

Self Assessment: Best Practices in Online Undergraduate Teaching

Adapted from: www.lincoln.edu/imc/BestPractices.pdf

Principle 1: The instructor encourages student-faculty contact and interaction.

Frequent student-faculty contact is the most important factor in student motivation, intellectual commitment, and personal development. Interaction with faculty is a critical factor in online student success and satisfaction.

As an online instructor I:

- offer multiple forms of contact, including email, phone, online chat, and face to face.
- establish actual or virtual office hours at times when students will be available for online chats, phone calls, or email.
- acknowledge initial receipt of students' email with a reply.
- differentiate between types of inquiries (receipt of message, personal question, content question, procedural question, assignment feedback) and modify my response time accordingly.
- inform my students that infrastructure problems (server, etc.) are beyond the control of the instructor and may impact response time.
- create course assignments that build in feedback and communication (see Principle 3).
- make an effort to find out basic information about students.
- make an effort to introduce students to each other.
- refer to students by name.

Principle 2: The instructor encourages student cooperation.

Cooperative learning is characterized by positive interdependence, face-to-face interaction, personal responsibility, collaborative skills, and group processing.

As an online instructor I:

- create assignments that require students to respond to peers' work/assignments.
- use techniques for fostering student cooperation:
 - Interview and introduce one another
 - Peer reviews
 - Chats
 - Discussion forums
 - Group projects
 - Student groups
 - Study teams

Principle 3: The instructor encourages active learning.

To maximize learning, students must interact with the material they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences, and incorporate what they are learning into their worldview.

As an online instructor I:

- encourage student questions, input, and feedback.
- clearly state that all points of view are welcome and respected.
- regularly send announcements and general feedback to the whole class.
- follow up on students who are not participating.
- ask students to state what they expect to learn in the class.
- ask students to critique web sites that relate to the class and enhance learning.
- ask students to teach their classmates.
- ask student to develop/create learning activities and projects.

- ask students to review each others' work.
- ask students to reflect on their performance and their progress in the class.
- pose discussion questions that that foster critical thinking, problem solving, and extended and wide-ranging dialog.
- follow up reading assignments with discussions, simulations, or applications to case studies/scenarios.
- select real-world, relevant, and practical assignments that allow students to apply and practice the concepts learned.
- offer frequent short assignments/quizzes or other frequent "in progress" feedback opportunities.
- require students to reply and respond to online discussions topics.

Principle 4: The instructor gives prompt feedback.

The instructor role is key, as it gives the students help in assessing their knowledge and competence.

As an online instructor I:

- respond with frequent email or discussion board comments: with answers to questions, comments about lesson/unit content, giving directions and information.
- return tests, papers, assignments, etc. within 7 days.
- hold virtual office hours for students to discuss their graded work.
- post or send grades regularly.
- acknowledge all student questions.
- use grading rubrics to clearly and consistently evaluate student work.
- post outstanding student work and explain what makes it good.
- provide models of assignments (e.g., a model student essay or journal entry) to demonstrate expectations.
- Follow up on feedback via email or phone if students do not respond initially to feedback.

Principle 5: The instructor emphasizes time on task.

Learning takes place when time is used effectively and actively.

As an online instructor I:

- clearly define and explain course goals, performance objectives, grading and evaluation criteria, and give grading rubrics.
- indicate the relative emphasis of facts, critical thinking, analysis, reasoning, etc.
- establish and enforce deadlines for assignments.
- let students know how much time it should take to do the assignments.
- outline the steps for completing each of the assignments, breaking the assignment into smaller, more manageable parts if appropriate.
- use quizzes/questions that require students to review the content (self-check or automatically graded online).

Principle 6: The instructor communicates high expectations.

When the instructor sets high but attainable goals, academic achievement increases.

As an online instructor I:

- post a course description that clearly defines and explains course goals, performance objectives, grading and evaluation criteria, and indicates the relative emphasis on facts, critical thinking, synthesis, analysis, and reasoning.
- ensure that online course activities address the same objectives as on-campus course activities.

- ensure that online course requirements/assignments/activities are equivalent in difficulty and depth to those in the on-campus sections of the course.
- ensure that students are evaluated with the same emphasis and level of difficulty as the on-campus sections.
- set high standards for myself and model lifelong learning through example.

Principle 7: The instructor respects diverse talents and ways of learning.

Helping a student recognize his own learning style can improve a student's learning. Recognizing the learning styles of others can increase a student's repertoire of learning strategies.

As an online instructor I:

- design more than one method of assessment and demonstration of student achievement.
- allow students to choose from different possible modes of assignment completion
- encourage students to use the Web and other resources and media to master course content by incorporating Web-based assignments into the curriculum and reading assignments.
- recognize that distance education and online classes may not be the preferred or best learning environment for some students.
- am sensitive to possible cultural differences, especially communicating with students for whom English is a second language.
- design course materials with the access needs of individuals with disabilities
- provides alternatives to reading text, such as audio explanations of complicated materials.

Based on:

Chickering, A. W. & Gamson, Z. (1987). *Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education*. Racine, WI: The Johnson Foundation

Chickering, A.W., and Gamson, Z.F. (1991). Applying the Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education. New Directions for Teaching and Learning. Number 47, Fall 1991. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.