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LTC Resource: Developing a social contract for hybrid or online learning

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LTC Resource: Developing a social contract for hybrid or online learning

A social contract allows you and your students to establish what kinds of interactions, behaviors, and classroom culture you collectively want to support. Many instructors have a discussion of this topic in their face-to-face classes; the scope might be somewhat different in a hybrid or online class, but the spirit is the same. Here are some key values and the associated expectations that you might want to discuss with your class when establishing a social contract.

Respect
- Expectations about respecting the time and effort of others by being prepared for class activities and engagement.
- Expectations about respecting the personal circumstances of individuals by being flexible with class activities and engagement.
- Expectations about the nature of discourse (scope of topics, engagement with ideas versus engagement with individuals, language, format).

Honesty
- Expectations of original work and citing others where appropriate.
- Expectations around what are and are not reasonable types of assistance that classmates can get from one another and from others.
- Expectations around the appropriate use of online resources.

Privacy
- Expectations about recording and distributing class materials.
- Expectations about camera being on/off during video conferencing.
- Expectations about how conversations around difficult or sensitive topics occur, particularly when that includes video conferencing where others may overhear. (Consider that some students may be sharing space with family members or others.)
- Expectations about links to video conferences, and whether they can be shared with anyone other than the students in the class.

Collaboration
- Expectations for making edits in collaborative online writing. (Can individuals edit the text of others directly or should they only use "suggest changes" or commenting?)
- Expectations about how people can make contributions to a discussion during a synchronous session. (Possibilities include chat questions/comment, voice question/comment, or an individual designated as the discussion moderator each day.)
- If students are working in small groups, expectations for a group member to let others know if they are having technical or personal difficulties that prevent them from engaging. If a student repeatedly fails to meet group expectations, what happens? Is moving to individual work something that would be considered? (For extended small group projects, consider group contracts.)