



Respectful Online Learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic

As instructors are reconceptualizing their courses for online delivery during summer and fall terms, and as is the case for face-to-face courses, it is important to create a healthy and respectful learning environment. Achieving this may be more challenging at this time for a variety of reasons. Many of our students are facing increased responsibilities and worries as work futures are uncertain, some have children at home requiring care and supervision, while others may be concerned about parents or other loved ones near and far. Our own energies may be pulled in many directions as we too grapple with challenges and uncertainties. Further, some students and instructors have been deeply impacted by a wave of anti-Asian racism in the face of this pandemic.

In accordance with the UBC [Statement on Respectful Environment, Discrimination Policy](#) and policies on Appropriate Use of Technology (see resources and links below), we remind you to consider the following as you attend to online teaching and learning environments:

- Bullying and harassing behaviour, linked to the current crisis or for any other reason, will not be tolerated and should be reported. This includes the sharing of memes and comments through social media and chat groups.
- It is important to consider the humanity of the person or people with whom we are communicating, whether synchronously or asynchronously, and be attuned to the extraordinary challenges some may be facing at this time.

Resources

From the [UBC Statement on Respectful Environment](#)

The best possible environment for working, learning and living is one in which respect, civility, diversity, opportunity and inclusion are valued. Everyone at the University of British Columbia is expected to conduct themselves in a manner that upholds these principles in all communications and interactions with fellow UBC community members and the public in all University-related settings.

Activities harmful to a respectful environment include behaviours ranging from expressions of disrespect such as rudeness and gossip, to bullying or harassment. Disrespectful behaviour, including bullying or harassment, is harmful to a respectful environment and therefore has no place at UBC. It is not only a direct attack on the dignity and worth of the individual or group at whom it is directed, it undermines the freedoms of the whole community. For these reasons, disrespectful behaviour, including bullying or harassment, is not acceptable and will not be tolerated at UBC.



Bullying or harassing behaviour includes cumulative demeaning or intimidating comments, gestures or conduct; verbal aggression or yelling; threats to a person's employment or educational status, person or property; persistent comments or conduct, including ostracism or exclusion of a person, that undermines an individual's self-esteem so as to compromise their ability to achieve work or study goals; abuse of power, authority or position; sabotage of a person's work; humiliating initiation practices; hazing; calling someone derogatory names; spreading of malicious rumours or lies; or making malicious or vexatious complaints about a person.

Students who have concerns should contact their professor, Department Head or Dean's Office.

From [UBC Distance Learning Office: Netiquette](#)

Know Your Context

- Remember that culture influences communication style and practices. Stay open and ask questions – avoid assumptions.
- Instructors will usually set the tone and provide guidance/guidelines
- Familiarize yourself with policies on [Appropriate Use of Technology](#)

Remember the Human

- We all come with personalities. Remember there is a person behind the words. Ask for clarification before making judgement.
- Check your tone before you publish
- Respond to people using their names
- Again, culture and even gender can play a part in how people communicate
- Remain authentic and respect the same of others
- People participate in different ways – some just by reading the communication rather than jumping into it
- Avoid jokes and sarcasm – they often don't translate well to the online environment

Text has Permanence

- What you say online is difficult to retract later – once in print. Be judicious
- Consider your responsibility to the group and to the learning environment
- If you are working collaboratively – agree on ground rules for text communication (formal or informal; seek clarification whenever needed, etc)

From the [Equity and Inclusion Office – Educational Programming](#)

Education and training programming aims to promote and sustain respectful learning and working environments to the campus at large. Online seminars can be tailored to groups and arranged by request: equity.ubc.ca/resources/consultation-request-form



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Other Resources

[UBC Discrimination Policy](#)

[Exemplary Practices in Equity and Diversity Programming](#)

[Fostering an Anti-Racist Campus Community](#)

[Equity & Inclusion Policies and Reports](#)

[UBC Information Technology Appropriate Use](#)