

The function of the online instructor is crucial to student success in online learning. Drawing from a review of research and the perspectives of experienced, award winning online faculty members, [Martin et al. \(2019\)](#) identify five important roles assumed by online instructors:

Facilitator.



The instructor creates an engaging environment for learning by being present, being responsive, motivating students, and modeling active online participation.

For example, a facilitator will respond to students' discussion board posts and pose questions for further reflection and dialogue with their peers.

Mentor.



The instructor models professionalism and gives advice on academic and professional development.

For example, a mentor will help students create personal learning goals and offer the opportunity to receive feedback on assignments prior to submission.

Course designer.



This involves defining learning objectives and employing active-learning strategies that inspire student engagement with material. It also entails minimizing barriers by creating congruence between course design, course content and delivery approach and by ensuring accessibility.

For example, a course designer will identify parts of a course that may not be suitable for online delivery and adjust where necessary.

Subject matter expert.



The instructor demonstrates mastery in choice of content and ensuring the currency and practical relevance of course content.

For example, a subject matter expert will research current trends in the subject field, or collaborate with industry peers.

Content manager.



The instructor has full responsibility of course delivery, including providing content, collecting assignments, encouraging attendance, assessing learning, and reflecting on course design.

For example, a content manager will ensure course modules are functioning and up to date, and reflect on what did and did not work in order to improve the course in the future.

References:

Martin, F., Budhrani, K., Kumar, S., & Ritzhaupt, A. (2019). Award-winning faculty online teaching practices: Roles and competencies. *Online Learning*, 23(1), 184-205.