

FACULTY INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY TRAINING CENTER

Columbia State Community College

Principles of Online Learning

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Definition: What Is an Internet Course?

An Internet course also known as web courses or on-line courses, are courses delivered exclusively over the Internet. In many classes, instructors continue to use hard-copy course texts and materials, although electronic text is available for most subjects. In addition, proctored testing may be a requirement for some Internet courses.

Definition: What Is a Web-Enhanced Course?

A Web-Enhanced course is a traditional course with significant use of web technology to facilitate interaction and learning. Web-Enhanced courses provide course materials via the Internet and use email, calendars, and discussion boards. This creates a 24-hour, 7-day a week extension of the classroom.

Hybrid Course: "Hybrid" is the name used to describe a course that combines in-the-classroom instruction with computer-based, online learning. In a Hybrid course, half of the course learning is done online and, as a result, the amount of on-campus classroom time is reduced to half. This allows students more flexible scheduling, while maintaining contact with the instructor that is typical of traditional campus classes.

Let's examine four aspects of effective course preparation:

1. Motivation
2. Convictions
3. Evaluating effectiveness
4. Critical teaching events

Element 1: Motivation Why Should We Produce Online or Web-Enhanced Courses?

1. Motivated adults can have better access to higher education and still satisfy their life responsibilities.
2. Online courses can accommodate students' various learning styles, resulting in an increased motivation to learn.
3. Students and instructors can experience a surprisingly high level of personal communication and collaboration.
4. All Internet-based communications can be immediate, accurate and economic regardless of time or place.

Online learning is not for everyone. Adolescent characteristics, some learning styles, poor self-management and unrealistic expectations about Web-based education would all favor traditional learning.

Element 2: Core Values What Basic Convictions Make Online Learning Effective?

What Is Effective Learning: Integrating knowledge with life for critical and creative thought.

People achieve high levels of critical and creative thought by integrating new knowledge with true-life application, guided by a committed teacher within a small group of co-learners.

The following five value statements can help develop a healthy philosophy about online learning. These five values permeate all the sections in this guide.

Learning Style Flexibility: Matching the learning needs of students.

People learn better by using their natural learning styles. Online technology should be harnessed to effectively accommodate the distinct learning goals of the course in a way that matches the learning-style of the student.

1. Media should broaden student interaction and collaboration about knowledge and skills.
2. Student responsibility should be improved with technology.
3. Learning experiences should be convenient through new technologies.
4. Media technology should not be the focus of course problem-solving.

Integration of New Learning: Integrating learning for critical and creative thought.

People learn better by integrating new understanding with old understanding. True learning occurs when students are able to integrate new understanding and skills with previous learning in order to create new levels of critical and creative thought. Don't be satisfied that true learning has happened when:

- faculty are satisfied
 - information is available
 - technology is efficient
1. Integration happens when a student recognizes how new learning fits in with older learning and how it can be useful in real-life situations.
 2. We are equipping the learner to think critically and creatively about problems and solutions that benefit people and society.
 3. A student should be equipped for life to maximize linear and non-linear learning experiences in an environment of constant change and uncertain predictability.
 - a. People live and work in an environment that appears chaotic.
 - b. The traditional university setting tends to isolate students from that environment to encourage focused, linear learning.
 - c. However, people learn both linearly and non-linearly in settings that mirror their natural environments, wherein learning must be applied.
 4. An effective course (on-campus or online) attempts to help students know in both linear and non-linear formats what changes and doesn't change, what is predictable and not predictable regarding the field of study.
 5. Acquiring new skills for doing Web-based research will greatly enhance learning and working productivity. (Based on a new definition of *expert*: one who can find the right information.)

Granting Self-management: Convenience to schedule and learning-style.

People learn better if study is at convenient times and places and in balance with other life demands. The learner can excel if he/she is empowered as the manager of his/her learning experiences that are convenient to one's personal life demands and learning style.

1. Faculty who view themselves as mentors or directors of learning experiences (not the source of) excel in online courses.
2. Learning experiences will improve in correlation to how technologies become more transparent to faculty/learners or at least user-friendly and efficient. New technology should allow learners to focus more on managing their learning experiences, rather than on learning the technology.

Heart of Passion: Commitment to students and course.

People learn better from committed teachers who give personal assessment and encouragement. Instructors can revolutionize learning by being passionate about helping learners become critical thinkers and leaders for the benefit of society.

1. A basic need of learners is to sense they belong in a class and are accepted without pretense.
2. The learning environment is greatly affected by instructors who are passionate about society's needs and address them in the course.

True Life, Small Group Involvement: Using real-life and relationships.

People learn better by utilizing true-life settings and a small group environment when applying accurate knowledge. Most people learn best in close-to-life situations with a caring, interactive community of co-learning mentors and students.

1. Meaningful relationships are usually not extendable beyond 12-15 people in one group.
2. A totally asynchronous, online course as a stand-alone has limited abilities to effectively change a student's understanding and behavior.
3. People learn best when instruction occurs in close-to-life situations, where the focus is not on information but on real world application.

Element 3: Evaluating Effectiveness

What Student Attitudes Reflect an Effective Online Class?

How can faculty know if their course is effective? An array of course assessment options are possible, but the true test will be borne out in new thought and practice in life. Immediate online measurement tools are archived discussions, assignments, quizzes, exams, surveys, etc. Whatever tools are used, the following five student attitudes should be monitored at various points during the course.

1. Excitement: Students will be excited to use new knowledge and skills in their lives and careers.
2. Enjoyment: Students will enjoy knowing and learning from other students.

3. Assurance: Students will be sure that the instructor cared about them and the course.
4. Appreciation: Students will appreciate the course matched their schedule and learning style.
5. Eagerness: Students will be eager to excel as a result of being in control of their learning.

Element 4: Effective Online Teaching Activities

What is effective teaching? The following six foundational methods of effective teaching apply to teaching in general, but are of particular importance for an online course because of the geographical distance between the instructor and student. By integrating six methods of effective teaching into course modules, the instructor can give students better experiences with true learning.

Effectiveness is not necessarily accomplished by ensuring that all six elements surface in each module. Some modules may focus on just one element, like motivation; however, some disciplines require varied mixes of the elements. Most courses should address all elements at appropriate times.

Effective Teaching Activities: What Are the Key Activities that Lead to Online Effectiveness?

1. Motivation: Instructor motivates his/her students by bridging student interests with course goals.
2. Instruction: Instructor communicates essential knowledge and skills in an easy- to-remember format.
3. Demonstration: Instructor demonstrates real-life application with practical models.
4. Application: Instructor arranges real-life situations to encourage learning integration.
5. Collaboration: Instructor guides group interaction to encourage critical and creative thinking.
6. Evaluation: Instructor crystallizes true learning by productive assessment and immediate feedback.

Motivation: Bridge Interests and Desires

1. Assert high expectations about your ability to teach and the students' ability to develop as leaders.
2. Seek to establish...
 - a. your credibility to teach this subject
 - b. good relationships with the students
 - c. An atmosphere of vulnerability between you and the class.
3. Bridge student interests and desires with the central application of the course for the students.
 - a. Discover common ground between the students' concerns/desires and the course's key principles.
 - b. Help students connect their previous experiences and learning with the course.
 - c. Give them opportunities to express such experiences to the class.
 - i. Relate their past with current challenges in the field of study.
 - d. Stir their curiosity about that central application with questions like:
 - i. What do they want in life related to the course?



- ii. How are they getting what they want?
 - iii. How will the course help them get what they want and need?
- e. Forecast what could happen if they fail or succeed in applying this course.
- 4. Equip them to become self-starters in this area of training, desiring to excel in order to serve others with humility.
- 5. Expose students to real life experiences that turn “should feel need” into “do feel need.”
- 6. Avoid improper ways of motivating students to master the course:
 - a. Just to get a high grade
 - b. To gain a false sense of mastery of material
 - c. Sense of pride from knowledge
 - d. False success formula

Instruction

Communicate the essential principles and skills of this subject.

Instruction: Nurture Understanding

1. Identify the minimum key “facts” needed to master the subject.
 - a. Prioritize each fact and arrange it so as to make understanding easier.
 - b. Ensure that students see how each part of the course contributes toward the central application referred to in the Motivation section.
 - c. Ensure that students also see from objective truth that each principle is vital to the field in practice.
 - d. Explain necessary skills for using the course’s knowledge.
2. Create transferable mental or visual images to help students retain and transfer the principles:
 - a. story-telling
 - b. axioms
 - c. attractive images or pictures
 - d. logic
 - e. tangible objects
 - f. actions
 - g. drama or music
 - h. graphs-charts
3. Lead the students to memorize and internalize those essential facts through frequent review.
4. Teach them how to think accurately and critically about the subject’s basic truth.
5. Teach them how to constantly grow in personally learning the subject for life. Avoid spoon-feeding truth that they can self-feed.
6. Provide summaries of essential information before exam times.

Demonstration: Reveal Practicality

1. Reveal how the course's essential truths and skills can be useful in life, career and society.
2. Use role-playing:
 - a. guest speakers
 - b. live situations
 - c. media resources
3. Explain how the course's truths have changed your life.
4. Give examples or role-play how students can use the principles and skills of the course to change lives.
5. Consider how these personal life areas may be affected by the course:
 - a. Self: How does this course affect their character, self-image, life balance, life-views and overall leadership development?
 - b. People: How does this course affect a healthy family life, social relationships, and quality of contribution to society?
6. Clearly explain and act out an easy-to-remember model of application.

Demonstration

Model real-life application of the course with practical methods or skills.

Application: Hands-on Involvement

1. Equip the students for leadership by mastering the use of facts and skills.
 - a. Character: What kind of person must they become in order to have credibility as a leader in this field?
 - b. Concern: How can they develop concern--and even compassion--to use this course to help solve others' problems?
 - c. Content: What do they need to know/do in order to become a leader in this field?
2. Expose the students to controlled and uncontrolled situations where they can use the course.
 - a. Clarify the purpose of the involvement.
 - b. Use a mixture of controlled and uncontrolled situations that require students to retain, use and master the course's principles and skills.
3. Give challenging but reasonable assignments.
 - a. Choose assignments that help students learn to think analytically and creatively. (Remember, leaders must be thinkers before they are doers.)
 - b. For learning to take place, a student must actively think through the relevance of the ideas taught with regards to his/her behavior and then act out that behavior.
 - i. We retain:
 - a. 10% of what we hear
 - b. 50% of what we see
 - c. 90% of what we do
 - c. If the Application element is done properly, most students should be able to retain what they learn to use the course.

Application

Arrange real-life assignments to encourage old and new learning integration.

- d. Don't hesitate to give the students assignments that are challenging (difficulty is a necessary part of the learning process).
 - e. Encourage experimentation and creative thinking that take students outside traditional boxes of solving problems and into new paradigms (old thinking will rarely solves new problems).
 - f. Include problem-solving situations that reflect real life.
4. Involve the students in any of the following activities, with clearly stated action points:
 - a. textbook and outside readings
 - b. frequent quizzes
 - c. case studies
 - d. skill profiles
 - e. discussion boards
 - f. tools or handbook creation
 - g. service performance
 5. Invite students to make lesson presentations for the class to analyze.
 6. Have students submit work to outside organizations for awards or prizes.

Collaboration: Peer Interaction

1. Aim at productive student/faculty collaboration as a key to a deeper level of new knowledge generation.
2. Foster a common, embraced learning goal of the community of learners.
3. Remember people's habits change more readily as peer involvement affects their thinking and behavior.
4. Reward group initiative, critical thinking and creativity.
5. Common goals for collaboration:
 - a. Provide a comfortable setting for contribution by all group members.
 - b. Enable convenient collaboration without regard to time or place.
 - c. Archive meeting notes and student exchanges.
 - d. Provide students with experience and support in teamwork.
 - e. Help students learn from each another.
6. Ask groups of students to seek breakthroughs in collaboration.
 - a. A breakthrough in combat happens when strong enemy lines are penetrated by a new arrangement of one's own existing forces.
 - b. A breakthrough in learning happens when a formidable problem is solved by new connections or discovery of existing information.

Collaboration

Liberate small group interaction to create breakthrough ideas.

Evaluation

Crystallize true learning by evaluation and correction.

Evaluation: Assess Progress

1. Maximize the students' mastery of the course, so that they can apply the course in future learning experiences, life development and vocational endeavors.

2. Note carefully students' attitude, attention and actions during the application element.
 - a. Students are notorious about using their new, inaccurate knowledge in zealous and naïve ways.
 - b. At proper moments, mentor them in light of your notes so they can excel. They may be unaware of such things until you bring them out.
 3. Continue to develop a concept of accountability between peers, with the instructor and professionals.
 4. Ask students to discuss what happened after each involvement experience.
 - a. List questions for students to discern if the major principles and skills are being caught. Some questions could be:
 - i. What do they think and feel about using this course (is it vital)?
 - ii. What progress has been made in their personal growth and leadership development?
 - iii. How could they improve their use of the course?
 - iv. What convictions are necessary to maximize this course?
 - v. Are they confident they could hand off those convictions to others?
 - b. Encourage students enlightening them as to how well they have begun to understand and use this course.
 - c. Remind them to view challenging tasks as an important part of the training process.
 - d. Use students who have excelled in the experience model for others what they did and pinpoint their good points, while improving the not so good.
 5. Encourage ongoing personal study with diligence and zeal.
 6. Connect with qualified mentors.
 7. Use these aids:
 - a. tests/quizzes
 - b. essays
 - c. surveys
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Implementing the Seven Principles

The American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) has posted an excellent article *Implementing the Seven Principles: Technology as Lever* by Arthur W. Chickering and Stephen C. Ehrmann on their Web site at www.aahe.org/technology/ehrmann.htm. Chickering and Ehrmann seek to guide educators in connecting the practices of residential and distance learning.

Credits

Online programs at these institutions are sources for this guide:

- The University of Memphis:
 - Faculty Resource Center: <http://support.memphis.edu/train>
 - Center for Academic Excellence: cae-server.memphis.edu/index2.html
- Southwest Tennessee Community College: <http://ww2.stcc.cc.tn.us/>
- Tennessee Board of Regents *Regents Online Degrees Program*: www.tn.regentsdegrees.org
- WebCT: www.webct.com
- Mentergy: www.mentergy.com/ (formerly Allen Communications - corporate training firm for the US Air Force)
- Langevin Training Services: www.langevin.com/ (one of the world's largest corporate trainer training firms)
- Pennsylvania State University World Campus: www.worldcampus.psu.edu/
- University of Central Florida: reach.ucf.edu/
- University of Washington: www.extension.washington.edu/online/
- World Class Strategies: www.worldclasstrategies.com/ (an online learning consulting firm)

Have an Outstanding Class!

We've given you enough to think on. Enjoy producing your online course. We trust your online teaching experience will be a rewarding one. Don't forget two key convictions about online course production:

- *Your online course can give motivated adults greater access to higher education as they meet life's demands.*
- *People achieve higher levels of critical and creative thought by integrating new knowledge with true-life application, guided by a committed instructor within a small group of co-learners.*

*The Online Curriculum Development Team
Extended Programs
The University of Memphis*