



## NORTH CAROLINA REAL ESTATE COMMISSION

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### **MOST COMMON PROBLEMS With INSTRUCTOR VIDEO RECORDINGS**

Below are the most common problems identified by reviewers in video recordings submitted by prospective prelicense, postlicense and *Update* course instructors to demonstrate their teaching skills.

- **Instructor provides incorrect or incomplete information.** *Although not necessarily the most common problem noted, providing incorrect information is noted all too often and is probably the single worst error an instructor can make.* Instances of providing incorrect information should be infrequent, *especially* if the misinformation relates to a testable point. If there are multiple instances of misinformation in a recorded segment, the reviewers will likely conclude that the instructor's mastery of the subject matter is inadequate. If an instructor is conveying incorrect information during a session depicted on a recording submitted to the Commission, what is the instructor doing during other *sessions*?
- **Instructor fails to utilize varied instructional methods/techniques.** The almost exclusive use of the "lecture" method fails to initiate adequate learner (student) participation. Many reviewed recordings are almost completely devoid of student participation other than an occasional question raised by an interested (or perhaps confused) student. *Along with providing erroneous information, failing to demonstrate varied teaching styles that encourage student participation are among the top reasons instructor candidate teaching skills are found to be unsatisfactory.* Good instructor-learner interaction and active learner participation has been proven to greatly enhance learning, including both retention and understanding. An instructor who attempts to actively involve students *in* the recorded class, even if the efforts are not as smooth and productive as is desirable, will fare considerably better in his/her evaluation than one who makes little or no effort to involve students.
- **Ineffectual use of technology or visual aids.** Instructor should use visual aids to augment his/her instruction. Well-prepared visual aids have been proven to enhance student learning. *Failure to use visual aids (or very minimal use of visual aids), as well as improper use of visual aids are also very common problems contributing to unsatisfactory ratings.* Even when used, PowerPoint presentations are frequently left on display for long periods, even after the subject has changed. Blank the projector as soon as each slide has served its purpose and when students' attention needs to focus on the instructor. Avoid walking between the projector and screen when in use. Verify that the font size on the slides is large enough for all students to read. Do not attempt to put too much information on a single slide. The general rule of thumb is 1) no more than 6 words per line, 2) no more than 6 lines per slide, and 3) font size no smaller than 36 points.
- **Instructor fails to clearly state the learning objectives for the session and the relevance of the topic.** At the beginning of all class sessions (but especially the session being recorded), the instructor should state the *specific* teaching objectives for the particular class session.

The instructor needs to be very positive about the subject matter and provide an explanation as to why each particular topic is important for a practicing real estate agent to understand. *Never* tell students they *only* need to know a particular point because it may be tested on an examination.

- **Inappropriate scope and depth of topic per NCREC's course syllabus.** The Commission's course syllabi clearly note the required instructional level prescribed for each course topic. The most common problem is failure to teach a subject in sufficient depth, using examples of practical application, when the syllabus calls for in-depth instruction on the subject.
- **Little or no use of bridging or transition statements between topics and sub-topics.** An instructor should provide appropriate transitions between topics/concepts. When shifting from one topic to another, summarize the key points just covered before moving on and, if feasible, explain how the new topic relates to the one just covered or others covered earlier.
- **Overreliance on notes or text.** Instructor should never read extensively from text and/or notes; just refer to notes to establish place in the discussion and/or an occasional reading of a passage verbatim for emphasis. Reviewers will typically see overreliance as an indication that the instructor does not have sufficient mastery of the material and/or is lacking in poise and confidence. Extensive reading of material by the instructor is also a very poor instructional technique and frequently results in student inattention, if not sheer boredom.
- **Inadequate use of examples and illustrations.** Instructor should use appropriate "real world" examples to illustrate concepts and points. The *use* of numerous practical examples greatly enhances student interest and learning and is mandatory for any Level 3 or 4 prelicensing topic. One of the main reasons instructors are required to have real estate brokerage experience is so they can augment their instruction by relating examples based on their experience. The failure to use sufficient examples to illustrate concepts constitutes a failure to teach the subject matter at the appropriate depth and frequently leads reviewers to conclude the instructor's mastery of the subject matter is less than desirable. [The opposite problem would be for the instructor to spend most of the time telling "war stories" and omit coverage of other important points due to lack of time.]
- **Poor handling of student questions.** Instructor should make a practice of repeating or restating students' questions or comment to make sure the whole class can participate in the answer or discussion. Answering a question for only the student that asked it is a very common problem with instructor video recordings. Repeating students' questions and addressing answers to the whole class is always a good practice, even with small classes where you are relatively certain the other students heard the question. Restating a question helps to clarify what is being asked and helps students who might not have been paying close attention at the moment the question was asked. Also, addressing the answer to the entire class prevents other students from "tuning out" while you are answering a question. A closely related common problem is *failing to recognize a student's contribution to the class when the student attempts to answer an instructor's question {even if the answer is not correct} or when the student asks a question, provides an example, etc.* It is important to recognize their participation in order to encourage more participation and interest. Always thank a student for their question or comment.
- **Poor communication skills.** Instructor fails to speak distinctly at an appropriate pace using appropriate voice tone and inflection. Speaking in a monotone (without any inflection) is boring for students and results in a loss of their attention. Using different voice tone and inflection to emphasize key points/words is very important. Speaking either too fast or too slow is equally annoying and should be

avoided. Some instructors repeatedly use filler words between topics and points such "uh," "okay," or "you know." Repetitive use of filler words at pauses can be due to "stage fright." If you don't know what to say, count to ten silently and breathe slowly while you refer to your notes.

- **Use of improper grammar, pronunciation or word usage.** This can be a very serious problem that will undermine an instructor's credibility faster than just about anything else, especially with students who are better educated. Fortunately, this is not a widespread problem among instructors, but some instructor candidates have demonstrated a significant problem with grammar and/or pronunciation. The most commonly noted grammatical problem is a *lack of subject-verb agreement*. Proper conjugation requires that the verb agree with the subject-noun **in** regard to both *person* (*first, second or third*) and *number* (*singular or plural*). Other noted grammatical problems include improper use of verb *tense* (*past, present or future*). [A few examples of noted grammatical problems include: "If the broker *fail* to notify the buyer..;" "The light fixtures *is* going with the house..;" "This house *have* 2000 square feet..;" "Look at the handout I *give* you..;" "If it *don't* look right..;" and "Where is she *at*?"] Another fairly common problem is *mispronunciation* of words. [Examples: Saying "track" for *tract*, "interstate" for *intestate*; "RELATOR" for *REALTOR*; and "revelant" for *relevant*.] Improper grammar can be a difficult problem to overcome and prospective instructors may need to consider obtaining special educational assistance if this is noted as a major problem.
- **Instructor uses a local or regional dialect that does not meet the standard of good speech expected of professional instructors.** While a strong dialect would probably not, standing alone, result in an unsatisfactory finding as to teaching skills, instructors should attempt to avoid the use of such a dialect. Instructors who use a strong regional dialect may also lose credibility in the eyes of some students, especially students with higher education levels. A regional dialect frequently involves consistent non-standard pronunciation of words. This is best understood by a few examples:
  - Not pronouncing the "g" in words ending in "ing" (e.g., listin', sellin', buyin', etc.)
  - Pronouncing "where" as *whar*; "fire" as *far*; "this" as *dis* or *this here*; etc.
- **Instructor does not move appropriately throughout the classroom.** It is fairly common for a new inexperienced instructor to remain fixed in one position (usually behind a podium) for long periods of time, because it feels safe. It is important for the instructor to have a reasonable amount of movement around at least the front of the classroom in order to retain the students' attention and to appear accessible to the students. Ideally, an instructor will move throughout the room and there should be no fixed object between the instructor and the students for any length of time. Avoid leaning on a podium (or other structure). [A less common, but more serious problem, is *sitting* during a significant portion of the class, unless there is a very good reason for doing so.]
- **Instructor fails to exhibit positive attitude toward the subject matter or the students.** If the instructor is not enthusiastic about teaching, the students will not be enthusiastic about learning. Personal opinions should not be offered that might offend the sensibilities of the students and criticism of any person, agency or organization should be avoided.
- **Recording has poor audio quality.** It is not unusual for submitted recordings to have such poor audio quality that it is virtually impossible for the reviewers to hear the instructor, much less student questions or comments.

**STRONG SUGGESTION:** Do NOT submit your video to the Commission until it has been reviewed at least by you. Ideally, you should have a currently approved prelicensing and postlicensing instructor critique your video performance to determine adherence to the Commission's Teaching Skills Criteria. Many instructor candidates need to record multiple class presentations and implement changes before exhibiting the requisite teaching skills that will produce a satisfactory video submission.