

Videoconferencing Protocol

Participating in a Videoconference

Protocol – Agreed upon procedures for effective teaching and learning.

You will soon find out that while teaching and learning at a distance in the videoconference classroom in some ways resembles the traditional classroom, there are some important differences. Protocol will help everyone manage those differences; help those involved obtain the most from the learning experience.

Instructor Protocol

For the instructor: preparation and organization, creating and maintaining an interactive environment during the course to hold student attention, letting students know exactly what is expected of them and how they should participate, providing feedback, and bridging the distance between the sites are essential. Here are a few rules of protocol that will help:

- Be prepared and organized. This will enable the class to run smoothly, as well as set an example for the students.
- Start on time. Since you are dealing with a network schedule, time is limited.
- Orient your students to the videoconferencing environment if they are not familiar with it.
- Be aware of presentation skills (see Presentation Skills Storyboard)
- Involve participants at all sites within the first five minutes of the session.
- Facilitate communication by letting participants know how to reach you by phone, before and after class, by email, etc.
- Keep everyone synchronized. Refer occasionally to a page number or specific graphic. Watch for signs that participants are lost, such as flipping pages back and forth.
- Provide feedback to participants questions and on progress.
- Allow time for conversation or chatting between sites during breaks.
- See how the students are doing by arranging for the remote site coordinator/contact to stop in at a mutually agreed upon time to talk with the participants

Student Protocol

For the student: asking questions, participating in class, and taking notes are still necessary, as well as performing other activities typically associated with classroom instruction. In addition, as a student, you will need to adjust to learning in a new environment and to being more motivated and independent in your learning approach. While most of the following apply to any learning situation, they are especially important when learning at a distance using videoconferencing.

- Be Prompt. Since we are dealing with a network, the time is limited. Arrive on time; if you are late or must leave early, do so with minimum distraction.
- Be prepared by completing advanced reading, and bringing necessary materials to class.
- Look directly into the lens of the camera/monitor. This will give you good eye contact with those at the remote sites.
- Sit within easy range of a microphone so that it is easily accessible to you. You may be asked to mute your microphone when it is not in use.
- Ask Questions if something is unclear; do not hesitate to ask for clarification.
- Ask for assistance if you are having difficulty hearing the instruction. The site coordinator or technical personnel at your site will help.
- Identify yourself and your location when you ask a question or make a comment.
- Interaction is essential in videoconferencing. Take the time you need to participate and ask your questions or make comments, but avoid dominating the conversation.
- Avoid unnecessary distractions such as talking during class and rustling papers.
- Restrict personal conversations to times before and after class and during breaks.
- Take the initiative to get to know the other students in your class and at the other sites, if possible.
- Get together with other students in informal study groups. Small group activities or study sessions will give you the opportunity to get to know others taking the course.
- Find out about support services that may be available at or near you location. Take advantage of what your distance education program has to offer.