

Recommended Practices for Hybrid and Online Courses

In light of the issues raised in the survey recently conducted by the Student Government Association (SGA), the Senate Faculty Affairs Committee took on the charge by the Executive Committee, and compiled a brief report of DOs and DON'Ts of teaching online and hybrid courses during a pandemic. The recommended practices below are based on an analysis of the qualitative data collected from questions 14 through 16 of the SGA survey. Please implement as you see fit.

1. Clear communication about course expectations and instructor availability

Provide the welcome message (written or verbal) to establish the learning environment, for example, communication channels, course expectations, and content accessibility. A video message allows students to “see” you 😊.

Provide specific ways for students to reach out to you (e.g., office hours, email, Course Q & A discussion forums) as well as when they can expect you to respond (i.e, respond to email within 24 hours during the work week).

Use multiple methods for reaching out to students: emails, announcements, forums, virtual office hours. Regular correspondence/posting with reminders can help them stay on track and create a connection/opportunity for them to ask questions.

Promote the availability of virtual video or chat sessions with the instructor and/or teaching assistant.

Explain basics regarding your approach to teaching/teaching philosophy, so that students know why you are asking them to do the tasks that you ask them to do – for example, flipped classroom requires pre-reading. Clear course design

2. Clear course design

Follow [CELT template for online syllabus](#) with special attention to course schedule/pacing and corresponding assignments.

Establish a consistent weekly schedule (traditional Monday-Sunday or nontraditional Wednesday-Tuesday) to help students quickly get familiar with course pace and stay on track. If a major change in the schedule is necessary, an explanation and an updated syllabus with highlighted changes can cut down confusions and ease the transitions.

Assess students’ familiarity with the course website and syllabus at the beginning of the semester via syllabus/course quiz or scavenger hunt and provide summary feedback about areas of confusion.

Implement consistent course organization (structure and labeling) throughout the semester with date indicators. Streamline the course as much as possible. It is difficult for students to keep up if they have difficulty keeping track of too many things happening at once.

Make available the instructions on major assessments early and regular notifications on upcoming assignments.

Provide periodic summaries of common questions and good practices by students.

Utilize shorter videos that are labeled with key contents.

Consider videos requiring action from students, e.g., complete short writing assignments, find a resource before continuing to keep them engaged.

Create effective PowerPoints to use with your discussions/lectures: [Ten tips Blog](#); [Vanderbilt information on teaching with Power Point](#)

Provide links or documents for content appearing in the recordings.

Explain each type of assignments in more than one format – for example, written directions and also a short video. Some students prefer to read directions, other students prefer to listen to and watch directions.

3. Take on the advising or supporting role

Emphasize creating a study plan.

Provide some study tricks to promote personal connections.

Summarize FAQs by students periodically to encourage more questions.

Consider a mid-semester (or 6 week) evaluation focused on the challenges they are currently seeing with the course design, modality, etc. and what they think would help them succeed.

Consciously work on creating relationships with students. Consider connectedness ideas from [Crisis Conscious Teaching](#).

If a student misses because of COVID19 or falls behind and you want to allow them to come back, write down a recovery plan, share it with them, and get their commitment to it.