

The University of Alabama System



INTERCAMPUS INTERACTIVE TELECOMMUNICATION SYSTEM (IITS)

A Faculty/User Handbook: Effective Teaching/Presenting Using Videoconferencing Technologies

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FOREWORD

Welcome to the University of Alabama System Intercampus Interactive Telecommunications System (IITS). Since its inception in 1991, IITS has been leading the state in videoconferencing endeavors that have led to face-to-face interaction for everything from business meetings to the completion of a college degree. The IITS' primary function is to facilitate the sharing of Alabama's educational resources among its member institutions via two-way video/audio (videoconferencing).

Whether you are teaching a course or conducting a meeting, the IITS offers flexible options to meet your individual needs. You will be in a classroom with more equipment than the ordinary classroom, but don't panic. You will not be required to troubleshoot any of this equipment during the class. However, the technology is simple to operate. You can choose to control all or part of the equipment or leave it completely in the hands of the room coordinator. Whichever method you choose, you will find ideas for preparation and presentation in this handbook.

This handbook was developed to assist you in preparation for what may be a new teaching experience for you, instruction in an electronic classroom environment. Many general principles of good teaching are described which are applicable beyond videoconferencing instruction. We hope that you find the contents of this handbook useful, interesting, and challenging. It is our goal to assist you in any way possible to make this a successful experience.

IITS staff and/or your campus Site Coordinator are available to assist you as you plan your course for distance instruction and develop your individual presentations. At your request, your campus Site Coordinator will schedule a videoconferencing orientation session to demonstrate the proper use of videoconferencing equipment and to provide an opportunity for you to try out the facility. Additionally, the IITS Program/Operations Coordinator is available to assist you with evaluating materials and techniques used in the videoconferencing classroom. **The IITS Program/Operations Coordinator can be reached by phone at (205) 975-6854 or email at iitscal@uasystem.ua.edu.**

Thank you for your cooperation and for participating in this maturing delivery system. Your suggestions for improving this handbook are greatly appreciated as IITS strives to better serve videoconferencing users.

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STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Once you made the commitment to deliver instruction via videoconferencing, you qualified as a member of a unique group of faculty. Perhaps the most obviously shared characteristic of this special assemblage is that most members have superior understanding of their respective teaching abilities. Also, you probably have more than an average dedication to your discipline and broadening its role in our society. But most importantly, the members of this fraternity tend to be risk takers and change agents.

Change agents and risk-takers in the teaching profession seem to operate from an intuitive conceptual framework. When asked, the teacher dissatisfied with the status quo may not be able to immediately articulate the reasons why s/he sees a need for change, but s/he intuitively makes changes and improvements. A good example of this is seen in how faculty change curriculum in higher education or adjust their teaching to the course level (and student level) of the program.

There are those members of the academy who see the major or program as a series of courses, which provide students with the opportunity to gain increasingly specialized content. Others, however, see the departmental curriculum as a set of experiences for different populations. This latter population tends to be concerned with the nature of the discipline and its processes. These faculty members will use the curriculum as an opportunity to foster students' intellectual skills and to nurture increasingly sophisticated thought as students' progress through the curriculum. For the faculty member offering a course via technology, he/she must have a clear appreciation of the purposes of curriculum. Without such an understanding, the course and instruction can be readily misinterpreted.

We clearly admit that we do not have all the answers since we do not even know all the questions. What we do know is that higher education must reassess where it is and its responsibility to the citizens of the region. And, moreover we know that educational technologies are developing more rapidly than our abilities to use them to their fullest capacity.

Perhaps the most powerful strategy for us is to do all we can to maintain an open mind concerning the changing role of higher education. In so doing, we can continue to nurture in faculty a willingness to risk trying new approaches. Maybe the combination of new ideas and new technologies will present us new ways to provide educational access and empower the greatest number of citizens.

HOW VIDEOCONFERENCING WORKS

As an instructor in a videoconferencing classroom, you will see and hear participants at remote sites via TV monitors, video cameras and microphones. They will also have the ability to see and hear you on TV monitors at their locations. Other information that will be useful for you to know is:

In an IITS classroom there are two TV monitors. One monitor will display your site. The other will display a distant site. Since the videoconferencing systems are voice activated, the site displayed on the monitor will be the site where someone is speaking. If more than one person speaks at the same time, the monitor will display the person who speaks the loudest or the longest.

As an instructor in a videoconferencing classroom, you may want to consider establishing a policy for the microphone system in all participating sites. Do you want the microphones on during class or muted? If you have multiple sites, you might want to establish a “round robin approach” where at intervals decided by you each site is called on to ask questions or make comments. This approach helps to alleviate students talking over each other. Most sites have a technician available to work the room during a connection. Inform this person when you want microphones muted, etc. It is helpful to students if your procedure for answering questions, etc., are included in your syllabus as well as announced at your first meeting. Always assume microphones are on at all times and all conversations can be heard by everyone on the system.

With compressed video, it is important to engage the remote students as much as possible.

For example, you should:

- Call on distant students by name, asking him/her to share his/her thoughts on an issue, or to answer a discussion question.
- Do a seating chart so that you can call on distant students by name.
- Have students at distant sites place a name card in front of them for easy recognition.
- Demonstrate how you would prefer they ask questions, i.e., should they raise their hand, will you allow time after completing a thought, etc.
- Have on-campus and distant students state their name prior to asking questions and/or making comments. This allows the camera time to move to their location so that they appear on camera when speaking.

IITS Roles and Responsibilities

Your role in delivering a course in this medium will not be much different from the role in a face-to-face classroom. The major difference is that others are involved in the videoconferencing process. When videoconferencing is used, teaching becomes a team work concept because of the other involved in making your class/presentation a success.

REMOTE SITES

There are currently 80+ videoconferencing sites listed on the IITS web page.. A complete list of IITS remote sites is included in the back of this handbook for your convenience.

SITE COORDINATOR

The site coordinator provides initial support when setting up your videoconferencing course. S/he will assist you in locating distant sites, completing appropriate scheduling paperwork, and confirming your individual instructional needs, i.e., computer presentations, slides, videotapes, etc. A copy of the IITS Site Coordinator Handbook is available for your review. All site coordinators names and contact information can be found at www.iits.uasystem.ua.edu..

ROOM COORDINATORS

Room coordinators support videoconferencing courses at off-campus locations. These employees are not tutors but serve as facilitators at the remote sites for your course. Often, room coordinators are part-time campus student employees. The campus site coordinator is the contact person for room coordinators. Room coordinators take attendance; administer tests, report technical problems at the site, etc. A copy of the IITS Room Coordinator Handbook is available for your review.

TECHNICAL COORDINATORS

The Technical Coordinator is the person(s) designated by the site to coordinate the technical details of classroom maintenance and operation. The Technical Coordinator works with the Site Coordinator to provide technical support in the classroom necessary for efficient operation. This position provides the technical link with the hub in Birmingham. In some instances the Technical Coordinator and Site Coordinator are one-in-the-same.

The Technical Coordinator does not need to know all of the technical details regarding the operation of the videoconferencing equipment in a classroom. They do, however, need to know how to make adjustments to the equipment and be knowledgeable enough to handle the daily operation of the classroom. When a problem develops with the equipment, the Technical Coordinator needs to be able to identify and fix the problem if it is within his/her expertise. If the problem is more complicated, the Technical Coordinator needs to contact the hub in Birmingham and report it, providing as many details as possible.

UA SYSTEM TECHNICAL ENGINEER AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANT

The UA System Technical Engineer and/or Technical Assistant are housed in the hub in Birmingham, Alabama. Their primary role is making sure that the equipment at all sites participating in a videoconference has been certified. They also are responsible for second tier technical assistance for all UA System sites plus all IITS videoconferencing members.

UA SYSTEM PROGRAM/OPERATIONS COORDINATOR

The UA System Program/Operations Coordinator is responsible for scheduling all traffic on the network. This person is also available for assisting in the location of distant sites, faculty training, program development, financial arrangements and general assistance for faculty in preparing to teach through this medium.

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Preparing to Teach via Videoconferencing

While the core content remains the same, videoconferencing presentation requires pre-planning. As you prepare to teach via videoconferencing your first question might be “How do I offer a course over the IITS?” First, submit a course proposal for review and approval by your Chair, Dean, Continuing Studies and the IITS Scheduling and Policy Committee. Once you have been given approval to offer the course/program you are ready to prepare your video presentation. Some general guidelines are listed below to assist you in this preparation.

- A. What to do first.
 - 1. Decide what you plan to teach.
 - 2. Determine your goals for student learning.
 - 3. Know who your student population.
 - 4. Familiarize yourself with the procedures for offering a course over videoconferencing.
 - 5. Decide how you will assess student learning.
- B. Prepare an outline of the material you plan to present.
 - 1. Number of general topics you plan to discuss.
 - 2. Course requirements.
 - 3. Resources that need to be reserved or ordered, speakers. (Textbooks, library reserves, reading packets, etc.)
- B. Prepare your syllabus.
 - 1. Include the information you gathered in item A.
 - 2. Include how you will interact with students during class and after.
 - 3. Include alternative plans in the event of any type of connection failure, i.e., equipment failure, power outage, etc.)
 - 4. Include testing and proctoring procedures.
 - 5. Include dates the class will not meet.
- C. Prepare yourself.
 - 1. Consciously prepare for student interaction. Be aware of student’s need for reinforcement, repetition and clarification.
 - 2. Remember to welcome students to each class session and close with a “see you next time” statement.
 - 3. Prepare yourself and students for possible technical problems, i.e, equipment failure, power outages, etc.
 - 4. Allow for breaks, especially if the session is more than 90 minutes. A 10 minute break will give you and students time to refresh.

GENERAL INFORMATION

THE VIDEOCONFERENCING CLASSROOM AND PARTICIPATING SITES

Technology transports information, not people. The placement of students and their instructors in different locations poses challenges for teachers and students alike. One of the challenges is the exchange of hard copy materials. Another is ensuring that the classroom environment, even through compressed video, is supportive of learning.

WEB MANAGEMENT

Web management products such as webCT and other similar products are helpful for maintaining communication and providing information for your distant students. Depending on the product your university has chosen, articles can be downloaded, grades stored, tests dispersed, and video streaming accessed.

Web management makes it possible for you to have handouts available for students on the web making it convenient for students to review and print materials before class. This process alleviates the need for mailings to distant students and vice-versa drastically cutting the costs incurred by the institution for videoconferencing delivery. Web management also allows students to email papers, etc. which allows the student more time to prepare a paper and you less time waiting for the mail.

DISTRIBUTION OF CLASS MATERIALS

Distribution of class materials is up to the discretion of each individual University, College, Department, and Instructor. You should, however, if you do not utilize or have access to use the internet allow ample time for documents to be copied, collated, and received through the mail. Please include your course number at the top of each handout distributed to participating sites. If possible, the relevant class session and/or lecture date is also helpful for clarification.

Students at your distant sites should have all class materials at the same time as on-campus students. This is especially beneficial for keeping your distant students feeling like vital members of the class.

EXAMINATIONS

In addition to your course number and title, examinations must include all necessary instructions for administering that specific test. Remote students and site coordinators need to understand how you wish to conduct each exam. Please state whether it is an open or closed book test, what length of time is allowed for completion, and any other instructions you would give students if they were present in the classroom. In addition, verbal instructions should also be given over the air to distant students at the same time you are explaining the examination process to your on-campus class.

Before the exam proctor distributes exams, an Examination Cover Sheet should be attached to the top test paper. This should prevent anyone from accidentally seeing the exam itself if an unauthorized individual should open the package. Also, exams should be placed in a sealed inner envelope for further confidentiality, with the course number and testing date indicated on the envelope.

When you return student papers to a distant site, it is best to place each student's documents in a separate envelope. Remember it is against the law to disclose any part of a student's record without his/her written consent. Also, when posting grades, it is illegal to identify a student's name

You are responsible for providing guidelines regarding academic integrity, i.e., cheating and plagiarism at the beginning of each course. All university/college has a policy addressing academic integrity. It is highly recommended that you provide a statement outlining scholastic honesty on your course syllabi.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL NEEDS

Contact your Site Coordinator for information on supportive services required for accommodating students with special needs. Also, include a statement regarding disability access and special needs in your syllabus.

COPYRIGHT

As a participant in a distance learning course, the classroom is located miles away from you. Since this is not a face-to-face situation under the copyright law, there are more limits as to what is meant by your ability to "perform works without obtaining copyright clearance from the owner.

It is imperative that you obtain the permission necessary to reproduce copyrighted material. Your department on your campus should have information to assist you in facilitation of this process. Also, if you are going to have "Course Reading Packets: for purchase, it is important to begin early with the copyright clearance process so that your materials will be available for the first class session. Once you have obtained the copyright permission, you can place this information on the web for your distant students' to be able to access.

Prior to your first class session you will need to sign a Videotape Release Form. This form must be on file at the IITS Office if you plan to have your class taped or streamed. If you have the class taped or streamed students will be also be taped as part of the class. Therefore, students must also sign a release form. These two must be on file in the IITS Office prior to taping.

VIDEOCONFERENCING ETIQUETTE

Since many events are conducted in the videoconferencing studio, it must be kept as clean as possible. Please remind students that no food or drinks are allowed in the studio classroom. This can especially be a problem after a break or during evening classes. The rule is a bit awkward since it is useful for faculty to have something to drink readily available. If you bring something in, keeping it low profile is useful. Your cooperation is appreciated.

Always remember and remind your students, that if you can see and hear, you can be seen and heard.

Top Ten Horrible Mistakes easily made when teaching via videoconferencing:

1. Failure to acknowledge participants at a remote site.
2. Failure to send materials early enough.
3. Not having contingency plans. (Technical problems, power outage, etc. do occur.)
4. Not addressing audio problems promptly because the audio “sounds okay” at your site.
5. Thinking you can wing-it because you are a great classroom instructor.
6. Not planning for who will work equipment in remote site(s) if needed.
7. Using lecture format because you’ve heard lectures are easy to do by video.
8. Failure to set ground rules and expectations right at the beginning of the class.
9. Not starting or stopping on time. (Repercussions for sites that have multipurpose rooms or videoconference meetings immediately following your class).
10. Not informing the appropriate Site Coordinator of a date or time change in a class. (You are not the only one using a site.)

COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

There is a wide range of ways instructors provide descriptions of course purposes and goals. Some choose to make no such reference. Others may talk about the broad purposes and goals as they introduce topics within the lecture. A few instructors will provide details within the course syllabus or as a separate handout. For the traditional student who has the opportunity for considerable informal interaction (before and after class, during office hours, perhaps over coffee, etc.) the need for “hard copy” may not be critical. However, for the non-traditional student a description of goals with related objectives can clarify expectations and help relate the course to personal educational plans. For this reason, a short discussion of ways to develop goals and objectives follows.

Goals and purposes are, by their nature, broad and sweeping but usually difficult to measure. An example of a goal statement is provided below.

Goals for SXXX

My purpose as an instructor is to expose you to a wide variety of ideas, and to assist you in developing the ability to think clearly and critically, to ask vital questions, and to express your ideas in a logical and concise manner.

There are four central goals to this course. First, the course will provide basic knowledge about _____. Second, the course will be concerned throughout with the usefulness of the concept of _____. Third, as we examine similarities and differences among specific societies, skill in comparative analysis will be developed. And finally, since throughout the course we also will be asking how each of the societies we study differs from—or is similar to—the USA, you should develop an increased understanding of our own society.

These goals should suggest to you that much of the evaluation of student performance would be structured in the “compare and contrast” format. More information about that format will be provided later.

Many instructors find it useful to establish a clearly stated set of instructional objectives before they begin to teach their course. Objectives can be phrased in various ways. One approach, which focuses on the teacher, is to write statements with a prefatory phrase such as:

The objectives of this course are:

- To show a film on...
- To help students understand....
- To demonstrate what happens when...

Perhaps general statements of this type can be useful. However, they are simply statements of intention to perform teaching tasks and say nothing about what the student will take away from the activity or class. A far more useful approach is to express the objectives as behaviors a student is expected to exhibit after the instruction. An example is,

After completing the assignment on maps, the student will be able to interpret features on a topographic map he/she has never seen before.

Note the action verb “interpret.” Some action verbs describe relatively simple or less mechanical kinds of learning. Others can require a complicated chain of mental operations, which demonstrate a clear grasp of a major concept.

Table 1 Useful Words for Expressing Learning Objectives		
The stem might be: after completing the work associated with this section, the student should be able to...		
Level 1 – simple measurable behaviors:		
find	investigate	describe
gather data	make	do
compute	measure	prepare
Level 2 – behaviors requiring application of more complex mental operation:		
prove	disprove	organize data
analyze	apply	distinguish between
construct	compare	plot a graph
Level 3 – behaviors showing that student has a good grasp of concepts and/or shows original thought:		
predict	generalize from data	
infer	discuss critically	
deduce	propose/defend explanations	

Table 1 provides examples of various action verbs in rough categories showing the relative degrees of sophistication of cognitive thought they require.

You will notice that Table 1 does not include all the action words that describe learning behaviors. Words, which suggest memorization and other low level cognitive behaviors, are intentionally omitted. These are placed in a Zero Level category (see Table 2). While the objective for an activity may require certain Zero Level learning, memorizing vocabulary or knowing the names of items may be questionable goals for adult learning courses.

Table 2
Zero Level
Words

recall	state	list
duplicate	define	imitate
repeat	tell	match
understand	appreciate	know

In order to be completely honest with yourself and your students, include within your objectives a statement describing the conditions under which you might assess their understanding of the ideas. The more clearly you can state the objectives for your course the more likely you are to achieve your instructional goals. The more clearly the students understand your expectations the more likely it is they will perform to the best of their abilities. If you write *realistic* objectives designed to inform the student, the chances of your expectations being met by students will be enhanced.

COURSE SYLLABI AND OTHER ITEMS

The syllabus plays a vital role in the distant learning course unlike its role in on-campus courses. The effective course syllabus has to provide the student with basic information about the course and the instructor. Since the syllabus is frequently the first material the student receives, it establishes both a *tone* for the course and the *image* the students will have of the instructor. Whereas the professor who has had years of experience teaching on campus has an established reputation within the university culture, the off-campus student will know little, if anything, of that reputation. The same can be said of the reputation of a specific course. It must be realized that most distant learners are not likely to have access to informal campus information.

There is a set of basic information, which **must** be included on a syllabus designed for the non-traditional learner. Although many of the items will seem intuitively obvious to the experienced professor, it is useful to review some details and suggestions, which are shown to be useful to the distant learner. Essential information about the instructor, which must be provided for the distant learner, is listed below.

Information About the Instructor

- Instructor's full name and title.
- A complete mailing address.
- Office location and office hours.
- Office fax number and phone number with specific telephone office hours for taking phone call for distant learners.
- Home phone number and any specific time when (and if) calls will be received at home.
- Fax number for your on-campus videoconferencing room.
- Electronic communication address (E-mail and web page).

Information about the course may seem too obvious to describe on the syllabus. However, it cannot be assumed that all students have the current catalog description or an updated list of prerequisites. Of course, textbooks are important sources of information, but for the distant learner the book also provides important structure to the course and information. Students benefit enormously from a careful description of the textbook in relation to the course and its purpose.

Information About the Course

- Course title, course number, credits.
- Course description as published in the catalogue.
Prerequisites for the course including any programmatic requirements.
- Specifics concerning the class location and time (particularly if there are any

projected deviations).

- Required textbook (where textbook may be purchased, availability of the textbook in libraries, reason for selecting the textbook).
- The year and semester of the course offering. This is important historical data, which may be subsequently needed as reference and documentation by the student.

Time for informal discussions between instructor and student is minimal in distant learning situations. A statement of the rationale for the course can contribute to better communications.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

Course schedules range from concise topics to a comprehensive outline of the course content. A major problem with providing a detailed content outline is that the instructor is viewed as inflexible and unaccommodating to student needs. On the other hand, the detailed outline provides an opportunity to clarify the structure of the course. Consider providing students a calendar of the course topics and student assignments the first class session. If necessary, provide an expanded outline later as needed.

When students receive the course handouts the first time the class meets, they immediately review the list of assignments. Students frequently complain on end-of-course evaluations that the instructors neither provide sufficient guidance in fulfilling assignments nor the rationale for requiring the assignment. Students should be provided the following information related to assignments and the course calendar.

Information for Students

- Required textbook.
- Readings.
- Paper, including style / format required, number of pages, number of references and any other requirements.
- Field experiences and / or other outside of class requirements.
- In-class presentations should be described (dates, selections of topics, format, use of overheads, etc.).
- Tests, quizzes, etc.
- Final exam expectations (note: except in unusual circumstances the final exam in regular academic courses must be of a comprehensive nature, see the UA Faculty handbook.).

STUDENT FEEDBACK/EVALUATION

It is important to provide detailed information about the grading process and any other mechanisms to be used to provide students information regarding their performance. Students are always concerned about how they will be evaluated and graded. Clear descriptions of these procedures will reduce ambiguity later. It is important that the evaluation process parallel the kinds of teaching strategies that are used, and the goals and objectives of the course. The classic example is the professor who describes the conceptual nature of the course, emphasizes the importance of ideas and the ability to make broad generalizations but places short answers, simple memory work, and isolated facts on exams.

It is suggested that the syllabus or other handouts include detailed information about the procedures that will be used to provide feedback to students and measure student learning.

The main point of this discussion is that learning is enhanced if the environment in which students and professor interact is open and trusting. Anxiety and frustration is reduced if the structure of the course, the student grading policy, and other factors that impose on the learning environment are clearly articulated.

Feedback and Evaluation

Students should be provided with the following information:

- The grading system and how it relates to learning expectations.
- The procedures for providing feedback on papers written by students and the approximate turn-around time for returning them.
- All policies regarding:
 - due dates,
 - accepting assignments,
 - makeup tests and other late materials,
 - attendance,
 - incomplete grades.
- How feedback will be provided in those courses using computer conferencing.
- Special testing requirements for distant learners (sites that they must attend, etc.).
- Quizzes and exams: multiple choice, essay, (including the percent of exams which focus on low-level content as opposed to concepts and generalizations). A rule of thumb: If you cannot give 80% of any exam as an open-book and open-note assessment, then you are testing for recall or related low-level cognitive skills.
- Describe the differences (if any) between the comprehensive exams and other tests and quizzes.

THE INSTRUCTIONAL ARENA

The key to successful learning is good teaching. If the teacher is good, then it probably does not matter whether the class is being videoconferenced, tape recorded, sent via satellite to Europe, or whatever. There is no substitute for enthusiasm, expertise, and creative interaction with students. The technology will become transparent if the instruction is well done and well planned. Unfortunately, technology cannot hide poor teaching. On the contrary, poor teaching is actually exacerbated in videoconferencing settings.

AUDIO/VISUAL EQUIPMENT

Other equipment available at your site may include an overhead projector, VCR, and DVD player. Some sites have stationary computers while others may have laptop computers or connectivity. If you need a computer for your class/presentation, contact the your campus' site coordinator to determine what media is accessible to you.

MARKER BOARD/SMART BOARD

A white marker board or in some rooms, a smart board, replaces the traditional chalkboard. Presenting lecture notes on a white board is not the best method since you will be writing with your back to the students and the camera. If you choose to use a white board do **not** write continuously across the entire board. The camera can only zoom in on about one-third of the board for readability. Write only on a third of a section at a time; otherwise you force the camera operator to track you, which is hardly viewable for distant learners. Fill up the first third of the board, then the center section, and so on. Remember that the camera operators zoom in to effectively enlarge your work. However, when the camera zooms in to enlarge something, it reduces the width of the material that can be displayed.

Better methods of presenting your lectures notes would be a Smart Board which is like a white board only tied into the videoconferencing equipment so that only the text/drawing you put on the board show on the television monitors much like a computer. Also, good is utilizing the overhead or preparing PowerPoint presentations.

GRAPHICS

An advantage of videoconferencing over the traditional classroom is that photographs, diagrams or tables in resource books can easily be displayed by placing them squarely under the overhead cameras/Elmo or having PowerPoint presentations. Drawings or graphic materials should be clear, large, and drawn with a broad pen. If electronically generated, a **bold** printout is advisable.

The Pen Pal is an electronic tablet that enables you to annotate stored graphics. The Pen Pal makes any camera shot you choose into a digitally reproduced slide. You can alter the slide using drawing and text software and send it to another site. Additional changes can be made there and returned to you. Graphics can be saved with or without your changes. *(If you require graphics support, contact the site coordinator at your campus.)*

TRANSPARENCIES AND OVERHEAD VISUALS

With the acquisition of the Elmo, overhead graphics are encouraged. Transparencies may now be shown in your televised course as well. Plastic overhead transparencies do not work well in this type of display as they produce glare. Hard copy (printed) versions of your supporting materials printed on light blue, light gray or ivory paper work best. White paper can be used, however, some white paper can glare on the screen. A sharp pointer works well to draw students' attention to specific areas on your graphic. The aspect ratio of all materials placed under the Elmo overhead camera should be roughly 4X3, horizontally oriented. Normal sized type does not reproduce well on video and is not readable on camera.

Handwritten materials are discouraged. You should either prepare them in advance, or if necessary, generate them during class discussions. They should be large, with no more than 35 characters to a line. Use large font when printing or writing, such as:

24 point size in bold.

Color felt marking pens display very well and will add variety to diagrams. The videoconferencing classroom is equipped with felt pens and writing pads for use under the Elmo overhead camera system. Check with your UA site coordinator for these items.

Avoid using all uppercase letters except for titles. It tends to be easier to read text when only the first letter is capitalized. Limit the use of different types of fonts to three: one for the title, one for the copy and one if needed for stressing important items.

Limit highlighting to no more than 10% of the words using techniques such as boxing, underlining, color or shading.

Color chart

Best Color For Lines, Text, Design Areas	Background Color	Worst Color
Blue, black	Orange	Yellow, white
Blue, black	Yellow	White, cyan
Black, blue	Green	Cyan, magenta, yellow
White, yellow, cyan	Blue	Green, black
Blue, black	Cyan	Green, yellow white
Black, white, yellow, blue	Magenta	Green, cyan
White, yellow	Black	Blue, magenta
Blue, black	White	Yellow, cyan

SOURCE: SMALDINO & HERRING, ACTIVE LEARNING AT A DISTANCE, AECT, FEBRUARY 1997

VIDEOTAPES AND FILMS

½” VHS videotapes can be played back through the video system for simultaneous display on the classroom monitors and over the air for distant learners. (We are not equipped to play ½”Beta videotapes.) If you plan to use videotape, especially tape you have prepared yourself, make sure it is high quality and recorded at the fastest possible speed (SP mode). Inexpensive videotape gives a poor signal and leaves deposits on the tape heads. Faulty videotape casings can destroy expensive equipment. It is best to test your video tape for quality audio and video prior to class. Contact your Site Coordinator for assistance. If you plan to show a complete video, please obtain copyright clearance to do so if necessary.

VIDEOTAPING YOUR CLASS

Video taping of your videoconferencing class at the host site is recommended. This provides a copy of your class should a distant site experience videoconferencing difficulties. At the end of the semester all tapes should be erased.

MICROPHONES

Wireless clip-on microphones for the speaker and table microphones for participants have been installed at each IITS site. Both are sound activated and extremely sensitive. Please be alert to turning your microphone off when taking a short break or when in casual conversation. Please contact your UA site coordinator in advance of any special guests or activities for your class so that they can be prepared before class time. Guest speakers should wear the wireless clip-on microphone. If a panel will be presenting in a forum setting, a tabletop microphone should be set up in advance.

The room coordinator will set the microphone levels before your session begins. When someone at a remote site speaks or makes a distinct sound, that location becomes instantly visible on the system monitor. You may want the room coordinators at remote sites to mute the microphones during a lecture or guest presentation so that inadvertent noise is not heard.

The table microphones are touch on and off. Table microphones are sensitive and it is not necessary for the student to shout to be heard over the system, however, students should sit near microphones and speak in their general direction. If your students are required to make on-camera presentations to the class, please inform your UA site coordinator of those dates so that the necessary audio configuration will be set up.

COMPUTERS

Many computers have various “video out” connectors and are adaptable to the videoconferencing system. The computer must have 1 volt of composite video out (1 v. P-P output) and adequate screen resolution. Although UA campus technical staff has adapters to connect computers to our video system, you should check in advance to make sure your computer’s output is adaptable to your UA campus site system. If there is any doubt, you need to schedule a time to test the computer interface in the studio a minimum of two weeks before your lecture/presentation that requires computer support.

Please keep in mind the aspect ratio discussed earlier in this document. For a laptop or PC to display properly the resolution should not be set any higher than 1024 X 768 at 75 Hz .

CLOTHING

When dressing for videoconferencing, no special wardrobe or makeup is necessary. A few suggestions are helpful in selecting your dress for videoconferencing; colors look better than high contrast such as black or white. Colors that tend to look best on camera are medium hues of blue, brown and gray. Colors that do not look good on camera are The exceptions are shades of bright red, which look over saturated, dark solid colors, and extremely bright colors.. Pastels look especially nice. Herringbone, tweed, small plaids, and busy patterns may appear distorted on camera and should be avoided. Many professionals wear the typical dark suit and white shirt, which is not the best for broadcast due to the extreme contrast. This may cause cameras to lose details of the presenter’s facial features, for which the cameras cannot compensate.

AUDIO TIPS

No need to yell. Speak as you would in a traditional classroom. The microphone will carry your voice. Adjust your tone or volume to emphasize major points just as you would in the traditional classroom. Remember to allow for questions and comments from students. Remind students to introduce themselves before they ask their question. This allows the camera time to track to them. Also remind students to avoid shuffling papers, covering microphones and side conversations. Microphones are very sensitive and will pick-up even the faintest noise.

VIDEO TIPS

Always address the camera with both eyes and your responses to the camera as though it is a student. A good tip for letting students at all sites think you are looking at them is to look between the top of the students’ heads and the instructor camera. Remember to speak to the need at all sites. Students at all sites are of equal importance.

Some video movements may appear jerky and be distracting to students. Try not to sway or pace. If you are sitting, try not to rock back-and-forth or from side-to-side. However, you also want to avoid the “talking head” syndrome of no movement at all.

SPECIAL POINTS TO REMEMBER

The instructor can take a few specific actions to prevent problems with the broadcast of a course. Please be aware of potential problems highlighted on the following table.

Potential Problems of Videoconference Programs
1. Bright white shirts.
2. Typewritten vertical visuals on 8 1/2 X 11” paper, rather than horizontally oriented. Since normal type is small and written with long line lengths, the camera has to

<p>zoom in to enlarge the image for readability, which crops out some of the materials, or stay zoomed out to include all materials in the camera view, which is generally too small to be useful.</p>
<p>3. Small handwriting. Many speakers prefer to write on pads. Students viewing on a TV monitor are totally dependent on the presenter to write legibly if the material covered is not provided in a supplemental handout.</p>
<p>4. Do not delay delivering copies of the syllabus for your videoconferencing class. The syllabus should be available for distribution a minimum of 5 workdays before the first class.</p>
<p>5. Do not forget to prepare handouts in time for delivery to off-campus students prior to the pertinent lecture. Distant students are very discouraged when they see classroom students receiving class notes, outlines, maps, questionnaires, or other materials that they did not receive prior to a particular lecture.</p>
<p>6. Examinations should be delivered to the distant campus site coordinator, with a sufficient number of copies for the off-campus students, one week prior to the exam date to ensure timely delivery.</p>
<p>7. Last minute surprises. Please give your on-campus coordinator at least 48 hours notice for any special audio / visual needs. With less notice, the ability of the camera operator to accommodate and adapt to your needs is greatly diminished.</p>

GUEST SPEAKERS

Guest speakers can make a valuable contribution to a course. However, some planning must accompany any addition to the instructional phase. Special consideration will have to be given to the production aspects of the class if additional presenters are used. Please attend to the guidelines described below regarding the visits of guests and the use of guest speakers. Be aware that these must be addressed prior to any visit by persons to the classroom. If you have additional needs or questions, contact your UA campus site coordinator.

Guests and Guest Speakers	
1. Notify your on-campus site coordinator if you have:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A substitute instructor,• A guest speaker, and / or• You are to be absent.
2. Guest speakers should be informed of the appropriate mode of dress for televised video.	

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Evaluation is a broad term and can be a complex process. Student assessment is described elsewhere in this handbook. Course and technical evaluation (described here) is carried on a regular basis.

The assessment of the technical aspects of the system is designed **not** as an evaluation of instruction, but rather as an opportunity for students to comment on technical and/or student support issues. A sample of the evaluation form is provided in the Appendix.

Students are also provided the opportunity to evaluate the course, instruction and the instructor. Because of the difference between the on-campus environment and the off-campus environment, two different forms are used for evaluating the course. The regular *Student Questionnaire of Course and Instruction* (SQCI) must be used according to policy for on-campus students. Off-campus students will be provided a specially designed evaluation form, the *Student Questionnaire of Compressed Video Courses and Instruction* (SQVCI).

The (SQVCI) evaluation materials will be forwarded to instructors shortly after the end of the semester. It is important to note that the evaluations provided by remote students are for the IITS use only and are not placed in the Retention-Promotion-Tenure (RPT) file.

ADVISING

The distant learner needs considerable encouragement and support. Recognizing that videoconferencing can be an impersonal medium, faculty is encouraged to make as many personal contacts with students as time permits. It is important, not only that office hours are maintained by faculty for potential in-coming calls, but that some time is invested in making occasional calls to students to express encouragement, success, and to invite campus visits.

Advising sessions for remote students may be scheduled for broadcast to outlying communities. However, this is the exception rather than the rule. Students should be encouraged to contact an advisor for guidance on how to get the most out of the educational opportunities offered via videoconferencing instruction.

A
STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE
OF
VIDEOCONFERENCING COURSE(S) AND INSTRUCTION.

Student Questionnaire of Video Courses and Instruction

Course Title _____

Instructor _____

Campus _____

Semester/yr. _____

This form is only made available to the instructor after he/she has turned in grades for this course. The student will neither be rewarded nor penalized for writing an honest and thorough evaluation of the course and/or the instructor.

Directions: Please read each of the following statements carefully. Using the Rating Key provided at the right, indicate your evaluation by circling your response to each item.

1-Strongly agree 4-Disagree
 2-Agree 5-Strongly Disagree
 3-Neutral NA – Not applicable

The Student:

1. was provided opportunities to explore challenging ideas/concepts.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
2. was intellectually engaged in learning throughout the course.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
3. expected levels of performance were appropriately rigorous.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
4. will benefit significantly from having taken this course.	1	2	3	4	5	NA

The Instructor:

5. seemed enthusiastic about teaching this course.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
6. provided students with the course syllabus, course schedule, and a description of the process for student evaluation at the beginning of the course.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
7. scheduled "telephone office hours" and was available for consultation at those times.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
8. clearly explained the grading system/process.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
9. gave clear and helpful explanations to student questions or without directly answering the student, helped students gain an understanding of material related to the questions.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
10. used a variety of instructional strategies so that students were engaged in learning during the full time allocated to class meetings.	1	2	3	4	5	NA

The Room Coordinator:

11. coordinated site activities smoothly.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
12. was friendly, helpful, and cooperative.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
13. was punctual and reliable.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
14. could answer general questions regarding registration and/or						

B
WEB LINKS
FOR
VIDEOCONFERENCING USERS

WEB LINKS

- <http://www.wisc.edu/pte/vdeo> - After selecting this website about half way down the page, there is a section titled “Custom Training or Promotional Videos” and the sample shown is “Videoconferencing at DoIT.” You must have a high bandwidth connection to stream the video over the Internet.
- <http://www.uasystem.ua.edu/IITS> - IITS home page outlining services, site locations, etc.
- <http://www.crc.ua.edu/manuals.html> - Operation Manuals for videoconferencing rooms on the UA campus.
- <http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/vidcof/intro> - Covers all aspects of videoconferencing, i.e. teaching, room set-up, equipment, etc.
- <http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/vidconf/glossary> - Glossary of useful videoconferencing terms.
- <http://www.ndivn.nodak.edu> - The North Dakota Interactive Video Network (IVN)
- <http://www.vianet-al.net> - Videoconferencing In Alabama Network – member sites, scheduling information, etc.

C

VIANET MEMBER SITES

A complete list of **Vianet** Member Sites and additional **Vianet** certified videoconferencing sites in the State of Alabama can be found at:

www.viane-al.net

D

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REFERENCES

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