Building a positive and productive relationship with students depends to a large extent on how you use your teacher presence in the classroom. Here are some suggestions to develop a teacher presence and student rapport.

**Be well prepared for class**
- Plan carefully for each class. Consider learning outcomes, session structure, rapport building strategies, types and range of activities, duration of tutorial tasks and resources to be used.
- Prepare activities that promote active learning, i.e., learning which is based on active engagement of students.
- Use a selection of ice-breakers to establish a relaxed atmosphere in class (see UWS Tutor’s Guide, pp 6-8).
- Design your teaching resources thoughtfully so they are clear, easy to read, and relevant.
- Make sure you arrive a few minutes before tutorial time to convey a message of punctuality and responsibility.
- Acquaint yourself with relevant UWS policies (e.g., assessment; student academic misconduct) so you can respond appropriately to students’ queries.

**Establish rapport with students**
- Use confident body language when you enter the classroom. Walk tall. Chin up. Smile.
- Make eye contact with all students.
- Learn your students’ names (see UWS Tutor’s Guide, p 8 for strategies to learn students’ names).
- Discuss and develop collective ground rules and expectations with students.
- Deal with misbehaving students quickly but not angrily or sarcastically.
- Start each class with something catchy (e.g., one-minute quiz; an interesting news item).
- When appropriate, use humour to “lighten up” a difficult concept or issue.
- Motivate all students to participate in discussions and activities.
- Be culturally sensitive. Make sure students from different cultural backgrounds feel welcome in your class.
- Cultivate students’ trust by fostering a spirit of open and safe inquiry.

**Motivate students to learn**
- Show your enthusiasm about teaching through your passion about the subject matter of your unit. If you do not feel enthusiastic on a particular day – “fake it”, but maintain authenticity.
- Build a case for learning, explaining why the class is important. Students will be more likely to engage if they “buy in” to the relevance of the unit or topic under discussion, especially when you link it with their professional futures.
- Be explicit about the types of teaching techniques you will be using (e.g., group work; case-studies; storytelling; quizzes, etc). Explain how these activities will assist learning.
- Whenever relevant, discuss current issues in the news (online, printed, television, radio). Keep yourself well informed about what is happening in Australia and internationally.
- Listen actively to your students. Respond positively to their contributions (e.g., “Good point!”; “I see what you’re saying”; “A very interesting observation!”; “Excellent question!”). Pause from time to time and check for understanding. Ask students: “Does this make sense to you?”

**Rationale:**
- Being well prepared for your class will enable you to feel in control, which will enhance your teacher presence and facilitate rapport with students.
- Establishing rapport with students will build a stronger teacher presence and create a productive learning environment.
- If students feel motivated to learn, they will engage more actively in class discussions and activities which will facilitate deep learning.
Case Studies

Case Study 1
Marina Nehme, School of Law
Units: Company Law (100 students); Financial Service Law (32 students)

- Prepares thoroughly for classes (e.g., reacquainting with learning guide; planning engaging activities).
- Talks about herself and her expectations from students; encourages them to do the same.
- Consciously learns students’ names by memorising where they sit.
- “Sells” the unit by drawing attention to its real-life applications.
- Provides a thorough overview of unit contents and assessment methods.
- Offers helpful hints on how to do well in the unit and draws attention to resources that enhance learning (e.g., podcasts; discussion board; websites).
- Asks lots of questions in class to engage students, and also encourages students to ask questions.

Students’ Comments:
“The lecturer was very thorough in her explanations and was very engaging. [Enjoyed] the interactive ways used by the lecturer (e.g., discussion board, podcasts, etc.).”
“Lecturer used visual cues to demonstrate what she was discussing, which helped us to better understand the content.”
“The staff member is enthusiastic, dynamic and energetic in conducting classes. Class materials are well prepared and clearly explained.”

References:
Teaching @ UWS http://tdu.uws.edu.au/qilt/downloads/Teaching@UWS.pdf

Case Study 2
Laurel Jackson, School of Marketing
Unit: Marketing Principles (1700 students)

- Prepares for first class by reflecting on her teaching philosophy, and on how to “market the unit as a product” to students. Plans engaging activities.
- In class, welcomes students, introduces herself and explains expectations and ground rules. Establishes a “serious space” by not smiling until the ground rules are thoroughly discussed. Learns students’ names by asking them to write their names on bright coloured cards which they pin to their shirts.
- Ensures students digest content by interspersing information with “capsules of inputs” (e.g., brief discussion of concepts by students before moving on to new ideas).
- Avoids standing at the front for long periods of time. Uses cordless microphone to walk around the class.
- Uses lots of props (e.g., chocolate biscuits; bottled water) and audio-visual resources (e.g., DVDs; YouTube; TV advertisements) to generate discussion.
- Encourages reflection through strategic use of silence (e.g., “Take a minute to think about what I’ve just told you”). Verbally rewards students (e.g., “That’s a good point, Mohammed!”).

Students’ Comments:
“The activities in lectures were good, instead of having theories all the time; people can learn in a relaxing atmosphere.”
“Engagement of hands-on activities during lectures.”
“Best aspect was learning how marketing really works in the real world.”

References:
Teaching @ UWS http://tdu.uws.edu.au/qilt/downloads/Teaching@UWS.pdf