

## Getting Started with Videoconferencing: Faculty Guide

### Introduction

Videoconferencing is a technology that allows users in different locations to communicate face to face in real time. Participants can hear and see each other, and can also see instruction materials that are being displayed by the Instructor. Grande Prairie Regional College faculty uses videoconference as a method of extending their classrooms to students in different locations. Of all the distance teaching technologies, videoconference is the most similar to classroom instruction. However, there are differences in the teaching and learning process that requires attention for faculty and students to use videoconference successfully.

These best practices are to be a pedagogical primer for faculty who are relatively new to using videoconferencing to teach their course. This guide will not cover technical details on operating VC equipment since each classroom has unique features and controls.

### Things to do prior to my first videoconference class

- Meet with the Instructional Conferencing Coordinator contact person ([Darcie Coulter](#) ext. 2064) to book your training session.
- Attend a one on one or group training session. Your training session will include:
  - Explanation of the room, placement of the equipment, and the technology that is available to you.
  - Live test call with the actual location or locations. This will ensure the remote sites have the right setup you require prior to your first lecture.
  - Discuss setup issues, lighting, audio and microphone placement, where you would prefer your student to sit.
  - Meeting your student or students. This will give you the opportunity to meet prior to the first day.
  - Prepare and discuss videoconferencing etiquette summary for your students. This will inform them how sensitive our microphone system is. So they know not to tap their pens on the table, shuffle papers, place materials near the microphones. This will also lessen the chances of disruptions. When it is acceptable to mute & unmute.
  - Have a backup plan in the event technology fails. Options in this situation include teleconference, recording the class. Once the class is recorded, with student and Instructor permission, we can load it on to Moodle for viewing.

- Try to get to class as early as possible to ensure the equipment is set up properly. Allow for enough time to contact the technical person to rectify the situation, if an issue occurs. The more time the better.

### **How are my remote students going to access class information, hand in assignments, and write exams?**

- The most common way of presenting materials in a lecture is using PowerPoint presentation. Using [Moodle](#) (GPRC's online learning system) is essential. There is training sessions available to you in the Education Technology Center, with the Moodle Coordinator ([Jason Fehr 2064](#)). This can be discuss and scheduled in your training session for videoconferencing.
- Send your material to your remote students AND local students, ahead of time by posting your material in your [Moodle](#) course space.
- Students should be told to check their course space prior to coming to EACH class. They can bring a copy of the materials to each class or on a device of their liking.
- If you are an instructor who prefers to write notes on the board, our videoconference rooms are equipped with interactive boards, interactive monitor, and Whitey paint depending on which room you are assigned to. If you are interested in these technologies we have a training session available to you. Please contact [edtechrequests@gprc.ab.ca](mailto:edtechrequests@gprc.ab.ca) for extending training.
- For your distance students, you can use a software tool call [Bridgit](#). Bridgit is a desktop sharing application students can use to follow your lecture notes in REAL TIME once invited to your session. It allows the student to see you on camera and receive the lecture notes.
- Most rooms are equipped with a Document Camera that allows you send an image of a physical document or specimen.
- If your remote students require a physical copy of a worksheet that you have changed at the last minute, you can access the staff assistant at the remote location to print and distribute copies. Lynn Seabrook [lseabrook@gprc.ab.ca](mailto:lseabrook@gprc.ab.ca) is the Program Coordinator for our distance sites. Feel free to contact her with any concerns you may have. She can assist you with handing out information to students and proctor exams. You will have an opportunity to meet Lynn during your videoconference training session.
- Moodle allows your students to submit assignments and exams. It has great features such as Discussion Boards, automatic marking with a Gradebook. You can post when you will be away or if class is cancelled.
- Final exams or midterms that are not during class time MUST BE SCHEDULED at the distance site for your distance students, much like classrooms are scheduled on campus. Room and supervisors are available to you at the distance sites. Lynn Seabrook would be your contact.

### **What is your style of teaching? Can you change the layout of the room to suit your style?**

- Videoconferencing rooms have been designed to optimize lighting and sound quality.
- If you are mainly lecturing, make sure you are in clear view of the camera. You may want to mute your distance students, unless they would like to add/comment to the lecture and to eliminate excess noise.
- If you are planning any kind of class discussion, make sure the videoconferencing cameras are positioned so each party can see the others without difficulty.
- Feel free to move table and chairs. Again, make sure your videoconference students can see you and the local class. After the end of your class, any tables and chairs moved must be returned to their original places.
- Connect with your distance student. Don't be afraid to ask them to sit on a certain side of the room or creating camera pre-sets to quickly move between your position and the local student group. This can be discussed further in your training session.

### **Keeping your distance students engaged, involved and part of your class as a whole. Instead of us-versus- them atmosphere.**

- Perform visual checks to make sure that the remote students are present and paying attention.
- Greet your remotes students at the beginning of each class.
- Stay connected through email.
- You can use Moodle to communicate with your remote students so they have an opportunity to access you outside of class. Make them aware of your office hours and how to reach you.
- If possible, travel to the remote locations two or more times during the course and teach from that location. The recommendation is that the first time should be close to the beginning of the course as this gives students a chance to meet with you in person and discuss any concerns they have. The other visits should be centered on critical points in the course, such as exam preparation or project reviews. Many instructors have taken advantage of this opportunity it has gone over very well. Please let your technical contact ([Erin Grier](#) ext.2968) aware of your visit should a technical issue occur.
- Invite your remote student(s) to come GPRC Campus two or more times during the course. If students make the trip, give them time before or after class to meet with you and socialize with the other students.
- Always let your distance students know the protocol for asking questions. Do you want them to interrupt you as you are speaking (with a question or a raised hand) or will you allow certain times for questions?
- Learn the names of your remote students and ask them discussion questions directly.
- Allow your remote students to mute their microphones and have their own course-related discussion.
- If you require students to have a group discussion, during class time with the remote students, this is totally acceptable. You can book the Educational Technology Faculty lounge that has videoconference equipment. This will allow the group to have a personal discussion without

disrupting the rest of the class. This also gives the local and remotes students a chance to interact on a more personal level. Please contact [Darcie Coulter](#) (ext. 2064) or [Erin Grier](#) (ext. 2968) for assistance.

- Remote students may have trouble jumping into a heated classroom discussion. At times, audio and video signal may also be delayed by a second or two, which makes students feel out of synch with the main presentation. Go out of your way to give them the opportunity to present their views.
- Periodically check to see if there are questions from any of the remote sites.
- Take advantage of the discussion tools in Moodle. This gives the remote and local students an opportunity to expand or continue their classroom discussion. This gives students open-ended time to continue the discussion and provide supporting evidence.
  - If you have three or more sites during a class discussion, inform your class on the flow of the discussion. “We are going to start the discussion with Hinton, and then move to Edson, and then Fairview. If you have any questions, please write them down so you don’t forget them when it is your turn.”

#### **Class presentations from the remote site.**

- It is the responsibility of the remote AND local students to make sure they are prepared for their classroom presentations. This includes knowing how to use the technology in the room. Educational Technology Centre offers training sessions to students. Please book prior to your presentation through [edtechrequests@gprc.ab.ca](mailto:edtechrequests@gprc.ab.ca).
- Remote students have access to the technical contact in Hinton. They are available to them for assistance, help or any questions they may have. They have the opportunity to rehearse in a live call. Please book through [edtechrequests@gprc.ab.ca](mailto:edtechrequests@gprc.ab.ca)
- If the remote students have any handouts, they should contact their instructor OR simply use Moodle to post the handouts. This way the students can print them and have them ready for class.
- Reposition the camera so the remote students and local students can see each other comfortably. This will encourage the local students to ask questions.

#### **Expand your guest speaker list and attend conferences virtually!**

- If there is a lecture or guest speaker you would like to speak to your class. Invite them. Ask them if they would be interested in videoconferencing to your class. No travel required!!!
- The presentation that you would like your students to attend is not during your class time? No problem! As long as a videoconference room is available, we can do it. We also have a Mobile Videoconference Cart. Let’s bring the videoconference to YOUR class.
- You must give ample time to get conferencing like these scheduled. There is a testing process that must happen prior to the successful connect of your conference.

