Designing an Online Course and Becoming an Online Educator

A Step-by-Step Guide

August 2014

Version 2.0
August 2014

Revision History:

Version 1.0	Piloted with March 2006 Sloan-C Workshop
1.0a	Piloted with February 2006 UAlbany Summer Gen Ed Pilot Program
	Piloted with February 2007 UAlbany Summer Gen Ed Program
	Piloted with February 2008 UAlbany Summer Gen Ed Program
	Used with permission February 2009 for the UAlbany Summer Gen Ed Program
	Used with permission February 2010 for the UAlbany Summer Gen Ed Program
1.0b	Used in UAlbany ETAP687 summer course 2008
1.0c	Used in UAlbany ETAP687 summer course 2009
1.0d	Used in UAlbany ETAP687/640 summer course 2010-14
Version 2.0	Revised and Retitled August 2014

This manual provides a step-by-step process and instructional design guidelines for the design of an effective online teaching and learning environment.
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Online Course Development: at-a-glance
You use these steps to guide your online course development.

PROCESS	ACTIVITIES
# 1. Reflect: Process: Explore, Consider Possibilities, Question Assumptions, Air Concerns, Get Answers.	-Self-assess Your Readiness -Create a Course Description -Detail Course Information
# 2. Connect: Process: Observe Exemplar Online Courses, Draw Connections, Consider Differences, Reconceptualize Learning Activities for the Online Environment.	-Create a Course Information area in your course in your course development tool.*
# 3. Organize: Process: Chunk and Sequence Content, Draft Structure.	-Set up Modules in your course development tool.
# 4. Build: Process: Consider the options and limitations of the online teaching and learning environment, Move from theory to effective design and practices.	-Climb the learning curve in your course development tool. -Design Learning Activities for each Module.
# 5. Refine: Process: Review-revise-refine, critique, Take the Student Perspective.	-Review and walk through your course and make revisions.
# 6. Implement: Process: Prepare to Pilot your Course.	-Learn and practice course management skills.
# 7. Evolve: Process: Commit to Iteration.	-Review, evaluate, and revise your course.

*Course development tool: e.g., Moodle, BlackBoard, Canvas, etc.

Welcome!

Introduction to the *Designing an Online Course and Becoming an Online Educator* Manual

The purpose of this of this manual is to:

- Guide you through a Seven-Step Process to develop your own effective online teaching and learning environment.

I hope you enjoy developing your online course. *Good luck!*

How do I use this Manual?

You can use this Manual as a stand-alone step-by-step guide, or as a reference manual. This Manual can also be used in conjunction with an online course or workshop, or as a part of a more comprehensive online faculty development process. This Manual assumes that you have not built or taught an online course before. (But even if you have, you will still find some valuable information to help you improve your online course.) The aim of this Manual is to present you with a practical hand's on process that will help you design an effective online course and to become an effective online instructor. By following the steps in this Manual you will actually design an effective online teaching and learning environment and will be provided the tips, suggestions, and resources for effective online course management practices that will help you be a better online instructor. You will note, however, that the last step in the process is "Evolve." Iteration, continuous improvement, and ongoing learning are built into this process. So, though you can use this Manual to build and prepare to teach an online course, it is in the *process* rather than the destination where there is the most value.

The Manual will guide you through Seven Steps of effective online course design, presents some foundational theory and best practices, and provides a series of online course development building activities for you to follow in your own online course shell to:

1: Reflect
2: Connect
3: Organize
4: Build
5: Refine
6: Implement
7: Evolve

Organization of Steps
Each step contains:
Overview
  Each step begins with an at-a-glance overview.

Content
  Each step contains a section(s) of explanatory information presented to help you understand the step's objectives.

Best Practices
  Each step contains Best Practices/Exercises to help you further understand, adapt and implement the step's objectives.

Activities
  Each step lists the online course and course development activities that you should engage in during the course of that step in your course development process.

Review
  Each step ends with a review section that highlights the results expected upon completion of that step in your own course design and development process.

Course Reading/Resources list:

Read the assigned articles and review the web resources as follows:

Module 1 Reflect:

Read:
- *Step 1* in the course manual.
- *Ten Ways Online Education Matches, or Surpasses, Face-to-Face Learning*, Kassop, Mark - The Technology Source Archives, at the University of North Carolina, May/June 2003.
- *Minds on Fire: Open Education, the Long Tail, and Learning 2.0,* John Seeley Brown & Richard P. Adler (2008), Educause Review, vol. 43, issue 1. Or http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ERM0811.pdf
- Online Student Demographics & Info Graphic.

View Videos:
- Did you know? - a YouTube video.
- Online Teaching & Learning - Minilog play list.
- Effective Course Design and Alignment - a YouTube video.
- Discussion Board Etiquette - a YouTube video.

Use Resources:
- Let's Break the Ice! Voicethread activity. Instructions for how to comment on a VoiceThread.
- How NOT to Write Objectives.
- An interactive model of learning objectives based on a revised version of Bloom's Taxonomy.
- Verbs to Use in Writing Objectives.
- Plagiarism - A YouTube playlist.
- Netiquette - a YouTube video.

Module 2: Connect

Read:
- *Step 2* in the course manual.
- *A series of unfortunate online events and how to avoid them, Alejandra M. Pickett (2006).*
- *Do online students dream of electric teachers?* Jason Scorza (2005). Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks, Vol. 9, issue 2.

View Videos:
- How to Design your Online Course, Michelle Pacansky-Brock, YouTube, 2014.
- Designing an Online Learning Environment - Minilog playlist.

View Presentations:
- What Works?: LD Basics for the Online Classroom presented by Alexandra M. Pickett (Duration: 00:59:24)

Listen to Podcasts:
- Exemplar Online Instructor Interviews: Introduction & Tour

Best Practices Checklists and Course Quality Rubrics
- Best Practices Checklists
- Course Review Checklist
- Course Review Rubric

Additional Resources:
- UDL at a Glance, Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST).
- UDL Guidelines - Examples and Resources

Module 3: Organize

Read:
- *Step 3* in the course manual.

- *(My) Three Principles of Effective Online Pedagogy,* William E. Pelz, JALN, Volume 8, Issue 3 - June 2004.
- *The Role of Questions in Teaching, Thinking and Learning,* Foundation for Critical Thinking, 2007.

View Videos:
- How to Design your Online Course, Michelle Pacansky-Brock, YouTube, 2014.
- Creating/Presenting Online Content - Minilog playlist. Ó

View Presentations:
- Keys to Success: Are You Ready to Develop an Online Course? presented by Alexandra Picket (Duration: 00:35:00)

Listen to Podcasts:
- Exemplar Online Instructor Interviews: Learning Activities

Best Practices Checklists and Course Quality Rubrics
- Best Practices Checklists
- Course Review Checklist
- Course Review Rubric

Additional Resources:

- *The university student experience of face-to-face and online discussions: coherence, reflection and meaning. Research in Learning Technology,* 15(1), Ellis, R. A., Goodyear, P., O'Hara, A., & Prosser, M. (2007).
- *A Preliminary Investigation of 'Teaching Presence' in the SUNY Learning Network,* Shea, P., Fredericksen, E., Pickett, A., Pelz, W., (2003) Elements of Quality Online Education, Needham, MA.

Module 4: Build

Read:
- *Step 4* in the course manual.

View Videos:
- Leveraging Technology for Instructional Purposes - Minilog playlist.
- Creating/Presenting Online Content- Minilog playlist.

View Presentation:
- Teaching Presence and Class Community presented by Alexandra Pickett (Duration: 00:66:05)

Additional Resources:
- *A Follow-up Investigation of "Teaching Presence" in the SUNY Learning Network,* JALN, Volume 7, Issue 2 - July 2003, Peter J. Shea, Alexandra M. Pickett, and William E. Pelz.
- UDL at a Glance, Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST).
- UDL Guidelines - Examples and Resources
- Accessibility Resources
- http://www.go2web20.net/: One site to help you select technologies to enhance your online instruction.

Module 5: Refine

Read:
- *Step 5* in the course manual.

View Videos:
- *How do you engage online learners? - a YouTube playlist of experienced educators in online learning.*

Best Practices Checklist
- Best Practices Checklists

Additional Resources:
- [Online Community of Inquiry Review: Social, Cognitive, and Teaching Presence Issues](#), D.R. Garrison.

Module 6: Implement & Evolve

Read:
- *Steps 6 & 7* in the course manual.
- *Seven Principles of Effective Teaching - A Practical Lens for Evaluating Online Courses,* Charles Graham, Karat Cagiltay, Byung-Ro Lim, Joni Craner, and Thomas M. Duffy , The Technology Source, March/April 2001.
- [Assessing Online Learning, Special Report](#), Faculty Focus, retrieved from http://www.facultyfocus.com/wp-content/uploads/images/AssessingOnlineLearning-OC.pdf

View Videos:
- [Facilitating Collaboration & Interaction](#) - Minilog playlist.
- [Online Feedback and Assessment](#) - Minilog playlist.
- [Strategies for Managing Online Workload](#) - a YouTube playlist of online teaching experts discussing different strategies to managing the online workload in an online environment.

Listen to Podcasts:
- [Exemplar Online Instructor Interviews: Reflections](#)

Course Review Checklist
- Course Review Checklist

Additional Resources:
- *Assessment and Online Teaching, Australian Flexible Learning Quick Guide Series*
- *Effective Assessment in a Digital Age: A guide to technology-enhanced assessment and feedback.* Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 2.0 UK: England and Wales license. The copyright of this publication is held by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) on behalf of JISC.© HEFCE, 2010.
- [Rubrics](#)

Course Culminating Activities:

A Vision of Students Today, Michael Wesch, YouTube October 2007, http://youtube.com/watch?v=dGCJ46vyR9o

Other online resources used in this course:

http://diigo.com   https://voicethread.com/

http://audacity.sourceforge.net/   http://www.podomatic.com/

http://screencast-o-matic.com/

http://www.jingproject.com/   https://www.youtube.com/

http://www.adobe.com/products/presenter.html   https://vimeo.com/
(formerly Macromedia Breeze)

http://www.slideshare.net/

1. Reflect

Designing an Online Course and Becoming an Online Educator Manual

The purposes of this Step in your Online Course Design Process are to:

- Provide you with an informational foundational on effective practices in online teaching and learning.
- Allow you the opportunity to reflect on what your online course might look like in an online asynchronous environment.
- Explore any concerns and questions you may have about online teaching, learning or course design.
- Begin to refine your online course concept from the abstract to the concrete.
- Emphasize the importance of, and provide the opportunity to practice writing course materials to a student audience.
- Assess your computer skills.
- Become familiar with your course development tool.

In this step you will:

Assess your computer skills using a checklist

Read articles about effective practices in online teaching and learning

Participate in an online discussion with other Online Course Developers

Draft a Written Course Description

Document your Course Information

Overview of Step One: Reflect

The Purpose of Reflection Prior to Getting Started Building Your Online Course

Before you begin working in your course development tool to create your course, I recommend that you go through this preparatory Step to help you begin to visualize your course in this asynchronous online environment. You don't need your course development tool, the web, or your computer for this Step.

Have a course concept

To get started you should:

- Begin to familiarize yourself with the principles of learning and teaching in an online asynchronous environment. *See course reading list.*

- Assess your skills.

- Assess your current instructional practices as they relate to distance learning principles by reflecting on what you do in the classroom compared to what you imagine doing in the online version of your course. ***Question your assumptions!***

- Identify some learning activities and methods of evaluation appropriate to asynchronous learning that you might use.

- Think about and discuss what concerns you most about the prospect of developing and teaching a course online.

- Create a draft course concept by writing out a course description and filling out a course information questionnaire.

Assess Your Skills

To develop and teach an online course, you have to have some basic computer, word processing, internet, and email skills. Use the checklists below to see if you have the basic skills necessary in these areas.

Computer Skills Self-Assessment

Check if you have these basic Computer skills:

- ❏ Turn on, restart, shut down a computer, its monitor, and its printer.
- ❏ Launch applications (programs), quit, and switch between programs.
- ❏ Use a standard keyboard to type, erase text, and move the cursor around the screen.
- ❏ Use a spell checker.
- ❏ Use a mouse to open, close, minimize, and move/resize windows and menus on your computer's desktop to activate commands, to reveal menus, to move (drag) screen elements.
- ❏ Use a scroll bar.
- ❏ Create, rename, and delete folders and directories to organize files.
- ❏ Find, open, copy, move, rename, and delete files.
- ❏ Find files by switching views and searching with key words.
- ❏ Select multiple files or folders.
- ❏ Know how to insert and remove a CD disk, pen/flash/thumb drive, or external drive.
- ❏ Save and retrieve files from storage devices such as a hard drive, CD disk, thumb (pen), or external drive
- ❏ Print files to a printer.
- ❏ Print files to .pdf (create .pdf files).
- ❏ Create a presentation using PowerPoint, or equivalent.
- ❏ Create a spreadsheet.
- ❏ Zip (compress) a folder/file.
- ❏ Access or change network settings to connect to the internet via wi-fi, Ethernet, or other network connection.

Word Processing Skills Self-Assessment

Check if you have these basic Word Processing skills:

- ❏ Create, save, delete, and print a new document using a word processor such as Microsoft Word.
- ❏ Locate an existing word processed file, and edit and save changes to that file.
- ❏ Cut, copy, and paste text within and between documents, or to another location.
- ❏ Understand and use auto word wrap.
- ❏ Save a word-processed document in .RTF or HTML format.
- ❏ Format and change text formatting such as font style and size, paragraph alignment.

Internet Skills Self-Assessment

Check if you have these basic Internet skills:

- ❏ Access the World Wide Web using a browser such as Firefox, Safari, or Chrome.

- ❏ Download and install browser plug-ins for common software applications such as Adobe Acrobat Reader, Windows Media Player, and Real Player.
- ❏ Manage routine browser issues and settings, such as: clear the browser history and cache, manage pop-ups, and manage mixed content (i.e., secure and non-secure items, accept embedded multimedia content, etc.
- ❏ View a specific site by entering a URL (Internet address) i.e., http://suny.edu
- ❏ Use the "Bookmark" or "Favorites" feature of your browser to create, access, maintain, and manage a list of web pages.
- ❏ Use an Internet search engine such as http://google.com to find specific information on the web.
- ❏ Copy bookmark/favorite/URL/hyperlink to a word processor.
- ❏ Open, save and upload Adobe Acrobat files (PDF files), word processed files, and images in various formats.

Email Skills Self-Assessment:
Check if you have these basic Email skills:
- ❏ Use an email program such as Outlook to send, receive, reply to, forward, and search email messages.
- ❏ Attach a file to an email message, and open and save an incoming email attachment.
- ❏ Print and/or save/store/organize in folders, delete, and retrieve email messages.
- ❏ Use the "address book" feature of your email to store contact information from individuals you email regularly and create and maintain "groups" to facilitate sending a message to a group of people.

The Basics Self-Assessment:
Check if you have these basics:
- ❏ There is institutional support of online learning at my institution.
- ❏ I have a passion for teaching, learning, and my students.
- ❏ I am willing to "rethink" how I teach.
- ❏ I am committed to complete the design and development of my online course prior to teaching it.
- ❏ I am aware of and will use the online instructional design support services and online faculty development opportunities available to me at my institution to assist me to develop and effective and engaging online course, and to become an effective, efficient, and engaging online instructor.
- ❏ I have consistent and stable access to the internet.
- ❏ I can commit to iterate and improve the design of my online course and my online teaching practices.

This exercise can help you self-assess areas/skills that you need to brush up on. If you need to improve your skills in any of the listed areas check with the faculty help sources on your campus. Most institutions will have teaching with technology or instructional technology departments and programs for to assist faculty in these areas and more.

Create a Course Description

The Course Description and Course Information forms that follow will further help you to clarify your course concept and begin to get you thinking about how you will design or convert your course for the online asynchronous environment.

For this assignment you need to write course learning objectives. Please view the video, Effective Course Design and Alignment, before completing the written assignment. Well-written measurable learning objectives are essential to a high quality effective online learning experience. You will need to make sure that you have mechanisms for assessment/feedback for each activity in your course and that you can tie them back to specific learning objectives.

- Review **How NOT to Write Objectives**: http://www.phy.ilstu.edu/pte/310content/objectives/stperfobjectives.html

- Consider where your objectives fall on **Bloom's Taxonomy** http://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching/RevisedBlooms1.html

- Consider the **verbs used in your objectives** to target the appropriate level: https://anethicalisland.files.wordpress.com/2014/06/bloom-verbs.jpg

In this activity you will draft text for your online course orientation documents, including your online course objectives.

This activity is about drafting documents to orient your students to your online course. You will create a deconstructed syllabus and present it in the form of a course information area in your course. You will also practice writing documents for your online students using first and second person. In an online learning environment, the way you write to convey information to your online students can create additional "distance," or bridge the "distance" and create connection and community. It is most effective to write as though you are **addressing a single student.** Remember, your students will interact with your course individually, not as a class.

Before you begin to develop your online course, it may help to begin by answering the following questions. You will then be able to use these answers in your course information documents. You will need to describe your course to students. This will help you get started.

To make your ideas "user friendly," write your descriptions as though you are addressing a single student. Remember, your students will interact with your course individually, not as a class. Use a narrative, conversational tone, respond as though an individual student has asked you these questions:

COURSE DESCRIPTION
Objectives: *(Student: "What will I get out of taking this course?")*
Narrative Description: *(Student: "What is this course about? ")*
Course Modules: *(Student: "How is this course organized?)"*
Learning Activities: *(Student: "What exactly will I be doing when I take this course?)*
Method(s) of Evaluation: *(Student "How will you evaluate me and assess my work? What constitutes "good" work in the course?")*

You will use the answers to these questions in Step 2 as the basis for the course information documents for your course that you will provide to your online students.

Document Your Course Information

Please Fill Out Your Course Information Questionnaire

While your Course Description describes your course to students, the Course Information gives the specific information that may be needed to plan for your course and will help you, your Instructional Design Partner if you have one, and your campus understand the scope and features of your course.

ABOUT YOUR COURSE

Course Title:

Institution & Department:

Course Code:

Number of Credits:

How long will this course be in terms of weeks:

Are there any prerequisites for your course? If so, what are they?

Will this course be part of a degree program? What program?

What students might be interested in this course?

Have you taught this course before? How many times? In what formats have you taught the course? (Classroom, hybrid, online, etc.)

Do you know your campus policies for online courses regarding web accessibility, copyright and fair use, attendance, course caps, extensions, etc.,

What features do you envision this course having?

What texts or additional materials/resources will you use? (e.g., publisher's web sites, coursepacs, online reserve material from your campus library, etc.)

Will students need additional software/plugins to participate in your course?

What other media (video, sound, simulations, chat, etc.) will students use in your online course?

What kinds of assignments will you be requiring and collecting from your online students? How will you evaluate these assignments?

In development, your course will have, (please list) e.g., co-developers, observers etc.?

In delivery, your course will have, (please list), e.g., guest experts/lecturers, additional instructors, auditors that you know of, or outside participants, co-instructors/grad assistants, observers, etc.?

To be successful in your course your students must...?

What expectations do you have of your students? (Behavior, participation, quality of work, plagiarism, etc.)

How will you create a sense of class community in your course?

How will you get feedback from your students on the design of your course?

Do you have any preferences/expectations regarding how you wish to be contacted by students or for your own course logon schedule?

What do you feel you need to be successful in developing and teaching your online course?

You will use the information from this exercise in Step 2 to further refine the course information documents for your online course and as you begin to plan your development.

Activities

Online Course Activities

- Participate as a student in the online asynchronous discussion and activities of the online course.
- Be observant and reflect on how that online experience might inform the design of your own online course.
- Reflect on and discuss any concerns you may have about the prospect of teaching and learning online in the online course.
- Reflect on your who you are and how you teach, and what you want to do and how you want to be as an online educator.
- Consider who your students will be, what your assumptions might be about them, teaching and learning online in general, and on the online course design/development process.
- Consider the options and limitations in the online teaching and learning environment.

Online Course Development Activities

- Develop an introductory familiarity with your course development tool.
- Check with your institution, department, and instructional technology support center for any assistance, resources, or training they may offer.

Review

What you did and what is next

In the first step you:

- Read articles and developed a basic understanding of effective online teaching and learning practices.
- Checked your computer skills.
- Refined your course concept from the abstract to the concrete by writing a course description and detailing your course information.
- Practiced thinking about your course from the online student perspective and writing materials to an online student audience.
- Experienced online asynchronous discussion in the online course.
- Experienced the perspective of a student with your participation in that online course.
- Had the opportunity to discuss your concerns about the prospect of teaching and learning online.
- Reflected on who you are and how you teach, and what you want to do and how you want to be as an online educator.
- Considered who your students will be, what your assumptions might be about them, teaching and learning online in general and the online course development process.
- Began to consider the options and limitations in the online teaching and learning environment.

You are now ready to move on to the next step: 2. Connect!

2. Connect

Designing an Online Course and Becoming an Online Educator Manual

The purposes of this Step in your Online Course Design Process are to:

- Look at examples of successful and effective online courses and activities.
- Draw connections between what you will do online and what you do in the classroom - consider differences and reconceptualize.
- Draft content for your online course that provides your students with detailed course information including:
  - A *welcome* to the course.
  - An overview of the course.
  - What is going to happen in the course.
  - How to contact you.
  - What the syllabus and schedule are for the course.
  - What kinds of activities they will be participating in.
  - How they are going to be evaluated and what you expect of them.
  - What they can expect from you and the course.
  - What they should do first/next.
- Create this Course Information area in your course development tool.
  - Implement basic web page presentation techniques

In this step you will:

Create/draft the course information area and documents for your online course in your course development tool.

Observe exemplar online courses as models to help inform your own online course design.

Overview of Step Two: Connect
The Purpose of Creating an Orientation for your Course

The aim of your course and an orientation to its structure should be carefully spelled out right from the beginning. Students should know what is going to be happening in their course, how they are going to be assessed, and what they should be striving to achieve. In addition to a course overview, the students also should be given an orientation to the mechanics of the course, and be presented with activities to help "break the ice" and begin to build a sense of class community. The course syllabus may provide all this information and you may want to provide the syllabus to students as well. But by deconstructing your syllabus and adapting it into a well organized and series of specific course information documents, you will assist your online students with an introduction and orientation to you and your course. Creating an orientation to your course in a "course information" area of your course provides quick and easy access to specific course information that is written with the online student in mind. Where a syllabus requiring a download can be dry, outdated and impersonal. Your course information area can help you create an immediate connection between you and your students, between your students, and between your students and the course content and environment – essential in a successful and effective online learning environment.

Using the features available to you in your course development tool, you will create a number of "standard" course information documents to give students information about your course. You might think of these documents as containing all the information needed by your students to fully and clearly understand how your course works and what to expect.

The recommended standard Course Information/Orientation documents are:
1. WELCOME!
2. Contact Information
3. Course Overview & Objectives
4. Readings and Materials
5. Course Learning Activities
6. How you will be Evaluated
7. My Expectations
8. Course Schedule
9. YOUR NEXT STEPS

Specifically, the purposes of your Course Information documents are to:

- Introduce yourself and your course.

- Present your course overview, syllabus, schedule, and readings/materials.

- Explain the types of learning activities students will be doing in your course.

- Present your expectations of students and how you plan to evaluate their work in your course.

- Give students several "ice-breaking" tasks to get them off on the right track and introduce them to each other, and let you know that they are up and running in the online learning environment.

- Instruct students on precisely what they are to do first and next in your course.

Reading through the Course Information documents and performing the firsts tasks detailed in the NEXT STEPS document will introduce and encourage a sense of class community and reinforce the basic mechanical skills that your students will need to participate in your course.

Create the Course Information Documents for your Course

A student that is well oriented to you, your course, and your expectations, will have fewer questions and will feel comfortable in your online classroom. The purposes of Course Information documents are to cover the range of initial information needs your students may have to become familiar with you, your course, and general course-related information.

Orientation Documents:	Purpose:
WELCOME!	Introduces you and the course to the students. Think of it as a letter of introduction. It sets the tone, and is the students' first "glimpse" of you.
Contact Information	Details specific information about the course, how to contact you, and your schedule.
Course Overview & Objectives	Describes the course and course learning objectives in greater detail.
Readings and Materials	Details the texts and/or materials to be used in the course. Can list optional/additional reading materials or resources for course.
Course Learning Activities	Describes specifically each type of activities that the students will be doing during the course.
How you will be Evaluated	Details specifically how each activity will be evaluated.
My Expectations	Details specifically what you expect from students in terms of participation in the class and/or any other specific expectations you may have for students in your class. And what they can expect from you.
Course Schedule	Clearly outlines every activity the student needs to do in your course including reading assignments, assignment due dates, scheduled tests and quizzes, special projects, discussions, group activities. Titles and references to documents and module in your course must be referenced consistently for the schedule to be effective.
YOUR NEXT STEPS	Some of the next tasks a student should do might include reading any posted announcements, posting a personal profile, participating in an ice-breaking discussion, etc.

Use the answers to the questions you drafted in the first 2 exercises you completed in Step 1 as a basis and guide for the content and how you will present it in these course information documents.

Best Practices
General suggestions for making your web course materials clearer and more effective:

- Create navigational instructions and cues that explicitly tell your students where to go next and what to do. Don't assume your students will know where to go, what you want them to do, how, when, or what to do next.

- Long documents can be broken up into several shorter documents. A good rule of thumb is to not exceed a couple of screens for scrolling. If you must have a long document, informs the student at the top of the page: You may want to print this out for easier reading.

- Use heads, subheads, hypertext, and a document hierarchy to break up long paragraphs. But don't break them up so much that it affects the flow or meaning.

- Put important information at the beginning of a document.

- Use short descriptive titles for your document subjects and to structure the content of your course. Long vague titles don't fit well on the screen, don't convey instructional information to organize course materials or content and they lose their purpose. Indicate the type of assignment, due dates, or time frames in the subject lines or Module names and use them consistently throughout your course.

- Use directives, first person, and a friendly conversational tone. Avoid using the third person voice in your writing.

- Don't overuse hypertext to link your course pages or to link to other web sites.

- Spell check your work.

General "Do's" for Successful Web Page Presentation

Before beginning to create your first document in your course development tool, you should know that certain things might not transfer to the web environment. In addition, there are also certain web design conventions that you should use to make your documents effective, legible, and attractive. You can save yourself a lot of time and energy by reviewing and adhering to the following recommendations:

DO	AVOID
Use a web editor to create numbered or bulleted lists and html tables for getting things to line up.	Don't use the space bar or the tab key to get things to line up. *The web does not recognize word processed tabs and spaces.*
Do use the word-wrap feature that automatically brings you to the next line.	Don't use the <Return>, or <Enter> key to move from one line of text to another in running text. *You will end up with jagged line breaks.*
Do put blank lines between paragraphs for white space and a clean legible look to your page.	Don't indent running text. *Word processed indents don't transfer to the web and on the web, type is much more legible if you align all your type flush left and separate paragraphs with blank lines.*
Do use bold, italic, underline, all caps judiciously for emphasis, voice, or to distinguish heads and subheads from running text.	Don't over emphasize. Don't over use bold, italic, or bold italic. *It is hard to read and too much will loose its desired effect.* Don't use underline. *On the web underlined type indicates a clickable hotlink.* Don't use ALL CAPS. *All caps are very hard to read in running text and are the convention on the Internet for* SHOUTING.
Do use color judiciously and consistently for emphasis, or to indicate a specific function.	Don't use color type in running text. *Arbitrary and inconsistent use of color is confusing and hard to read.* Don't use the colors blue or purple. *On the web, blue and purple for single words will look like clickable hypertext links.*
Do use a standard font.	Don't bother with different fonts; they won't translate to the web. Use standards: Times or Times New Roman for serif text, or the Arial, Helvetica, Verdana, Sans serif for sans-serif type. *On the web all text, no matter what, will appear in the default font of the browser.*
Do use font size 12 for text and 14 for readability and headlines consistently.	Don't use more than 3 font sizes and don't mix fonts and sizes in text. Be aware that font sizes are rendered differently on Mac and PC browsers (PCs render text larger than Macs). *Mixing font sizes inconsistently will look chaotic and be confusing. Check to see how it will look to your students and understand that students can change their browsers in various ways to customize the display of their pages*

Initially, concentrate on the content and structure of your course. A good rule of thumb to keep in mind is to "*First make it work, then make it pretty."*

Activities

Online Course Activities

Continue to:

- Participate as a student in the online asynchronous discussion and activities of the online course.
- Be observant and reflect on how that online experience might inform the design of your own online course.
- Reflect on and discuss any concerns you may have about the prospect of teaching and learning online in the online course.
- Reflect on your who you are and how you teach, and what you want to do and how you want to be as an online educator.
- Consider who your students will be, what your assumptions might be about them, teaching and learning online in general, and on the online course design/development process.
- Observe some exemplar online courses.
- Consider the options and limitations in the online teaching and learning environment.

Online Course Development Activities

- Create the recommended Course Information area and draft documents in your course development tool.
- Check with your institution, department, and instructional technology support center for any assistance, resources, or training they may offer.

Review

What you did and what is next

In the second step you:

- Reviewed best practices and used/adapted them to create the Course Information documents for your online course in the appropriate area using your course development tool.
- Had the opportunity to observe some exemplar online courses.
- Drew connections, considered differences, and began to reconceptualize activities for your online course.
- Continued your participation in the online course discussions and activities.

You are now ready to move on to the next step: 3. Organize!

3. Organize

Designing an Online Course and Becoming an Online Educator Manual

The purposes of this Step in your Online Course Design Process are to:

- Look at examples of successful and effective online courses and activities.
- Begin to conceptualize, chunk, and sequence your course modules.
- Create a module outline structure for your course content in your course development tool.

In this step you will:

Observe exemplar online courses as models to help inform your own online course design

Draft a list of your course modules

Organize your course module list and give each module a "good" name.

Create the overview document for each of your modules in your course development tool.

Learn to create, order, reorder, rename, and move your course modules, sections, and documents in your course development tool.

Overview of Step Three: Organize
The development of your online course requires instructional design and organization.
The instructional design and organization of your course will take time to conceptualize and build, and you need to understand, consider, and explore for yourself what is effective in an online teaching and learning environment so you can design your course well. You also need to learn how to use your course development tool.

To convert or create your course for an online asynchronous environment, instructional design involves the following interrelated steps:

1. Create a Course Overview *(which you did under Step 2. Connect)*
   Creating the Course Information area in your course results in a Course Overview that involves the abstract "what" of the course: What am I going to teach in terms of content? What questions or problems will be central to the course? What concepts will be fundamental or prerequisite? What information will I provide, or will students need to access and how? What will the students need to do and produce, when, and how? What is my concept of the course? What overall plan/schedule shall I adopt? What requirements shall I set up? What expectations do I have of the students, their work and their participation in the course? What methods of evaluation will I use?

2. Synthesize Chunks
   "Chunks" imply form, structure, and involve "when" - moving the abstract to the tangible structure of the course. "Chunks" are the major units of a course. Chunks can follow the chapters of a textbook, break content into topical areas, organize materials by task or chronologically, and so forth. Regardless of the type of chunking scheme you adopt, the chunks of your course must logically and consistently organize and present the materials and activities of your course.

3. Develop the Outline
   The chunks are then further developed into the outline of the course and actual Learning Activities, as they will be presented to students. What do the students do first? What do they need to know before they can go on? What theory or fundamental information is necessary for them to learn prior to applying the knowledge?

4. Devise Learning Activities
   "Learning Activities" involve the "how": How will students meet my objectives? What do students need to know or learn? How will students be actively involved? How will students develop insights, understandings, knowledge, and abilities that are essential? How will students learn to "reason" their way to the answers to questions in the field?

Synthesize "Chunks" and Develop your Course Outline
Identify your Course Modules

What is a course module?
A module is a "chunk" of your course. Whether you are teaching mathematics, Shakespeare, anthropology, or accounting, you must "chunk" the content of your course in to digestible pieces or modules to give it structure, consistency, and form for online presentation and delivery to your students.

Your pedagogical approach, the nature of your content, and the constraints and features of the online asynchronous environment are what will determine how you "chunk" your course.

1. Look at your content, consider how you want to teach it, and see if chunks naturally emerge.

2. Look at examples of how others have "chunked" their courses. Depending on what is being taught and how the instructor teaches, the following are some examples of approaches to creating modules:
    *   By content-specific topics
    *   By chapters of a textbook you are using
    *   By date or time frame
    *   By a metaphor
    *   By steps in a process

Or, use any of these examples in combination. Or, you may have some other way you would like to chunk your course.

Make a List of your Modules

This will be a paper and pencil activity. Based on your Course Description assignment, and after reviewing the examples, and thinking about your course content in terms of modules, you will create a DRAFT list of the modules for your course.

How do I go about chunking my course into modules?

1. List your modules.
   Give a DRAFT name or title for each module. (This list will eventually become the outline you use to create your course in your course development tool.)

2. Sequence your modules.
   Do you foresee students working through these modules in a specific order? If so, DRAFT a list of the modules in that order. If not, list the modules in a logical order.

Name your modules

Create a DRAFT name for each module that is engaging, meaningful, descriptive, and unambiguous. Keep the titles short and to the point. But be sure the names convey information that organizes your course content. Well named areas, sections, and documents in you online course will act as advanced organizers for the information in your course, allowing your online students to glean instructional value about you, the content, what you think is important, etc. Module, section, and document titles are very important in an online course environment and when well named can aid in the orientation to and the ability to navigate, find, retain information about, and recall your course content.

Remember that you are still in the DRAFT stage; anything can be changed, revised, re-sequenced, and rewritten during the development phase of your course.

Best Practices

1. Start your course with an ice breaking activity.
2. Keep the number of modules in your course to 7 (plus or minus 2).
3. Create a culminating activity for your course to end the course and to get feedback from students that you can use as you review and revise your course.
4. Consider areas of your course for class community type of activities. E.g., where students can meet each other and talk about non-course related activities.
5. Consider private communication with students.
6. Consider how and where and when you will make and archive class/course Announcements.

Now what?

Once you have your list of modules and are happy with the design of your course "chunks," their titles, and their sequence, you can begin to set that structure up in your course development tool. It is a good online course design practice to begin each module with an overview of the objectives and activities that will occur in that section of the course, so as you create the structure for your course in your course development tool, create a blank "overview" document for each of the modules in your course for this purpose.

What do I put in my Course Module Overview Documents?

Each of the modules in your course should have an overview that "describes" for your students the details of what and when they will be doing in that module. You don't have to call it an "Overview" if you don't want to. Change the name and call it anything you like, "What's due when?" for example. A student should always know where they are supposed to be, what they are supposed to be doing, when, where, and how in the course they are to do their course activities.

Best Practices

To achieve this, your course needs:

1. A thorough description of the learning activities.
2. Clear and explicit details of your expectations for participation in the course.
3. Clear and explicit details on how you will evaluate/assess student work and participation.
4. Comprehensive instructions on how to create, participate, submit, or accomplish every learning activity.
5. A complete and final course schedule.
6. An orientation to each module reiterating activities, due dates, etc.
7. Clear, logically organized, and consistent module structure, including well-named documents that might indicate the type of activity, due date, or time frame.

Including these elements as part of your course will go a very long way toward orienting the student well to the course and the course activities.

Now that you have created a blank overview for each of the modules in your course and seen outline structure of your course taking shape, you can go back to each overview document and fill in the content. The important thing is to reiterate, reinforce, and orient the student to any information pertinent to the successful completion of the module and to have it all in one document in an initial location of each module. Even if you have this information elsewhere in your course, in the Course Information section, for example, it is not "redundant" (in the negative sense) to reiterate or link to information specific to a given module in more detail at the beginning of that module. It reinforces and clarifies the information for the student, serves to set up and introduce the module and the tasks at hand, forestalls confusion and the resulting student questions and discomfort, and provides multiple opportunities and access to information the student needs about the tasks for the course.

Your overview can be narrative in style, or you can use a table to map out activities and deadlines. How you "describe" each module is up to you. Write it with your students in mind. Think about it from the student's perspective and what a student would like or need to know to begin a course module—"what is due when?" is a good place to start

Your module overview document should cover the following:

- The goals or objectives for the specific module (e.g., what the student should expect to get out of it.)

- Where the module exists in context of the course-- how the module fits into the other modules and the course in general.

- The learning activities for the module-- what the student will be doing as he/she works through this module. Keep in mind that reading subject content is a learning activity, as are any "off-line" activities, such as interviews or observations, etc., that you might require students to do as part of your course, as are discussions, and written assignments such as papers, essays, or tests, etc.

- The methods of evaluation of the learning activities-- how you will evaluate the student for the work they do in this module. All of your modules need not have a learning activity that is evaluated. But, for those that do, you should tell the student the evaluation criteria.

- The time frame for completion of the module using explicit dates. It should also highlight the due dates for any learning activities that have them.

Activities

Online Course Activities

- Participate as a student in the online asynchronous discussion and activities of the online course.
- Be observant and reflect on how that online experience might inform the design of your own online course.
- Reflect on your who you are and how you teach, and what you want to do and how you want to be as an online educator.
- Consider who your students will be, what your assumptions might be about them, teaching and learning online in general, and on the online course design/development process.
- Observe some exemplar online courses to see how the instructors structured the modules and learning activities in their online courses.
- Consider the options and limitations in the online teaching and learning environment.

Online Course Development Activities

- Create your course modules using your course development tool.
- Check with your institution, department, and instructional technology support center for any assistance, resources, or training they may offer.

Review

What you did and what is next

In the third step you:

- Reviewed best practices and used/adapted them to "chunk" your course into modules.

- Had the opportunity to observe some exemplar online courses.

- Created the overview documents in your course development tool for each of your online course modules.

- Learned to create, reorder, rename, and move course modules, sections, and documents in your course development tool.

- Continued your participation in the online course discussions and activities.

You are now ready to move on to the next step: 4. Build!

4. Build

Designing an Online Course and Becoming an Online Educator Manual

The purposes of this Step in your Online Course Design Process are to:

- Provide an overview of best practices in online teaching and learning.
- Provide an in depth review of what constitutes, and how to design for, successful and effective online "Teaching Presence."
- Sequence and list your course learning activities for each module in your course structure.
- Create learning activity documents in your course development tool.
- Consider how you will evaluate/assess each activity.
- Become proficient in the use of your course development tool. Including editing, renaming, moving, adding, deleting, and changing documents in course development tool.
- Learn how to view your online course from the perspective of the student and explore the course online interface from that perspective.

In this step you will:

Consider the three components of online "Teaching Presence" and use them to inform the design choices and decisions in the design of your online learning activities.

Create a list, description and outline of your course learning activities for each of your online course modules and course areas.

Organize, sequence, and pace each activity and give it a "good" name.

Create the overview document for each of your activities in your course development tool, including how the activity will be evaluated, links to rubrics and models.

Create an instructional document of each of your activities that details how, when and where, etc.; the student is to complete the activities.

Learn to create, edit, delete, order, rename, and move your course modules, sections, and documents in your course development tool.

Become familiar with the student perspective of your course.

Overview of Step Four: Build
The Theory: Designing Effective Online Learning Environments
How People Learn

Good learning environments *are knowledge centered* in that they are designed in consideration of desired outcomes. Guiding questions for creating a knowledge-centered learning environment include - what do we want students to know and be able to do when they have completed our materials or course? How do we provide learners with the "foundational knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for successful transfer"?

Good learning environments are also *learner centered*, that is they function in a manner that connects to the strengths, interests, and preconceptions of learners and help students to gain insight into themselves as learners. In such environments teachers work to bridge new content with students current understandings and facilitate growth, while attending to the learners' interests, passions, and motivations.

Another characteristic of good learning environments is that they are *community centered*, that is they promote and benefit from shared norms that value learning and high standards. Ideally good learning environments connect to relevant external communities and provide a milieu within the classroom where students feel safe to ask questions, to work collaboratively, and in which they are taught to develop lifelong learning skills.

Finally, good learning environments are *assessment-centered* meaning that they provide learners with many opportunities to make their thinking visible and to get feedback in order to create new meaning and new understanding.

Adapted from Bransford, J., Brown, A., Cocking, R., Donovan, M., and Pellegrino, J. W. How People Learn, National Academy Press, 2000

The seven principles of good practice in Online Teaching and Learning;

Principle 1: The developer/instructor encourages student-faculty contact and interaction.
Principle 2: The developer/instructor encourages student cooperation and reciprocity.
Principle 3: The developer/instructor encourages active learning.
Principle 4: The developer/instructor gives prompt feedback.
Principle 5: The developer/instructor emphasizes time on task.
Principle 6: The developer/instructor communicates high expectations.
Principle 7: The developer/instructor respects diverse talents and ways of learning

Adapted from Chickering, A. W., and Gamson, A. F. Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education. Racine, WI: The Johnson Foundation, Inc/Wingspread, 1987

Cognitive, Social, and Teaching Presence

Successful and effective online teaching and learning environments are designed to promote high levels of:

Cognitive Presence: "the extent to which students are able to construct and confirm meaning through sustained discourse in a community of inquiry" and it is achieved in concert with effective teaching presence and satisfactory social presence.

Social Presence: the "ability of students to project themselves socially and affectively into a community of inquiry" and is deemed critical in the absence of physical presence and attendant teacher immediacy necessary to sustain learning in the classroom.

Teaching Presence: "the design, facilitation, and direction of cognitive and social processes for the realization of personally meaningful and educationally worthwhile learning outcomes." Teaching presence has three components (1) Instructional Design and Organization, (2) Facilitating Discourse/Interaction, and (3) Direct Instruction.

Class Community

Community has been defined in many ways, and various authors have focused on different elements of community including trust, spirit, connectedness, belonging, membership, various forms of support, and the rich, and productive milieu that communities of practice can engender for teaching and learning. Our most current research shows that online collaborations between the instructor and students, and between students themselves, positively and significantly influence student satisfaction and perceived learning. Reconceptualizing your classroom activities for the virtual classroom and building opportunities for such interactions into the design of your course, as in the collaborative projects and small group work and interaction with you as online activities, will be your challenge- the fun part, and the key to success.

Adapted from Rovai 2002, Wenger 1997, Scardamalia and Berieter, 1996.

From Theory to Practice: Devise the Learning Activities for your Online Course

To be an effective online instructor you will need to engage in behaviors that are likely to result in high levels of learning and student satisfaction. To achieve this goal you will need to design an online course environment that is learner/learning-centered, knowledge-centered, assessment-centered, and community-centered. Additionally, you will need to develop the seven principles of good practice detailed above. You also need to understand the nature of online, asynchronous learning, and in particular how to adapt and cultivate social and teaching presence, and a sense of class community into practice and strategies that will work for you in your course.

What is a Learning Activity?

In this step you will identify, organize, and create the learning activities and related documents for each of the modules in your course. In an online environment a "Learning Activity" is everything your students do in your course--the online and offline tasks and assignments. Whether they read a journal article, a textbook chapter, your lecture, write paper or an essay, participate in a discussion, take a test, give a presentation, conduct a survey, do an observation, run an experiment and so on--these are all learning activities.

Think about instruction in this environment in terms of conversion. Rather than attempting to duplicate what you do in your regular classroom or teaching environment, you want to convert your learning activities to adapt to the options and features, as well as to the constraints and limitations of the online environment. You may be wondering how you will engage students --how you will keep them motivated and actively involved in your course in an asynchronous electronic environment.

Some relevant questions to ask yourself when trying to design the learning activities for your course:
- How do I normally teach? What do my students do? What types of things do I do in my regular classroom, or teaching environment?
  - Do I lecture, give assignments, do students read, produce presentations, work in groups, write, take tests, have discussions, do experiments, or special projects?

- Can my activities be converted and be effective learning experiences for my students, or do I have to reconceptualize an activity to achieve the learning objective in the online medium?
  - What are the features of the online medium that do not exist in my normal classroom? Are they appropriate for me and my content? Can they enhance my teaching or the learning experience?
  - What are the limitations and constraints of the online medium?

- What do I expect my students to accomplish during the course? At the end of the course, what do they need to have produced or have learned? How can I design the learning activities to help my students develop the insights, understandings, knowledge, and ability that are essential to my course? What kinds of learning activities in this environment will help them to learn to reason or research their way to the answers to questions in the field?

Identify Your Learning Activities

Just as your pedagogical objectives, the nature of your content, your personal style, and the features and constraints of the web shaped the module structure of your course, so too will they shape the section structure and specific learning activities for your course.

This will be a paper and pencil activity. You will create a DRAFT list of the learning activities for each of the modules in your course, and then group the activities in a logical and consistent manner across

each module. (This list will eventually be used to create the documents and section structure that will organize the learning materials for each of your modules you create in your course development tool.)

How do I go about identifying the learning activities of my modules?

1. List the learning activities that you envision for each of your modules. Give a DRAFT name or title for each activity.

2. Do you foresee students working through your learning activities in a specific order? If so, DRAFT the list of the learning activities in that order. If not, list them in a logical order for each module.

3. Does a pattern of activities emerge? For example, your activities may logically group by task or date. Grouping the activities in a logical and consistent scheme across modules will help enhance and organize your materials and activities. Consistency in the structure and order of activities across modules also helps students in their understanding and navigation of the course, materials, and activities.

Naming your Learning Activities

Create a DRAFT name for each learning activity that is descriptive and unambiguous. Keep the titles short and to the point. Consider putting due dates, type of task, and a descriptive name in the title. Use consistent naming conventions across modules and for similar types of activities. Eventually, once you create your learning activities documents in your course development tool you will have to check the web to see how they look on the web.

Remember that you are still in DRAFT phase of your course development process. Anything can be changed, revised, and rewritten during the development phase of your course.

How do I best sequence my learning activities within a module?

Now that you have decided on the general module framework for your course, your task is to plan out your learning activities within each module. At this stage sequencing and consistency will be very important to take into consideration. A well-designed course will be consistent and logical in its presentation and organization.

For example, a typical module could begin with an overview, followed by some introductory material or lecture. Students are then typically given tasks, such as a reading in a textbook, creating a written assignment, and/or participating in an online discussion, or directed to complete some project or activity. Keep in mind that just because it is an online course, not all activities have to take place online.

- Some relevant questions to ask yourself when considering the sequence of the learning activities for each module are:
  - What does the student need to know or do before they can do an activity?
  - What does the student need in order to accomplish or participate in the activity?
  - For example, does the student need to participate in the discussion before formulating and writing an essay written assignment?
  - For example, does the student need to have done the reading before reading your lecture, or before beginning work on a writing or discussion activity?

- Some relevant questions to ask yourself when considering the quantity of the learning activities for each module are:
  - How much work do I expect from students in my traditional class? (You should expect the same quantity and quality of work from your online students as your classroom students.)
  - How many students will be in this class? (For example, depending on your objectives, your involvement in class discussions, or the number of written assignments can be more with fewer students, or less with a large class.)
  - How much time do I have to devote to this class per week? (Be realistic.)
  - What are the relative weights, in terms of importance and in how they will be evaluated, of the different learning activities?

- Some relevant questions to ask yourself when considering the pacing of the learning activities for each module are:
  - How long does it usually take students to accomplish a given task/activity? What are my expectations of pacing in my regular teaching environment?
  - Are there any issues specific to the online environment that would affect those expectations?
  - How long does it usually take me to respond, give feedback, interact, etc. with students and their work?

How do I best organize the information in my course?

Your course development tool will provide you with a variety of options for organizing your course materials and learning activities, and provide you with an assortment of features and course management tools. The interfaces may vary, but most structures are linear, hierarchical, and they may be pre-sorted by task or functionality.

Before you create your first learning activity, give some thought to the overall organization of your materials in the context of the options and limitations of the tool you are using. Developing a logical consistent framework for your materials will help your students understand and navigate the information and tasks for your course.

Most current course development tools will provide the following general structural elements to help you define and present your course framework online:

- The Course home page **-** the web home page for your course that is automatically generated to provide a consistent interface for all courses created with your course development tool. It organizes your course into areas: Course Information, Learning Modules, and Other Course Areas. It also provides the navigational interface for the site with access links to email, etc.

- The Module View **-** the framework or outline of an individual module or section of your course content that is generated according to the structure you define for each module.

- Modules **-** your course modules provide a general framework for the units of your course. They establish the scope of the content for a particular unit, and organize the materials and activities into broad instructional or conceptual units.

- Module Sections **-** the module section is used to further define your framework by organizing your modules into logical sections that are consistent across modules. For example, the section can be used to further organize your course activities by types of tasks, time frames, logical topics, or by conceptual or metaphorical categories.

- Documents - Are the pages that contain the content of your course.

How do I make sure my students know where to go and what to do throughout my course?

You also need to think about how your students will interact with your materials and navigate your course.

Your course development tool will have built-in navigational buttons and a web interface that facilitates students' navigation through all the levels of web screens. However, don't assume your students will know what to do and where to go next. You will need to create navigational cues, documents, and instructions on your documents that explicitly tell your students where to go next and what to do.

For maximum effectiveness of your navigational instructions, be consistent. Use the same font, put them in the same location on your pages, and use consistent wording for the instructions. You can also use the section title and the document title to highlight a type of task, a due date or a time frame.

Use the following tips to make sure your students will be able to effectively and efficiently navigate the pages and activities in your course.

Best Practices: Course Navigation Tips!

- Create instructional documents.
  You should create documents that set up the directions and expectations you have for your various learning activities, such as for a discussion or written assignment activity, so that there is no confusion about what you expect them to do, where, how and any specifics you may have for the activity.

- Create and use instructional cues.
  Instructional cues are the instructions and directions that explicitly help students navigate the pages of your course and your learning activities efficiently. Instructions are very important in an asynchronous learning environment. Students need to know what to do, where, when, and how. And they need to be able to access information quickly and without difficulty to distract them from the task. For example, if you want them to go to the Discussion Area of your course and to respond to a discussion question you have posted, you have to tell them to do that and how.

- Use Module, section, and document titles to organize and convey information about the activities, content and structure of your course.
  Whatever type of framework you decide upon for the organization and presentation of your course activities, the module, section, or document titles are the way you will implement it. Consider using titles to specify the type of activity, due date, time frame, etc. The more information you can put in the framework the students see from the module view, the more comfortable and confident your students will be with what they are to do.

- Refer to the Course Navigation bars, links, and buttons.
  Your course pages on the web will have a navigation bar and links to help your students navigate and interact with the pages of your course. Encourage students to use them by referring to them with your instructional cues.

- Make information accessible.
  If your students have to travel too far to find what they need or want in your course by having to click too many successive documents or scrolling through very long documents, you risk disorienting and discouraging them. The structure created by descriptively named and well-categorized documents/learning activities also makes your course more accessible.

- Balance your course structure.
  Strike a balance between over outlining the modules and sections of your course and a relatively flat and undescriptive course structure.

- Limit the number of hypertext links per page.
  If you link to web sites outside your course area, make sure students are aware they are leaving and know how to get back. Create links to other modules or to other areas within a module only if necessary. Because of the nature of hypertext it is important to make sure students understand where they are and where their documents are going when creating responses and interacting with your learning activities.

Build a Sense of Class Community

Research supports the definition of learning as a *social process*. Online courses that are designed to promote a sense of class community, where there are ample opportunities for interaction and the social construction of knowledge, result in online teaching and learning communities of satisfied students and faculty. Interactions between students, and in particular the quantity and quality of interaction between the student and the instructor, affect faculty satisfaction, and student satisfaction and their perception of learning.

Encourage a sense of class community in your online course; provide community building opportunities, and activities that involve interactions and collaborations

- Provide students ample opportunities for interaction with the instructor and with others in the course.
- Provide students with opportunities to engage and interact with the content actively. - Directed learning activities.
- Create opportunities for interaction with students and between students.
- Create/use activities that build a sense of class community: e.g., personal profiles, introductions, areas in the course for non-course related interaction, areas in the course that support access to and interaction with the instructor and others in the course.
- Build/design activities that create a sense of connectedness between the course participants and with you, that build social/group spirit, and that foster a sense of trust.
- Create a learning environment that is engaging with supportive contact and interaction and that permits the sharing of and reflection on educational expectations and experiences.

Suggestions that work!
When designing online collaborative learning activities consider these:

1. How big are the small groups? More than 2 or 3 people may not be as effective depending on the nature of the activity.

2. Are the students prepped to work in small groups? Make sure that they know up front at the beginning of the class that they will be doing this kind of activity. You may want to model the activity right at the beginning of the course with the students so they see what it is like in a non-threatening activity.

3. Are you letting them choose their own groups? In an online course unless you manage it extremely well, it could take them the whole term for students to get themselves into groups. :) I recommend assigning groups... you can ask the students questions in the beginning of the course, if the groups would be better organized by common interest... Also, don't assign groups as the students enter the course, otherwise you will have all the early bird overachievers in the first group.

4. Is your online group activity well explained in terms of instructions, expectations, etc.? Do students know what to do, when, what you expect, and how you will evaluate them and the group? An ambiguity is amplified in an online course. Creating explanations in various places and at various times would be good. Model the activity and the skills necessary with "warm-up" activities to get team members to know each other, or to practice the skills necessary that will be required in the team/group activity. If your students are having problems finding the area where you want them to do the activity in your course, then you need more explanatory documentation in the course.

5. Create a page in the module that gives them links right to the page you want them to go to initiate the activity. Make one link for each group of students. Be redundant with your explanations. If your students are used to following the course linearly and you then ask them to go to another spot in the course to do an activity, it may throw them some confusion resulting in decreased participation... if a collaborative activity is not turning out as you expected, it likely needs more instruction, explanation, and direction.

6. Is the objective of the group activity clear? Are there discreet milestones to achieve it with a clear role identified for each member of the team? Are there documented timeframes associated with the activity? Is there a required outcome or out put for the group/activity? Are the evaluation criteria for that detailed? How will the activity be evaluated? How will the work of individual team members be evaluated? What constitutes successful completion of the activity? If one student obviously ends up doing all the work for the group, then it was not a well-designed activity. Are their directions and locations built in to the course to organize, contain, and display the group's work and final out put? How wills the activity wrap-up?

7. Do you assume things you shouldn't? You can't just put a bunch of people together tell them to work in a group and then hope it will succeed. Groups need to be designed to succeed. There is a lot of attention to detail that had to go into designing the activity and then managing it to make sure it is successful. Do the students have the cooperative skills to do the activity? Can they handle the complex tasks required? They need practice leading up to complex group work... Can they coordinate their work with the others in the group? Do they know each other? The instructor must design the activity, manage the activity, and monitor it for each individual to teach them how to successfully interact in a team/group activity.

Learning is social in nature and online learning environments can be designed to reflect and leverage the social nature of learning. Community can play a critical role in building and sustaining productive online learning and satisfying online teaching and learning experiences.

The Communities of Inquiry Model (CoI)

In this manual the [Communities of Inquiry Model](#)* is used as the theoretical framework and foundation that informs our understanding of effective practices in online course design and online teaching practices.

According to the authors of the model, "An educational community of inquiry is a group of individuals who collaboratively engage in purposeful critical discourse and reflection to construct personal meaning and confirm mutual understanding."

The Community of Inquiry model is depicted as a Venn diagram of 3 overlapping and interdependent elements: Social, Teaching, and Cognitive Presence. Each presence is made up of several indicators that work in combination to describe the "process of creating a deep and meaningful (collaborative-constructivist) learning experience."

Social Presence is "the ability of participants to identify with the community (e.g., course of study), communicate purposefully in a trusting environment, and develop inter-personal relationships by way of projecting their individual personalities." (Garrison, 2009)

Teaching Presence is defined as the "design, facilitation, and direction of cognitive and social processes for the purpose of realizing personally meaningful and educationally worthwhile learning outcomes." (Anderson, Rourke, Garrison, & Archer, 2001).

Cognitive Presence is the "extent to which learners are able to construct and confirm meaning through sustained reflection and discourse." (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2001).

*Garrison, D. R., Anderson, T., & Archer, W. (2000). Critical inquiry in a text-based environment: Computer conferencing in higher education. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 2(2-3), 87-105. [pdf Full Text](#)

Social Presence: What is it? Why do I want it? And, How do I create it?

In an online teaching and learning environment, establishing a strong social presence is essential to set the climate for learning, to build trust, and to develop a strong sense of class community. It can be used to enhance the online learner experience and to create an effective and engaging online teaching and learning environment. Online instructors can effectively cultivate online group cohesion, and incorporate affective elements, and promote positive interaction in online instruction.

Social Presence is made up of three indicators:

1. Affective Expression
2. Interaction
3. Group Cohesion

1. Affective Expression: Why do I want it?

To support and facilitate social interaction in an online web-based teaching and learning environment…

1. So students can get to know each other.
2. So students will feel a sense of *belonging* in the course.
3. To establish a sense of class community. So students will establish **trust** with you and their classmates – so you can move on to teaching and cognitive presences.
4. So students can form distinct impressions of others in the course – so students feel those they interact with are **"real."**

How do I create it?

1. Use emotions, humor, self-disclosure (appropriately – based on who you are.) This is NOT the same as being "chummy" with your students. Model it in your welcome, introductions, interactions, and online discussions. Use your interactions (in "voice", "tone", with images) to convey **your** personality to help students form distinct impressions of you and to encourage them to do the same.
2. Leverage course profiles – photos, interests, etc.
3. Create spaces for social interaction in the course.
4. Create opportunities for non-course related interactions. Examples: a bulletin board (virtual coffee house), a suggestion box, etc.
5. Create an introductory discussion/interaction to give students a chance to get to know each other – give the introductory discussion more depth by framing it with questions about prior knowledge of the course and expectations.

Examples:
- http://voicethread.com/share/3084120/ – Icebreaking/Introductions (an introduction to the instructor through the eyes of her young daughter)
- http://etap640.edublogs.org/2012/06/26/love-letter-to-my-students/ – voice/trust/community
- http://bit.ly/iM4P5z – Voki speaking avatar welcome. (A personalized welcome, with the instructor's actual voice.)

2. Interaction: Why do I want it?

To support a sense of **open communication** in you're online teaching and learning environment.

1. So that students feel comfort conversing online
2. So that students feel comfortable participating in discussion
3. So that students feel comfortable interacting with you and their classmates

How do I create it?

1. Start the course with an introductory discussion at the beginning of the course. Provide models and timely feedback.

2. Provide explicit expectations about interaction. Example:
   http://etap640.edublogs.org/2009/12/17/my-discussion-post-grading-rubric
3. Ask questions. End each post in your discussions with a question, so that the conversation continues and so that you can get the students to dig deeper. As the instructor you risk halting discussions when you contribute. By asking a probing question at the end of your posts you can continue a thread of discussion to promote and create additional depth in the interaction.
4. Quote directly from a previous post in a discussion.
5. Refer explicitly to others by name in the discussion.
6. Express compliments and appreciation. Never underestimate your power. If you have high expectations, your student will rise to them.
7. Express agreement.

3. Group Cohesion: Why do I want it?

To create a sense of class community in your online teaching and learning environment.
1. So students will feel comfortable disagreeing with you and with classmates in the course. This requires a sense of trust, which requires that students understand what is expected and permitted in the class.
2. Where their point of view is acknowledged by others in the course.
3. Where discussion is used to help students build a sense of collaboration in the course – where they feel they are positively contributing to the *sense making* in the course for themselves and their classmates.

How do I create it?

1. Provide expectations for interactions, including netiquette. Provide examples and models to insure understanding. Give students permission to disagree and show the how to do that.
2. Model the behaviors yourself.
3. "Speak" to them. Use salutations in your posts. Refer to students by name in your posts. Use inclusive pronouns.
4. Give students ample opportunities to interact with you, the content, and each other.
5. Let students do the work.
6. Let students help each other. Example: Create an *ask a question* area – where students can help each other.
7. Let students peer evaluate each other's work.

Teaching Presence: 1. Instructional Design and Organization

Best Practices

Suggestions that work!

- Start your course off right. Creating a strong social presence, sense of trust, and the understanding that those in the class, including the instructor, are real people, is essential to building a strong sense of class community. Creating opportunities for students to get to know each other and to interact with the instructor at the start of the course can "break the ice." Include ice-breaking activities in your first module. In addition to the social and trust activities, practical activities can be designed to help students get comfortable and familiar with the features and functionalities of the learning management system. Include a discussion and an assignment submission area, so students can practice these technical skills before beginning course assignments.

- Number your course modules in addition to having a title. Then be sure your Course Schedule coincides with the numbers and titles given to modules.

- Courses with several discussion areas or assignment submissions in one module can be very confusing to the student as the view of the module may expand beyond one web page. Consider how you will manage large volume areas in a module, or create additional modules.

- Use consistent terminology in all documents. For example, Submit, rather than Save. Reply, rather than Respond. There may be LMS-specific terminology. The key is to be accurate and consistent. Also, don't refer to the assignment submission process as 'emailing assignments to me.'

- Remember that large or multiple graphics affect the loading of your course pages on the web.

- Check all hypertext links within your documents each time you teach the course. Links to external web sites must be verified to make sure they are still accurate.

- If using small group work areas that require students to exchange files, stipulate a standard for file attachments. If students are exchanging word-processed documents, students should use the compatible file formats listed on the written assignment form. Stress that students need to have virus-checking software installed on their computers.

- If document format is important to the grade of an assignment, students must submit the assignment as a file attachment. You need to be familiar with the file attachment submission process and how to write the appropriate evaluation of the student's work.

- Use the forms and features available to you in your course development tool created especially for communications, assignments, tests, and evaluations. Avoid (if possible) conducting any course related activities outside the course via email. Student email is not reliable. Students may provide incorrect information, or their email addresses may change during the course of a semester, or they may use unrecognizable email names.

- Provide thorough explanations and descriptions of what students will do, your specific expectations or requirements, and of your learning activities in the Course Information area of your course. The more students know, the less likely they will be confused.

- If your course development tool does not provide a spell-checking feature for students, or if spelling is important to you, you need to clarify and instruct the students on this requirement for

49

your course. Students should then word process written assignments or discussion responses off-line within their word processor so they have the use of a spell and grammar checker. You should familiarize yourself with the student interface and course functionality so you can give accurate instructions to students on how to participate in your course.

- Schedule your due dates with the understanding that many online students use the weekends to work. A week day afternoon is a good time for an assignment deadline as the student has the weekend to finish the assignment and time to get help if they experience any technical problems with submitting their assignment. For example, make due dates Monday afternoon rather than late Friday night or midnight on the weekend.

- Don't have a late night deadline such as midnight for assignment submission, or when a module will open, unless you definitely plan to be online at that time.

- Don't complain about your technology problems to the students.

- Be positive and supportive when a student mentions or experiences a technical problem. Complaints give the impression of instability and affect the student's confidence in using the system. If there is a HelpDesk available, encourage students to contact them for assistance in resolving technical issues.

- Be familiar with and check your course from the student perspective during the development and delivery cycles of your course. Familiarity and understanding of the student interface and course functionality are important as you give instructions to students on how to participate in your course.

- Become familiar with the assignment submission process: including the limitations of copy/paste, smart quotes issue, how to open file attachments, creating an evaluation, what to do if file attachment isn't a compatible file format, etc.

Teaching Presence: 1. Instructional Design and Organization
Create Areas for Communication/Interaction/Engagement in your Online Course

Best Practices
Quantity and quality of interaction with the instructor has a significant and positive correlation with student satisfaction and reported learning. By creating and strong sense of class community in your online course and by creating mechanisms for interaction and engagement with your students and opportunities for interaction and engagement between your students you can positively impact the levels of satisfaction in your course.

Create a "Talk with the Professor" Area
What is it?
"Talk with the Professor" is a simple discussion area you can add to your course where you and your students can post public questions or comments. For example, a "Talk with the Professor" area functions as a discussion area specifically designed for student-professor interaction. I recommend adding this area based on research that shows that student satisfaction and learning online is significantly and positively affected by quantity and quality of interaction with their professor. This area demonstrates to your students that you are accessible and provides a specific area dedicated to student-professor interaction.

How should it be used?
"Talk with the Professor" is analogous to a student asking you a question before or after class, or perhaps in the hall. It may or may not deal directly with the content of the course, but allows for students to ask general questions of you, in a public forum.

When do I use it?
As the instructor, you should look for questions in the "Talk with the Professor" area of each module and respond to them in a timely manner. Likewise, you can ask questions and interact with students in discussion that you initiate as well.

Create a Mechanism to Obtain Feedback from Students on the course, e.g., A Culminating Activity
What is it?
The "Culminating Activity" is a something that I recommend you create and use in your course as the final activity to "wrap-up" your course. A course wrap-up is a good way to end a course and will give you:
1. Valuable information about your course from the student perspective, which will help improve your understanding of online teaching and learning.
2. Valuable feedback that you can use in the evaluation and revision of your course for the next time you teach it.

How should it be used?
I encourage you to use a variety of mechanisms to get feedback on the course from your students. Asking simple questions about what is working and what can be improved in the course will give you valuable information and help you better understand the student experience and perspective. Using student feedback to inform the evaluation and revision of your course is an important component in your development as online faculty and in your course design process. This evaluation and revision cycle is something you should do every time you teach/re-teach a course.

When do I use it?
The "Culminating Activity is designed to wrap-up a course at the end. However, there is also valuable information that can be gained from collecting such information during the course, as well at midterm, for example. Collecting feedback from your students on the design of your course will give you information you

can use to be responsive to student issues/concerns with the course and help you when it is time to evaluate and revise your course.

Create a "Private Student Folders" Area
What is it?
A space in your online course dedicated to private communications with each student. The Private Folders area is something that I recommend you create and use in your course for all private communication between the student and the instructor. You might create this in your course management tool as a private group or team with you and a single student as members, or you may use built in functionality, such as the internal course mail system in your CMS.
1. To keep all course-related documents in your course. This makes your course-related correspondence easy to find.
2. To keep all course-related documents, file attachments, correspondence secure, virus-free, backed up, and for tracking purposes. Keeping interactions with student within the course eliminates the possibility of the excuse that email was lost or never received.

I encourage faculty to have students use only a Private Folders-type mechanism for private communications and request that students never send them internet email. This eliminates the need for and use of unreliable/ever changing/obscure student email systems and addresses for course-related communications in your course. Student email systems and accounts can be unstable, and so the existence or arrival of course documents or communications sent via email between the instructor and student(s) cannot be guaranteed. You should specify your preference for private communication in your course. If you decide to conduct private communications with your students within your course, you must be sure to monitor the area for student communications. Your online course development tool may have a built-in mechanism to facilitate this desired functionality, such as a course mail feature.

How should it be used?
"Private Folder" functions in the same manner as meeting with a student one-on-one, in your office. It is an opportunity for students to ask questions, get clarification, further information, an explanation, or have a discussion that they do not wish to share with the class. It is also a place where you can interact privately with your students.

When do I use it?
As the instructor, you should look for questions in the "Private Folder" and respond to them in a timely manner. Likewise, when you need to note something privately to a student, you may also post a message for them here.

Create a Bulletin Board area for your Course
What is it?
The Bulletin Board is essentially a discussion outside of a particular course content area. Just as students have the opportunity to talk or chat with each other, or with the instructor, when taking a conventional classroom course, so should they also have the opportunity to do the same in an online course? The Bulletin Board gives them this opportunity. Your online course development tool may have a built in mechanism to facilitate this desired functionality.

How should it be used?
The Bulletin Board would be a space available only to students enrolled in your class to post and/or read messages and respond. These can include questions or comments to other students and the instructor about the course. It can also be a place where students can go to talk about non-course related subjects. You can also use it as a place to make announcements or as an archive of any class announcements you may have.

When do I use it?
You should check the Bulletin Board area regularly and use the Bulletin Board to make announcements, or to respond to students' questions.

Create and use Class Announcements
What is it?
The Announcements is an area for a short message/announcement that generally appears at the top of your Course home page, or as a pop up. Your online course development tool may have a built in mechanism to facilitate this desired functionality. It may also be called class/course announcements.

How should it be used?
An announcement is used to display a brief class message to students.

When do I use it?
You should use the announcement mechanisms for communications to make announcements to the class. (There may be other features and functions in your course management tool to facilitate various types of class communications.) You can use announcements to direct the students to other course areas. You can also use it to call attention to an activity or event, remind students of due dates, or to encourage them to participate. This is one of the most effective, most visible, and easiest ways to make your "presence" known and felt in the course.

Create/use a Standard Mechanism for Asking a Question
What is it?
There should be a mechanism built into your course where by a student can ask you a course content related question from virtually any location in the course. These questions posted by your students should be public documents. If one student has a question, it is likely that another has the same question. Answering it once in a public location, or encouraging students to answer each other's questions in this area will give you additional flexibility and help in responsiveness, and encourage student interaction, and community. Your online course development tool may have a built in mechanism to facilitate this desired functionality.

How should it be used?
Essentially it provides your students the opportunity to "raise their hand" from anywhere in your course to ask a question, or if they want clarification, further information, or explanation.

When do I use it?
As the instructor, you should look for questions in the Question Areas of each module and respond to them in a timely manner.

Create a Personal Profile
What is it?
The "Profile" is a biographical sketch, a way to introduce the members of your course to each other. It is a way to begin to develop a sense of class community by helping you to get to know each other, and to learn some things about each other. Usually profiles are collected in an area for that purpose in your course and are a form that you fill out that allows for the inclusion of a photo or link, and other additional personal information. Your online course development tool may have a built in mechanism to facilitate this desired functionality.

How should it be used?
The profile is used to introduce the members of your course to each other.

When do I use it?
Profiles are generally filled out as one of the first introductory activities in an online course. You should create a profile to introduce yourself to your class and direct your students to do the same as one of their "ice breaking" activities to get the course started.

Create Ice Breaking Activities to start your course
What is it?
An Ice Breaking activity is an introductory generally non-graded activity or series of activities that you ask all students entering your course to complete. Part orientation and part community building, good ice breaking activities present students with the opportunities to get to know each other in an interactive discussion, to help each other, to build trust, to try out the features of the environment that will be used in the class, to talk about what they already know about the course topic, or why they are taking the course, to talk about why they are taking the course online, to practice with and navigate the environment, etc. An ice breaking activity might also function as an opportunity to troubleshoot technical difficulties prior to the start of the content of the course, or to gauge skill level, prior knowledge, interests that can inform activities later in the course.

How should it be used?
The Ice Breaker is used to break the ice at the start of the course.

When do I use it?
Ice Breakers are generally set up at the start of a course as one of the first introductory activities in a course.

Teaching Presence: 1. Instructional Design and Organization
Using Small Groups in Your Online Course

Best Practices
Quantity and quality of interaction with other students in the online class also has a significant and positive correlation with student satisfaction and reported learning. By creating and strong sense of class community in your online course and by creating mechanisms for interaction and engagement between your students you can positively impact the levels of satisfaction in your course. Consider how you might incorporate cooperative or collaborative learning activities designed to engage pairs or groups of individuals in learning and your content.

Suggestions that work!

- Keep group size small: 2 or 3 are best. Smaller groups are more effective and take less time.

- Prepare students to work in cooperative online groups. Explain to students why you are using cooperative learning, do a short cooperative learning activity, then have them explain how it can help them. Initially, do short get-acquainted and review activities.

- Teach students appropriate interaction skills. Ask students to contribute to a class list of appropriate group behaviors. Examples: stay on task, contribute ideas, help others learn, encourage everyone to participate, listen with care, show respect for others. Display the list and remind students to use them. Add to the list as needed.

- Avoid let students choose their own groups. Students need to develop positive working relationships with all class members. Randomly assign students to groups. Change groups often enough so no one gets stuck for long periods with the same class members.

- Conduct cooperative online activities often enough for students to develop cooperative skills. Have students do something cooperative regularly in your online class to reinforce positive cooperative habits. If nothing else, have them share what they learned with a partner.

- Plan cooperative online learning activities with care. You can't just put students in groups, tell them to work together, and wonder why the groups aren't successful. Cooperative learning groups have five essential elements (positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face interaction, social skills, and processing). Built carefully into an online small group learning activity the se elements will create an environment where students can learn well together.

- Make sure your cooperative groups can complete simple tasks successfully before learning how to handle complex ones. Students must be taught how to learn together. Start with short, simple activities and progress to longer and more significant ones, as your students are successful. Have frequent class discussions on what helps the groups do well.

- Avoid emphasizing paper or project completion as a group goal. With completion as the only goal, there's nothing to stop one student from doing the work and the others from "hitchhiking." Assignments should ensure individual accountability is possible (a test taken individually, a class presentation, a follow-up assignment that is completed alone).

- Provide a clear learning goal. A clear group-learning goal is one whose achievement is easily measured. Example: The activity is concluded when every member in your group can explain the work and/or pass a quiz.

- Don't assume that students will magically develop needed social skills. You must teach them how to coordinate their work with others and keep everyone included in the learning. Do this by helping them understand the need for skills, giving detailed instructions and providing models that show them exactly what to do, making sure they know you will be "watching" their interactions and activity online, then giving them feedback and coaching until their cooperative skills are automatic.

- Take advantage of the power of positive relationships on achievement. Start every online group activity with a get-acquainted or relationship-building discussion, such as "What is something unique about your partner(s) that no one in the class knows or would be able to guess?" Build in initial success by giving review or easier assignments, and then slowly increase the difficulty of the tasks as students gain confidence in their ability to work online together.

- Monitoring the groups carefully while they are working. Monitor the groups carefully by observing interactions and encouraging appropriate learning and teamwork skills. Help the groups ensure mastery by every student. Keep individuals on their toes by asking them at random to explain their group's work.

- Give group grades only when absolutely necessary, absolutely fair for each member, and when you have taught the students how to work together. Assess learning with individual quizzes or papers. Have students assess their own learning by comparing what they can do with criteria.

- Building effective and successful online small group activities is not easy. Cooperative learning is complex, procedural learning, like learning to play a new sport. Plan for on-going practice in cooperative learning to achieve intuitive, wise use.

Source: adapted for online learning activities from Instructional Innovation Network - http://bestpractice.net

Teaching Presence: 1. Instructional Design and Organization

Think before you link!

One of the great things about delivering your course on the web is that you can incorporate links to other documents or to other web sites to support/augment your own materials or to offer further information or explanation. Done well, hypertext links to other web sites or among your own pages can greatly enhance your presentation, learning materials, and the learning experiences of your students. But just because you can, doesn't mean you should.

Before creating hypertext links, keep the following in mind:

Be sure you want the student to click on the link you create where you create it. If it is there, the student is likely to click on it to see what is behind it. This will interrupt the flow of the material you are presenting. You may not want the student to click on a link to the Newsweek home page when you mention a Newsweek article in one of your lectures. Also, you should be aware that if the link is to an external web site, a student could get distracted, begin surfing, and leave your course all together. You may or may not want to enable that.

If your course is linearly organized, i.e., students must complete Modules 1-4 before entering Module 5, then you will probably not want to link to it simply because you have made a reference to it. A good rule of thumb is to only make a link if you really want or expect the student to go there at that time. In the example, a link to Module Five would not be advised unless you want them to do something there. Conversely, however, you might want to link from Module Five back to Module One to review something or make some sort of an illustrative point.

Links are particularly useful for things like to link to a page that defines a term, to break out a section of a long document, or for further information on a topic, to pose a thought question, etc.

Linking between documents in your course is most successful when you explain to the student where s/he is, where s/he is going, what s/he should do, why, and how to get back to find what s/he has done. It is essential that you view your course from the web as a student to insure that that is the case. If a student is deep in Module 3 and you hypertext to Module 5 to submit an assignment, you must make sure the student knows where s/he has saved the assignment so s/he can find it again. If s/he came in from Module 3 and got linked elsewhere this will not be intuitive unless well documented by you in your instructions or content.

Too many links may prove confusing, ineffective, and distracting. If everything on your page is a link it loses its effectiveness. When adding a link consider what is the main point of the page? What is important, where does the student go first? What information comes from you and is part of the course, and what is supporting information from secondary external sources? Consider whether the link will add to the understanding of the information being presented or lead to a task you want the student to complete.

Teaching Presence: 1. Instructional Design and Organization
Get feedback on your course from your students
For example, add a "culminating activity" to your course to get feedback from your students that you can use to help you in your evaluation and revisions to your online course.

Question 1: What did you like best about this course?

Question 2: What specific things do you think could be improved in the structure or design of the course and learning activities?

Question 3: How would you improve the quality and participation in course discussions/interactions?

Question 4: What changes would you suggest be made to the pacing or sequence of the content and activities for this course? (E.g., were the due dates doable for you? Were the course materials sequenced well?)

Question 5: What changes would you suggest be made to the quantity of work required for this course?

Question 6: How could the course be improved in terms of my interaction, participation, and management of the course?

Question 7: What other suggestions, comments, or recommendations would you have for the instructor?

Teaching Presence:

Get feedback on from your students

For example, add a "descriptive feedback/metacognitive journaling" to your course to get feedback from your students that you can use to help you understand your students and improve your teaching.

Rodgers, Carol R. (2006) Attending to student voice: the impact of descriptive feedback on learning and teaching. Curriculum Inquiry, 36(2), pp. 209-237.

Descriptive Feedback

Question 1: What did you learn? Really think about what it means to have learned something.

Question 2: Can you say more? Can you give me an example?

Question 3: How do you know you learned it?

Question 4: What helped your learning? What would have helped your learning more?

Question 5: What hindered your learning? What got in the way of your learning?

Question 6: How did you feel?

Incorporating getting "feedback" from your students will help you really understand what it means to be "student-centered."

1. A shift from seeing teaching, self, and curriculum as primary, to seeing students and their learning as central.

2. A shift from seeing students as people to be won over, or as adversaries, to seeing them as partners whose share in power is equal.

3. A shift from seeing teaching as a cause of learning, to seeing teaching as a response to learning. (Just because you teach it doesn't mean it is learned --no teacher is that "powerful."

   Student–centered is more than caring about your students, or knowing their learning preferences, it is not abdicating responsibility in the teaching and learning process…it is accepting the reality/challenge that you need to step aside to give your students voice in and power over their own learning.

Teaching Presence: 1. Instructional Design and Organization
Make your course web-friendly to students with disabilities
Web Accessibility

Using the web as your classroom is a great way to provide students with access to additional opportunities for learning. And it is very important that these opportunities be available to everyone. On September 30, 1999 New York State adopted a policy (99-3) that "allows persons with disabilities to have access to information - via the World Wide Web - which is equivalent to that available to persons without disabilities." This policy requires that all New York State agency web sites comply with level A, priority 1- W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. The policy states that all web sites created after September 30, 1999 will be designed to adhere to these guidelines and that all existing web sites will, if necessary, be modified so that they are accessible by September 30, 2000."

"Web content shall conform with level "A," satisfying all priority one checkpoints. In addition, each site must have a contact mechanism so individuals who might have trouble accessing any portion of the site can report the problem."

As you design your course, consider the 3 primary principles that guide the Universal Design for Learning (UDL): 1. Provide multiple means of representation. 2. Provide multiple means of action and expression. 3. Provide multiple means of engagement. If you employ these principles in your online course design, your course will not only be "friendly" to those with disabilities, but will also be learner-centered. To learn more about UDL and about guidelines to help you make sure the materials you create within your course and any additional web resources you may be using are accessible, visit the National Center on UDL, http://www.udlcenter.org/implementation/examples.
- UDL at a Glance, Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST).
- Accessibility Resources

"The primary goal of these guidelines is to promote accessibility. However, following them will also make Web content more available to all users, whatever user agent they are using (e.g., desktop browser, voice browser, mobile phone, automobile-based personal computer, etc.) or constraints they may be operating under (e.g., noisy surroundings, under- or over-illuminated rooms, in a hands-free environment, etc.). Following these guidelines will also help people find information on the Web more quickly. These guidelines do not discourage content developers from using images, video, etc., but rather explain how to make multimedia content more accessible to a wide audience." (From the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.)

You can find out more about the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines at:
http://www.w3.org/

You can read the New York State Policy regarding web accessibility at:
http://www.irm.state.ny.us/policy/99-3.htm

Please check your own state or institutional policies regarding web accessibility for online teaching and learning.

Ten Tips for Testing Your Web Pages for Accessibility

Your course development tool may provide a link to a text-only view of your course for students with visual impairments who may use web readers to access your course. Generally a link located at the top of your course homepage, it provides a text-only way to view and navigate your course. It is generally your responsibility to make sure that the contents and design of the pages of your course take web accessibility in to account. Check with your instructional technology department for institutional policies and procedures regarding web page accessibility issues in online courses.

Ten Tips for Testing Your Web Pages for Accessibility

1. Turn off graphics in your web browser, and make sure the ALT text is displayed in place of your informational graphics and that the ALT text makes sense.

2. Consider whether ALT text is really necessary for decorative-only images. If not, assign a null value to the ALT text (alt="").

3. Turn off sounds in your web browser to make sure no important information is lost. Provide alternative transcripts if necessary.

4. Check your web site using a Lynx browser, and/or using an automated web accessibility checker.

5. Use the High Contrast option in the Accessibility Options section of Control Panel in Windows, then restart the browser and make sure the page is still readable.

6. Make sure that text can be resized on your web pages. Test the largest font size supported by the browser (the largest is only available when High Contrast mode is turned on).

7. Check that all areas of your course can be accessed without the use of a mouse. Navigate using the keyboard, make sure TAB traverses all links in reasonable order and that CTRL+TAB moves between panes or sections, and that the text for the links make sense out of context.

8. Check the site map for your course, or the text-only features provided by your course development tool.

9. Select all text and copy it to the clipboard, ensure it makes sense when pasted into a word processor.

10. Check that any forms you use or create in your course provide prompt text next to each item so that the fields are associated with what is supposed to go in them.

Add ALT tags to your graphics

The ALT text provides alternative or substitute text, for use when the image is not being displayed. Don't make the mistake of providing a description of the image, without considering what job the image was doing on the page. The ALT text should be composed as an appropriate textual alternative to the image: sometimes that might turn out to be a description of the image.

The "ALT tag" tags any images you import into your course with a text description or alternative of what the graphic is or what it does. For example an image of the cells of a leaf could be tagged "Microscopic picture of the cells of a leaf." If you can click on the image to take you somewhere, you can describe the image and the action that happens when you click on it. For example, a graphic of a can of Pepsi can be tagged "Click on this red can of Pepsi to take you to the Pepsi corporate web site."

Your course development tool will have a mechanism to easily add ALT tags to your graphics.

Teaching Presence: 2. Facilitating Discourse and Interaction
Enhance Your Online Content Presentation
Things you can do in your course besides lecture!

Almost any activity can be designed to be carried out in some way or another for an online course. Most important is that the instructor must set up the activity with all the supporting and explanatory documentation necessary for the students to understand fully what they are to do, when, where in the course they are to do it, what is expected specifically, and how they will be evaluated. Areas in the course must be designed and set up in advance by the instructor to account for and accommodate, explain, model, and evaluate each activity. Below are some ideas to get you thinking about what is possible and how. Check with your institutional academic computing department for instructional design assistance with implementing any of these ideas in your online course.

1. **Conduct an interview**: A formal interview consists of a series of well-chosen questions (and often a set of tasks or problems) that are designed to elicit a portrait of a student's understanding about a concept or set of related concepts. The interview may be conducted as an offline activity and videotaped or audiotaped for later analysis, or online asynchronously. Online course assignments and activities can be designed to prepare interview questions either as individual or small group activities.

2. **Guest speaker**: Instructors can bring additional expertise into the "classroom" in the form of virtual guest speakers. The instructor sets up a module or section in the course for the guest speaker, sets up the activity, introduces the guest speaker, requests web access for the guest speaker, and creates the kick off document for the guest speaker to use to start the discussion or presentation. The Guest then interacts in the course via the web.

3. **Student-led discussion**: Often associated with 'idea circles.' These are peer-led, small group or whole class discussions of concepts fueled by single, or multiple text sources. Students work together with a student leader to build abstract understandings from the facts, data, and details provided by a variety of resources. Variations include students assuming the role of the professor, asking guiding questions, & facilitating the discussion.

4. **Student summaries**: single sentence or paragraph. This simple technique challenges students to answer the questions "Who does what to whom, when, where, how, and why?" (Represented by the letters WDWWWWHW) about a given topic, and then to synthesize those answers into a simple informative, grammatical, and long summary sentence. Can be used as a pop quiz. See below.

5. **Pop a quiz**: These quizzes can be used as "curve busters," opportunities for students to earn extra points and improve their grades by answering questions correctly. Pop quizzes are unannounced and can be inserted at any time into any course module. A pop quiz section to each module with an explanatory document can alert students that a pop quiz might occur at any time. Information on the pop quiz aspect of the course should be clearly detailed in the course in formation documents of the course and in the module at a glance areas of module in which they are likely to occur.

6. **Direct an observation**: observations may include written field notes with detailed accounts of an event, objects or people observed. They run the gamut of disciplines from artistic to scientific observations. The observation is conducted as an offline activity (See related, *Field Trip*). Online course assignments and activities can be designed to prepare observation instruments either as individual or small group activities.

7. **Brainstorming:** This is a technique for generating new, useful ideas, and promoting creative thinking. It can be a very useful to help generate ideas for projects, encourage shy or reluctant students or solve problems. This can be conducted online as a small group discussion activity or with the class as a whole.

8. **Build consensus**: Students are expected to look for key themes of a given topic and post their position. Next students read others messages, look for an ideal framework and post a message supporting more than one position. In the following stage, students also post a message supporting more than one position. Finally, there is a debriefing, discussion and final evaluation. A specific example is the Jigsaw method. It is a useful for encouraging cooperation. In this technique students are arranged in "expert" groups, responsible for developing an approach to solving part of the problem. Students are then rearranged in "home" groups with one person from each of the expert groups and are expected to find an overall solution. This is then brought together by the instructor by having each group report their overall solution. This can be organized as an online activity using small groups. Careful planning, explanation, and course document set up is necessary to have this flow well and in a timely way. *Tip*: As an online activity, the best results are when the instructor assigns members to groups and assigns roles within the groups in advance, rather than letting student self select into groups, and workout roles.

9. **Buzz groups**: A group is divided into sub-groups of from 3 to 6 persons each for a brief period of time, to discuss an assigned topic or to solve a problem. A representative is sometimes selected from each sub-group to report the findings to the entire group. It allows for total participation by group members through small clusters of participants, followed by discussion of the entire group. It is used as a technique to get participation from every individual in the group. This activity is implemented online via small group discussion activities.

10. **Case Histories**: Case teaching presents authentic, concrete teaching problems for students to analyze. Teaching cases have long been a cornerstone of professional training in schools of business, law, and medicine. It provides models of how to think professionally about problems. Online case studies or histories can be set up as activities for individual or small group work.

11. **Chain story, poem, and article**: The teacher begins e.g., 'One morning Ben got up & went to work.' A student is invited to continue with another sentence & so on round the class. You provide the linkers - 'and then', 'so', 'next', ... ' finally' - good for conditionals. Each person adds to what the previous person told, ending on a cliff-hanger phrase such as, "but suddenly..." or "but when he opened the door he saw..." and so on -- the trick being to work the word in so that it fits the story. This works for poems, articles, and dialogue, too. This can be set up as an online activity either as a discussion with the class as a whole or in small groups. Every time a new person logs in to the course they add to the story...

12. **Chain math or science problem**: The teacher or a student poses a multi-staged problem which one student after another offers one step in its solution. This is done in small groups. Variation: students are given a list of solutions, and asked to create the problem to which it is the answer. The instructor gives guidance on what type of problem the solution is to. This can be set up as an online activity either as a written assignment with the "save for class" option and including the class as a whole or in small groups. Every time a new person logs in to the course they add a step to the solution or problem. The first person to save their response gets the credit for that level. Duplicate or concurrent respondents have to redo their response at a different level.

13. **Charts:** They can be used in a variety of ways in all disciplines, sometimes teacher-, other times student-generated to cover a vast array of topics. Closely related is the Categorizing Grid. Charts can be created using various software programs and attached to assignment documents for the instructor, for the class, or in small groups; both as stand alone documents or as supportive materials to a presentation or paper.

14. **Chalkboards/Whiteboards**: Teachers or students use these to outline, summarize, and highlight concepts and information. Online these can be created in PowerPoint or other graphics programs and attached as files to assignment documents. There are also tools that can be used synchronously online specifically for this purpose that may include capture and playback options as a feature.

15. **Class created annotated bibliography**: A glossary of various types of resources for any discipline. Using the Shared References Area and form students can be directed to regularly contribute a certain number of shared references to the class. As a directed learning activity the instructor can evaluate the student on the quantity of submissions, and require that the student include a summary of the resource as well as an evaluation of the resource. There are fields on the shared references form for summary and evaluation notes and to document the type of resource.

16. **Conduct a survey**: The teacher or students devise a survey instrument to use in or outside class. One example of a teacher-created survey is the attitude survey of students that provides valuable information on student perceptions of their online course experience, or as a mechanism to poll students on a particular course-related topic. Students can also work in small groups to design instruments that they then implement offline and return to the group or class to report on.

17. **Debate:** Informal debates encourage students to think critically about an issue or issues presented in class and allow for interactive class discussion. It is implemented by dividing students into two groups and assigning each a point of view to debate based on controversial material that had been presented in class. It is a pro-and-con discussion of a controversial issue. The objective is to convince the class (audience), rather than display skill in attacking the opponent. This can be done using the small group for preparation of the strategy of each side, and discussion areas for the actual presentation of the debate in the online course.

18. **Demonstration:** Teacher or students demonstrate a concept, procedure, or technique. This can be an online or offline activity. Online, it might be presented as a discussion with supporting documents or graphics. Offline, it might be video or audio recorded to be turned into the instructor, with a section in the online course for reflections on the process. Or, a video or audio file sent to the students by the instructor, with a section in the online course for reflections on the process.

19. **Discussion:** Lively online discussion fosters democratic participation and enhances learning. It emphasizes participation, dialogue, and two-way communication. The discussion method is one in which the instructor and a group of students consider a topic, issue, theory, or problem and exchange information, experiences, ideas, opinions, reactions, and conclusions with one another. Teaching by online discussion can be an extremely effective means of helping students apply abstract ideas and think critically about what they are learning and how to use and evaluate online and other resources to support their positions. Variation: student - led online discussions. Online discussion questions work best that are open ended and provocative. Instructors need to make sure students understand what is expected and how they will be evaluated. Students must be clear on how to take a position and support it. See related, *Questions and Answers*.

20. **Field Trips**: This strategy increases motivation and highlights the application of classroom material to the real world. It is an excellent opportunity to facilitate learning outside of the online

classroom in an interesting and purposeful way. Field notes, reports, inventories, and treasure hunt lists, can be developed in the online course individually or in small groups and then used in the field trip. Students can then return to the course to report on their experiences to the class or in small groups. Variation: Students can also videotape the field trip and turn it into the instructor. See related, *Direct an Observation.*

21. **Film/Video**: As an offline activity for an online course, these visual tools help build background for particular topics or motivate student reaction and analysis. They encourage the use and development of communication skills and can be used to establish a social context for English as a second language, or to provide visual "texts" for deaf students. Film/Video/Audio etc. can be developed by the instructor and sent out to students, or in some cases students can be directed to find a particular resource at the local library or video rental store.

22. **Group activity**: There is a nearly endless list of group and collaborative activities you can do in the online classroom. The group discussion, for example, provides an opportunity for pooling of ideas, experience, and knowledge.

23. **Keep a journal**: Journal entries provide students an opportunity to make observations and reflect on their learning or development of a skill. This can be saved privately by the student and then periodically turned in to the instructor or submitted to the instructor on more regular intervals. Journaling activities can also be done in pairs or small groups with peer review intervals. Variation – Keep a blog.

24. **Games:** They can be used to teach everything from art to zoology and are only limited by the imagination. Online or offline games can be used. Students can work individually or in small groups.

25. **Laboratory:** This is where students apply what they have learned. Labs can be set up as online experiments using simulation web sites, or software, or off line as actual experiments that the students conduct and then return to the class to report their findings. Lab packets can be sent to students including anything from seeds to sprout to a dead cat for dissection... Set up for this activity is rigorous and essential.

26. **Learning Teams**: This group method encourages full participation from students in the learning process, provides shared support among students and promotes individual preparation prior to class. This can be accomplished online using the small group areas. Variation see, *Study Groups.*

27. **Maps:** Concept maps, diagrams, maps are used to explain concepts. They can be student- or teacher-generated. They can be created in spreadsheets or other graphics software programs and attached as files to assignment documents or imported into the course for display.

28. **Memorization:** There are a variety of memory techniques that students can devise, learn about, and practice as online and off line activities. In an online course that requires memorization, the self-test is a useful study tool to help students self assess.

29. **Models:** Teaching and learning models add dimension to the learning environment even when they are abstract. In an online classroom, models can be used as examples to clarify what is expected from the student in terms of behavior, responses, quality of work, etc.

30. **News Articles**: Topical news stories are a great source of teaching material. They can raise the level of involvement and participation that the students have in the lesson. In an online class,

topical news stories can be used to bring in current events or to target learning to the individual interests of students, or to target learning to timely topics. To do this in an online course where everything must be created prior to the first day of class, the structure of the course is designed in advance to explain, and accommodate timely topical new, e.g., place holder documents are created in the course in a Module called "the news room" where topical news based activities will appear as they happen in the news. Variation: Students pick a news story, item, trend, issue and follow it and post assignments related to their topic designed build expertise in the student on that topic, e.g., student becomes an expert related to the economics of South Africa, by reviewing an assigned list of periodicals for a certain period of time and completing a series of assignments designed to probe the topic, leading a small group discussion, and writing a paper to synthesize a report on the topic.

31. **Object/Object Lessons**: Activities specifically developed to target the nature of science concepts serve as object lessons that can enhance online discussions.

32. **Panels:** An online discussion among a selected group of students with an assigned leader, in front of the class that joins in later. It is used as a technique to stimulate interest and thinking, and to provoke better discussion. With set up and explanation this can be done online using online discussion. Students are broken into Groups/Panels, given a topic, and a leader is assigned. The discussion in each group is restricted to group members but members from other groups are assigned to pick other panels to follow and then at a specific time are invited to pose questions to the panel and participate in the discussion.

33. **Paradox:** It helps students move beyond either/or toward both/and thinking. A paradox presented online to a student, a small group, or to the class can be a very effective discussion starter, written assignment or small group activity to problem solve. See related, *Puzzles*.

34. **Peer Review**: Student peer review is often used to increase the amount of feedback students receive on their writing and speaking assignments, but it can be applied to a variety of activities. Variation: Peer observations are different from the peer review. You aren't asked to review, rank, or evaluate your peers, but provide formative information, to help a person improve, change, and grow as a writer. Online this can be done in assigned pairs or in small groups.

35. **Picture Studies**: Use of pictures & diagrams in the classroom. Graphics files can be imported or attached to documents in an online course by the instructor of the student to illustrate, support, document, or demonstrate.

36. **Problem Solving**: Online, students solve given or self-generated problems individually or in groups.

37. **Projects:** These can be done individually, in pairs or groups, student- or teacher designed. They can be online or offline activities. They can be posted online, to the instructor, to the class, to a small group, for evaluation, review or discussion. Or, they can be sent in to the instructor for evaluation, e.g., a sculpture, a video demonstrating a skill, or a recording of a conversation in a foreign language, etc.

38. **Puzzles:** These cover all disciplines and may be verbal (written), mathematical, conceptual or concrete. A puzzle presented online to a student, a small group, or to the class can be a very effective discussion starter, written assignment, or small group activity to problem solved. See related, *Paradox*.

39. **Quiz or self-test**: Questions may be short essay, multipart, matching, multiple-choice, short answer, true/false, etc.

40. **Questions and Answers**: A variation on the ancient Socratic method. This as an online activity can be done with the entire class or in pairs or groups. Student and teacher may reverse roles. See related, *Discussion.*

41. **Report:** An online report may occur in a variety of formats and may be delivered individually or as a group effort, to the entire class or to small groups, or to the instructor. The instructor must set up the location in the course for reports and clearly document, how, when, and where reports are expected.

42. **Review:** An online review may have various resources as its object such as a book, article, a performance, etc. Variation: Students can peer review each other's work.

43. **Role Playing**: The spontaneous acting out of a situation or an incident by selected members of the group. It may be used as the basis of developing clearer insights into the feelings of people and the forces in a situation that facilitate, or block good human relations. Online a role-play has documented and assigned roles, scenarios that set up the situation or incident and can be carried out in small groups. The instructor must provide very clear definition of roles, role assignment, activity set up, explanations, etc. A role-play must be carefully planned and executed in an online course for it to work. See related, *Simulation.*

44. **Skits:** Skit writing can easily be incorporated into an online classroom including science and math to make concepts and ideas come alive. A skit can also be carried out in an online classroom as an offline activity that is video taped and turned into the instructor for review and evaluation. A report /description of the skit can be submitted by the student online to the class to incorporate it as part of the online course.

45. **Simulations:** (1) Provide a way of creating a rich communicative environment (a representation of reality) where students actively become a part of some real-world system and function according to predetermined roles as members of that group. Some examples include the Analytic Memo, In Basket (Manager's Box); Committee Hearing; management lab (corporate business); treasure hunt; web quest; Sam's Café (philosophical perspectives); Point Counter Point; U.N Council Meeting; Let's Do Business!, etc. Rigorous set up for this type of activity is required on the part of the instructor. Definition of roles, role assignment, activity set up, explanations, etc., must be carefully planned and executed in an online course for this to work. See related, *Role Play.* (2) Multimedia simulations can be added to an online course to illustrate, explain, deconstruct a process, function, system, etc. Simulations can be distributed to students on CDs as accompanying materials to the course, added as objects or links to a course as presentation material, be incorporated into a course as a component of test or quiz, etc.

46. **Storytelling:** This is a powerful teaching strategy that can be used online not only in English, but also in history and any disciplines with an historical background, which includes all.

47. **Study Groups:** Students can be assigned to pairs or small groups to help each other out in the course for the entire duration of the course, or to rotate with time or change in topic. Variation see, *Learning Teams.*

48. **Symposium:** An ancient Greek instructional technique. It is a discussion in which the topic is broken into its various phases; each part is presented by an expert or person well informed on that

particular phase, in a brief, concise speech. Online, students can perfect their phase individually or in small groups with discussion and assignments designed by the instructor or the students to perfect their brief concise "speech," and then be directed to present it to the entire class.

49. **Take a poll**: This is a quick technique that can be used to take the pulse of the class, highlight differences of opinion or interpretation, and surface assumptions. Instructors can use the test/self-test or multipart written assignment forms to create their online polls.

50. **Testimonies:** Personal testimonies bring life to any learning environment. Online self-disclosure can be easier for some with an aspect or illusion of anonymity because of the lack of face-to-face presence. Ground rules need to be set up to establish expectations for confidentiality, online courteous behavior, and respect for each other.

Researched by J. Prusch, and written and adapted by A.M. Pickett.

Teaching Presence: 2. Facilitating Discourse and Interaction

Enhance your Online Discussion/Interactions

An online discussion will take at least 2 weeks to fully develop. Also, keep in mind that students are told "any time, any place" and many working students logon only on weekends.

A full discussion will require at least:

1. An initial response.
2. A response to someone else's response.
3. And then response to any response to their original response.

It is very important that you begin the first discussion activity in your course with a document that gives instructions and explains your expectations for discussion in your course. It is also important that you include the number of responses required, any other specific requirements or expectations you may have for the activity (such as a time frame for the discussion), how you plan to evaluate discussion, what percentage of the grade their interaction in the course will be, and what constitutes an acceptable response.

Keep in mind that Online "Discussion" or interaction is not the same as traditional "class participation." Asynchronous interaction between students and with the instructor is a complex instructional interactive process that requires thought, synthesis, analysis, substantiation, critical thinking, etc. In this environment for most courses it is a primary teaching and learning tool. It must be valued accordingly.

Best Practices in Online Interaction:

- Make sure your discussion/interaction is long enough. Remember that discussions usually take at least 2 weeks to fully develop.

- Require participation: specify quantity and quality of participation. The clearer you are the better. Consider providing students with a model response specifying the criteria they should use to support their opinions and responses.

- Grade participation: Be sure students are clear about the quantity and quality of participation required. Be sure to give students clear instructions on timeliness of their participation in the activity.

- Give students private feedback on their participation in your course discussion. It is important to evaluate the quality of the contributions in your course discussion and give periodic individual feedback on how they are doing in this type interaction.

- Create and provide documents in your course that specify what is due when. Module overviews, timeframes, agendas help students keep on task and working on activities as a group and ensure that participation in your activities happen smoothly.

- If you have more than one discussion item in a module, indicate the start and end dates in the document title so students will know which discussions are active and the time frame for the discussion.

- Resist the temptation to respond to every student's response. Otherwise, the discussion may become a series of dialogs between you and each student, rather than among the students.

- However, don't be absent from the discussion either. The students need to know you are there.

- Resist the temptation to be "didactic" in your own responses-- Instead of supplying the answer; guide the discussion so that the students "discuss" the answers on their own.

- Encourage students to use the subject field to describe their input. The subject should add to the context of the discussion, not just state for example, "DISCUSSION ITEM 1." Descriptive subjects add to structure and understanding of the discussion.

- Don't ask questions that are not interesting, or that will not result in "discussion." Use open-ended questions. Your discussion starter should be pose a question that requires comprehension, or synthesis of the readings / course materials, or be provocative in some way, NOT for example, "List the 5 major points of ... "

- Structure the discussion/interaction. Topics should not be too open-ended or students may lose focus. One way to structure discussion is through debates. Assigning or asking students to choose a position in advance can be helpful. Other structuring devices include - problem solving, case studies, interviews, panels, brainstorming, summaries, etc.

- Be explicit in your expectations for participation and types of acceptable responses. You may consider giving students a model, e.g., "yup, I agree" will not count.

- Know the difference between setting up an online discussion and asking students to write a short essay response to a question.

- Require a product that is based on, or the result of discussion: A "hand-in" assignment that is based on class discussion can help students to synthesize, integrate and apply what has been discussed.

- Include ideas, and information generated in discussion/interaction on exams. This serves two purposes. It reinforces the importance of student collaboration and makes "cheating" much more difficult. If students need to participate in class discussions to answer exam questions they will be unable to simply "copy" from outside sources.

- Form Small Groups or Learning Teams. Assigning students to these (rather that allowing self selection) can help avoid logistical problems that inhibit productivity. If you do allow self-selection, establish a deadline for this process (a week to ten days) and then default to teacher assignment to the groups after the deadline. Small groups can
    - Come to a consensus
    - Develop group presentations
    - Peer review each other's work
    - Prepare for exams
    - Analyze a case study, etc.
    - Small groups are especially helpful for large classes

- Create a discussion response that calls on specific students that have not yet participated in the discussion.

- Create a discussion response that asks a specific student to clarify a point, or that asks a student to reassess a response in light of another student's response.

- Don't hesitate to call on individual students in the discussion to clarify a point, or to further substantiate their position.

- Don't hesitate to call on a student by name to ask a question. You can use this method to encourage discussion among students. For example, ask what one-student thinks of another's response in light of his/her own position.

- Assign individual students the task of summarizing the discussion.

- Create a discussion response that asks a follow-up question of the group or of an individual student.

- The quickest way for you to grind a discussion to a halt is to step in and summarize or synthesize the discussion. Students will assume that since you are the instructor, a summary caps the discussion. To keep the discussion going draw attention to points that come up, refer to students' responses by name, etc., and post more questions that will encourage the students to take the discussion further. You can also call on a student by name to clarify, or probe a point.

- Employ a student-led discussion strategy where assigned students come up with critical thinking questions and are evaluated on the quality of their questions and how they facilitate the discussion. In a discussion intensive course, this strategy will help the instructor with workload.

- Establish boundaries or rules for interaction in your course. Include a document on netiquette appropriate for your course in your course information documents. Setting acceptable behavior rules for your course and making these rules explicit for your students helps set the appropriate expectations for behavior in your course.

- Be encouraging, supportive, timely, and constructive in all discussions and all evaluations of the products of discussions/interactions. Promote quality participation by publicly acknowledging it and by modeling it.

Teaching Presence: 3. Direct Instruction
Confirming understanding through assessment and explanatory feedback

Think about how you will assess learning activities and provide feedback
Review the list of learning activities that you created and take a moment to think about how you plan to provide feedback, assess or evaluate student work, performance, or learning for each activity.

Look at the Evaluation document you created in your Course Information documents area. Have you assigned appropriate values to the types of activities in your course? Do they match the actual activities you have planned? For example, is discussion 60% of the course and only 25% of the grade?

How will you evaluate discussion, if it is a component of your course?

Confirming understanding through assessment and explanatory feedback:
• How you evaluate student work depends on what it is you have asked them to do - *that you will then evaluate...*
• To evaluate if they understand a concept, have them define it, find examples of it, apply it.
• To evaluate if they understand a process have them demonstrate it.
• Devise activities that force them to analyze, evaluate, synthesize and apply the information, knowledge, concept or process. Have them make their thinking visible.

Review the workload for students and for yourself. How many students are you likely to have? What if you have a very small number of enrollments? What if you have a very large number of enrollments? Will the activities you are planning still work? What alternatives do you have?

Give some thought to your workload and course management. You should begin to gage what it is going to take to participate in and manage your course and to evaluate your students' work, and your students will need to know how you will be evaluating them on these activities and when they can expect feedback and evaluations from you and what form they will take The more your students know about the tasks, activities, expectations, requirements and how they will be evaluated, the more comfortable and confident they will be participating in the course.

Peer-to-Peer feedback
• Create opportunities for students to help students.
• Create small groups/study groups.
• Create collaborative learning activities and assignments.
• Create activities that require peer reviews/feedback.
• Set the expectation that students can help each other out in the course with questions, etc.

Creating opportunities to collect student feedback on course
• Create a course review activity or assignment - or use the built in culminating activity.
• Create a Suggestion Box for students to give you suggestions and feedback on how to improve the course.
• Give bonus points to students who find small errors or inconsistencies in your course.
• Give bonus points to students whose feedback actually results in a change that you implement in your course.

Keep/Use:
A private Notebook for comments, evaluation criteria, revisions to tests/assessments

Private Folders for feedback, private tutoring, etc.

Self-tests for student self-assessment. Self-assessment activities are also very effective activities online that will help with confirming understanding. Many text books come with CDs that have self - assessments that could be incorporated, or companion web sites, some of them very sophisticated that even email you the results of your students tests that they have available on their closed site for that purpose . . .To evaluate if they have completed and understood the readings in the text book, you can create a self-test for them to check their comprehension and guide their progress.

Peer evaluation has many benefits. It increases autonomy, it can deepen understanding and reinforce the application of standards or criteria in students, moves the student from being a passive learner, to being an active peer evaluator, promotes reflection, and helps students develop make judgments. It can be designed to assist the instructor in providing timely student feedback.

Tests, midterms, and finals can provide students with feedback and progress assessments of how they are doing in the course and where they need to concentrate their efforts to improve.

Discussion Rating to help you qualitatively evaluates discussion and interaction in your course. Consider rating discussion responses in conjunction with a rubric and provide feedback/evaluations to students on their performance in discussion/interaction activities.

Rubrics
1. Provide rubrics for grading and assessment of all learning activities and assignments.
2. Provide rubrics that detail how discussion will be evaluated qualitatively.
3. Provide rubrics for overall achievement.

Stand-Alone Evaluations for feedback. Your online course development tool will have various ways to provide feedback to your students, groups, and class, and will have evaluation mechanisms for you to use to provide and display grades to your students. However this is addressed by your course development tool, create stand-alone progress reports for each student to give them feedback on how they are progressing in the course and what they can do to improve.

Use the Assignment Evaluation mechanisms provided to you in your course development tool to provide corrective feedback and comments to your students on their work and progress/performance in your course, use a "different color" to mark up student assignments, or use other built-in mechanisms in the evaluation forms built in to your course development tool to provide general and corrective feedback to your online students, and create by-module evaluations/progress reports so students know how they are doing and how they can improve.

Implement a Course Evaluation – at mid-semester or as a culminating activity in your course you can learn a lot by asking students to tell you what worked well in the course for them and what they think needs to be improved. This is something just between you and the students to help inform your own evaluation, review and revisions to your online course and should be in addition to and not take the place of a formal institutional course or faculty evaluation.

Providing prompt and clear feedback for students:
• Provide comments/guidance/feedback in the public community areas of the course: Ask a Question Areas, the Bulletin Board, the NewsFlash/Announcement, etc.
• Provide timely feedback.
• Provide private feedback.

- Timing of corrective feedback.
- Provide comments/guidance/feedback in responses and comments in discussions.
- Provide models to demonstrate and clarify expectations.
- Audio files to provide feedback.
- Using the subject line to provide corrective feedback.

Teaching Presence: 3. Direct Instruction
Confirming understanding through assessment and explanatory feedback

Suggested Online Assessment Techniques (OATs)

Minute paper

Description: During the last few days of an open module, ask students to answer: "What is the most important point you learned in this module?" and, "What point remains least clear to you?" The purpose is to elicit data about students' comprehension of a particular module/topic.

What to do with it: Review responses and note any useful comments. In a follow up discussion emphasize the issues illuminated by the students' comments.

Quick Check-in

Description: Instructor creates a discussion with one question about the course/module/topic, and gives a very short time frame for responses, etc. Each student he/she responds to the question in the allotted time. This can be done publicly in a discussion, or posted in each of the student's private folders, or as a written assignment with the instructions to submit to class or professor.

What to do with it: Go through the student responses and determine the best criteria for categorizing the data with the goal of detecting response patterns. Discussing the patterns of responses with students can lead to better teaching and learning.

Memory matrix

Description: Instructor creates an assignment: Attaches a Word table representing a two-dimensional diagram for which instructor has provided labels. Students fill in cells and return their Word documents as attachments to assignments. For example, in a music course, labels might consist of periods (Baroque, Classical) by countries (Germany, France, Britain); students enter composers in cells to demonstrate their ability to remember and classify key concepts.

What to do with it: Tally the numbers of correct and incorrect responses in each cell. Analyze differences both between and among the cells. Look for patterns among the incorrect responses and decide what might be the cause(s).

Directed paraphrasing

Description: Ask students to submit a layman's "translation" of something they have just learned—geared to a specified individual or audience—to assess their ability to comprehend and transfer concepts.

What to do with it: Categorize student responses according to characteristics you feel are important. Analyze the responses both within and across categories, noting ways you could address student needs.

One-sentence summary

Description: Students summarize knowledge of a topic by constructing and submitting online a single sentence that answers the questions "Who does what to whom, when, where, how, and why?" The purpose is to require students to select only the defining features of an idea.

What to do with it: Evaluate the quality of each summary quickly and holistically. Note whether students have identified the essential concepts of the class topic and their interrelationships. Share your observations with your students in a follow up discussion to the activity.

Exam Evaluations

Description: Select a type of test that you are likely to give more than once or that has a significant impact on student performance. Create a few questions that evaluate the quality of the test. Add these questions to the exam or administer a separate, follow-up evaluation.

What to do with it: Try to distinguish student comments that address the fairness of your grading from those that address the fairness of the test as an assessment instrument. Respond to the general ideas represented by student comments.

Real-World Application

Description: After teaching about an important theory, principle, or procedure, ask students to submit at least one real-world application for what they have just learned to determine how well they can transfer their learning.

What to do with it: Quickly read once through the applications and categorize them according to their quality. Pick out a broad range of examples and present them to the class in a follow up discussion.

Student-generated test questions

Description: Allow students to write test questions and model answers for specified topics, in a format consistent with course exams. This will give students the opportunity to evaluate the course topics, reflect on what they understand, and what are good test items.

What to do with it: Make a rough tally of the questions your students propose and the topics that they cover. Evaluate the questions and use the goods ones as prompts for discussion. You may also want to revise the questions and use them on the upcoming exam.

Adapted from Angelo & Cross, Classroom Assessment techniques, 1993.

Readings: Angelo, T.A. & Cross, P.K. (1993). Classroom Assessment Techniques (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Davis, B.G. (1993). Tools for Teaching. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Teaching Presence: 3. Direct Instruction
Confirming understanding through assessment and explanatory feedback

*This section is adapted and used with permission from William Pelz.

How do I assess my students' interaction in my course?
Evaluating Interaction
Online "Discussion" or interaction is not the same as traditional "class participation." Asynchronous interaction between students and with the instructor is a complex instructional interactive process that requires thought, synthesis, analysis, substantiation, critical thinking, etc. In this environment for most courses it is a primary teaching and learning tool. It must be valued accordingly.

What criteria should I use to rate student responses and interaction in my course?
Students must demonstrate knowledge of the material - not just opinions. Each contribution made to any of the discussion or interaction thread should add something of value to the class.

1. Postings and questions should be thoughtfully developed and carefully worded. These questions should address issues and/or concepts from the reading that are particularly important.
Consider using these criteria for evaluating student interaction:
- Relevance - question must be relevant to the material in the unit of study.
- Importance - question must address a significant issue in the chapter.
- Thought provoking - question must require high-level thought, not a simple "look-up" in the textbook.
- Originality - does not ask a question that is essentially the same as a question posed by another student.
- Timely - question must be posted early in the Module so that the other students have an opportunity to respond.

2. Consider using these criteria for evaluating student interaction Responses to questions:
- Is the answer correct?
- Is the answer thorough?
- Is the answer focused - to the point?
- Is the answer well organized?
- Is the answer well written? Is the answer original?

 3. Three things determine the quality of a discussion thread:
  - The quality of the initial discussion question asked.
  - The quality of the response posts.
  - The depth of the discussion thread. Discussion "depth" is determined by how many indents there are.

Use this to help guide the creation of the criteria for rating student interaction in your course. Once you have your stated criteria, you can build an evaluation rubric for interaction in your course.

Rubrics
How do we determine the value of a response in an online course?
It is necessary to use a Discussion Rubric that spells out the criteria for student responses, so students know what is expected of them and how their performance will be evaluated. Rubrics are authentic learner-centered assessment tools that are designed using criteria that are performance based.

Advantages of using Rubrics:

- Assessments are more objective and consistent.
- Clarifies the instructor's criteria in specific terms.
- Shows students what is expected and how their work will be evaluated.
- Increases awareness in assessing peer performance.
- Provides feedback of instruction.
- Provides benchmarks.

A good Rubric....
- Measures a stated objective.
- Uses a range to rate performance.
- Have specific performance characteristics that are arranged in levels indicating the degree to which the standard has been met.

Create a Rubric

Evaluating interaction in an online course is a challenge to online instructors. How do you evaluate online interaction both quantitatively, and more importantly "qualitatively?" Recent research in the field of online learning suggests that online discussion/interaction responses that add value to a discussion fall into one or more of three categories: Social Presence, Cognitive Presence, or Teaching Presence, [based on Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2002)].

It makes sense then to create a very clear and specific rubric for your students so they understand how their interaction in your course will be evaluated.

Consider the following criteria when creating a rubric for discussion/interaction responses for your online course:

- Social Presence - to what extent does a response contribute to the class community as a whole?

- Cognitive Presence - is the information accurate? Is it backed up by cited examples? Does it raise any provocative, tangential issues?

- Teaching Presence - to what extent does a response teach others? Does it offer any information that students have not yet seen/learned?

Social Presence

Social Presence is the ability of participants in an online course to project their personal characteristics into the online community of learning - to present themselves as "real people." There are at least three forms of social presence:

- Affective - The expression of emotion, feelings, and mood.
- Interactive - Evidence that you are reading, attending, understanding, thinking about other's responses.
- Cohesive - Responses that build and sustain a sense of 'belongingness', group commitment, ore common goals and objectives.

It is important to establish a community of learning in an online course. One way to facilitate this is for the instructor and students to provide social reinforcement to each other. When you agree or disagree with what another student writes, you are providing such feedback. When you respond with an expression of emotion, that also demonstrates social presence.

The example 'Criteria' table below lists a few general characteristics of possible discussion submissions. It is the responsibility of the professor to evaluate each discussion response and award quality points accordingly. It should be clear to the students that the number of quality points awarded to each discussion post is not negotiable. In this example, responses that provide this type of feedback will receive 0,1 or 2 points, depending on the quality, extent, and frequency they occur.

For example, a student who just says "I agree" may get a point the first time, but no points subsequently.

POINTS	SOCIAL PRESENCE - CRITERIA
1-2	The post projects your personal characteristics into the community of learning - presents yourself as a "real person." Affective - The expression of emotion, feelings, and mood Interactive - Evidence that you are reading, attending, understanding, thinking about other's responses Cohesive - Responses that build and sustain a sense of belongings, group commitment, ore common goals and objectives

Cognitive Presence

Cognitive Presence is the extent to which students are able to construct and confirm meaning through sustained discourse (discussion) in a community of inquiry. Cognitive presence can be demonstrated by introducing factual, conceptual, and theoretical knowledge into the discussion. The value of such a response will depend upon the source, clarity, accuracy and comprehensiveness of the knowledge.

In this example, responses that add no academic value receive a 0 or are ungraded, while the more fact or information that the response adds to the discussion, the higher the points awarded up to a 4 point maximum.

POINTS	COGNITIVE PRESENCE - CRITERIA
0 or ungraded	Unrated response. The post adds no academic value to the discussion. No new information is presented.
1	The post contains at least one usable fact or piece of information. However, the fact or information is available from the textbook.
2	The post contains at least one usable fact or piece of information. However, the fact or information is not available from the textbook.
3	The post makes a substantial academic contribution. Material is included that is not available just by reading the textbook, and some issue or concept is clarified.
4	The post contains documented information that contributes greatly to the understanding of some issue under discussion. The new information is explained and applied such that the reader gains new insight into the material being studied.

Teaching Presence

Teaching Presence is the facilitation and direction of cognitive and social process for the realization of personally meaningful and educationally worthwhile learning outcomes. In a learner-centered teaching and learning environment teaching presence is demonstrated not only by the instructor, but also by the students.

There are two major ways that both instructors and students can add teaching presence to a discussion:

1. By facilitating the discussion:
    *   Identifying areas of agreement and disagreement
    *   Seeking to reach consensus / understanding
    *   Encouraging, acknowledging and reinforcing student contributions
    *   Setting a climate for learning
    *   Drawing in participants / prompting discussion
    *   Assessing the efficacy of the process

2. By direct instruction:
    *   Presenting content and questions
    *   Focusing the discussion
    *   Summarizing the discussion
    *   Confirming understanding
    *   Diagnosing misperceptions
    *   Injecting knowledge from diverse sources
    *   Responding to technical concerns

Keep this in mind not only for evaluating student responses, but also as guides for facilitating discussion and providing direct instruction in your course.

In this example, student responses are evaluated according to the number of instances of teaching presence present in the response.

POINTS	TEACHING PRESENCE - CRITERIA
0 or ungraded	Unrated response. The post adds no teaching presence or other to the discussion.
1	The post contains one instance of teaching presence (from the list above).
2	The post contains two instances of teaching presence (from the list above).
3	The post contains three instances of teaching presence (from the list above).
4	The post contains four or more instances of teaching presence (from the list above).

Teaching Presence: Creating and Using a Discussion Rubric

*This section is adapted and used with permission from William Pelz.

1. Create (with or w/o class collaboration) a quality-based Discussion Post Grading Rubric that considers the following two factors: The quality of the **Message** and the quality of the **Subject Line.**
 - The professor assigns the readings (or students select the readings).
 - Students post "critical thinking" discussion questions (requires training).
 - Students facilitate the ensuing asynchronous discussions (more training).
 - Students peer-evaluate the quality of the discussion posts they reply to.
 - Students self-evaluate the quality of their own discussion posts.
 - The professor evaluates the quality of every discussion post and provides ongoing or periodic feedback (constrained by LSM specific mechanisms).

2. Create a Discussion Forum Grading Scale that considers both the **quality** and the **quantity** of the student's forum submissions.

EXAMPLE:
Rule #1: **The message of your post must introduce relevant information that teaches us something new.**
- Is your message **accurate**?
- Is it **relevant** to the issue under discussion?
- Have you **taught** us anything new?
- Is your information **properly cited and/or documented**?

Rule #2: **The subject line for your post must be a complete sentence, which conveys the main teaching point of your message.**
This requirement is intended to accomplish 2 goals:
- It **requires you to think** about and clearly state the main point of your message. To do this, you must have a clear understanding of the material. (This aids in learning and memory.)
- It **provides the reader with advance information,** which is helpful in organizing and learning the content of the message. The reader should be able to determine the essence of your comment just by reading your Subject.

The Discussion Post Grading Rubric

Points	Interpretation	Grading Criteria
4	Excellent (A)	The comment is accurate, original, relevant, teaches us something new, and is well written. Four point comments add substantial teaching presence to the course, and stimulate additional thought about the issue under discussion. Documentation for factual information is provided.
3	Above Average (B)	The comment lacks at least one of the above qualities, but is above average in quality. A three-point comment makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the issue being discussed.
2	Average (C)	The comment lacks two or three of the required qualities. Comments that are based upon personal opinion or personal experience often fall within this category.
1	Minimal (D)	The comment presents little or no new information. However, one-point comments may provide important social presence and contribute to a collegial atmosphere.
0	Unacceptable (F)	The comment adds no value to the discussion.
Subject Line	No penalty	The subject field is a complete sentence and conveys the main point of the comment. The reader clearly understands the main point of the comment before reading it.
-1	Minor problem with subject line	The subject field provides key word(s) only. The reader knows the general area that the comment deals with.
-2	Major problem with subject line	The subject field provides little or no information about the comment.

The Discussion Forum Grading Scale

Forum Grade	Total Quality Points	Additional Requirement
A+	40+	At least eight 4-point ratings.
A	31-39	At least four 4-point ratings.
B	25-30	At least four 3 or 4-point ratings.
C	12-24	At least four 2, 3, or 4-point ratings.
D	6-11	None.
F	1-5	None.
0	0	None.

Activities

Online Course Activities

Continue to:

- Participate as a student in the online asynchronous discussion and activities of the online course.
- Be observant and reflect on how that online experience might inform the design of your own online course.
- Reflect on your who you are and how you teach, and what you want to do and how you want to be as an online educator.
- Consider who your students will be, what your assumptions might be about them, teaching and learning online in general, and on the online course design/development process.
- Observe some exemplar online courses to see how the instructors structured their courses, to see what learning activities the instructors designed in their courses, how they designed them, and how they evaluated their students work and performance in the course.
- Consider the options and limitations in the online teaching and learning environment.
- Explore the internet for resource to enhance and support your learning activities and the design of your course. For example:
  -Check with your textbook publisher to see what companion online activities and resources they may offer.
  -Go to http://www.merlot.org. Become a member and browse the resources in your discipline to see if there are any learning objects or resources that you might use to supplement or enhance your course learning activities.
  - For information and help creating rubrics for your online course.
    - https://groups.diigo.com/group/GMU-online-faculty-resources/content/tag/rubrics

Online Course Development Activities

- Create the Learning Activities for each of your course modules using your course development tool.
- Design and organize the structure of the learning activities for your course.
- Determine how you will facilitate discourse and interaction in your course.
- Decide how you will confirm understanding, provide feedback and evaluate your students' work and performance in your course.
- Design rubrics to evaluate interaction in your online course.
- Check with your institution, department, instructional technology support center for any assistance, resources, or training they may offer.

Review

What you did and what is next

In the fourth step you:

- Reviewed best practices and used/adapted them to create your Online Course Learning Activity documents in your course development tool.
- Learned to edit and revise the documents in your course development tool.
- Became familiar with your online course interface.
- Explored online resources to enhance your course and learning activities.
- Incorporated best practices to enhance the sense of class community in your online course.
- Incorporated best practices to enhance online "Teaching Presence" in your course and used the three indicators of Teaching Presence to inform the design choices and decisions in the design of your online learning activities and how you will assess and evaluate learning in your online course.

You are now ready to move on to the next step: 5. Refine!

5. Refine

Designing an Online Course and Becoming an Online Educator Manual

The purpose of this Step in your Online Course Design Process is to:

- Finalize the design of your online course.

In this step you will:
Use checklists to review and revise your online course modules.

"Preflight" your online course as a whole by targeting three levels of review/revisions:
- Student perspective
- Structural (instructional design) elements of your course
- Mechanics of your course.

Make refinements and finalize your course design.

Overview of Step Five: Refine

Getting outside feedback and making revisions

This step is about reviewing, getting feedback, and making the final revisions to your course. In addition to doing your own walk-through, use the checklists provided to review, revise, and finalize your course.

Having someone with a fresh perspective review your course is an excellent way to refine your materials. You may also want to get a colleague or test student to review your course from the web and give you additional feedback. You should ask for feedback on structure, sequence, pacing, amount of work required, presentation, instructions, and design of learning activities in the online environment.

Based on your own review and any other the feedback you get, you will make the final revisions to your course.

Editing, evaluation, and revision during the development phase of your course

An integral part of the design stage of your course development process is the evaluation and revision of your course modules as you develop them. If possible, and time permits, you may want to have an outside reviewer such as colleague expert in the field, and/or an instructional designer review your course. They can give you very valuable feedback about issues such as content accuracy, technical quality and functionality, user acceptability and usability, and issues associated with actually implementing and using the instruction.

Whether you use a reviewer, or not, it is important for you to evaluate and revise or refine the structure, materials, and activities you are designing during the development phase of your course. The checklists in this handbook have been designed to help you evaluate, review, and pinpoint areas in your course in need of revision or further development. Any reviews you do of your course should be done from the web. Review the instructions in Step 4 on how to preview your course from the web and on the pages that follow you will find some checklists to help you or your external reviewers with your formative evaluations.

IMPORTANT: One of the main differences between teaching online and teaching in a traditional classroom is that it is essentially text-based and that all your course content, instructional materials, and learning activities (for both online and non-online activities) must be completely planned, designed, and laid out prior to the first day of class. Though this may make you feel initially constrained, paradoxically this will give you freedom and flexibility when you move to the delivery phase of teaching and managing your course. For example, if your course material requires flexibility, as in a Current Events course, you must plan for it and build it into the design of the course to make sure that the technology will function as planned and to have a consistent and well organized environment for your students so that they feel comfortable, and well-oriented to your course, the structure of the material presented, the scope of the course, the tasks and assignments involved, the environment, etc. It is not advised to attempt to develop new sections of a course and deliver portions of your course concurrently.

It is also very important to note that during the design and development phases of your course you can always change your mind, edit, add to, restructure, redesign and change things. However, once you move to the delivery phase and changes you make should be minor content changes. Do not attempt to redesign or make major design changes to the structure and function of your course as you are teaching it.

Checklist: Do a Module Walk-Through

You can use this checklist formatively, that is, as a guide during the development of your modules. The items on this checklist represent best practices that can help you define and refine the elements of your online course and learning activities. As you complete the modules in your course, use this checklist to review and then revise each module of your course. To use the checklist, read through a module from the beginning, imagining that you are a student seeing the materials for the first time. (You can also give this checklist to an external reviewer.)

Information

☐ From the Module overview do you know what kinds of activities you will be doing?

☐ Do you know what to do first?

☐ Do you know how long the Module should take to complete?

☐ Do you know when your assignments are due?

☐ Are there clear instructions for every activity?

☐ Do you know how you will be evaluated on those assignments?

Organization

☐ Are the materials logically and sequentially organized?

☐ Do you have a consistent Module framework across modules, sections and documents?

☐ Is the sequence of documents within each Module logical and clear?

☐ Are the Module titles meaningful and engaging?

☐ Do Module and page titles convey information **about** the activity or content, and function as advanced organizers for the course?

Presentation

☐ Are the pages hard to read in form or content?

☐ Content is presented in an effective and engaging manner?

☐ Do the graphics make the instructional point?

Tone

☐ Is the tone of the course personal, interesting, and inviting?

☐ Is the instructor speaking directly to me, i.e., in first or third person?

☐ Do you get the sense that you are in a class community?

☐ Does the instructor seem accessible and interested?

Complete or Revise your course to address the list items not checked.

Checklist: Finalize your Modules

The items on this checklist represent best practices that can help you define and refine the elements of your online course and learning activities.

Use this checklist to finalize each of your Modules. Once you have revised a module using the Module Walk-through Checklist, use this checklist as your final step.

Check the following:

Accuracy

☐ Did you proof read each document in the module?

☐ Did you spell check each document?

Consistency

☐ Are the titles of your modules clear, simple, meaningful and logical?

☐ Do any sub section titles contribute to the organizational framework of the module in a meaningful or instructional way?

☐ Do your document titles convey instructional or content information?

☐ Did you maintain a consistent voice?

☐ Do you speak directly to one student?

☐ Have you used fonts, font sizes, and color constantly on all documents?

☐ Did you use the same font and size for your body copy?

Page layout

☐ Do you break up and organize long documents?

☐ Are there any documents that are too short?

☐ Do you break up longer text with headlines and sub heads to make it visually clearer?

☐ Did you use color and graphics purposefully?

Functionality

☐ Whenever you ask the student to do something, do you provide clear and complete instructions?

☐ Did you clearly set up the expectations for participation for each of your types of learning activities?

☐ Do all forms, links, and buttons act as planned?

☐ Test each link from the web. Do all links work?

Complete or Revise your course to address the list items not checked.

Checklist: Walk through your online course as a student and Revise

The items on this checklist represent best practices that can help you define and refine the elements of your online course and learning activities. Use the checklist below to do a walk-through of your. Put yourself in the student's place and read each document in your course from that perspective. Start at the beginning and work your way sequentially through your course the way a student would. Remember to assume the role and perspective of the student and make note of any changes you would like to make.

Check the following:

General:

☐ Can you tell what the course is and whom the instructor is from the course home page?

☐ Do you know specifically where to begin/what to do first?

☐ Are you provided with detailed course information documents that provide orientation and syllabus information?

☐ Are you welcomed to the course by your instructor?

☐ Are you provided with a course schedule?

☐ Are important course dates clear? (Course start and end date, assignment due dates, etc.)

☐ Are you provided with a class community area in the course?

☐ Do you have an ice breaking activity to start the course?

☐ Do you know specifically what is expected of you?

☐ Do you know specifically what you can expect from your instructor?

☐ Does the course provide you with clear measurable course learning objectives?

☐ Does the course provide you with overviews of each module?

☐ Do you know how you will be evaluated?

☐ Do you know how to contact your instructor?

☐ Do you know how to ask a question and/or get help?

☐ Do you know how to report a bug or a technical problem with the course?

☐ I have the opportunity to interact, collaborate and/or reflect on my learning?

For each assignment or learning activity:

☐ Is it clear when each assignment is due?

☐ Is it clear exactly what the you should do or produce?

☐ Is it clear how to complete and where to submit assignments?

☐ Is it clear if the completed assignment will be public or private?

☐ Is it clear when and how it will be evaluated?

☐ Are there clear instructions on each document on what to do, where to go, or what the student should do next or prior to each learning activity?

☐ Are there notes of encouragement or milestones written into the learning activity instructions when appropriate?

Discussions/Interactions:

☐ Does the initial discussion document adequately set up the topic and expectations for the interaction?

☐ Is the time frame for the discussion clearly communicated?

☐ Are the length and nature of the responses clearly communicated?

☐ Do the instructions state whether you should respond to the main topic, responses, or both?

☐ Do you know how your participation in the discussion will be evaluated?

Wrap up**:**

☐ Do you know how and when you will receive your grades?

☐ Do you have an activity/activities to bring closure to the course?

☐ Do you have a way to provide feedback to the instructor on your experience in the course, the design of the course, etc.

Complete or Revise your course to address the list items not checked.

Checklist: Peer Review Your Online Course

Below is a checklist that can be used by an external, or peer reviewer to finalize the course before it goes live. Print out the main view of the course. Or you can use this yourself to check your course **from the perspective of a student.**

Check for glaring omissions or errors. Be sure to use student level access to be sure you see it from the perspective of the student.

Check the following:

☐ Verify the instructor's name, course name, and institution is on course home page (spelling).

Read and Proof Course Information Area and Documents.

☐ Welcome, Contact information, How you will be Evaluated, My Expectations, Course Schedule, Your Next Steps;

☐ Check to be sure there are no assignments or discussion in the course information area. Assignments should be moved to the first course module. The course info. area is to present information only.

☐ Every course learning activity addresses a stated course learning objective.

☐ Every objective has a corresponding learning activity.

☐ Every learning activity has a corresponding mechanism to provide feedback/assessment.

☐ "Your Next Steps" document: is it clear, complete, and tells where to go?

Check "Other" Course Documents/Areas:

☐ Does the instructor have a profile?

☐ Have they included a picture or avatar?

☐ Has the instructor written an introduction to the bulletin board?

☐ Do they have an announcement posted?

☐ Are there model documents provided for assignments and interactions?

☐ Are rubrics used?

☐ No blank or incomplete documents (especially in the Course Information area and in modules 1-3)!

Verify the Views of the Course:

☐ Check numbering if any, order, etc.

☐ Do the modules, documents, and course areas that should be visible to students, show?

☐ If the instructor is opening and closing course sections/assignments automatically, make sure that selected modules intended are actual displaying for students, and that the dates set to open and close are correct.

Read through the first 3 Modules:

☐ Note glaring errors of spelling or formatting.

☐ Check all URLs and links.

☐ When any element is referred to, can you find it (does the instructor use the exact subject title, link/button name, etc.?)

☐ Is it clear on all activities how a student can ask a question?

Proof Modules 1-3

☐ Fonts are standard consistent and readable point sizes for body/heads - 14/16 or 14/18 points

☐ Bold or italic are used for emphasis rather than underline.

☐   Text colors are consistent and appropriate and readable online.

☐   There are no glaring spelling or formatting problems.

Check First Module

☐   Contains an ice breaking activity. For example a self-test or discussion, or assignment. NOTE: If course uses attachments suggest that faculty have students test this out in a trial activity so they can work it out before the activity counts.

☐   Gives an overview of the course.

☐   Clearly tells students what to do/expect, step by step.

First Discussion/Interaction Assignment

☐   The discussion/interaction activity document specifies instructions for students: what to do, how to do it, when it is due, what requirements are, and how it will be evaluated.

☐   The discussion/interaction activity itself has the correct functionality for completing/submitting the assignment, or there are instructions on how to submit the work.

☐   Check the first discussion/interaction assignment to see if it all works as intended.

☐   Group activities or collaborations (if any) are clearly explained.

First Written Assignment

☐   The written assignment activity document specifies instructions for students: what to do, how to do it, when it is due, what requirements are, and how it will be evaluated.

☐   The written assignment activity itself has the correct functionality for completing/submitting the assignment, or there are instructions on how to submit the work.

☐   Check the first written assignment to see if it all works as intended.

Complete or Revise your course to address the list items not checked.

Activities

Online Course Activities

- Participate as a student in the online asynchronous discussion and activities of the online course.
- Be observant and reflect on how that online experience might inform the design of your own online course.
- Reflect on your who you are and how you teach, and what you want to do and how you want to be as an online educator.
- Consider who your students will be, what your assumptions might be about them, teaching and learning online in general, and on the online course design/development process.
- Consider the options and limitations in the online teaching and learning environment.

Online Course Development Activities

- Review your course and make the necessary refinements to the structure, instructional documents, content, learning activities, etc.
- Check with your institution, department, instructional technology support center for any assistance, resources, or training they may offer.

Review

What you did and what is next

In the fifth step you:

- Used best practice checklists to review, revise, finalize your online course.
- Had your course reviewed by a peer, or an instructional designer.
- Became more familiar with your online course interface.

You are now ready to move on to the next step: 6. Implement!

6. Implement

Designing an Online Course and Becoming an Online Educator Manual

The purposes of this Step in your Online Course Design Process are to:

- Develop and practice course management skills.

- Plan for the first couple of weeks of your online course.

In this step you will:
Learn how to manage your course using the features of your course development tool.

Prepare to teach your course.

Practice the skills you will be using to teach and manage your online course.

Overview of Step Six: Implement

Getting ready to teach your course

This step marks the transition from the development phase of your course in your course development tool to the delivery phase. There are features in your course development tool designed for teaching and managing your course that you have not used during the development phase. They may include such features as:

- Ways to evaluate your students.
- Ways to evaluate and grade individual assignments.
- Ways to communicate privately and publicly with your students.
- Ways to make announcements.
- Ways to send group messages.
- Ways to see who has done what and how often.
- Ways to respond, manage, or participate in the various activities and interactions you design into your course, etc.

In this step we will review:

1. What you need to do before your course starts.
2. How to manage your course using your course development tool.
3. Teaching tips and troubleshooting suggestions.

Things to think about when teaching in an online environment

When teaching in an online environment there are several things you need to know. The answers to these questions will help you plan your course of action.

It is all in the planning:

- How will you get help if you need it?

- What will you do if your hardware malfunctions?

- Do you have a back up copy of your course?

- Will it be backed up regularly during the delivery phase?

- What will you do if your software malfunctions?

- What will you do if the network is down?

- How will your students enroll and get course access?

- When will your course be available to your students?

- What are the start and end dates for your course?

- What is the census date for your course?

- What are your institution or departmental policies regarding online courses?

- How will you respond to students that contact you with technology questions?

- How will students get help if they need it?

- What will you do about students that start late?

- Is cross-platform compatibility an issue for activities in your online course?

- How will you accommodate students with disabilities or special needs?

- How will you deal with students who do not complete the course within that allotted time frame (incompletes)?

Best Practices
Tips on getting off to a good start!

Your students will need to register, enroll, and then actually enter your course. Depending on the nature of your course or program and student services may be provided, or you may have to deal with how your students will know what to do, when, and how to access your course.

No matter what your situation, you should NOT expect to see all your students arrive in your course on the first day of the term. Problems with access, awareness, hardware, software, the Internet, connections, the phone/modem, the network, registration/enrollment, account creation, and so on will inevitably occur for your students.

At the beginning of the semester, encourage ALL of your students to get familiar with the specific learning management system environment for your course. Have a few warm up activities designed to get every one to know each other and to practice using the features specific to your online course environment. This will not only have them practice doing the kind of things they will be doing in your course, but can be designed to introduce the course and begin to support the development of a sense of class community.

Getting Started

Post an "ice breaker" discussion in the first module. Using the mechanisms for conducting an online discussion in your course, ask them why they took the course, what they know about the topic, what expectations they have, one thing they really hope to learn, etc. This will help everyone get to know each other, you can gain insight into prior knowledge and expectations, and you can practice and model a good online discussion, and students who enroll late, or have technical difficulties, will not be so far behind.

Consider creating a pre-prepared welcome email message that you can forward to students as they appear in your course over the course of the first week.

Consider sending out an introductory letter to your students that specifies the first off line reading assignments for the first couple of weeks. If they have technical problems they can do the initial reading, know what they should be preparing, and not be so far behind when they finally get online. You may also want to design the activities in your course for the first couple of weeks with this in mind.

Consider using a self-test type feature in your course development tool the first week of class as a comprehension check on the course information documents for your course. This can make sure that students read that information and eliminate questions later on in the course. It also introduces the testing capability to students in a less threatening way.

Be responsive

You should log in on a scheduled basis - especially at the beginning of the semester. Students will be wondering "who is out there" and you can help them by responding right away.

Respond to all student email immediately. Email should only be used for private communication between student and instructor. If the message is not private in nature and better posted as question or as a Bulletin Board item, ask the student to post it in the appropriate place in the course.

Check for questions in your course regularly (especially during the first few weeks) and respond immediately to student queries. Direct technical problems to the technical helpdesk if you have one.

Grade and return evaluated assignments to students as quickly as you can. Give students feedback on

their performance and participation in your course early with suggestions on how to improve meeting your expectations.

If you experience difficulties . . .
Contact your help source immediately, if you believe something is not working in your course, or if you notice some unexpected change.

Course management tips to keep students engaged
Course Management Best Practices

- Use the features or options in your course management tool to make announcements and post bulletin board items.

- Check your course frequently, especially in the beginning. Respond to questions or discussion as appropriate and immediately. This gives your students a sense of security and lets them know everything is functioning correctly.

- Have all students create personal profile documents as a means of introducing themselves to you and the class. Encourage them to share photos and Internet resources, either in the profile, or in other course areas.

- Check for and resolve technical, or user problems in both your, and student documents.

- Check to see that students are responding in the appropriate locations in the course. If you see a problem, create an announcement to address the issue, or provide immediate corrective feedback to the students.

- Check for empty student documents created by accident. Your students may not be able to delete their own documents, so you should delete empty, or duplicate documents.

- In order to keep the class moving - make sure that there is something "new" for the students at least every 2-3 days. If students are not moving the discussion along, you might comment on existing responses, and invite students to respond again. Or, put a note in the course announcements area encouraging students to participate. If some students continue to remain silent, consider sending them a "prodding" email message. (Perhaps ask if there is anything preventing them from participating at the moment, e.g., a trip, illness, technical difficulties etc.)

- Call on students by name.

- Be responsive.

- Create as many possibilities for student interaction as you can. Encouragement rather than nagging is more effective to increase participation.

Best Practices: You can support student success in your online course:
1. Provide frequent, timely, helpful, and positive feedback.
2. Pinpoint and positively call out specific things in student work.
3. Be helpful and encourage students to do the right thing.
4. Raise questions that make student really examine their ideas and what they are studying.
5. Be accessible.
6. Be present.
7. Be timely in your interactions and with your feedback.
8. Offer supportive comments, compliments, and encouragements.
9. Pose challenging questions.
10. Encourage self-reflection and evaluation.
11. Encourage peer evaluation.
12. Provide opportunities for students to make choices in course assignments that allow them to relate them to their real lives or to use their skills and interests.
13. Encourage high levels of helpful interaction between students.
14. Encourage peer support and peer interaction and collaboration in the course to address and alleviate the sense of isolation online students feel.
15. Maintain high expectations and communicate them to students.
16. Provide a course schedule with assignments and due dates to make planning and time management easier.
17. Use the grade book make student self-monitoring of progress in the course easier.
18. Identify students at risk and take preventive action.
19. Provide exemplar/model assignments.
20. Create an environment where students feel they have access to you, their classmates, resources, and help - and where their questions can get answered.
21. Recognize and acknowledge student success, effort, and accomplishments with course work, life challenges, and with technology used in the course.
22. Draw student attention to how the skills they develop in your course and the material they learn will be useful in their real life and will help them be successful in the future.
23. Encourage and reinforce the need for managing time well.
24. Ask students for clarification to prevent misunderstanding.
25. Provide opportunities and online course space for non-course related interactions between students.
26. Make sure students know how to get technical help. Recommend that they get help immediately and early.
27. Provide students with information on tutoring services, or where students can go to get help with their writing (campus writing center).
28. Reassure students that they can be successful in your online course and give them tips on how (for example, collect stories from and suggestions from past students in the form of advice for future student).

Things to consider:

1. Consider participation by students during the first two - three weeks of the term who don't necessarily end up enrolled in your course. Students will have access to the courses "they say" they are enrolled in. Verification of enrollments will be made based on final course rosters from your campus, usually about the third week of the term. Consider putting a "reminder" message about registration on your course map, which identifies the deadline for registration at your campus, and possibly provide your campus Registrar's Office telephone number for questions.

2. Consider what you will do with "late starters." Be prepared to tell them where to start and how to catch up (e.g., Consider alternate assignments such as summarizing closed discussions rather than trying to go back and participate).

3. Make your first written or graded assignment one that can be done independently of the second so that late starters can jump in to the current topic while simultaneously catching up. Or, prepare alternative assignments for late starters.

4. Verify students logging on against your official course roster. Follow up with students who have not participated by the end of the first week of class.

5. Communicate with your Help Sources concerning anything that seems out of order in your course, particularly in the first 3 weeks.

6. Call your Help Sources any time you or your students cannot access your course, or are experiencing problems that prevent normal participation.

7. Don't become a helpdesk for your students. If your institution offers technical support for students, use it. While it may be tempting to answer their questions, this is not the best use of your time and blurs boundaries for distance students. Even if you know the answer, refer *non-course-related questions* to the proper source. This will help students understand your role as professor more clearly.

8. Encourage public posting of questions or comments; discourage private communications/email, which can add significantly to your workload. Train students early to use areas and features of your course for communications. It is more efficient to answer a question once in a public place. When a student emails you with such a question, you might respond, "This is a good question. Would you mind if I posted your message?" or "Would you be willing to post your message, so that other students can see the answer?"

9. Set and maintain a regular log on schedule. You should log in on a scheduled basis - especially at the beginning of the semester. Students will be wondering "who is out there" and you can help them by responding.

10. Don't worry. Breathe. You can do this! It will be okay!

Keep notes on any changes you want to make to your course

In anticipation of this evaluation and revision stage of your course development process, you should keep notes during the teaching phase of your course. If your course development tool allows, create a private/hidden document within your course to keep any notes, reminders, changes you plan, directly in the course itself. Notes on any issues or problems that emerge for you as you teach, or that are commented on by students can help in the evaluation and revision of your course. As you teach think about:

- What is working?
- What isn't? Why?
- What could be improved? How?

Thoughts, general or specific, on the design, structure, pacing, and/or sequencing of the course, or of any of your activities should be documented for future reference. Use whatever mechanism is available to you in your course development tool to create and save a private document within your to keep a running note of comments, thoughts, plans, revisions for your course, activities, or the environment.

Note: In addition, you may consider creating a similar "to do" document to track your thoughts and plans during the development phase of your course.

Checklist: Final Revisions

Use the checklist below to do a final review of your online course. This should be your very last review and revision.

Check the following:

☐   Proofread the entire course.

☐   Verify consistency of font, font size, and color in all documents.

☐   Spell check every document.

☐   Print all documents intended for printing to make sure they look OK.

☐   Test links to make sure they act as planned.

☐   Test each activity/assignment as a student to make sure they work as planned.

☐   Did you create a profile for yourself?

☐   Did you create a "welcome" announcement for your students?

☐   Did you post something in the Bulletin Board?

Complete or Revise your course to address the list items checked.

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Activities

Online Course Activities

- Participate as a student in the online asynchronous discussion and activities of the online course.
- Be observant and reflect on how that online experience might inform the design of your own online course.
- Reflect on your who you are and how you teach, and what you want to do and how you want to be as an online educator.
- Consider who your students will be, what your assumptions might be about them, teaching and learning online in general, and on the online course design/development process.
- Consider the options and limitations in the online teaching and learning environment.

Online Course Development Activities

- Review your course and make the necessary refinements to the structure, instructional documents, content, learning activities, etc.

- Thoroughly review the first 3 modules of your course to be sure they are ready for students.

- Prepare for each activity as much in advance as possible.

- Practice the skills you will be using to teach and manage your online course.

- Created a private document in your course to keep track of ideas for improvements, changes, and revision to your course as you taught it.

- Check with your institution, department, instructional technology support center for any assistance, resources, or training they may offer.

Review

What you did and what is next

In the sixth step you:

- Learned how to manage your course.
- Created or put the finishing touches on class community elements, such as your own personal profile, your introduction, the announcement, bulletin board, etc.
- Practiced the skills you will use to teach and manage your online course.
- Reviewed best practices and strategies for effective course management.

You are now ready to teach your course!

But you are not done yet!

Don't forget, after you have piloted your course, the last step in you course development process will be to move on to the next step: 7. Evolve.

7. Evolve

Designing an Online Course and Becoming an Online Educator Manual

The purposes of this Step in your Online Course Design Process are to:

- Plan a review and evaluation of your online course.
- Document the revisions you intend to make to your online course.
- Identify those things that you will change or improve in the next iteration of the online course.

In this step you will:

As you teach the course create a private document in your online course to document and keep track of any ideas for improvements, changes, and/or revisions.

Implement a student evaluation as a culminating activity in your course for students, and after the course ends review this student feedback.

Once the course is over, implement your evaluation and review plan: identify the changes and redesign necessary, and make the necessary revisions to prepare the course for the next time.

Overview of Step Seven: Evolve

Once you have taught your course, you will be expected to review, evaluate, and ultimately to revise your course as the last step in your Course Development Process.

For the purpose of assessing your course you should consider:
- What worked?
- What didn't? Why?
- What could be improved? How?

Once you conclude the delivery phase you can use this information to review, evaluate, and document the revisions you want to make to your course in anticipation of the next time you teach it.

Things to think about when ending an online course
- How will you end the course?
- Will you send a group "good-by" email or post something in your course?
- Will you send students their final grades via email? Is there an online mechanism for this built in to your course? Will the students get their grades from your institution via some other mechanism?
- What is the end date for your course?
- How will you deal with students who do not complete the course on time?
- Do you want to survey your students for feedback?
- Does your institution require and implement a course evaluation?
- Have you made/kept a copy of your course for yourself?

Evaluate your course

This is the last step in your online course development process. Once you conclude the teaching phase of your course, you should evaluate the course and your experience. Review any notes you made to yourself as you taught and review student feedback to assess the necessary improvements and revisions to the structure or activities in your course.

You may want to think about:
- What worked?
- What didn't? Why?
- What could be improved? How?
- Were your discussions successful?
- Were your assignments and other activities successful?
- Did you get through all the modules in the course?
- Did most students complete the course?
- How was the workload for you and for your students? Were you able to keep up?
- Was there anything missing?
- Were there any points in the course where you noticed that students did not do an activity, or did not understand the activity?

You may want to ask a colleague or instructional designer to do a review of your course after it has concluded. You can use the checklists found in Step 5 again to guide or focus summative evaluations of your course materials, interactions, and activities.

If you conducted a culminating activity in your course as recommended, or a midterm feedback forum, review these student comments as part of the evaluation and revision planning process for your course. In addition, look at the types of questions your students had and where they had them. Activities,

assignments, and areas in your course that did not go as expected or intended may indicate a need for revision. If there was any apparent confusion or a bunch of questions about the same thing - that would most likely indicate that more instructions, clearer instructions, or details are necessary.

Best Practices: Teaching Presence and Class Community: Reflection, Evaluation, & Revision

The purpose of this step in the process is to provide you as the instructor with the opportunity to reflect upon and evaluate your course and online teaching and learning experiences.

Based on your experiences so far, you may have some indication of what you feel may need improvement in your online course. No matter what, there are always ways to improve your online teaching and learning environment. Keep in mind that evaluation and revision of your online course is an ongoing process. You may want to consult with an instructional designer if one is available to you for any revisions/changes to your course.

Our best practices show that high levels of "Teaching Presence" (Anderson, 2001) - effective instructional design and organization, facilitation of productive discourse and direct instruction - positively and significantly influence the satisfaction and reported learning of online students.

There is also evidence to suggest that a strong sense of community in the classroom helps reduce student feelings of isolation and "burnout" associated with higher attrition levels in both classroom-based and distance learning. A positive sense of community also promotes the likelihood of student support and information flow, commitment to group goals, cooperation among members and satisfaction with group processes and efforts [e.g. Rovai (2002)].

Teaching Presence is the facilitation and direction of cognitive and social processes for the realization of personally meaningful and educationally worthwhile learning outcomes. In a learner-centered teaching and learning environment teaching presence is demonstrated not only by the instructor, but also by the students.

Classroom Community is comprised of various elements of community including trust, spirit, connectedness, belonging, membership, various forms of support, and the rich, and productive milieu that communities of practice can engender for teaching and learning.

Class community and teaching presence can be expressed in an online course in the following ways:
1. Class Community (by Instructor & Students)
   Connectedness
   Building social/group spirit
   Establishing trust

   Learning
   Engaging in supportive contact and interaction
   Sharing educational expectations

2. Instructional Design and Organization (by Instructor)
   Setting the curriculum
   Designing methods
   Establishing time parameters
   Utilizing the medium effectively
   Establishing Netiquette

3. Facilitating Discourse/Interaction (by Instructor & Students)
   Identifying areas of agreement/disagreement
   Seeking to reach consensus
   Reinforce student contributions

Setting climate for learning
Drawing in participants, prompting discussion/interaction
Assessing the efficacy of the process

4. Direct Instruction (by Instructor & Students)
Present content/Questions
Focus the discussion on specific issues
Confirm understanding
Diagnose misconceptions
Inject knowledge from diverse sources

An online survey has been designed to assist you to self-assess based on the indicators of teaching presence, to help you identify areas in your course that you can target for improvement: Teaching Presence Survey: http://sln.suny.edu/teachingsurvey/

This online faculty self-assessment is a simple survey. You are asked to self-assess on 20 specific indicators of teaching presence from the CoI model and the development of online class community. It generates a report giving the you a numerical score for each indicator that corresponds to a key of score ranges. You can then see, based on your own self-evaluation, what specific areas in the online course need (1) redesign, (2) need some improvement, or (3) effectively demonstrate class community and teaching presence and need no improvement.

You can then use the results independently to update your online course in preparation for the next delivery, or you can use it with an instructional designer, to pinpoint areas in a course that could be improved, and work together to make the indicated improvements.

A companion to the survey (appended below) provides examples of the indicators, and suggestions that you can use to make improvements in those areas where your self-assessment indicated you needed some improvement.

There is a relationship between teaching presence and the development of community in online learning environments - that courses characterized by effective teaching presence are more likely to develop a stronger sense of community on the part of students.

If you feel that the class community elements in your course need improvement, review the subcategories of the class community section below and the examples presented as suggestions, alternatives, and places in your course to revise.

Review the Class Community and Teaching Presence indicators, strategies, and suggestions detailed below and consider how they might be applied to making improvements in the revisions to your online course.

INDICATOR	STRATEGIES	SUGGESTIONS
Connectedness:		
Building social/group spirit:	Personal information about yourself, including a photo, audio, video, etc.	Model expected student behaviors in the introductory activities in your course, in your initial communications, and with your own profile.
	"Student Lounge", "Social Cafe", etc.	Create a module exclusively for social contact/interaction/exchanges between students.
		Create a section in each module where students are encouraged to help each other by answering each other's questions.
		Encourage students to use a "Bulletin Board" for interaction unrelated to course content.
	Phone, chat, Skype, face-to-face, snail mail to students before the opening of a course.	Consider offline or synchronous contact with students when appropriate.
		Ask students for help in improving the course; implement a midterm course review, What can be improved? And then make one of their suggested changes in the course for the remainder of the term.
Establishing trust:	Study Groups, Peer Evaluations.	Provide opportunities and recognition for students to support each other.
	Student Journals, Private Communications, Talk with the Professor, question areas.	Respond promptly to student concerns.
		Provide clear guidelines for activities in which students interact with each other that encourage them to communicate openly, fairly, and empathetically.
	Student-led discussions, Pairing students, small groups.	Create learning activities for which students must rely on each other.
	Brainstorming activities, chain activity.	Use the first and third person narrative voice as much as possible.

Engaging in supportive contact and interaction:	Problem-based activities, Case Studies, Debates.	Establish cooperative learning activities that foster student/student interaction and group learning.
		Create written assignments that are viewable by the class. Encourage students to comment, peer assess, or provide feedback for each other.
	Web quest, small group discussions or projects that open to the whole class after they are complete.	Create a learning activity for which students discover something as a group. As examples - problem-based activities or case studies for small groups of students.
		Provide prompt feedback and evaluation of student performance.
		Provide students with options for how they make their thinking and learning visible to you and to the class. Allow them choices in how they can demonstrate their learning.
		Encourage students to share and combine their research efforts.
		Encourage students to respond to each other in the **A**sk a Question area.
Sharing educational expectations:	Rubrics, Instructions for Discussion.	Establish Netiquette.
		Clarify expectations in the Course Information documents.
	My Expectations, Course Objectives, How You Will Be Evaluated.	
		Encourage students to evaluate their experience in your course.
	Mid-semester Course Evaluations, Culminating Activity, Suggestion Box/Gripe fest.	Use course Announcements and other LMS communication tools to communicate expectations.
	Student-led discussions, Peer Reviews, student presentations.	Provide opportunities for students to learn from each other.

If you feel that the design and organization of your course needs improvement, review the subcategories of the design and organization section below and the examples presented as suggestions, alternatives, and places in your course to revise.

Instructional Design and Organization

INDICATOR	STRATEGIES	SUGGESTIONS
Building curriculum materials		Subdocuments, documents, sections; importing text, graphics; file attachments; tables; using HTML; links.
Integrating external learning objects		MERLOT, OER, YouTube, etc. Check online resources available to you via your textbook publisher. Many textbooks now have companion websites with simulations, self tests, quizzes, related links, etc.
Designing methods: instructional strategies that help structure learning activities	I am going to divide you into groups, and you will debate...	Written Assignment Area; Discussion Area; Adding an Online Journal section or module; cooperative and collaborative activities; group papers; individual project; structured/virtual seminar; role plays & simulations; In Basket (Manager's Box); Committee Hearing; skits; management lab (corporate business); treasure hunt; web quest; Sam's Café (philosophical perspectives); case study; Preceptor's/Mentor's Module; internships; learning contract. *Resources:* MERLOT; course examples; excerpted examples, etc.
Establishing time parameters	Please post a message by Friday...	Schedule/calendar function; Announcements; linking to Course Calendar.
Utilizing the medium effectively		Using the right form for the activity. Embedding rather than linking. Understanding how things work and look from the student perspective. Different course areas and views; handling old courses & email lists; Private/Public Communications; clear directions & navigational cues/signposts.
Establishing Netiquette	Keep your messages short	Course Information; Instructions for Discussion document; My Expectations.

If you feel that facilitating discourse or interaction your course needs improvement, review the subcategories of the facilitating discourse/interaction section below and the examples presented as suggestions, alternatives and places in your course to revise.

Facilitating Discourse/Interaction

INDICATOR	STRATEGIES	SUGGESTIONS
Identifying areas of agreement and disagreement	Joe, Mary has provided a compelling counter example to your hypothesis. Would you care to respond?	Debating activities; interviews.
Seeking to reach consensus/understanding	I think Joe and Mary are saying essentially the same thing.	Group product; group/shared decision making; inter-community networking (Guest Speaker); polling/survey/balloting; small group discussions; small working groups; team presentations.
Encouraging, acknowledging, and reinforcing student contributions	Thank you, Jo, for your insightful comments.	Students Helping Students/Peer Assistance; Student-led discussion.
Setting climate for learning	Don't feel self-conscious about 'thinking out loud' in this forum. This is a place to try out ideas after all.	Speaker's Bureau (guest lecturers); learning partnerships; peer learning groups; learning circles; study groups/pairs; Online Classroom.
Drawing in participants, prompting discussion	Any thoughts on this issue? Anyone care to comment? Mary, I would like you to dig deeper into your assertion and support it with current credible research.	Free flow discussion; open-ended or thought-provoking questions; brain storming/brainwriting; free association; In the Hot Seat; The Shot Gun; informal socializing: the online café, online games & simulations (management laboratory; U.N. session); Ice Breaker activities (learning styles quiz); Panel Discussion; Round Table Discussion; symposium; student moderators; Bulletin Board; Online Office Hours; participate wisely
Assessing the efficacy of the process	I think we are getting a little off track here…	Suggestion Box; Culminating Activity; small groups;

If you feel that direct instruction your course needs improvement, review the subcategories of the direct instruction section below and the examples presented as suggestions, alternatives and places in your course to revise.

Direct Instruction

INDICATOR	STRATEGIES	SUGGESTIONS
Presenting content and questions	Bates says.... what do you think?	Virtual lectures; Peer Assistance; discussion & assignment documents.
Focusing the discussion or directing the activity	Question your assumptions! I would ask you to consider...	Virtual seminar; student-led discussion; group spokesperson or leader.
Summarizing the discussion or results of an activity	The original question was... Joe said... Mary said... we concluded that... we still haven't addressed...	Small group reporting.
Confirm understanding through assessment and explanatory feedback	You're close, but you didn't account for ... this is important because...	Discussion rating; using rubrics; stand-alone evaluations; feedback module; test & evaluation forms.
Diagnosing misconceptions	Remember, Sandy is speaking from an administrative perspective, so be careful when you say...

What does the research say about learning styles? | Talk with Professor; Peer Assistance; Learning Journal; Question Area; Bulletin Board. |
| Injecting knowledge from diverse sources | I was at a conference with George once, and he said... You can find the proceedings from the conference at http://www... | Online Library Sources, Shared References; Virtual Library/Resources; collective database; Guest Speakers; MERLOT |
| Responding to technical questions | If you want to include a link in your message you have to... | Your Institutional Help Sources if any, e.g., HelpDesk, online resources, etc. |

Revise your course

After your course review, decide on the changes you will make, and document those changes in your private Course Revisions document.

When your course is over, your online course shell complete with all student documents becomes a historical record and artifact of your course and the semester. Consider archiving a copy of the course for record keeping reasons, as well as a reference for the next time you teach the course. Check with your institution, department, or instructional technology services support for policies and procedures regarding archiving and accessing courses from term to term.

Make detailed notes of all the enhancements, changes, improvements, and revisions you would like to make to the course prior to teaching it again.

Revisions you must make!

Don't forget to check each document for possible revisions including:

- Due dates and time frames specified in course documents, such as the course schedule and individual course assignments.
- Any specific references to a specific term or an individual student.
- Check all external links in your course to make sure they are still active.
- Check your contact information to make sure it is up to date.
- Update your profile and introductory documents if necessary.
- Did you add or change books/materials/activities/prerequisites that need explanation now in your course?
- Check the Bulletin Board to make sure you clean out any outdated or term-specific documents.
- Don't forget to create a new Announcement for your new term.
- If you are using a Course Calendar feature of your course, make sure the dates listed are accurate, up to date consistent and comprehensive.
- Spell check :)

Activities

Online Course Activities

While you are developing your course, continue to:

- Participate as a student in the online asynchronous discussion and activities of the online course.
- Be observant and reflect on how that online experience might inform the revisions or redesign of aspects of your own online course.

Once you have actually developed and delivered your first online course, consider the following:

- Reflect on your who you are and how you teach now that you have taught online for the first time.
- Consider who your students were, what your assumptions were about them, about teaching and learning online in general, and on the online course design/development process. How did they match up to the reality?
- Consider what you will do differently next time.
- Consider what you learned about the options and limitations in the online teaching and learning environment.

Online Course Development Activities

Once you have completed your first online course delivery you will:

- Review and evaluate your online course and document the revisions, changes, and redesign necessary to improve your course.

- Make the necessary revisions to improve your online course for the next delivery.

- Check with your institution, department, instructional technology support center for any assistance, resources, or training they may offer.

Review

What you did and what is next

In the seventh step you:

- Reviewed best practices and strategies for revising and improving your online course.
- Reviewed your course and any notes you kept for making changes or improvements.
- Made detailed and documented notes on revision to be implemented prior to the next delivery of your course.
- Implemented those planned revisions.

Congratulations! You have completed your first full cycle of course design, development, delivery, and revision. You are now an experienced online course developer and instructor!

But you are not done... every time you teach online you have the opportunity to learn from the experience and to continuously improve not only the design of your course, but your online teaching practices as well. Use the evaluation and revision materials and suggestions in this module to revise and improve your course every time you teach it.

You and your course will evolve, and you and your students will benefit from that!