

# Instructional Design tips for Online Instruction

## LEARNER SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

### A. Information about being an online learner ...

- ⇒ Tips for being an online student
- ⇒ Quiz to self-assess readiness to be an online student
- ⇒ Link to Library
- ⇒ Instructions for how to conduct online research
- ⇒ Guidance for evaluating bias and integrity of web sites
- ⇒ Instructions on how to write a research paper
- ⇒ Guidelines for APA/MLA format of papers and/or citations
- ⇒ Link to campus centers for testing, remedial resources, and student disability resources
- ⇒ Information/tutorials on how to use software required by class assignments
- ⇒ How to use campus email account
- ⇒ Contact information for technical support/Help Desk/server status report site
- ⇒ Checklist or procedures for common troubleshooting problems
- ⇒ Minimum computer hardware and software requirements
- ⇒ Sources for any required plug-ins
- ⇒ Guidelines for forming and working with groups (if applicable)
- ⇒ FAQs for Learning Management Software (LMS)
- ⇒ Tutorials for using the LMS tools
- ⇒ Netiquette guidelines posted
- ⇒ Suggestions for using “search engines.”

## **B. Course specific resources ...**

- ⇒ Contact information for academic department or advisor
- ⇒ Contact information for the instructor
- ⇒ Information on additional related courses
- ⇒ Pre-requisites of course
- ⇒ Link(s) to Bookstore(s) or ordering information for textbooks or other instructional materials
- ⇒ FAQ site on course information
- ⇒ Estimated amount of time needed for completing course requirements
- ⇒ Define academically inappropriate behavior (e.g., explain what would constitute “cheating”)
- ⇒ “Honor Statement” included for students to acknowledge and agree to appropriate behavior

## **C. Resources supporting course content ...**

- ⇒ Link(s) to web sites with supporting information relevant to course content
- ⇒ Link(s) to web sites of organizations or associations related to course content
- ⇒ Glossary of terms or links to definitions of new vocabulary
- ⇒ Link(s) to learning objects (external to course)

# **ONLINE ORGANIZATION AND DESIGN**

## **A. Course navigability and organization ...**

- ⇒ Syllabus and required instructional materials are easily located
- ⇒ Links to other parts of the course or external sources are accurate and up-to-date
- ⇒ Numbers identify sequenced steps; bullets list items that are not prioritized or sequential
- ⇒ Course content is organized in a logical format
- ⇒ Topics are clearly identified and subtopics are related to topics

- ⇒ Sequential (vs. concurrent) topics are annotated with dates; synchronous activities are given very specific times for participation
- ⇒ Course schedule is available in a printer-friendly format for student convenience
- ⇒ Organization and sequencing is logical and clear--students know “what to do next”
- ⇒ Resources are separated into “required” and “optional” categories
- ⇒ Folders have descriptions before opening them
- ⇒ Top level links have no files that increase load time (e.g., audio files or animations)
- ⇒ Nothing should be more than three clicks from the top level

### **B. Syllabus includes ...**

- ⇒ Course objectives and level of mastery explicit
- ⇒ Course completion requirements
- ⇒ Explanation of relevance of course material
- ⇒ Expectations of students’ participation, honesty, etc.
- ⇒ Timeline for student participation is clear
- ⇒ Faculty member(s) introductory information
- ⇒ Expectations of availability of and turnaround time for contact with instructor
- ⇒ Course schedule is summarized in one place

### **C. Aesthetic design ...**

- ⇒ Typeface choice and contrast between text and background enhances readability
- ⇒ Appropriate images supporting course content add visual interest
- ⇒ Design keeps course pages to a comfortable length with white space.
- ⇒ Consistent theme used throughout
- ⇒ Appropriate level of humor cultivates interest in course materials

#### **D. Consistency in course ...**

- ⇒ Layout of course is visually and functionally consistent
- ⇒ Navigability is clear, simple and user friendly
- ⇒ Spelling and grammar are consistent and accurate
- ⇒ Written material is concise, sentences and paragraphs brief
- ⇒ Language of written material is friendly and supportive
- ⇒ Clear directions are given for each task or assignment
- ⇒ Links to outside web sites open in a new browser window

#### **E. Universal accessibility ...**

- ⇒ Universal accessibility concerns are addressed throughout the course, including transcripts of any non-text objects
- ⇒ Images are optimized for speedy display and include alternative text
- ⇒ Alternative formats of materials provided, when possible (e.g., optional print packet of extensive reading materials available, CD of audio clips used in course, low bandwidth alternative for multimedia elements, PDF for a print option, etc.)
- ⇒ Use of color adds interest but does not disadvantage those with color blindness

### **INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN AND DELIVERY**

#### **A. Promote interaction in the learning community ...**

- ⇒ Students introduce themselves and are encouraged to respond to classmate introductions
- ⇒ “Ice-breaker” activity to get acquainted
- ⇒ Instructor introduces himself/herself to model interaction
- ⇒ Students’ input is not evaluated as “right” or “wrong”
- ⇒ Students are required to post their own assignments and respond to others’ posts
- ⇒ Netiquette described and enforced
- ⇒ Student participation is tracked and “wallflowers” drawn in to the discussions

- ⇒ Students are prompted by facilitator to expand on relevant points
- ⇒ Facilitator may play “devil’s advocate”
- ⇒ Provide a virtual meeting place for casual off-topic communications
- ⇒ Assign a “study buddy” as a learning support partner.

### **B. Goals and alignment to learning objectives ...**

- ⇒ Pace of delivery of course content is managed
- ⇒ Reading and writing requirements are consistent with student abilities and course unit load
- ⇒ Course content is “chunked” for more manageable learning
- ⇒ Instructional design is made clear (e.g., is it self-paced, or group-paced)
- ⇒ Pre-survey asks students to identify expectations or concerns to help tailor the course

### **C. Learning objectives and activities are integrated ...**

- ⇒ Reading assignments match learning objectives
- ⇒ Activities lead to learning desired concepts
- ⇒ Instructional material may be reviewed repeatedly (built-in redundancy)
- ⇒ Summary provided frequently, particularly at the end of topics, to reinforce learning

### **D. Activities to enhance student learning (addressing multiple learning styles) ...**

- ⇒ Video clips of interviews, movements
- ⇒ Historical audio clips of famous speeches
- ⇒ Screen animations (“viewlets”) for instructional exercises illustrating software use
- ⇒ Online journals or personal interview reports
- ⇒ Students report back with reviews of web-based resources
- ⇒ Annotated bibliography

- ⇒ Guest speakers facilitate student discussions
- ⇒ Flash simulations

### **E. Activities to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills ...**

- ⇒ Discussions center on questions without a single correct answer
- ⇒ Compare and contrast exercises
- ⇒ Case studies or “real world” scenarios requiring web-based research
- ⇒ Role playing
- ⇒ Critique classmates’ assignments
- ⇒ Collaborative exercises
- ⇒ Portfolios (building one activity upon another) to share/peer review
- ⇒ Agree to disagree to promote higher thinking
- ⇒ Online presentations (e.g., informational web pages, web-based student-generated quizzes)

## **ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF STUDENT LEARNING**

### **A. Assess student readiness for learning ...**

- ⇒ Pre-requisites are defined and enforced
- ⇒ Acceptable methods for completing assignments are identified (group work, open book, etc.)
- ⇒ Consequences of cheating or plagiarism

### **B. Learning objectives, instructional and assessment activities are aligned ...**

- ⇒ Criteria used to evaluate participation in online discussion groups
- ⇒ Study questions identify core concepts
- ⇒ Quantity and scope of graded assignments is reasonable
- ⇒ Authentic assessments
- ⇒ Give examples of how course concepts are applicable in the workplace or “real world”

⇒ Student projects can be designed to help adapt and update the course for future offerings; e.g., a “hotlist” assignment can uncover excellent resources to incorporate into course

### **C. Multiple assessment strategies ...**

⇒ Students’ bibliography or reference list includes a variety of materials such as URLs, books and journals, and videos

⇒ When possible, options among assignments are provided to allow for different interests, backgrounds, and personal learning styles

⇒ Students are not assessed solely on tests/quizzes but are provided ample opportunity to demonstrate proficiency in different ways

⇒ Student-designed projects

### **D. Regular feedback ...**

⇒ Rich and rapid feedback – self-grading assignments released immediately

⇒ Frequent, prompt, and substantial feedback from the instructor

⇒ Samples of assignments illustrate instructor’s expectations

⇒ Detailed instructions and tips for completing assignments

⇒ Due dates for all assignments

⇒ Grading scale

⇒ Instructor models assignment

⇒ Provide practice exercises when possible

⇒ Provide details on how and when students can expect feedback on their assignments

### **E. Self-assessments and peer feedback ...**

⇒ Self-tests similar to the final evaluation instruments

⇒ Students pose discussion questions, respond to others’ discussion topics, later post answers to their own questions and respond to others’ comments on their discussion topic

⇒ Peer review opportunities

- ⇒ Students apply rubric to their own work and describe/defend their score
- ⇒ Clear guidelines and resources on approach to peer review, if applicable

## **APPROPRIATE AND EFFECTIVE USE OF TECHNOLOGY**

### **A. Appropriate tools to facilitate communication ...**

- ⇒ Discussion boards
- ⇒ Synchronous “chats”
- ⇒ Email
- ⇒ Listserv
- ⇒ Teleconferencing
- ⇒ Group discussion areas, when appropriate, for group activities
- ⇒ Instant messaging
- ⇒ Track student activity to monitor individual interaction with course materials and classmates
- ⇒ Provide option for online office hours
- ⇒ Designate an “announcement” area for course so news items are noticed and checked (instructor-student communication) and not lost in a thread
- ⇒ Designate a discussion area specifically for student questions—open to responses from other students as well as the instructor
- ⇒ Create an area for off-topic discussions to keep the instructional discussion areas focused on course content

### **B. New teaching methods ...**

- ⇒ Instructor is open to trying new methods of delivery of instruction
- ⇒ Instructor is open to accepting additional methods for addressing course content to accommodate students’ preferred learning styles
- ⇒ Observe peers’ instructional designs and facilitation techniques

### **C. Multimedia elements ...**

- ⇒ Flash illustrations
- ⇒ Animated viewlets for screen captures
- ⇒ Audio clips
- ⇒ Video clips
- ⇒ CD-ROM or DVD supplemental materials
- ⇒ Reliable low-tech alternative delivery
- ⇒ Images, audio, and video are optimized for multiple transmission speeds

### **D. Engage students throughout the course ...**

- ⇒ Interaction with course materials is a key component of the course.
- ⇒ Engaging exercises are well distributed throughout the course to maintain student interest and participation.
- ⇒ Course assignments offer “building blocks” for final assessments
- ⇒ Group work increases engagement and accountability in course

## **FACULTY USE OF STUDENT FEEDBACK**

### **A. Course content ...**

- ⇒ Evaluation survey at end of course
- ⇒ Student input sought at regular intervals
- ⇒ Open ended questions
- ⇒ Students falling behind are prompted to determine what might be delaying their progress
- ⇒ Students prompted to find web-based resources supporting the topic to share with classmates; the highest quality resources incorporated into the course

### **B. Online technology ...**

- ⇒ Instructor has an open door to students to point out flaws of delivery of instruction using technology
- ⇒ Instructor solicits feedback on how delivery can be more effective for student learning (e.g., a Discussion Topic for Feedback)
- ⇒ Technical support or Help Desk staff suggestions are used to relieve technical difficulties communicated by students.

### **C. Instruction and assessment ...**

- ⇒ Instructor is willing to modify course (live) as needed to improve or fix inadequacies
- ⇒ Instructor is able to modify elements (e.g., fix bad quiz questions, extend deadlines, review methods of achieving course objectives)