

Principles for Online Teaching

1 What is it?

This document provides a number of instructional practices based on work by Chickering and Gamson (1987) and Boettcher and Conrad (2010). These principles contribute to an effective and satisfying learning and teaching experience for both online instructors and students.

2 How to do it?

- 1. Be present in the course:** Being present in the course is one of the important factors in online courses for developing student motivation, satisfaction, and learning. Students expect their online instructors to be present in the course, and be responsive and accessible (Boettcher & Conrad, 2010; Garrison & Cleveland-Innes, 2005; Shea, Swan, Li, & Pickett, 2005). ([See Community of Inquiry Framework for more details](#)). Be explicit about instructor availability and response time for questions posted on course site or to email! There is no rule of thumb for response time, but it is usually 24 hours.

Tips and Tricks

- Add a statement in the course syllabus to communicate response times and instructor's availability. For instance, "The course instructor will be available via email, and will respond as soon as she is available (generally within 24) hours. For the online discussions, the instructor will check in at least 3 times per week."
- Actively participate in discussion forums
- Send announcements throughout the week
- Reply to students' emails and questions in a timely manner
- Monitor students' progress
- Offer online office hours

- 2. Encourage Collaborative and Cooperative Learning:** Learning cannot be separated from its

social context. Encourage your students to construct their own knowledge through collaboration, cooperation, and interaction with each other (e.g., in-class or online discussions, peer feedback, teamwork) (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Vygotsky, 1978). In addition to increasing your students' involvement in the learning process, this will also help your students to reflect on their understanding by experiencing others' points of view.

Tips and Tricks

- Create online discussions centered on course readings or activities.
 - Use team-based projects or assignments.
 - Incorporate peer reviews or peer feedback for projects or assignments.
 - Create a positive climate where students seek information from others and share their opinions.
- 3. Encourage Active Learning:** Encourage learners to take the ownership of their own learning, and actively participate in the learning activities that help them reflect on what they are doing (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000).

Tips and Tricks

- Have students apply, synthesize, and reflect on their learning
- If applicable, develop a project that incorporates the theories or principles being studied.
- Create open-ended discussion questions that encourage students to explore and apply the concepts that they have learned.
- Have students take a role in the online discussions

- 4. Give constructive and prompt feedback:** Effective feedback is necessary and should be planned for in advance. (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Make sure you give timely feedback, focusing on where students are, how they are doing, and what to do next.

Tips and Tricks

- Have students answer three questions: “where am I going?, how am I going?, and where to go next?”
- Be specific, timely, clear, and purposeful
- Provide information about students’ current performance (e.g., correct or incorrect response), and direction for advancement toward the goal.

5. Communicate High Expectations: According to Chickering and Gamson (1987), setting high expectations motivates students to make extra efforts. Be clear about expectations to reduce uncertainty (Boettcher & Conrad, 2010).

Tips and Tricks

- Provide very detailed information about expectations
- Consider developing and including detailed rubrics that show students your expectations for assignments or projects
- Take the best samples of previous projects (with permission of course coordinator and students) and use those as examples!
- In the course introduction or syllabus, stipulate the hours that are anticipated for course work each week

6. Respect Diverse Learners: As each individual comes to formal education from different backgrounds (e.g., education level, ethnicity, culture, etc.), learning experiences need to be differentiated to help learners produce desired learning outcomes.

Tips and Tricks

- Provide multiple or flexible representations of information
 - Mind cultural differences ([See Cultural Competence](#))
 - Add some variety to your course; spice up the activities!
 - Provide supplementary resources for students who wish to learn more
- 7. Highlight Time on Task:** Chickering and Gamson (1987) underscore the importance of

effective time management for students’ academic and professional success. You can mentor your students on how they can manage their time well to achieve their goals.

Tips and Tricks

- State clear deadlines in your syllabi for your quizzes, assignments, discussion postings, and other course-related activities. Make sure the deadlines are realistic and achievable.
- Remind students regularly of upcoming deadlines through announcements
- Convey time-management techniques to your students which may include dividing an assignment into manageable parts and allocating time for each part, keeping adequate time for revision and getting feedback from a peer, etc.

3 References

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