Personal Tips for Video Conferencing

Taking time to ensure you plan out your videoconference lecture will help the lecture run smoothly and effectively. Below are guidelines to keep in mind when delivering a videoconference lecture:

Slides & Files

- **When creating presentation materials such as agendas, charts, PowerPoint / Keynote presentations, etc., use large non-serif fonts and dark text on light background** or light text on dark background to create contrast

- **Test out audio and video files** on the equipment you will use for the lecture **beforehand**. Not all audio/video files run the same way on every system and you don’t want to encounter unnecessary technical issues

- **Find out what equipment is available** for you to use in the videoconference classroom, what version of software is installed, etc.

- **On rare occasions there may be problems with the connection or equipment, have a backup plan** for your class
  - bring files in two formats
  - submit files to the remote locations in advance of class so that they can be brought up at each site in case of equipment failure, and the class can continue with telephone communication if necessary

Lecture Format and Delivery

- **Prioritize your content**, discuss the crucial information first and save nice to know information to the end so you can omit it if time runs out

- **Inform students about the way the VC class will operate**, such as:
  - When you will **take questions** and the priority/queuing of such
    - With a queued microphone system students need to know when you will stop to answer questions
    - With a ‘push to talk’ system, let them know that they will interrupt you and also will be placed on camera as soon as they push their microphone button
    - With an ambient microphone system, let them know that they should put up their hand and wait until you acknowledge them
      - The microphones pick up every noise, including side conversations, rustling papers, moving chairs, etc. Their noise may cut out the audio. They are always on camera
  - You **will stop to ensure all locations can hear you** and will also ‘check-in’ with each location periodically

- Make sure that all the participating sites can **see and hear** you. **Speak up** and don’t hesitate to ask other participants to speak up if necessary

Gesturing

- **Limit your gestures** as sudden or fast movements look jerky at the remote location. Gesturing does not need to be done as if you were in a large lecture hall with 500 participants

- **Avoid fidgeting** with things nearby, as this can be quite annoying or distracting to participants
• **You can move small distances but limit the amount** since pacing can also look blurry at the remote site or cause viewers to feel motion sickness. As well, you may inadvertently walk out of the camera’s view.

• **Use eye contact** with local and remote students to create an air of intimacy
  - Look at the camera when a distant student is speaking
  - Look at different students in the local room as you speak

• **Silence signals different things** to different people, cultures, etc. If you are going to use it, explain why, i.e. waiting for the remote site(s) to hear and respond to a question

**Voice**

• **Use a clear, strong voice; add animation to keep students attention.**
  - Practice recording your lecture and then listening so you can hear how it comes across.
  - Do not use whispers to convey an idea as it may not be heard by the microphone and it does not transmit well to distant sites. Also, a soft voice can make you appear tired or bored.
  - Use your voice to act, bring out the showmanship to convey what you would normally use body language to convey

• **Stay away from mumbling and using filler words** such as ‘um’ or ‘ah’. A brief pause is fine; you do not have to fill all of the minutes with sound. The better you know your lecture material, the more effectively you will speak.

• It is fine to **think out loud** when you are in the process of doing something such as opening up a file or starting a video. This lets the students at the remote site know what is happen and replaces the lost cues of body language. It also lets students anticipate what is coming next.

• Finally, **anticipate a brief delay in the audio transmission at the remote site**, so continue speaking until you are finished and then give a very brief pause to allow the remote site to ‘catch up’. Also keep this in mind when you ask a question, allow time for the remote site to hear the question and consider the answer before you take answers or select a student to respond.

**Clothing**

• **Avoid wearing bold stripes or patterned clothing** as it appears to jump around the screen at the remote locations

• **Wear pastel, dark or neutral colours** but avoid white and black

• **Stay away from big, chunky or loud jewelry** as the size, glitter or colour can detract from the picture clarity. Shiny or glittery jewelry can also reflect light so should be avoided

• **Stay away from bulky or chunky clothing** as this can make you appear larger than you are. The camera adds pounds to your appearance already