

Top 10 Things to Know When Developing an Online Course

1

Give students ways to engage with the content other than just reading and listening. Ideas include posting to discussion boards, taking quizzes (even if they count toward mastery of materials and not for point-based credit), working puzzles, creating suggested test questions, and cooperative group work.

2

Build community. Introductions are good. Introduce yourself, as you would in a face-to-face course, and provide a Discussion Board area (or some equivalent) for students to introduce themselves to each other. Let your students know how often you will respond to communications from them (emails, discussions, etc.). We recommend no more than 48 hours.

3

Create a PDF of your Syllabus, course schedule, and other important course documents. This keeps documents from being accidentally changed. Students can access these with the free Adobe Reader.

4

Respond to or summarize discussion board postings when appropriate. This allows you to tie up any loose ends left from discussion threads or clarify misunderstandings of the content. You can use a GA or assign a student moderator to assist with this.

5

Media files should not be uploaded to eCourseware. All media files (podcasts, videos, slideshow presentations with sound) should be housed on a media server such as Podcast Central and linked to eCourseware. (Note: You can use external media servers but can only contact UMHelpDesk about Podcast Central.) We do not recommend adding audio into PowerPoint using the Insert Sound tool. Doing so creates large file sizes, which is problematic for students. There is also the potential of a student accidentally deleting audio. *For support, please contact the Advanced Learning Center (<http://alc.memphis.edu>)*

6

Include course news items so that students don't log into your course and see a blank page. Add a welcome message, instruct students on how to access course content, etc. Show your personality – add a picture or video.

7

Communication is important. This is easily accomplished with emails sent using the course-based email groups provided by IT. For example, ABCD1234U50.2010S was the mailing list for ABCS 1234, section U50, taught in the Spring of 2010. (F=Fall; S=Spring; U=Summer.) You can also email your students through the my.memphis.edu faculty portal. Make sure, if you are teaching a cross-listed course, that you email both classes. You can also send and receive email via eCourseware; however, please note that this email is not delivered by default to your memphis.edu email account. We do not recommend that you or your students use an external email address.

8

Organize your online content into modules that make sense for what you are teaching. You can organize by units, chapters, weeks, etc. Group content in a logical progression and make sure that you put or link all content for that module into that organizational unit. Don't upload material that is not copyrighted to you into your course; link out to journal articles, videos, etc. If you do have copyright permission, please include that in your course site. Model what you want your students to do.

9

Treat your online students as you would your face-to-face students. Give explicit directions, navigation, and tools for them to be successful. Provide logically developed content. Take an objective look at your course through the eyes of students.

10

Most importantly, engage your students.