open learning
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support

Checklist For Facilitating a Distance Education Course

Before the course starts:

Familiarize yourself with the course delivery structure and CourseLink:

- Start Here;
- Course content (Outline, Assignments, Schedule, Units, Resources);
- Course Tools (News Forum, Discussions, Dropbox, Quizzes, Grades).

During the first week:

Use the News tool:

- Welcome students to the course;
- Communicate regularly through the News tool to maintain your presence in the course so that students don't feel isolated or alienated.

Create an icebreaker to build a sense of community:

- Model discussion response behavior and tone. Use a conversational tone that is inviting, personal, friendly, and encouraging.

Introduce students to key discussion forums they can use (e.g., Main Class Discussion or Coffee Shop):

- Monitor the discussion area daily. Reinforce student discussion board contributions and provide positive explanatory feedback (personally) to those who make the discussion area a better place through their participation;
- Challenge your students by asking questions that apply to the readings and communicate high expectations.

Contact missing students and draw in participants

- Watch out for non-participants during the first week of class and contact them by email to see if they have login/access difficulties.

During the course:

Be a positive online role model:

- Conduct the course according to the designated Schedule with any deviations communicated to students in advance.

Maintain your presence online via the News tool:

- Post announcements that transition from one topic or unit to the next to help students recognize time on task;
- Provide guidance and direction to students when needed;
- Post reminders about important due dates and upcoming deadlines, holiday wishes, and new-found resources;
- If you must be offline for a day or more, announce the absence to students with guidance of whom to contact during the absence.

Update the grades tool promptly:

- Keep the online gradebook current after assignment due dates;
- Provide positive encouragement;
- Use comments and narrative feedback as often as possible to support or explain assessments and maintain privacy of student grades and feedback.

Monitor student progress and online participation:

- Check assignment/quiz submissions and follow up with missing students;
- Check discussion forums regularly;
- Direct students to the Help Desk for technical support;
- Respond to student questions within 24 hours.

Provide meaningful and timely feedback:

- Evaluate student work promptly and provide meaningful feedback;
- Encourage learning strategies that promote learner independence, responsibility, and collaboration.

During the last week:

Use the News tool:

- Remind students about final exam;
- Encourage students to share their class experiences and say good bye in a closing discussion;
- Post a news announcement with a closing personal message to students;
- Encourage students to complete the end-of-course survey.

Report final grades promptly:

- Respect the major investment your students have made in your course.

Reflect on your online teaching:

- List technical aspects that worked well and those that need improvement;
- Analyze your personal observations and list what worked well and what needs modification next term.

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