

OnlineHE project

A practical toolkit for integrating eLearning in Higher Education Curricula

Motivation and engagement

I

dentify the design elements suitable for the development of eLearning courses



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Module 4: Suitable elements – improve teaching and enhancing eLearning interactivity

Improve Online Teaching as Instructor

Embrace The Power Of Communication:

Communication is the key to successful online education.

- social media channels
- e-mails
- student chat groups
- ...

Goal: engagement of students through discussion, doubts and even comparison of the scores that they have acquired from their assessments, competitive spirit

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Improve Online Teaching as Instructor

Instructor responsiveness and availability

Instructors become an even more important “ingredient” in helping to engage, retain, and **graduate** online students

- be present frequently, and students can reach out to you
- motivating students
- Encourage students through comments/messages
- Provide thought-provoking feedback
- Communicate Effectively
- Manage technology

Instructors are often the “face” of an online course

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Suitable design elements

Effective Approach: The idea here is to formulate an effective approach where both productivity and efficiency can be increased. This approach should be directed to every aspect of online education: curriculum, theory, practice, teaching, administration, technology, and institutional culture to leaving a positive impact on the overall method of learning.

Transparent Goal-Setting: Create clear expectations for students. Have students explain the unit's goals from the beginning of the online experience. Teachers explain what skills and learning outcomes students will develop and how they will be assessed. At the end of the module, students will consider and provide evidence of their progress towards mastering each of these competencies and set some goals for the coming weeks.

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Suitable design elements

Proactive, Planned Communication:

- Form groups and coordinate the timing of the call classmates (zoom, doodle, etc.)
- Establish common ground (e.g., have a learning contract)
- Personalize profile page (exists in most LMS)
- Establish connection regularity (log into the online learning platform)
- Monitor and keep track of students' presence through the analytics of the digital tools

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Suitable design elements

Student-Friendly Wayfinding: The goal of wayfinding design is to reduce the cognitive burden of your students. Confusing, complex or stunning design elements prevent students from focusing on what's important: learning.

Basic wayfinding strategies for online learning: label assignments clearly, create video walkthroughs, use calendars and Gantt charts. Make announcements, send private messages or emails to make sure students are on the right track and aware of all deadlines, responsibilities, program changes.

Develop students' digital competence, in order to use technology to solve problems, communicate, create while behaving safely and responsibly in the digital world.

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Suitable design elements

Scaffolding: incrementally arrange the tasks (or a series of assignments)

Low-Stakes Assignments: valuable ways to build confidence

Flexible Lesson Plans: (if possible)

Result-Oriented Assessments: analyse fields where students were not able to score and then provide simple step-by-step learning programs followed by tests to help them improve.

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Rubrics and Guidelines for Online Course Design:

There are a number of systems that have been developed to guide and evaluate quality design in online courses. e.g.

The Illinois Online Network's Quality Online Course Initiative (QOCI) rubric (www.ion.uillinois.edu/initiatives/qoci/index.asp) comprises seven main areas: Instructional Design; Communication, Interaction, and Collaboration; Student Evaluation and Assessment; Learner Support and Resources; Instructional Material and Technologies; Accessibility; and Course Evaluation.

California State University, Chico (www.csuchico.edu/eoi/rubric.shtml) which is designed to be used as a guide for course design as well as a set of evaluation criteria. It is organized into six categories: Learner Support and Resources; Online Organization and Design; Instructional Design and Delivery; Assessment and Evaluation of Student Learning; Innovative Teaching with Technology; and Faculty Use of Student Feedback. Low-Stakes Assignments are valuable ways to build confidence

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Provide Ongoing Feedback

Feedback Plan: feedback, multiple feedback

- between teachers and students,
- between students and students,
- and between students and teachers.

How and when do you provide students with formative and helpful feedback?

e.g. Is it possible in a private setting one on one (in the category for the submitted task) or on more than one public forum (for example interactions in a discussion forum)? How and when will students give feedback?

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Usefulness of the E-learning content

Universal Design and Accessibility: The terms “universal design in learning (UDL)” is designed so that the course content and teaching activities are accessible to as many students as possible without the need for special modifications. Explore the idea of providing more pathways, insights and learning methods.

Basic Tips: Large fonts (eg. 12pt), styles to ensure consistency, text descriptions (alt-text) for all images, captions or transcripts for video and audio files, meaningful titles or descriptions for all hyperlinks, test out all external sites and tools to ensure they are accessible.

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E-learning content

Courses Empowered With Videos: Having videos leads to

- a) Engaging in a Sensory Experience to hear and see the various concepts that are being learned. It assists the learning process, especially with complex topics that require a good level of understanding.
- b) With Go-to Resources (online), videos can be viewed anytime, anywhere from a variety of devices, such as smartphones, tablets, and laptops.
- c) Improving digital skills. When students adopt videos for online learning, they expand their digital skills.

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E-learning content

Make eLearning content mobile: Make your eLearning content easily accessible via smartphones, laptops and tablets to improve your learning methods. You will also show your students that you are relevant to the needs of modern staff and related technology.

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E-learning content

Narrated Slides, Audio or Videotaping, Screencasting: narration should extend over a series of slides rather than stopping for five or more minutes on one slide. Use a casual narration with lots of color in the voice. Use graphics, arrows, video snippets, or other visual means to enliven the presentation.

PowerPoint Slides: online, the slides themselves must carry the entire presentation. Therefore, design, images, and graphics are essential to the success of such presentations. Keep in mind, too, that slide presentations, when they involve a large number of slides and click-throughs, can be very tedious to the viewers.

Use of External Content: textbook and ebook, open educational resource (OER) version of readings

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E-learning content

Computer-Based Simulations and Serious Games:

"*Serious games*" are games that have an element of play, but also have an educational or training purpose. Games in contrast to simulations have rules, an element of competition, awards or points or another measure of success, and often actual winners, and can be collaborative.

"*Computer-based simulations*" attempt to recreate an actual process or activity or, on a broader scale, model complex real-life circumstances.

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Interaction with students/teachers

- Initiate discussions through forums, from the very beginning till the end of the course.
- Utilise “cyber-cafe” forums and chat rooms to enhance communication between students

Establish a sense of community in the online class.

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Interaction with students/teachers

Utilise social networks. Free *Social Bookmarking tools* like Diigo (www.diigo.com) or Evernote (www.evernote.com)

Discussion/Interaction/Communications: *small-group guided discussions, question-and-answer sessions, labs, and exams, seminar models* in which instructor presentation and discussion are often combined

Human interaction and ongoing conversations bring the class alive for students. Elevation of Faces and Voices: priority when facilitating online learning is relationships. The teacher, plays the facilitator in each of those spaces. Human interaction and ongoing conversations bring the class alive for students.

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Activities in the Online Environment

Discussion: *online discussion* that can take place in a discussion forum. Summarise discussions to pinpoint the concepts taught.

Group-Oriented Work and Student Presentation: (however, group activities must be well organized and properly paced)

Assign moderators in group-based discussions/activities (facilitating the communication: they initiate the discussion, sustain the dialogue, promote reflection, synthesise, and summarise the points discussed)

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Group Activities, tips in promoting collaboration :

Mixture of individual and group-oriented activities can help provide a variety of context.

Small groups (include three or four students, or even just a pair)

Group activities:

- provide guidelines for each group's collaboration,
- set reasonable goals and objectives,
- provide both a place for the group to work
- and a place or method to present its work.

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Group Activities, tips in promoting collaboration :

Depend to some extent on the learning management system (LMS) or other collaborative software we are using.

Provide detailed guidelines on the responsibilities of each member of a group, as well as explanations of how groups are to proceed with their task.

Define such roles as:

- group recorder of the activities,
- group manager or leader,
- and group spokesperson.

Clearly define the end product, what it should include and the deadlines.

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Group Activities

Dividing Students into Groups: It's best for the instructor to play a role in dividing students into groups. Depending on the nature of the group task, you may want a *mix of students of differing characteristics or skills in each group*.

Size and Duration of Groups: Don't make the groups too large, varying on the task, e.g. discussion can easily accommodate ten or more, but when the group members must collaborate then a group of four or five.

Group Roles: sign one member of the group to summarize, another to record the group's conclusions, and another to lead the discussion or allocate portions of the work, make the rotation frequent enough to give each member a chance at several roles.

Supervision and Assessment of Groups: You do not need to participate in group activities but your supervision will encourage participation by all group members and ensure that an individual's contributions to the group are recognized

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Group Activities: A very simple, stripped-down rubric for peer evaluation:

1 = member participated at minimal levels.

2 = member's individual work, participation in discussion, organizing, editing, or presenting role was significant.

3 = member's individual work, participation in discussion, or organizational/editing/presenting role greatly influenced for the better, the quality of group interaction and product.

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Activities

- Problem-Based Learning Approach
- Role Playing and Simulations
- Online Debates

Opportunities for guided reflection

Determine how much time students will have to participate in online learning activities

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Activities

Summaries, Consensus Groups: asking students to summarize some aspects of course activities, discussions or lectures.

- Helps students synthesize discussion and topics
- Interactive
- Promotes analysis and then synthesis in a wide variety of materials

A variant of this approach is to ask each small group to nominate a speaker who will not only present a summary of the results for the whole class, but also lead the discussion. Or someone in the group can present a summary while another in the group answers questions and comments from the second class. The consensus group can also create audio or video to present their ideas.

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Activities

The Experience-Based Practicum or Lab Assignment: involves a practicum or similar activity. The online environment provides opportunities for peer review and exchange with classmates to help individuals reflect on their experiences. Feedback from the teacher, is given through postings whenever it is needed.

eg. ... student's observation of the situation in the classroom, creating a lesson plan, an internship situation, conducting an interview with a faculty member. Reports of this experience may be shared with others in the online class and classmates may be asked to criticize or ask the lecturer.

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Activities

Reflective Activities: such as *journaling*, encourage thoughtful, focused consideration and critiques of a topic. This can be accomplished by asking students to *create personal web pages*, combining text, images, and links to internet resources to create a reflective piece. The arrival of blogging software made the *blog* one of the easiest methods to accomplish this sort of reflective journal. Students can maintain individual blogs or a class blog can be created by which all students contribute their reflections. Another idea is to connect all the student blogs by an index page so that students have potential access to all the journals of classmates. (eg. Padlet)

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Activities

Scenarios and Case Studies: Can be used to *stimulate analysis*, requiring students to imagine how they might respond to a particular set of circumstances, typically involving hands-on activities. *Scenario questions* can transform an abstract or theoretical discussion into one in which students demonstrate concrete problem-solving skills in a particular context, bringing multiple perspectives to a problem.

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Activities

Scenarios and Case Studies:

Case studies can easily form the basis of a written assignment, questions for a quiz, or a series of questions that one can pose for a discussion forum.

Benefits: Engages students in research and reflective discussion, encourages higher order thinking, allows students to develop realistic solutions to complex problems, develops students' ability to identify and distinguish between critical and extraneous factors, and generally creates an opportunity for students to learn from one another.

Recommended: 1) Use complex cases requiring multiple perspectives, 2) Assess the process of analysis, not only the outcome 3) Use a variety of questions in case analysis (e.g. clarification, analysis, conclusion, implementation, application and reflection)

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Activities

Peer Editing and Review: Peer editing, review, and evaluation enabling an instructor to provide students in a large class with additional opportunities for feedback. This could be achieved by applying peer-review evaluation rubrics. This helps them critically review their own work. Also students get the benefit of a perspective other than the instructor's.

Student Activities Involving Guest Speakers: during which time the guest speaker will post some material and be available for questions.

Livestreaming Guests. Another increasingly attractive option for a synchronous activity is to have a guest livestream a presentation. Livestreaming via Periscope (part of Twitter) or Facebook Live allows a speaker to offer commentary and even show something in their environment at the same time. (zoom, Microsoft Teams...)

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Activities

Using the Internet as a Resource: This is the use of the internet itself as a basis for assigned work. In preparing the way, *examine* the material yourself before assigning it to your class. *Suggest* pathways of links to find resources. Take advantage of annotated collections of links, podcast and vodcast collections Educational podcasts and vodcasts (video podcasting) through iTunes, wikis.

Remember to put out a grading rubric for every activity: It is extremely important, clearly defining your grading criteria when shaping the syllabus for an online class. You might want to consider creating a detailed grading rubric for one or more of your assignments. An effective rubric should be detailed enough to cover all the complexity and different aspects.

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Adult Learners (some key adult learning principles):

Adult learners tend to be *self-directed* and *independent*, even as they need guidance, examples, and feedback from instructor and peers in order to progress. Provide adequate feedback intervals, opportunities to share with peers, and facilitate student discovery.

Adult learners like to *draw on their experience* and to relate what they learn to real-world applications.

Guide students during their self-regulated learning.

Ask learners to *identify their learning goal(s)* for the course.

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Adult Learners (some key adult learning principles):

Modern theories shift the attention to the learner, his/her interests (interest-based learning) and the social aspect of learning (socio-constructivism, social learning, communities of learning), cultivating learners' higher order thinking skills, such as creativity, research, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and production.

Include examples to consolidate understanding. Examples allow students to relate the learning content with real life situations. Provide students with ample opportunities to apply the acquired knowledge/skills into situations that resemble real life.

Practice (participatory practices are suggested): brainstorming exercises, case studies, simulations, game-based learning, discussions, messages, wikis, (micro)blogging, teleconferencing, virtual scenes, quizzes, interactive presentations, social networking, webquests, digital escape rooms