

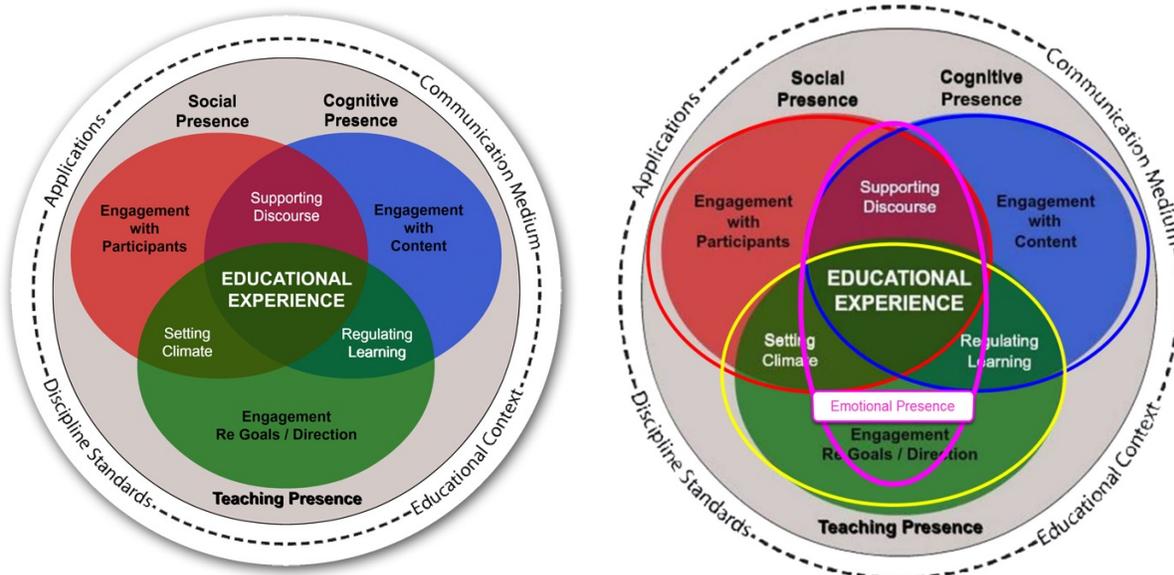
# The First Day(s) of Your Course in Zoom - Initial Engagement and Community Building Activities

## HKUST Student Feedback on Engagement in Live Online Learning & Teaching

In the Spring 2020 Student Feedback Questionnaire (SFQ), students were asked to rate the statement “Online interactions in Zoom supported my engagement and learning” on a 5-point Likert scale from Very good (5). The average for this was 3.83, a little below ‘Good’, so this is an area that needs to be worked on even more this semester. Techniques for increasing interaction using Zoom Polls, Breakout Rooms and other tools outside of Zoom have been the focus of a number of online sessions from CEI last term and these are continuing this fall (previous sessions are linked at the end of this document). As the first couple of sessions with the students in your course are key to setting the tone and expectations for student interaction for the term, below are a number of options for initial student engagement and community building activities. We hope one of these will resonate with your teaching style and can be used in the first week of your classes.

## A Framework: Online Learning and Teaching and Community of Inquiry

The Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework resulted from a Canadian research project into online learning and teaching between 1997-2001. This framework is comprised of three essential elements of an educational experience: **cognitive**, **social** and **teaching** presence. If you are interested in learning more about this framework, please see [Module 1 Unit 3](#) of the self-access [Teaching Online](#) course in [Canvas](#). More recently there have been discussions about whether there is a fourth presence, **emotional** presence. If you are interested in learning more about this aspect, please see this [9-minute video](#) (requires installation of Adobe Connect desktop application) with [Prof. Marti Cleveland-Innes](#). You can also [download her presentation slides](#). Vaughn, Cleveland-Innes and Garrison have also co-authored a book called [Teaching in Blended Learning Environments: Creating and Sustaining Communities of Inquiry](#), published in 2013 and is available as a [free e-book \(pdf\)](#).



## Your Role in these First Day(s) Activities

Join these activities, rather than being apart from them, as this an initial way of establishing Teaching Presence; an essential part of creating community in online environments.

*"Share more about yourself than usual. To encourage a community of which I was also a part, I deliberately disclosed personal details, starting with my domestic setting. I set up my laptop near my microwave, in effect inviting them into my kitchen, and poured myself a cup of coffee, which showed on my screen. I told them I lived in Manhattan, that, yes, it had been scary, and that I had two grown sons -- one in Brooklyn and another in Seattle -- whom I worried about. I said my tech skills were halting at best, and if anyone was tech savvy, I would be grateful for assistance."*

From "[How to Overcome Classroom Zoom Fatigue](#)" by Elizabeth Stone at Inside Higher Ed.

## First Day(s) Activity Idea 1: Giving Choice through Acronyms

[Since we're not in Ohio State, you could choose another word. Or use OHIO and see if anyone asks you why.] "O-H-I-O is an open-ended icebreaker that allows students to choose how much they'd like to share with the class and allows the class to learn more about each other personally and academically. To get started, explain the acronym and then allow students to popcorn around the main Zoom room. Or, in smaller groups in Zoom Breakout Rooms, have everyone go through this if time allows. Larger groups could be limited to only those who feel comfortable sharing.

- **O**urself - Name, pronouns, where you are from
- **H**ow I am feeling - can be interpreted in any way
- **I**nterest of mine - can be interpreted in any way
- **O**bjective - Why are you taking this class (if a class)? What is a goal you have for your time at HKUST? "

Localize it!

- **H**ow I am feeling
- **K**nowing what I want to take away from this course – my personal goal(s)
- **U**nknown to me currently in this course
- **S**omething about me personally that I'm willing to share
- **T**ime challenges I'm experiencing
  
- **S**...
- **E**...
- **N**...
- **G**...

Or you could use the letters of the course code ... you get the idea!

You also could give the first one or two and ask students to suggest statements for the rest, after which they all respond to these and share. They could share in chat or they could do this in an Office 365 Doc or Form that you've prepared before class and make available during the class session. Or students could complete the activity either before or after the first class and sharing of a selection can be done in the first or second session respectively.

Adapted from "[Icebreakers to Reduce Stress and Build Connection](#)" from IT@OSU

### First Day(s) Activity Idea 2: We Have Something in Common

*"Collaborative introduction is a synchronous activity where each person says one or two things about themselves, and if others have the same thing in common, they raise their hand in Zoom (physically or digitally) or type in the chat." See detailed instructions, adaptations, and a sample video by following the reference link below.*

From "[Asynchronous & Synchronous Introductions](#)" by OneHE

*"Great for larger classrooms, this icebreaker helps illustrate how much students have in common and can highlight the variety of experiences in your classroom. Ask 3-5 (or more) questions that involve being new to campus or activities done in quarantine or lockdown. Students then raise their hand if they answer 'Yes' to the question. In Gallery view in Zoom, encourage people to look around and see how similar their feelings are to others. These questions could also be tied to introductory course content. In Zoom, suggest that students physically raise the hand or digitally use the raise hand or reaction features." Questions might include:*

- I have made a great dish/baked something good during quarantine/lockdown.
- I felt unsure of how a university course would be run before today.
- I binge watched a new Netflix series during quarantine (maybe ask if anyone wants to share).
- I am excited to begin my time at HKUST.
- I am viewing this Zoom session from outside of Hong Kong.
- I am not originally from Hong Kong.

Adapted from "[Icebreakers to Reduce Stress and Build Connection](#)" from IT@OSU

### First Day(s) Activity Idea 3: Students Cue Turn-Taking

*"...begin the community building process by getting students to talk. Do a 15-second introduction, asking students to share something about themselves, preferably something low-stakes and relatable. (I will ask students how they would like to be addressed including preferred pronouns, where they're zooming in from, and their favorite food, movie, or music.) Instead of calling on students, I'll have each student who just finished sharing call on the next person. When everyone has had a turn, I'll ask, "What do we have in common?" because seeing our commonalities can serve as a social glue for future class sessions. [This will also be a good time to start practicing muting and unmuting.]"*

From "[A Four-Step Plan: The First Day of Class on Zoom](#)" by Crystal O. Wong (Faculty Focus)

### First Day(s) Activity Idea 4: Story of Your Name

*"Invite each participant in turn to tell a story about any part of their name (first name, last name, middle name, nickname)." [See detailed instructions, adaptations, and sample video by following the link below.]*

From "[Story of Your Name](#)" by OneHE

### First Day(s) Activity Idea 5: Pass the Ball & How Do You Make Rice?

*"The purpose of this activity is to engage in a discussion about identity and difference. Humanizing through storytelling. Discussing how people may learn the same topic, in different ways, with the same outcome. Discussing how everyone comes to the class with a unique background and lived experience, which influences how we approach a conversation, how we do things, and how we might answer a question. Relationship between culture and background, identity, and how we do things. Build community and create an inclusive, open, caring classroom culture." [See detailed instructions, adaptations, and sample video by following the link below.]*

From "[Pass the Ball & How Do You Make Rice?](#)" by OneHE

### First Day(s) Activity Idea 6: Ideal Study Space

*"As an icebreaker (or stress reliever later in the semester), encourage your students to take some time to find an image or come up with a description of their ideal study space. It can be anywhere: on the moon, at a beach, in an undersea cavern, in the library of their favorite fantasy series, anywhere! Start the discussion by explaining to the class what your dream space is and why you would rather work there. Then, go around the room and have each person share with the class the reasoning behind their dream study space. If your course is being held over Zoom, have students set their virtual background to a photo of their dream study space. This will get them familiar with the feature and give the rest of class a fun flair."*

From "[Icebreakers to Reduce Stress and Build Connection](#)" from IT@OSU

### First Day(s) Activity Idea 7: Alt-CV

*"Ask students to create an introduction to themselves that is not like a regular CV, but is an alternative CV, both in terms of what they share about themselves (what they value, not what is expected) and how they present it (they can get creative with video, visuals, etc.). You can reuse or adapt the prompt here. Students can upload/link their ALTCV in a discussion forum space on Canvas LMS, on their blogs if they have them, or a Padlet or such." [See detailed instructions, adaptations, and sample video by following the link below.]*

Adapted from "[Asynchronous & Synchronous Introductions](#)" by OneHE

## First Day(s) Activity Idea 8: Surrealist Portraiture (or Free Drawing)

"Surrealist Free Drawing Introductions' is a creative take on doing intros that can help students to know one another and challenges perfection paralysis through 1) A short time limit, 2) Drawing with your non-dominant hand, 3) Drawing without lifting your pen/pencil, or 4) Drawing with your eyes closed." [See detailed instructions, adaptations, and sample video at the link below.]

From "[Surrealist Free Drawing Introductions](#)" by OneHE

## First Day(s) Activity Idea 9: Video or Photo Introductions

"Video/picture introductions shared in one space, such as [Canvas LMS](#), an [Office 365 app](#), [Microsoft Flipgrid](#) ([set up your Educator account](#) using your HKUST Microsoft login), or other apps such as [VoiceThread](#), [Padlet](#), etc. Ask students to record a brief video introducing themselves (can be voice over if they don't like to use their actual face), which they can do using their HKUST Zoom account, or use a photo/image (does not need to be a personal photo, can be photo(s) representing something about themselves), or an avatar they create in apps like [Bitmoji](#), and post it to a shared space where all students can see each other's introductions." [See detailed instructions, adaptations, and a sample video by following the link below.]

Adapted from "[Asynchronous & Synchronous Introductions](#)" by OneHE

## Even More First Day(s) Activities

Check out the more extensive lists from [OneHE](#), [Faculty Focus](#) and [IT@OSU](#).

## Teaching from Home? Free Virtual Backgrounds for Live Video Conferencing

- HKUST theme templates and Virtual Backgrounds by MTPC [here](#).
- Shutterstock photos for virtual backgrounds available [here](#).
- IKEA photos for virtual backgrounds available [here](#).

Let your students know about these virtual background resources too!

## CEI Organized Online Teaching Development Sessions

[Adopting Online Teaching and Learning](#)

[Zoom Teaching Good Practices and FAQs](#)

[Zoom Meetings: Basics and Advanced Sessions \(Canvas\)](#)

**Acknowledgement:** With thanks to [Nancy Chick](#) for starting this discussion and collating the ideas shared by [PODNetwork](#) colleagues through the [SC-POD Google Group](#).