Kellogg Community College
Online Course Development Committee

In fulfilling its role in identifying the benefit to the College and its students of developing new online courses, the Online Course Development Committee considers a variety of factors in determining the benefit. One factor is the instructional design skill of the instructor identified as the developer. Also, because a KFA represented instructor also has "first right of refusal" to teach the course once it is developed, the committee may also weigh whether the teaching style of the instructor is consistent with successful online instruction. To assist in the analysis, the Online Course Development Committee has identified *Good Practices of Online Instructors* that the committee believes will lead to successful learning by online course students.

Good Practices of Online Instructors

Using Chickering & Gamson's Seven Principles of Good Practice in Undergraduate Education as a framework, the following are an online instructor's responsibilities to his or her students.

1. Encourage contact between students and faculty: Frequent student-faculty contact both in and outside of class is an important factor in student motivation and involvement.[1] Examples of practices expected of the instructor are as follows:

   - Instructor must contact students within 48 hours of the starting date of the course via e-mail, telephone, or letter.

   - Instructor must monitor all class discussion boards frequently (at least three days a week) and appropriately respond to enough discussion messages so the students know the instructor is participating. Some postings are designed primarily for student to student interaction, so the instructor becomes involved only when needed to redirect or post summary comments.

   - Instructor must send a weekly e-mail or Blackboard Announcement message to the students in the class.

   - Instructor must manage the communication expectations of the students by specifying timelines for responses and feedback. Clear instructor and student response times should be detailed in the syllabus and include the instructor's class policy about

     o Maximum time for the instructor to respond to or acknowledge an e-mail or bulletin board question. The maximum response time should be less than two working days.

     o Availability of the instructor to respond on weekends and holidays.

   - Instructor must encourage students to ask general, class-related questions in the discussion board rather than by e-mail. Students must be encouraged to answer classmates' questions in discussion board when they know the answer. Instructors should encourage questions about grades or personal problems interfering with assignment completion be sent by email.

   - Instructor should employ "verbal immediacy" through the use of "humor, frequent use of student names, encouragement of discussion, and follow-up on student-initiated comments."

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[1] Verbiage in all the enumerated points are directly from Holly M. Hutchins, "Instructional Immediacy and the Seven Principles: Strategies for Facilitating Online Courses*," The Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*, 12/10/03, accessed at http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdla/fall63/hutchins63.html on 6/12/07

2. Develop reciprocity and cooperation among students: Faculty should create and encourage opportunities for collaborative learning among students.

   - Instructors should use Blackboard Groups for collaborative assignments, enabling students to guide their own discussions and work in small cohorts on assignments. Collaborative activities do not always produce positive results for students, especially in complex courses. However it is important that students feel like they are part of a learning community and engage in frequent interaction with each other within the course. The interaction with each other and the instructor is an important part of the learning process and improves course satisfaction and retention.

3. Encourage active learning: Faculty should require students to apply their learning in oral and written forms.

   - Instructors should use authentic, real-world assignments.

4. Give prompt feedback: Faculty should provide appropriate and prompt feedback on performance. Students need help assessing their current competence and performance, and need frequent opportunities to perform and receive suggestion for improvement. Such feedback should be an ongoing process in collegiate settings.

   - Instructors must answer routine questions from students in less than two working days.

   - Instructors should use Blackboard Test Manager for all quizzes and exams.

   - Instructors should use Blackboard Gradebook to communicate assessment results to students.

   - Instructors are encouraged to use Blackboard Test Manager whenever possible for the submission of assignments when Test Manager has the capability of grading the assignments.

   - Instructors should return graded materials within one week of date due.

   - Instructors should engage in private email communication with students having problems in the courses. Students having problems can be identified by tracking grades in the grade book and their responses on the discussion boards. These students can be helped by identifying gaps in their learning and providing additional activities, discussions with the instructor, and referral to external sources like tutoring.

5. Emphasize time on task: Faculty should create opportunities for students to practice good time management. This includes setting realistic time for students to complete assignments as well as using class time for learning opportunities.

   - Instructor provides sufficient structure so students progress through the course as a cohort and at a pace consistent with mastery learning.

6. Communicate high expectations: Faculty should set and communicate high expectations for students. Such becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy for students, and they often will rise to meet the challenge.

7. Respect diverse talents and ways of learning: Faculty should create learning opportunities that appeal to the different ways students will process and attend to information. Varying presentation style and assignment requirements will allow students to showcase their unique talents and learn in ways that work for them.