technical problems, but such issues can often be very time consuming. If the technical issue is unique to the student, refer him or her to the university Helpdesk for assistance.
- **Ask students to turn first to each other.** In a Learning Model culture, questions belong to the community rather than to the individual. Ask students

to post their questions on the course's general discussion board. Respond to questions that you alone can address, but make it clear that other questions belong to the community. Reinforce the importance of teaching one another in this forum by referring students who contact you directly to post their questions online unless they are of a personal nature or require immediate attention.

Compliment students who respond to other students' questions or concerns, and refer to important posts from this community board in weekly announcements. Do all that you can do to draw students into the class and get them interacting with each other. You will not only lower the number of e-mails that require a personal response from you, you will also strengthen the students' ties to each other and reinforce the importance of teaching one another.

Similarly, if students are working together in a collaborative group, ask them to turn to each other with questions before they contact you. If they do need your assistance, ask that the group leader contact you with those questions, reinforcing the group process.

- **Strengthen class unity and reinforce effective collaboration.** You can help student relationships to grow by encouraging effective collaboration. You can offer extra credit to groups who complete small “fun” projects—like making contact via a text message chain or meeting using Skype, virtual classrooms, or other means—tasks that build relationships in the group and facilitate ongoing effective collaboration without taking a great deal of time. In addition, you can reinforce effective collaboration by using discussion boards and announcements to point out what certain groups are doing well. This fosters a sense of unity and accomplishment, and gives other groups ideas on how to be successful.
- **Set clear expectations for instructor interaction.** Let students know how quickly you will respond to e-mail or return feedback on major assignments. You should respond to emails and questions within 24 hours. Set clear boundaries. For example, you may want to make it clear that you do not respond to e-mail over the weekend and that you do not engage the course on Sundays. In addition, don't make a practice of responding immediately to every e-mail message you receive. Students' expectations are set by your practice. If you respond to student e-mails within the hour they are sent, students will begin to expect that kind of immediate response. Instead, set a daily time each day to read and respond to e-mail and then resist the temptation to access and respond to e-mail throughout the day.
- **Set the tone for the course in your pre-semester email.** Introduce your course in an inviting way. A friendly welcome that communicates your

interest in the course and your concern for students opens the door for further contact and invites ongoing communication

- **Use the Notes from the Instructor space, weekly announcements, and class-wide e-mails** to keep students focused on course outcomes, to encourage further thought, and to reinforce preparation and participation. Each week's lesson begins with a link to the Notes from the Instructor, your space for posting announcements, introducing the week's tasks, posting podcasts or tutorials, recognizing excellence, or taking the opportunity to build community. This is your space to connect with students each week.
- **Think about the information provided in your instructor profile or opening podcast.** While you want to maintain a professional tone, don't hesitate to share some general points of interest. You may not feel comfortable sharing specific information about your family, but information about hobbies, specific aspects of your field that interest you, or a favorite quote or scripture passage can build a solid foundation for ongoing interpersonal relationships.
- **Use the "get-to-know you" exercises to meet students.** Most courses include an ice-breaker activity that allows students to introduce themselves to each other. Participate actively in this activity, and then draw on this first contact information as you respond to future e-mails or provide feedback.
- In addition, I-Learn offers the option to e-mail the entire class, groups, or individuals; you can also post a class-wide announcement making it easy to summarize class progress, suggest areas for improvement, and build a sense of continuity and community. Mentioning a few students' specific contributions to the class or recognizing excellent student work, lets the entire class know you are actively engaged in the course without responding to each student individually.

Adding a social dimension to the community culture in the classroom provides extra incentive for students to come and learn. The social dimension can strengthen student engagement and improve collaboration among students.

- **Build relationships.** Encourage students to use the general discussion board to strengthen the online community. Let them know that they can post wedding announcements, news articles related to the subject, questions, and study group requests. Work to mimic the social atmosphere that exists in a face-to-face class before and after class when students build relationships.
- **Throw virtual parties for students with important events.** These events need not be synchronous, but hold a virtual baby shower, wedding shower, or mission call announcement for students in the class who want to share with

others in the community. Students can post virtual gifts, set up decorations, or make virtual refreshments for others with an important event. You can create a separate thread in the course questions forum for such events and invite students to participate (you may want to make note that such an activity is not required nor does it receive points toward the overall grade).

- **Try a “stump the teacher” activity to encourage participation in course discussions.** Start a new thread and ask students to post questions relating to the week’s course content for the instructor to answer with the goal of “stumping” the teacher. This game show element brings students to the discussion board often.
- **Personalize your course.** Each instructor will have a “Notes from the Instructor” space in each weekly lesson folder to interact with students. Think about ways you can use this space to enhance the subject matter by adding a community element. For example, an online art class may have a “gallery” of brilliant student work. A religion class might use the community discussion board for a different student to post a devotional thought each day.

There are many ways to help your students build an engaging learning community in your online classroom.



8.3. Instructor Standard #3: Inspire a Love for Learning

3) Inspire a Love for Learning

Help students realize their divine potential and “prepare [them] for lifelong learning.”

1. Demonstrate high love and high expectations
2. Challenge students to think critically
3. Cultivate an environment where learners teach one another
4. Express enthusiasm for the subject matter and demonstrate continual growth in related discipline

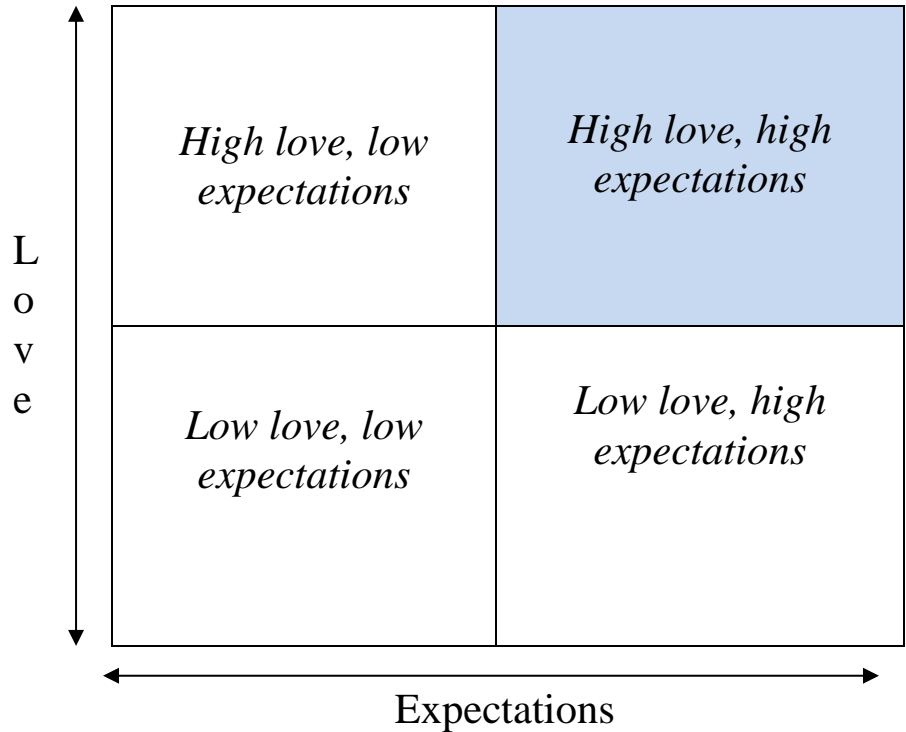
Seeking learning is a lifelong pursuit and one that increases our ability to serve the Lord (LDS Church Website: “The Glory of God is Intelligence”). Elder Robert D. Hales has said, “Lifelong learning is essential to the vitality of the human mind, body, and soul, it enhances self-worth and self-actuation. Lifelong learning is invigorating mentally and is a great defense against aging, depression, and self-doubt” (“The Journey to Lifelong Learning,” in *Brigham Young University 2008-2009 Speeches* [2009], 2, 8-9). The Prophet Alma admonished, “Oh, remember, my son, and learn wisdom in thy youth.” (Alma 37:35), and the Lord counseled the Saints through Joseph Smith to, “seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118).

Inspiring a love for learning in our students is an important aspect of the role of BYU-Idaho Online Instructors. This goal can be accomplished with the help of the Spirit as we seek to know and understand the needs of our students. Online instructors at BYU-Idaho should, themselves, cultivate a love of learning in their own lives and seek help from the Lord in knowing how to share that characteristic in their online classrooms.

8.3.1. Demonstrate High Love and High Expectations

In an address to BYU-Idaho faculty, President Kim B. Clark used a mental graph to illustrate some ways in which we interact with our students. One axis of the graph is the amount of love we have and show for our students. The other is the level of our expectations for our students—how much we require of them. Noting that it may be more natural for us to have high love than to have high expectations, President Clark invited us to all become teachers in the high-love, high-expectation

quadrant. Using this concept as we facilitate our online courses can help us inspire a love for learning in our students while also maintaining high standards for the learning outcomes.



8.3.2. Challenge Students to Think Critically

Challenging students to think critically is a natural expectation in the context of a high love, high expectation learning environment. Former BYU Associate Academic Vice President, Rob Eaton, wanted to help his students improve their learning experiences, so he formulated some high expectations to help them think critically and improve their overall performance and outcomes. Here, Brother Eaton explains his expectations and reasoning:

1. **Expect mechanically clean writing and explain why.** The first week in the introductory posts, I see a lot of writing in the minimalist style of this generation, which seems to view proper spelling, capitalization, and punctuation as just so much extra, unnecessary baggage. I try to make it clear quickly and lovingly that one of the benefits of college is learning to hone your writing skills, and one of the principal writing opportunities in my class is the discussion board. I also remind them that developing the capacity to write with proper mechanics may come in very handy in the working world, where some people will care about such things. Once I make expectations

- clear and dock points for failing to meet them, most students improve quite quickly.
2. **Point students to specific tools and resources.** In whatever regard we are asking students to improve, there are usually some resources available to help them. When we point students to specific resources, the path to improvement becomes less daunting. For example, to continue the previous example, for those students who struggle with mechanics even after being reminded, I suggest they try composing their posts in Word and take advantage of its built-in grammar review. I encourage them to click on the squiggly underlines to see what mistakes they may have made. Finally, when problems persist I'll encourage them to take advantage of the Writing Center, something that's free and available to all our students (including those online). I tell them that as an author, I never submit anything to a publisher without having several friends critique it first, hoping to show them that it's no sign of weakness to get help.
 3. **Ask questions that extend learning.** Some of the best comments we get in a face-to-face classroom come when a patient teacher acknowledges a wise comment and then says, "Tell me more about that." It's often in that second wave of thinking that we get a student's best insights. Similarly, online we can help students dig deeper than their initial comments, many of which tend to be on the more superficial side at the beginning of a course. For example, a typical comment in a religion course may sound something like this: "I just love the sons of Helaman. I always admired that so much growing up; I had a poster of them in my room that was such an inspiration to me." We can help students build on such positive sentiments by asking them kindly to dig more deeply with questions like this: "Of all the things you admire about them, which quality do you admire most and why? And can you find another verse in scripture that emphasizes the importance of that attribute?"
 4. **Ask students to back up their claims.** I can't count how many times students in my face-to-face religion classes have "quoted" Brethren saying things I've never heard them say. Online gives us a marvelous luxury. Whenever students paraphrase something they've heard in a Conference talk, I ask them to find the actual quote and share it with the class. When the quote is real, we all get to read the actual language. And when students can't find it, they learn something important.
 5. **Challenging students thinking is sometimes the right thing to do.** I'm a huge believer in the importance of creating a safe environment, where insecure students can find their footing without fear of being shot down by a teacher doing a bad imitation of law school professor. Most of the time I look to build students up and shore up their confidence. But I fear we sometimes swing too far and let almost anything go, rarely challenging students on sloppy thinking. I believe part of the challenge President Clark has extended to us is to find loving ways to challenge some of what students think and to make it safe for them to civilly disagree with each other. It might be as simple as asking, "How would you respond to someone who contended that . . ." and then introducing a counterargument. Or for a student who is overly confident

in a questionable position, we might ask, “Would your opinion change if . . .” and then introducing a variation on the facts that helps them see things from a different angle. Or perhaps we introduce them to some contrary data or authority on the same point and ask simply, “What do you make of this?” Whatever the method, if we occasionally challenge students—in love and as inspired—we can help them truly refine the way they think.

8.3.3. Cultivate an Environment Where Learners Teach One Another

BYU-Idaho online courses are structured around the Learning Model architecture. You and your students will Prepare, Teach One Another, and Ponder and Prove throughout the semester as part of the course curriculum. You may encounter resistance from some students to the collaborative Teach One Another aspect of the Learning Model culture; however, this component of the Learning Model process is as essential to success in learning as are the other two processes of preparing and ponder/prove. In your role as online course facilitator, you can help your students understand and embrace the importance of teaching one another in the learning process. The following overview places the Learning Model Processes in context with each other:

Prepare is the first step in the Learning Model process for students and instructors and is preliminary to the Teach One Another activities. Preparation should include ongoing spiritual exercise and worthiness.

Many examples from the scriptures demonstrate the importance of preparing to learn and teach (see Alma 17:2-3; D&C 11:20-21; 38:30). For example, we can learn much about preparing to learn and teach by studying the revealed prayer offered at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple.

And as all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom, seek learning even by study and also by faith;

Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing, and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God; (D&C 109:7-8; see also 7-15).

The online course outcomes, lesson plans, and lesson resources can be a source of wisdom each time you prepare for a lesson. Studying your notes about individual students’ needs can also provide wisdom and help you know what things are needful. What an accomplishment it would be if students’ first reaction on entering a course was, “This is a house of order!”

Consider the impact of the learning environment on students' feelings of order and ability to learn. If students are confused by activity instructions, taught in ways that inhibit interaction, or are intimidated or easily distracted by the way the course is taught, learning becomes more difficult. On the other hand, if students know what to expect, preparation instructions and resources are clear, the space and activities foster participation, and the instructor provides focus, then learning happens much more readily.

Perhaps the most important goal for preparing ourselves, the environment, and our students is to invite the Spirit. Creating an environment where the Spirit of the Lord is invited and feels welcomed can help to change a good learning experience into a transcendent one. The presence of the Holy Ghost can multiply many-fold our efforts and our abilities to learn truth.

Let him that is ignorant learn wisdom by humbling himself and calling upon the Lord his God, that his eyes may be opened that he may see, and his ears opened that he may hear; For my spirit is sent forth into the world to enlighten the humble and contrite . . . (D&C 136: 32-33)

The Online Instructor Standards will help you prepare for learning and teaching as the semester progresses. Consult with the other instructors in your teaching group to share tips gained by experience. Find a preparation routine that works for you. Remember the underlying principle to *prepare every needful thing* (D&C 109:8-15) to better serve and shepherd students.

Teach One Another is the second step in the Learning Model process for students and instructors. Teaching One Another should include elements of group collaboration, accountability, and assessment.

An essential skill in online instruction includes actively facilitating group interaction without controlling it and encouraging team ownership of collaborative processes and projects while respecting individual accountability.

Palloff and Pratt's *The Virtual Student* emphasizes the importance of collaborative work:

Going beyond online discussion to include small group work and other means by which students can collaborate helps to broaden and deepen the learning, lessens the sense of isolation that many online students feel, and allows students to test out ideas and feel a sense of connection to the course, the instructor, and the group. In general, higher levels of satisfaction with online learning occur when collaboration is an integral part of the course design. (103)

Effective collaboration is one of the most rewarding activities in which online students can engage, but it is also one of the most difficult activities to facilitate successfully.

Following are three strategies for facilitating effective online collaboration: Anticipate Student Concerns, Insist on Student Ownership, and Maintain Individual Accountability.

Anticipate Student Concerns: Recognize key student attitudes and expectations that may hinder effective collaboration.

Teach one another activities are a hallmark of all BYU-Idaho online courses. We know that students often learn more and are better able to apply what they learn when they work together and teach one another. And yet, for many students, nothing causes more anxiety than the thought of engaging in online collaborative projects.

In *Assessing Learners Online*, Oosterhof, Conrad, and Ely identify three obstacles to effective online collaboration: “Inadequate management of group processes, lack of individual reward, and unequal distribution of workload” (207).

Most likely, you have heard students complain about group work that has not been adequately defined, that rewards all members equally regardless of their contributions, or that requires some members of the group—those who care about their grades—to do more than their fair share of the work. Perhaps you have even experienced this kind of group work.

The first step in effective collaboration is to realize that students’ fears are often based in prior experience and should be addressed both in the design of the activity and in its management and assessment. The following strategies may help to allay student fears and encourage effective collaboration.

- 1) **Recognize and Address Student Concerns.** As you introduce a new collaborative activity or project, help students understand how the project will be organized and assessed, focusing on those aspects of the activity that may cause the most anxiety and the design steps in place to address those anxieties.
- 2) **Establish clear objectives and guidelines for the project.** Clear guidelines make it easier for groups to collaborate effectively. Students who understand the project goals and the roles each must fill to successfully complete the project can focus on working together rather than struggling to define the project.
- 3) **Discuss Collaboration.** Open a discussion forum focused on what students expect from each other as they collaborate. Facilitating a discussion that allows students to identify key responsibilities and expectations for online collaboration will help build a sense of community with common goals and expectations.

- 4) Create Team Contracts.** If students will be working on a lengthy project, ask them to create a team contract as a first step in the collaborative process. Team contracts can be adapted to meet specific assignment requirements, but generally team members work together to define roles and responsibilities within the team, establish how team members will communicate, create guidelines for how team members will coordinate their efforts and meet deadlines, and define clear consequences for members who don't meet team expectations as defined in the contract.

Helping students work together to identify obstacles to successful collaboration and then providing them with the tools necessary to overcome those obstacles is an important first step in any collaborative activity. It models the type of personal responsibility and active participation you will expect as they collaborate and allows them to take ownership of the collaborative process.

Insist on Student Ownership: Reinforce students' ownership of the collaborative process.

Collaboration is most successful when it is student focused and student driven. Ideally, collaborative activities will be designed to allow students ownership of the collaborative process.

- 1) Ensure students have control of collaborative processes.** Make sure that students have a role in assessing collaborative work and can take steps to manage the collaborative process. Student frustration often stems from being "forced" to work together without any control of the collaborative process or its assessment. Students are much more likely to collaborate successfully when they can control their work within clear guidelines and have options for addressing issues within the group.
- 2) Make group dynamics visible to the group.** As you communicate with group members, cc your responses to all others in the group, as appropriate, and send feedback to the group as a whole. If a group is struggling, redirect grievances back to the group itself and allow them to resolve the issue.
- 3) Encourage Regular Reflection on Collaborative Processes.** Encourage students to reflect often on their own contributions and the processes of the team as a whole. For lengthy projects, students should reflect on team processes shortly after the project begins, at midpoint, and as part of the final project assessment. Asking students to reflect regularly on their contributions encourages active participation. In addition, it allows team members an opportunity to identify and address issues within the group in a timely fashion.
- 4) Structure the interaction of struggling groups:** If a group is struggling and seems unable to resolve the issue alone, take steps to further manage their group interaction without replacing it. You might set up intermediate

deadlines to further guide group work, you might ask students to submit regular progress reports or formulate a plan to get back on track to complete the project, or you might set up a synchronous chat that will allow group members to meet in real time to discuss the project.

Maintain Individual Accountability: Emphasize the importance of each student's contribution and hold students accountable for their contributions to the collaborative process.

The opportunity to teach one another is a guiding principle in group interaction. As instructors, we don't want to do anything that robs students of their role in the collaborative process. Consider the following guidelines:

- 1) **Define Clear Roles for Each Member of the Team.** Help students assess group interaction by emphasizing how each member contributes to the project. Ask students to identify and fill clear roles within the group and allow them to take responsibility for those roles.
- 2) **Monitor the group.** Intermediate deadlines, reminders, and clear indications that you are paying attention to group members' contributions will encourage groups to keep on task and encourage individual responsibility.
- 3) **Emphasize Individual Preparation.** The best collaboration occurs when each member of the group comes prepared to contribute. Requiring a preparatory assignment or asking each member of a team to come prepared with role specific information or research reinforces the necessity for individual accountability. Some instructors enforce the rule that those who don't come prepared don't participate.
- 4) **Include Self and Peer Assessments in Final Assessments:** Assessment of the final product alone is not an accurate reflection of each member's contribution. Include self and peer evaluations in the final project assessment, adjusting scores to reward excellence or to reflect non-participation.

Additional Resources: these specific links can be found in the right-side column on the page as you follow the link.

- [Creating a Participatory Environment](#)
- [Instructor Role in Teach One Another](#)
- [Learning in Groups](#)

Ponder and Prove is the third and final step in the Learning Model process for students and instructors and provides further insight and continued learning following the Teach One Another activities. In this process, students and instructors will reflect individually and with a group, record learning, and note questions.

Pondering, as part of the learning process, is a frequent recommendation given by the Lord. Joseph Smith was given the following instruction, after a three-day church conference, to ponder what had been taught, “Wherefore, you are left to inquire for yourself at my hand, and ponder upon the things which you have received” (D&C 30:3). Similarly, the Savior encouraged the Nephites in America to “go ye into your homes, and ponder upon the things which I have said, and ask of the father, in my name, that ye may understand” (3 Nephi 17:3).

Pondering is an essential step in the learning process for both instructors and students as it allows time for reflection and assessing learning outcomes. For students, reviewing previous learning promotes better retention and deeper understanding.

Applying this concept to a strictly academic setting, Palloff and Pratt encourage online faculty to reflect “on their own online teaching practice” and “evaluate one online unit of a course or an entire teaching/learning experience” by asking descriptive and reflective questions. This practice, they say, can be used “as part of a faculty self-assessment . . . of the effectiveness of the course and faculty performance” (*The Excellent Online Instructor* 126-7).

Whether it be an act of pondering based in scriptural context or academic reflection for assessment purposes, pondering the results of a learning experience allows us to consider the experience and improve our performance.

Additional Resources:

- [BYU-Idaho Learning Model website](#)
- [Innovative Teaching & Learning](#)

8.3.4. Express Enthusiasm for the Subject Matter and Demonstrate Continual Growth in Related Discipline

In your online classroom, your students look to you as the subject matter expert and rely on you to help them understand the lesson material; they may even subconsciously hope that you will help them enjoy the learning process. Your enthusiasm for the subject is, most likely, what compelled you to become a teacher of that subject, and your role and responsibility is to inspire your students with that same

enthusiasm. In effect, show your students why the subject of your course is important and why it is essential that they learn about that topic.

Additionally, your role as an online instructor in your specific discipline affords you the opportunity, and the responsibility, to stay current in your field of study. Pursue learning opportunities that will help you build on your already strong knowledge base and that will help you advance your understanding of the field. Seek ways to share your enthusiasm for the subject and to help your students see and benefit from your ongoing development in your chosen discipline.



8.4. Instructor Standard #4: Embrace University Citizenship

4) Embrace University Citizenship

Demonstrate citizenship by contributing to the mission of BYU-Idaho and Online Learning.

1. Uphold the University's Mission and Honor Code, and exemplify the Spirit of Ricks
2. Actively participate in teaching groups, and build relationships with other online instructors
3. Participate in efforts to improve BYU-Idaho online programs
4. Review communications sent from Online Learning and respond promptly to administrative inquiries

8.4.1. Uphold the University's Mission and Honor Code, and Exemplify the Spirit of Ricks

All Online Instructors at BYU-Idaho are expected to uphold the University's Mission and Honor Code and exemplify the Spirit of Ricks while facilitating online courses and in their personal lives. The BYU-Idaho Mission and Honor Code have been discussed in previous sections of this handbook, and more information can be accessed in the Additional Resources box below. The Spirit of Ricks refers to a characteristic of BYU-Idaho which has continued to define the university since it was known as Ricks College (1888-2000).

In his address at the dedication of the Thomas E. Ricks building, Elder David A. Bednar explained the BYU-Idaho "Spirit of Ricks" as follows:

The *Spirit of Ricks* has long been the hallmark and defining phrase that describes this remarkable institution. The *Spirit of Ricks* suggests the spirituality, the desire for obedience, the personal caring and warmth, the humility and modesty, the friendliness and genuine concern for others, the bright smiles and cheerful hellos, and so many other elements that make this university an unusually inviting and supporting and nurturing institution [. . .] The phrase the *Spirit of Ricks* speaks to the commitment, to the sacrifice, and to the integrity of so many who have helped

make this institution what it is today—and what it will ultimately and inevitably become in the future. If the day should ever come that the phrase the *Spirit of Ricks* and its connotations were lost from the vocabulary of Brigham Young University-Idaho, then something fundamental and foundational would be absent from this institution. You will find many definitions for the *Spirit of Ricks*, but today I would like to reiterate the definitions I came to understand during my service here in Rexburg. The *Spirit of Ricks* is the Holy Ghost and its attendant spiritual gifts.

Online Instructors at BYU-Idaho should understand and support the Spirit of Ricks and seek to bring this Spirit into their online classrooms.

Additional Resources:

[“Thomas E. Ricks Building Dedication,”](#) Elder David A. Bednar, Feb. 18, 2005

8.4.2. Actively Participate in Teaching Groups

As an Online Instructor at BYU-Idaho, you will be a member of an online Teaching Group, led by a Teaching Group Leader (TGL). You will participate actively in your Teaching Group each semester by attending synchronous meetings and interacting with your Group members in the Online Instruction Community.

As you participate in your Teaching Group and in the online Community, you will build relationships with your colleagues, share knowledge and ideas, and collaborate together in the online instruction effort. Your Teaching Group and Teaching Group Leader will become increasingly valuable resources as you are mentored and lead through your continued professional development.

8.4.3. Improve BYU-Idaho Online Programs

BYU-Idaho online courses are developed by a team of university faculty and an instructional designer (curriculum development manager) and are facilitated by online instructors. Our online instructors teach courses they haven’t designed. This process is common in online learning communities because this approach to course design offers several advantages:

- Face-to-Face and online courses share the same outcomes and learning model architecture.

- Instructors are free to focus on teaching rather than designing, implementing, and maintaining an online course. In addition, online instructors may not always have the time, resources, or expertise to create online curriculum.
- Prepared curriculum makes it possible to quickly meet student needs while maintaining uniform course quality.

For some instructors, this approach may be a new concept and may present some challenges such as not agreeing with the design team’s approach to the course or finding it difficult to separate the responsibility of creating course content from the role of course instructor. Rena M. Palloff and Keith Pratt, respected online instructors and educators, affirm, “a good instructor can teach just about anything if he or she is well prepared. Thus, a well-trained online instructor should be able to effectively evaluate a course and determine how it should best be delivered” (*The Excellent Online Instructor* 27).

While BYU-Idaho online instructors are not responsible for creating course content, they do play the decisive role in extending the BYU-Idaho experience to the students in their courses. It is their influence, testimony, and example that brings course content to life and makes a difference in students’ lives.

Work to improve course design: as you facilitate your courses, you should work with other instructors and your teaching group leader to identify inefficiencies in course design that can be discussed in Course Improvement Councils. You will find a link for submitting suggestions and course fix requests in the instructor area of your course. If the course requires you to spend too much time on tasks that are not student-centered or that do not, by their nature, demand instructor attention, work with others in your teaching group to offer more efficient and effective alternatives.

As you facilitate your course, look for ways to improve the online learning experience for students in your class and for online students in general. Sharing your ideas and insights will generate a discussion that can set in motion the steps toward course improvement and a more effective teaching and learning experience overall.

8.4.4. Review Communications and Respond Promptly to Administrative Inquiries

As a member of BYU-Idaho Online Instruction, you will receive communications from the Home Office, your Teaching Group Leader, and other administrators as needed. Such communications should be responded to promptly so as not to delay any pending processes.

Additionally, as a member of the BYUI Online Community, you will receive, via email, a weekly newsletter that provides essential information regarding policies and procedures, announcements, Q&As, helpful tips and techniques, and opportunities to learn and share with your colleagues. Remaining informed is part of your role and

responsibility as an online instructor as is your responsibility to participate in the online Community as an active member of the BYU-Idaho Online Instruction family.



8.5. Instructor Standard #5: Seek Development Opportunities

5) Seek Development Opportunities

Increase proficiency in respective discipline, in teaching practice, and in mastering course tools.

1. Learn and effectively implement trustworthy facilitation and teaching skills
2. Master tools that enable effective communication and promote learning online
3. Increase content knowledge, depth, and expertise in respective discipline

BYU-Idaho Online Instructors participate in teaching groups, share insights, improve course facilitation and time management skills, submit weekly reports, and regularly work to increase their knowledge and capabilities.

8.5.1. Learn and Effectively Implement Trustworthy Facilitation and Teaching Skills

One way to manage your time effectively online is to take time to plan each week's tasks. Some tasks, like reviewing the week's lesson plan, posting weekly announcements, or grading will reoccur weekly. Other tasks, like responding to e-mail or participating in course discussions may require daily attention. Setting aside time for each task will help you better manage your time and ensure that each task receives sufficient attention.

An important part of this weekly planning includes reflection on the previous week's activities. What went well? Where are students struggling? Which students may need additional encouragement in the coming week or which students might benefit from some well-deserved recognition?

Some instructors like to set aside a specific time each day to work on their courses and work through a specific routine—e-mail, I-Learn home page, discussion board, and feedback—as an example. Others may respond daily to e-mail but set aside specific days during the week to read and respond to discussion board posts or post

feedback. As you teach, you will find the rhythm that works best for you. The key is to engage in weekly planning and reflection.

8.5.2. Master Tools that Enable Effective Communication and Promote Learning Online

The BYU-Idaho Learning Management System, I-Learn, offers many tools and features that will be useful in facilitating your online course. The I-Learn classroom and Gradebook include tools that can help you monitor student engagement and progress. Training and tutorials are available to help you learn more about the tools and features of the I-Learn learning management system.

BYU-Idaho Online Instructors complete **weekly reflection reports** throughout the semester. This self-assessment tool allows instructors the opportunity to ponder their effectiveness as instructors and set goals for development and improvement.

8.5.3. Increase Content Knowledge, Depth, and Expertise in Respective Discipline

Being an online instructor requires flexibility. With the rapid changes in the field itself, and the ever-evolving nature of the technology surrounding it, it is imperative that a BYU-Idaho online instructor maintain the attitude that there is always more to learn. Palloff and Pratt note, “training should not be a one-shot experience but should be ongoing” (*The Effective Online Instructor* 9).

It is important that online faculty, just like traditional faculty, participate in ongoing faculty development training and activities, including participation in the Online Instructor Community, to ensure that their teaching practices and skills remain current and effective for both online facilitation in general and in their respective discipline.

As you work toward personal and professional development, there will be numerous opportunities provided by the Home Office to help you advance your skills. A few examples of this ongoing training include New Instructor Orientation, Teaching Group Meetings, regular brown bag seminars, department trainings, faculty conferences, online tutorials, and synchronous Q&A sessions. You will be active in an ongoing professional development program where you will set goals and build on the knowledge that you have gained from your training and your own personal experience.

If there is anything we can do to help you improve your online course facilitation skills and better meet the needs of your students please let us know. We thank you for what you do everyday to support the mission of this great University, and we hope

you are looking forward to the opportunities that await you as a BYU-Idaho online instructor.



9. Appendix: Additional Resources

9.1. Disability Services

BYU-Idaho Online Instructors need to be aware of their students' needs including how to help students with disabilities and need for special accommodation. The following links will help you access information about the Disability Services office and how they help students and instructors when accommodating student needs.

[BYU-Idaho Disability Services](#)

9.2. Student Services

Effective instructors know how to help their students, and sometimes helping our students means knowing where to direct them when non-course related questions arise. The following resources will be helpful to you and your students in a variety of ways.

For all questions and instructor and student technical support: [Online Support Center](#)

Support for all Pathway students and instructors:..... [Pathway Support Center](#)

Student academic support (tutoring, study skills, etc.):..... [Academic Support Center](#)

Library Services:..... [McKay Library](#)

Student Honor Office (academic honesty, plagiarism, etc.):..... [Student Honor Office](#)