

Online Graduate Instruction: What Faculty Consider Reasonable In Relation to What Students Expect

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Abstract

In this investigation, the author utilized a modified Delphi technique to validate whether graduate level online faculty and learners could achieve a consensus of opinion relative to a range of instructional practices commonly associated with online education. A list of administrative guidelines pertaining to online instruction collected from an assortment of post-secondary institutions in the United States was examined by participants to address whether a consensus could be established between what online faculty and online students perceived as important instructional practices in online delivery. The findings of this study offer insight into how administratively driven instructional practices in the areas of Communication, Presence & Engagement, and Timeliness/Responsiveness relate to the expectations of online learners, and the realisms of online faculty.

Keywords: Graduate Online Instructional Practices/Graduate Online Learner Expectations

Examining student satisfaction and expectation has been noted as a key element to improving the quality of online programs. This position has been upheld by the profession, as expressed by a variety of distance learning organizations including the Online Learning Consortium. Of their "Five Pillars of Quality Online Education," student satisfaction is identified as the most important key to continuing learning (Lorenzo & Moore, 2002). But understanding student satisfaction also requires gaining clarification for what students actually expect from online instruction (Wilkes et al., 2006). To confound the matter, the interests and expectations of today's online learners tend to change, so keeping abreast of changing student expectations might present something of a challenge to programs of higher learning (Longden, 2006). As online teachers are expected to adopt more facilitative methods in their approach to instruction, there is a continuing need to re-examine the practices of instruction (Baran, Correia, & Thompson, 2011). But, in doing so, a determination is warranted on whether there is agreement on what instructional practices might serve to satisfy the expectations of online learners, especially when compared to what online faculty believe to be reasonable.

The purpose of this paper is to report on an investigation that examined instructional practices commonly prescribed to online faculty in the higher education setting to determine if students and faculty could arrive at a consensus of opinion concerning the aptness of three domains related to administratively defined faculty performance expectations in online instruction. These domains include the areas of Communication, Presence/Engagement, and Timeliness/Responsiveness. Through the collaborative identification of mutually accepted instructional practices, the outcomes of this study should serve to open dialog relating to how the expectations of online students compare to the instructional practices considered realistic by faculty in the online venue.

This investigation was a follow up to my previous study whereby administrative guidelines pertaining to online instruction were collected from an assortment of 20 post-secondary institutions located in the United States to be compared to the expectations of a group of seasoned online student participants (Bailie, 2014). The theoretical framework for this previous study surrounded Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT), a principle that has been widely applied in marketing research.

Originally presented by Oliver (1980), ECT is a consumer behavior model that is commonly employed to define and predict customer satisfaction and subsequent repurchase intentions. ECT is a theoretical principle that examines how consumer expectation, coupled with satisfaction, results in future purchasing. ECT contends that consumer expectation, together with perceived performance, leads to post-purchase satisfaction. In essence, the theory suggests that when a product or service outperforms expectation (positive disconfirmation) satisfaction will result. Conversely, when a product fails to meet expectation (negative disconfirmation) consumer dissatisfaction will result. Ultimately, succeeding interest to repurchase a product or service is reflective of previous satisfaction with prior use (Oliver, 1980, Anderson & Sullivan, 1993, Spreng et. al. 1996). The relationship between ECT and higher education is widely apparent, as administrators strive to focus even more attention on the influences that reinforce their efforts to attract, support, and retain an increasingly consumer driven student population.

There were two research questions to be addressed in the present study:

- What are some of the common instructional practices (in terms of Communication, Presence/Engagement, and Timeliness/Responsiveness) that online faculty and students perceive as being central to effective online instruction within the higher learning setting?
- Can online faculty and students arrive at a consensus concerning instructional practices?

The aim of Research Question 1 was to examine the perspectives of faculty and students regarding range of instructional practices prescribed to online faculty in the higher education setting in determining the accepted tolerances for each. As a framework for this inquiry, comparisons with previous studies were made. Research Question 2 was designed to determine whether faculty and students can mutually quantify the terms of the instructional practices .

Review of Related Literature

Past research in the field of education has corroborated that student satisfaction can be a prime indicator in the determination of the quality of programs delivered online, and there are multiple studies in the literature that define what satisfies online learners. Early into the expansion of online learning, Rowley (1997) noted an importance in the need to identify which aspects of online instruction are more significant to students, and therefore more likely to have an influence on their satisfaction. Further investigations over the past decade have endeavored to address this expressed need.

Rosenfeld (2005) concluded that student satisfaction in online instruction can be attributed to increased faculty to student interaction, peer interaction, and a sense of intellectual stimulation. A related study by Vonderwell & Turner (2005) determined that certain instructional approaches serve to foster online student satisfaction, including timely and helpful engagement with the faculty member and clear direction relative to course requirements and assignments.

In a 2005 study, Ortiz-Rodriques, et. al. found that student satisfaction with online courses was attributed to regular communication, timeliness of instructor feedback, straightforwardness of course design, and available learner support. A study by Evans (2009) concluded that online student satisfaction corresponds directly with routine faculty involvement, sound curriculum, student engagement, and flexibility. A previous investigation that I conducted deduced that for online faculty to satisfy the expectations of their students, they must demonstrate a timely and dependable presence, communicate often with students with regular feedback, promote occasions for discourse, and be responsive in opportunities for direct contact (Bailie, 2014). Young and Duncan (2014) offered that instructors (and administrators alike) recognize that difficulties with effective communication, the lack of forming positive faculty/student engagements, and the inability to demonstrate effective online teaching strategies all have a negative influence on end-of-term faculty appraisals completed by their students (a common measure of faculty performance).

In response to institutional concerns about online learner persistence, it is clear from the literature that many investigators have examined the relation between student satisfaction and their higher learning experience. In fact, according to Leckey & Neil (2001), collecting data on student satisfaction has become a major factor in the assessment of quality in American higher learning institutions. The process of querying learner opinion about their satisfaction with teaching practices and their learning experience,

analyzing and interpreting this information, and then responding to the results have become significant components to many institutional assessment and retention plans (Rahman, 2006).

Participants

In preparation for the study, a request for an exempt review was submitted to the participating institution's Institutional Review Board (IRB). This formal request was made in an effort to ensure that the proposed research design was appropriate, that any potential risks to participants were marginalized, and that all related matters of consent, confidentiality, and data security were duly considered by the investigator. Once the expressed permission of the IRB was received, recruitment efforts to seat a panel of experienced online students and faculty was initiated. Participants for this study were not randomly selected because the research design was dependent on the recruitment and selection of experienced participants. Toward this end, a student panel demonstrating successful completion of more than five collegiate online courses, and a faculty panel having completed not less than five online course deliveries were considered eligible subjects for membership in this study. Academic program chairs were asked to nominate faculty members that met the candidate profile. In addition, a plea was sent to online faculty to post an announcement describing the study in each of their active courses. The announcement served as an invitation to students meeting the designated qualification profile to consider self-nomination for voluntary participation in the study. Enrollment was closed when the target sample of 40 individuals, representing an equally distributed heterogeneous group, of consenting adult online faculty and students (20:20) had been qualified. Ultimately however, only 32 of the preliminary candidates (16:16) completed the prearranged protocol outlined to be seated as a panelist for the investigation.

Methodology

A modified Delphi methodology was selected to carry out this investigation. The Delphi method was devised in the 1950s as a tool for forecasting future events using a series of surveys intermingled with controlled feedback from a group of geographically disbursed respondents. Since its release, the Delphi method has been widely applied in formal investigations in the fields of technology and education (Hsu & Sanford, 2007). The technique employs an open-ended questionnaire that is delivered to a panel of informed participants in an effort to solicit specific information about a particular area of focus. Through a series of follow up inquiries, the process is designed to determine whether a consensus of opinion between participating experts can be established. According to McKillip (1987), by capturing the collective knowledge of experts, this approach expands on individual thought processes by introducing differing beliefs and judgments. It allows participants to see how closely their own responses correspond with the other panelists and to further justify their train of thought.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation created for the preliminary Delphi probe (Round 1) of the investigation was comprised of a survey that included the twelve instructional protocols that I collected from the 20 participating post-secondary institutions, as assembled for my 2013 study (Bailie, 2014). The survey was created using SurveyMonkey, and the resulting instrument was made available to participants through a dedicated Web link. Data from the completed instruments were managed with the application, processed, and stored as a read-only database. The previous study categorized twelve administratively driven online instructional protocols under three thematic fields, as follows:

Communication

The extent to which online faculty should be expected to:

- initiate email contact with each enrolled student
- place a welcome telephone call to each student
- preface new units of instruction with an announcement delineating learning objectives and due dates
- include personal imagery in their welcome messages

Presence & engagement.

The extent to which online faculty should be expected to:

- access their course
- actively participate in discussions
- engage in discussions
- maintain office hours

Timeliness & responsiveness

The extent to which online faculty should be expected to:

- respond to email inquiries from students
- respond to student voicemail inquiries
- return graded “minor” assignment (discussions, 3-5 page papers)
- return a graded “major” assignment (final project, 6+ page papers, team projects)

Process

Once a signed consent form from each participant was received, access to the secured Web site that housed the Delphi Round 1 instrument was divulged to participants through an e-mail message. To address the first research question relating to this study, participants were presented with the list of twelve online instructional protocols for the first round of the Delphi probe. From this list, they were asked to select each of the online instructional practices that they felt were important for effective online instruction in the higher education setting.

The Delphi Round 2 survey was comprised of the protocols identified in the first round survey instrument. Participants were sent an e-mail invitation with detailed information for how to access and complete the second survey. From a close-ended list, participants were asked to select from a range of tolerances to which they felt each protocol should be expected for an online instructor to be effective. The resulting data were analyzed using measurements of central tendency and Interquartile Range (IQR). As is common with Delphi studies, the IQR was chosen to gauge the level of consensus among the responses. The IQR is the difference between the 1st and 3rd quartiles of a data set, and is calculated according to $IQR = Q3 - Q1$. A consensus of response is acknowledged when an IQR of 1 or less is reached (Williams, 2000).

In an effort to determine whether a sustained consensus among the participant group was possible, a third probe was initiated with the 32 participants. The investigator believed that a third probe would lend a pretest-posttest reliability measure to the results of the previous round. Once the responses to the Delphi Round 3 survey were received from all participants, an analysis determined that a fourth Delphi round would not be warranted.

Results

The study was conducted over a six week timespan in the spring of 2014. In this follow up investigation, the survey design and approach were fashioned to examine instructional practices that online faculty and students perceive as being central to effective Web-based instruction within the higher learning setting. Further, a corresponding analysis of the IQR of the resulting responses was used to determine whether online faculty and students could arrive at a consensus relative to the tolerances of the mutually accepted instructional practices.

Participant Demographics

For this study, the Delphi panel consisted of 32 qualified members (i.e., 16 online faculty and 16 online graduate students). All participants responded fully to the prescribed surveys the allocated timeframe. Of the 16 faculty respondents, nine were female as compared to 10 for the student group. With regard to their experience as an online student and instructor, 75% of the students claimed a history of enrollment in more than 11 online courses and more than 87% of the faculty members indicated instructional experience in 21 or more online courses. Only two of the faculty members had no experience as an online student, and ten of the students reported previous

experience as an online instructor. Nonetheless, for the purpose of this investigation, each participant was asked to base their response to the role assigned for this investigation.

Table 1.

Percentage of Participants by Gender and Online Experience

Demographic	Online students		Online faculty	
	%	No.	%	No.
Gender				
Male	37.5	6	44	7
Female	62.5	10	56	9
Online experience				
< 5 courses	0	0	0	0
5-10 courses	25	4	6.25	1
11-15 courses	18.75	3	0	0
16-20 courses	18.75	3	6.25	1
21+ courses	37.5	6	87.5	14

Additional demographic detail, including participant state of residency in the United States, was also collected with the Delphi Round 1 survey. It was found that the geographically disbursed panel members represented seventeen states of residence.

Delphi Round 1: Fundamental List of Online Instructional Protocol

To address the first research question pertaining to this study, participants were presented with the list of twelve online instructional protocols included in my 2013 investigation (Baillie, 2014). From this list, they were asked to select each of the online instructional practices that they felt were important for effective

online instruction in the higher education setting. The objective of this step was to further validate that the previously examined protocols continued to be perceived by the current experts as important instructional tasks to be demonstrated by an online instructor. In response, each of the twelve protocols was selected by at least one faculty member and one student participant. Of the responses, all panelists indicated that online faculty should be expected to actively participate in discussions ($n=32$). Three additional protocols were held in high regard by the combined panels, including the expectation for faculty to access their courses on a regular basis ($n=31$), as well as the need to respond to student email and voicemail inquiries ($n=31$). On the other hand, those protocol that received less attention included the expectation to include personal imagery (photos) in messages ($n=15$), an expectation for faculty to maintain office hours ($n=12$), and the need for faculty to place welcome telephone calls to each enrolled student ($n=2$).

Table 2.

Descriptive Statistics of Combined Panel Ratings, Delphi Round 1

Theme/Protocol	Online students		Online faculty		Total	
	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>
Communication						
Initiate email contact with each student	62.50	10	81.25	13	71.88	23
Place welcome telephone call to each student	6.25	1	6.25	1	6.25	2
Preface units of instruction with announcement	81.25	13	87.5	14	84.38	27
Include personal imagery in messages	25	4	68.75	11	46.88	15
Presence & Engagement						
Access their course	100	16	93.75	15	96.88	31
Actively participate in discussions	100	16	100	16	100	32
Engage in discussions	87.5	14	93.75	15	90.63	29
Maintain office hours	56.25	9	18.75	3	37.50	12
Timeliness & Responsiveness						
Respond to email inquiries from students	100	16	93.75	15	96.88	31
Respond to student voicemail inquiries	100	16	93.75	15	96.88	31
Return graded "minor" assignment	93.75	15	93.75	15	93.75	30
Return a graded "major" assignment	100	16	93.75	15	96.88	31

Delphi Rounds 2 and 3: Tolerances of Online Instructional Protocol

The ideal result of the Delphi technique is the demonstration of a consensus of response among participants. In this investigation, the second and third round surveys were designed to elicit a consensus of opinion relative to the tolerances of specific online instructional practices. The second Delphi probe (Round 2) directed the student and faculty participants to identify the tolerance of each instructional practice that they felt best reflected effective online instructional delivery. With the data generated by the

Delphi 2 probe, descriptive statistics and the IQR were computed for each of the 12 protocols. The IQR was used to determine the level of consensus and was calculated by first establishing the 1st and 3rd quartiles, using the following formulas: $Q1 = (n+1)/4$ and $Q3 = 3(n+1)/4$. Table 3 presents the frequency of response for the online student and faculty panels and the IQR calculations from Delphi Round 2.

Table 3.

Institutional Online Instructional Expectations Round 2

Online Instructional Protocols: Communication				
Online faculty should be expected to initiate email contact with each enrolled student:	One month prior to the term start Faculty($n=0$) Students ($n=0$)	One week prior to the term start Faculty ($n=8$) Students ($n=12$) <i>IQR = 1</i>	One day prior to term start Faculty ($n=7$) Students ($n=4$)	Should not be expected Faculty ($n=1$) Students ($n=0$)
Online faculty should be expected to place a welcome telephone call to each student:	The week before the course begins Faculty ($n=1$) Students ($n=1$)	During the first week of the course Faculty ($n=2$) Students ($n=4$) <i>IQR = 1</i>	Only when requested by student Faculty ($n=13$) Students ($n=11$)	
Online faculty should be expected to preface new units of instruction with an announcement delineating learning objectives and due dates:	A day prior to the start of the new unit Faculty ($n=5$) Students ($n=9$)	The day of the start of the new unit Faculty ($n=11$) Students ($n=7$) <i>IQR = 1</i>	Should not be an expectation Faculty ($n=0$) Students ($n=0$)	
Online faculty should be expected to include personal imagery in their welcome messages:	For each course they teach Faculty ($n=11$) Students ($n=7$)	As they deem appropriate Faculty ($n=4$) Students ($n=8$) <i>IQR = 1</i>	Only when students are expected to do so Faculty ($n=1$) Students ($n=1$)	
Online Instructional Protocols: Presence & Engagement				

Online faculty should be expected to access their course at a frequency of not less than:	Once a day, seven days a week	Once a day, except weekends	2 – 3 x per week	At least once a week
	Faculty (<i>n</i> =3) Students (<i>n</i> =6)	Faculty (<i>n</i> =8) Students (<i>n</i> =4) <i>IQR = 2</i>	Faculty (<i>n</i> =5) Students (<i>n</i> =6)	Faculty (<i>n</i> =0) Students (<i>n</i> =0)
Online faculty should be expected to actively participate in discussions:	At least one day during the week	2 – 3 days per week	On a daily basis	
	Faculty (<i>n</i> =0) Students (<i>n</i> =2)	Faculty (<i>n</i> =11) Students (<i>n</i> =11) <i>IQR = 1</i>	Faculty (<i>n</i> =5) Students (<i>n</i> =3)	
Online faculty should be expected to engage in discussions:	Only when directly asked a question	Consistent with the activity	With at least half of the class each week	With each student during each unit
	Faculty (<i>n</i> =0) Students (<i>n</i> =0)	Faculty (<i>n</i> =9) Students (<i>n</i> =4) <i>IQR = 1</i>	Faculty (<i>n</i> =6) Students (<i>n</i> =10)	Faculty (<i>n</i> =1) Students (<i>n</i> =2)
Online faculty should be expected to maintain office hours:	Each business day	Each week	By appointment	As deemed appropriate
	Faculty (<i>n</i> =2) Students (<i>n</i> =0)	Faculty (<i>n</i> =3) Students (<i>n</i> =6) <i>IQR = 2</i>	Faculty (<i>n</i> =7) Students (<i>n</i> =2)	Faculty (<i>n</i> =4) Students (<i>n</i> =8)

Online Instructional Protocols: Timeliness/Responsiveness

Online faculty should be expected to respond to email inquiries from students:	Within 72 hours of receipt	Within 48 hours of receipt	Within 24 hours of receipt	Within 12 hours of receipt
	Faculty (<i>n</i> =0) Students (<i>n</i> =0)	Faculty (<i>n</i> =5) Students (<i>n</i> =3) <i>IQR = 1</i>	Faculty (<i>n</i> =7) Students (<i>n</i> =10)	Faculty (<i>n</i> =4) Students (<i>n</i> =3)
Online faculty should be expected to respond to student voicemail inquiries:	Within 72 hours of receipt	Within 48 hours of receipt	Within 24 hours of receipt	Within 12 hours of receipt
	Faculty (<i>n</i> =0)	Faculty (<i>n</i> =5)	Faculty (<i>n</i> =7)	Faculty (<i>n</i> =4)

	Students ($n=0$)	Students ($n=1$)	Students ($n=10$)	Students ($n=5$)
	IQR = 1			
Online faculty should be expected to return a graded "minor" assignment (discussions, 3-5 page papers):	"In a timely fashion"	Within two weeks	Within one week	Within three days
	Faculty ($n=2$)	Faculty ($n=0$)	Faculty ($n=10$)	Faculty ($n=4$)
	Students ($n=1$)	Students ($n=0$)	Students ($n=9$)	Students ($n=6$)
	IQR = 1			
Online faculty should be expected to return a graded "major" assignment (final project, 6+ page papers, team projects):	"In a timely fashion"	Within two weeks	Within one week	Within three days
	Faculty ($n=2$)	Faculty ($n=3$)	Faculty ($n=9$)	Faculty ($n=4$)
	Students ($n=2$)	Students ($n=2$)	Students ($n=9$)	Students ($n=3$)
	IQR = 1			

With an interest for validating the Delphi Round 2 results, a third round was initiated by the investigator. As an accompaniment to the third-round survey, participants were provided with a summary of the group responses from the second round survey. The introduction of the cumulative results generated by previous rounds has been historically offered in the final probe of modified Delphi studies to confirm the group consensus.

In the third round, an IQR of one or less was demonstrated for eleven of the twelve competencies (Table 4). The response pattern for three of the items compressed, and the result changed the IQR value of the expectation for *online faculty to access their course* from 2 to 1. The responses for this protocol clustered around the expectation for faculty to access their class between once a day ($n=14$) and two to three times a week ($n=13$). In addition, two of the protocols that had achieved an IQR value of 1 in Round 2 were revalued to 0 in the third round. The protocols of *faculty placing a welcome telephone call* shifted to "only when requested to do so by the student ($n=29$)" and *returning student voicemail inquiries* to "within 24 hours ($n=24$)" both achieved a solid consensus. The sole protocol that remained outside of consensus, with an IQR of 2, was the need for faculty to *maintain office hours*.

Table 4.

Institutional Online Instructional Expectations Round 3

Online Instructional Protocols: Communication

Online faculty should be expected to place a welcome telephone call to each student:	The week before the course begins	During the first week of the course	Only when requested by student
	Faculty ($n=0$)	Faculty ($n=1$)	Faculty ($n=15$)
	Students ($n=1$)	Students ($n=1$)	Students ($n=14$)
	IQR = 0		

Online Instructional Protocols: Presence & Engagement

Online faculty should be expected to access their course at a frequency of not less than:	Once a day, seven days a week	Once a day, except weekends	2 – 3 x per week	At least once a week
	Faculty (<i>n</i> =3) Students (<i>n</i> =2)	Faculty (<i>n</i> =7) Students (<i>n</i> =7)	Faculty (<i>n</i> =6) Students (<i>n</i> =7)	Faculty (<i>n</i> =0) Students (<i>n</i> =0)
	<i>IQR = 1</i>			
Online faculty should be expected to maintain office hours:	Each business day	Each week	By appointment	As deemed appropriate
	Faculty (<i>n</i> =0) Students (<i>n</i> =1)	Faculty (<i>n</i> =1) Students (<i>n</i> =6)	Faculty (<i>n</i> =9) Students (<i>n</i> =4)	Faculty (<i>n</i> =6) Students (<i>n</i> =5)
	<i>IQR = 2</i>			

Online Instructional Protocols: Timeliness/Responsiveness

Online faculty should be expected to respond to student voicemail inquiries:	Within 72 hours of receipt	Within 48 hours of receipt	Within 24 hours of receipt	Within 12 hours of receipt
	Faculty (<i>n</i> =0) Students (<i>n</i> =0)	Faculty (<i>n</i> =4) Students (<i>n</i> =2)	Faculty (<i>n</i> =9) Students (<i>n</i> =11)	Faculty (<i>n</i> =3) Students (<i>n</i> =3)
	<i>IQR = 0</i>			

Findings

A total of three rounds of Delphi probes were conducted in this study. The goal of the first round was to examine the list of twelve online instructional protocol identified in the 2013 study to determine whether each of the practices was also viewed with importance by the currently seated participants. The panels were able to accomplish this task with relative ease. The Delphi 2 probe found that a consensus of response was demonstrated by the combined group when considering the practices for ten of the twelve protocols when measured against the IQR. A third probe identified that only one protocol, the expectation for *maintaining office hours*, fell outside of consensus from the combined group's perspective. The results of this study suggest that the stated research questions for this inquiry were adequately addressed. Although a complete consensus of participants was not gained (i.e., only one Delphi 3 protocol fell outside the IQR), a robust consensus across rounds was demonstrated with an eventual outcome of eleven of the twelve (91.66%) protocols resulting in an IQR of 1 or less.

Limitations are commonly associated with any investigative effort and should be widely acknowledged and disclosed. The data for this study were collected over a span of approximately 2 months, beginning in the spring of 2014. Participants were recruited from graduate level higher learning programs at a single university in the United States. The non-traditional participants represented two programs of study, education and information technology. Accordingly, the results may not necessarily be generalized to students who are enrolled in other degree levels or at different academic institutions. The findings of this investigative effort captured the perceptions of an otherwise informed panel of participants. As such, the collective opinions of those included in this endeavor might be limited to this group only, albeit entirely worthy of consideration. Finally, the fashion in which online instruction is delivered will differ from one institution to another, so the protocols that were included in this investigation may contrast the approach indicative of the institutional affiliation of those participating in this study.

Implications and Discussion

A number of past inquiries designed to identify elements that can be attributed to student satisfaction are reported in the literature; however, the extent to which online student expectations in relation to what online faculty view as reasonable appears to be an area that is relatively untapped. In the interest of furthering the scrutiny of administratively prescribed online instructional practices, this investigation focused on the examination of online faculty instructional protocol and related tolerances as perceived by both graduate online faculty and students who were enrolled at a single university in the United States. Through a comparison of the outcomes of a previously completed study that centered on the independent expectations of online students (Bailie, 2014), a list of online instructional protocols were first acknowledged, and subsequently determined that a consensus view between the groups was indeed possible.

Many of the outcomes generated by this study arise with little revelation, particularly the interest in timely, informative, and responsive communication between faculty and learners. One protocol that was included under the communication theme that might warrant further review was the finding that the overwhelming number of participants in this study felt that welcome telephone calls should only be placed at the student's request, possibly debunking the requirement of some institutions for faculty to call each enrolled student during the first week of the term. It might also come as a surprise that, at least in this study, faculty revealed a higher expectation for the regular placement of their own personal imagery (photos) than did the participating students. Students and faculty agree that prefacing units of instruction with an announcement is reasonable and of benefit.

With respect to online faculty presence and engagement, it appears that students and faculty contributing to this study agree that instructor participation in discussion activity should be regular, but based on the prospect for genuine discourse and not according to an otherwise prearranged schedule. This would be contrary to those institutions that require faculty to post according to a prescribed schedule (e.g. "every student, every week"). Also, while the sole protocol that could not be agreed upon surrounded office hours, the majority of participants in this study did maintain that virtual office hours should be fluid and based on need.

Finally, matters of timeliness and responsiveness have been one of the domains that might have come with some resistance by faculty, since inquiries of student consumer expectation might conjure notions of unrealistic demands in the minds of some. However, the results of this study found a fairly consistent match of what constitutes an acceptable response between the two panels in terms of timeliness. We do, after all, live in a world where instantaneous gratification has become an expectation of technology. However, it is also recognized that expectation has been a common trait in humans for many centuries, as according to the Roman philosopher Horace (65 BC-8 BC), "life is largely a matter of expectation." Many would suggest that so too would be the management of expectation.

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