



## Three essentials in moving online

Dr Cathy Stone and Dr Nicole Crawford

In these unfamiliar times, universities are suddenly needing to move face-to-face courses online. This may be a [tall order](#) for educators, but even a hastily-developed online course can still deliver an effective and engaging learning experience for students.

NCSEHE Equity Fellowship research by Dr Cathy Stone provides direction through [Ten national guidelines for improving outcomes in online learning](#) for the post-secondary education sector. While it won't be possible to follow all these guidelines immediately, the following are three essentials to aim for when moving online:

- 1** Recognise the [diversity](#) of students' strengths, needs and circumstances:
  - Not everyone has fast internet and up to date computers — nor will everyone be very tech-savvy.
  - All ages and stages — flexibility will be needed as students 'fit study in' around their other commitments and responsibilities; weekends are essential and extensions may be needed.
  - Not all will be able to attend synchronous sessions — need a mix of synchronous and asynchronous contact.
- 2** Online students need a strong [teacher-presence](#) and ongoing communication:
  - Regular and meaningful communication with teachers (discussion boards, emails, blogs etc.) or students quickly become disengaged and disillusioned.
  - Institutional contact and communication throughout the student journey — enrolment to graduation.
- 3** Interactive and engaging [course design](#):
  - Build interactivity into learning tasks wherever you can (e.g. in synchronous sessions, students could be set tasks to work on together in video conference break-out rooms).
  - Vary the tasks — break it up and mix it up.

View a 2020 webinar by Dr Cathy Stone and Dr Nicole Crawford, *Three Essentials in moving online*:  
<https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/event/adcet-ncsehe-webinar-three-essentials-in-moving-online/>

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Dr Cathy Stone** is an independent consultant and researcher in the field of post-secondary student equity, retention and success. She is a Conjoint Associate Professor in Social Work at the University of Newcastle, Australia, and an Adjunct Fellow with the NCSEHE. As an active researcher, Cathy's publications focus particularly on the experiences of mature-age, First-in-Family and online students. The Final Report from her 2016 NCSEHE Equity Fellowship has provided *National Guidelines for Improving Outcomes in Online Learning* for the post-secondary education sector.

**Dr Nicole Crawford** is a 2019/20 NCSEHE Equity Fellow and Lecturer in Pre-degree Programs at the University of Tasmania (UTAS). Her research focuses on equity and inclusion in higher education, including enabling education; mature-aged students; regional and remote students; and student and staff mental wellbeing. She initiated UTAS's Social Inclusion Community of Practice, and the National Association of Enabling Educators of Australia (NAEEA) Special Interest Group on Mental Health.

