



CENTER FOR ONLINE AND DISTANCE EDUCATION

Virtual Teaching Tips

I. Course Development Tips

Many of the strategies below are covered in the Online Course Development Labs offered by CODE; however, a summary is presented below to assist faculty in preparing for virtual instruction.

1. Organize the content structure into lesson modules or folders by topics or chapters in a textbook. Place all of the assignments, lecture notes, handouts, etc into a single folder or module for a particular topic or chapter.
2. Whatever structure is used (topics, chapters, etc.), place a beginning and ending date for the specific topic or chapter. For example: Chapter 1: March 23-27, 2020 or Chapter 1: March 23- April 1, 2020. This strategy helps students with organization.
3. Whatever content structure is used for your course, maintain that structure for the duration of the course. Students can become disoriented if your content structure changes from lesson- to-lesson, week-to-week, or topic-to-topic.
4. Make sure each lesson module has learning objectives that begins with an action verb. For example, the word “understand” is not an action verb; however, “define”, “demonstrate”, “describe”, “evaluate” are all action verbs. Be sure the number of learning objectives for a particular lesson module can reasonably be achieved by the student within the dates you have specified for the module.
5. Avoid the common practice of only including a textbook chapter reading assignment, PowerPoint presentation lecture, and a multiple-choice quiz in a lesson module. Include an interactive learning activity to engage students. For example, role play or discussions. Even a math, science or engineering course can include a discussion or role play activity to apply a particular concept to a real-life problem.
6. If video recording tools will be used to create videos, keep the videos to no more than 3 minutes in length. Students may have limited WIFI access or limited cell phone data plans.
7. Although students may have become familiar with each other during the first half of the course, now that they are in a remote learning environment, it will be helpful to have them introduce themselves to each other to re-establish a learning community. Therefore, create a discussion forum at the beginning of the course that allows students to introduce themselves. Invite them to add a photo of themselves to create a visual presence.
8. If an online version of your course is already available in the department, speak with your Department Chair to request a copy of the course be assigned to you. Don't reinvent the wheel! CODE can help with copying course content into other Blackboard course shells.
9. Be mindful that there may be older adult students that cannot use a computer. Please be prepared to have print-based lesson materials mailed to the students by postal mail. Similarly, there may be students who live in rural communities who lack access to the Internet. Options for delivery of course materials to these students could include creating a CD of the lesson materials or putting documents on a flash drive and sending by postal mail. Speak with your Department Chair about these arrangements.



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II: Virtual Instruction Teaching Tips

1. Non-participation (or disengagement) is a problem in both face-to-face and online classes; however, the perception is that students are at greater risk of non-participation in remote learning environments.
2. Include at least one activity each week that actively engages the student in the learning process. For example, a discussion forum, a role play exercise, or case study. CODE can help you select learning activities that are appropriate for your students and class.
3. Obtain cell phone numbers - Faculty are to solicit students' cellphone numbers or the numbers of the residences where students reside.
4. For courses that will be delivered via Blackboard, check the "Date of Last Login" in the Gradebook once per week and contact students that have missed logging into the course during a 7- day period. Think of this as an early warning sign that can lead to "virtual drop-out". Email the student to let them know you missed them in the course and include your email and telephone number inviting the student to contact you. If you have the students cell phone number, call them by phone.
5. Send an Alert to SSRP through the Beacon system for students that are falling behind in their course work, not logging into Blackboard on a consistent basis or have not responded to your outreach methods. Since there are only 6 weeks left in the semester, "alerts" and "updates" should be sent weekly about students who stop engaging.
6. Grade assignments and return them within the timeframe specified on your course syllabus. Timely feedback on graded assignments is critical.
7. Post an announcement to the class on Monday of each week. The announcement may include reminders or a summary of the lesson for the week. If you have the skills, consider recording a short video (1 minute) of yourself reading the announcement. Providing visual cues for students is very helpful in remote learning.
8. Set expectations - Virtual learning may be 24 x 7; however, virtual teaching should not be a 24 x 7 hour per day endeavor. Inform students at the beginning of the course when they can expect you to respond to emails. Set a reasonable response time: 24 business hours, 48 business hours, etc., and adhere to this policy.
9. Stay organized – Most of the frustration with virtual learning comes from a lack of organization and time management on behalf of students and instructors. Here are some suggestions to help you stay organized as a remote instructor:
 - *Create a regular weekly schedule for posting announcements, email lesson materials, responding to student emails, grading assignments, following-up on non-participating students and other course management tasks.
 - *Create a folder in Microsoft Outlook to place all incoming emails from students and use whatever schedule you have created to respond to email messages.



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*Avoid the temptation to procrastinate. Make a realistic schedule and stick with it. Just like remote learners can fall behind in their lesson, remote instructors can do the same.

10. Maintain a healthy level of patience and flexibility in working with students. Remember, for some students, virtual learning will be a new and challenging experience. Ask students to email the Center for Online and Distance Education(ctles@scsu.edu) if they are struggling with using Blackboard.

For assistance with content development or remote teaching strategies, contact the Center for Online and Distance Education at ctles@scsu.edu