BEST PRACTICES IN ONLINE TEACHING

Fall 2017
So you want to teach online?

**Myth**

- Online students are comfortable with technology
- I can just use my face-to-face lesson “stuff”
- Teaching online is easier; the class just runs itself

**Fact**

- You will connect with your students
- You will receiving emails all day and night
- You will spend more time on your online classes
- Online teaching is rewarding

C. Jamroz 2017
Communicating
Planning, Designing, & Adapting

Your time

Grading
Interacting
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The Necessaries

Course Design-An Organized Course

The first step is to work backwards; lay out the plot for where you want the course to go and end before you begin. Decide if you want to design the course modules as chapters, topics, weeks, etc. While we recommend weeks as the easiest modules, the course itself will dictate the design. For example, a very content driven course may work more efficiently as topics.

- **Tip:** creation of modules makes it easier to move your class from a 16-week to a 12-week to an 8-week and back again.
- **Consistency in the "look/navigation" of each week creates predictability and helps both you and your students stay organized.**
- **Labels:** Be consistent with your labels. If you choose to organize your content in weeks, you need to use weeks for the entire semester.

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**Example 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Submodules: Use submodules for content that repeats weekly.

Checklists, Assignment Lists, or To Do Lists

These are lists of what the students are expected to complete each week. There are many options to choose from but stay consistent each week.

- These are helpful to keep students organized
- The more consistent you can be, the more successful your students will be

Example 1

Example 2

Early in my online teaching career, I posted two different To Do lists one week. I asked the students to vote on which one they liked better and majority would rule for the format moving forward. The students picked the opposite list than I would have picked!
You can create your own or take advantage of the Checklist option in our LMS.

- See your friendly campus instructional designer for help with LMS checklists.

- Consistency with due dates
  - Whether things are due weekly or bi-weekly, be consistent and clear each week/module.

Example

I always have my weeks start on Mondays at 8pm, weekly quizzes starting on Thursday at 8am, and the entire week ending the following Monday at 8pm...and then the new week will start when the old week closes.

Experienced instructor recommendations

I open the week on Monday nights at 7pm, and the previous week closes at 12am. There are two benefits to this schedule. 1) The overlap provides more flexibility and allows students to reference the previous week if needed. 2) This allows me time on Mondays to verify the week is ready to go live rather than working on Sunday.
Important tip from an expert
Post assignment due dates with time due and time zone. Remember, we have students in different parts of the world.

Your role

- Think about your schedule
  - If everything is due Sunday night, the highest volume of emails will probably arrive over the weekend.
- Be available and respond to each student in a timely manner
- Provide your contact info and for technical help in a variety of places (syllabus, email, course announcement, etc.), as well as standard response times and preferred communication methods
- Make clear how you’d like to be addressed
- We recommend a 24-hour response time during the week and 48 hours on the weekend. Note: many students will do the bulk of their work on the weekend.
- Set up expectations ahead of time and be clear
- Indicate whether or not you check email on Saturday or if all weekend emails will be answered Sunday night

Contact Information

Instructor’s Name:
Email: yourname@lonestar.edu (I will reply to all emails within 24 hours if sent during the week and within 48 hours if sent on the weekend)
Phone: See ** on page 15 for phone # options
Office Hours: If you would like to schedule either a face-to-face or phone conference, please email me so that we can schedule a specific time to discuss any questions you are having about the course or particular assignments.
Please address me as (insert your choice here) in your correspondence and conversation.
o Be present in the course (responding to discussion posts, check in with students, etc.)

Interact with two to three students per week within the discussion boards. It is not recommended to respond to every student each week. Both the student and instructor role changes in an online environment and students should be more active now. Respond to three different students each week until all students have interacted with the instructor.

Experienced instructor recommendation

o Consider recording a Meet Your Professor video/or an introductory video through the Instructional Media Assistance Center. This allows students to put a face to your name and emails. A professionally recorded video also conveys to students that this is an expert college course.

o Contact Monte Darland at (281) 357-3687 or monte.g.darland@lonestar.edu.

o Visit http://www.lonestar.edu/tomball-mms.htm for more information

Experienced instructor recommendation

Be flexible. Life happens, Hurricanes happen. Systems shut down. The best thing to do is make sure the course materials are also accessible somewhere outside of the LMS (for example, on Googledocs). Give students as many ways to reach you as possible.
Tools/Resources

All of these resources are available on the Lone Star College-Tomball campus.

IMAC (Instructional Media Assistance Center)
- This is a multi-purpose space designed to streamline training, support, and production of new media and technology. The manager of multimedia services maintains an office in the space and supervises work-study students which means immediate technological help is available. A faculty fellow is also available to guide instructors in integration of the technology.
- Visit [http://www.lonestar.edu/tomball-mms](http://www.lonestar.edu/tomball-mms) for more information
- Housed within IMAC are the Sound Studio and the Learning Glass

Sound Studio
- Lone Star College-Tomball created a studio designed specifically to capture high quality lectures which greatly increases the quality and standard of our recordings for online classes. This studio provides all faculty, adjunct and full-time, access to high-quality lecture capture recording capabilities.

Learning Glass
- The [Learning Glass](http://www.learning.glass) technology will enable instructors to deliver a lecture while simultaneously using a sheet of glass like a chalkboard. The technology means the student sees the professor writing in the air as the image is flipped for the video viewer. Modeling is crucial for learning but often difficult to achieve in an online environment. Students are more engaged when watching a person deliver the lesson rather than just a voice. Lone Star College-Tomball’s Learning Glass brings the person out in front of the camera and engages the learner sitting at home, work, or the park watching on their laptop or other device.
- Instructional Designer, Harlan Williams
- Instructional Technologist, Tracy Bear
Web-based Tools

Remind.com
- Another way to contact students

Instructional Video Sites
- **Adobe Spark Video**: Adobe Spark Video is a video storytelling tool. These videos have the ability to include text, images, pictures, icons, music, and your voice to help you deliver a mini-lesson that students will remember. Students can create their own stories to introduce themselves to their classmates, to review content you’ve taught, or to create a project.
- **Microsoft Office Mix**: Office Mix is an add-on feature in PowerPoint. With this tool, you can record and annotate your PowerPoint Presentations. You can then upload this to Microsoft Office Mix, which is a part of your 365 package, and assign the presentation as a link. Once your students have the link, you are able to view analytics on the lesson.

Microsoft Office 365
- All employees have access to Microsoft Office 365 for free
- Remind your students that they too have access, so no more excuses about not having Word!

Google
Google is not just a search engine...
- Google docs, Google sites, Google drive... all the google tools are free!

Video instruction
This is an integral part of online teaching. There are many resources you can use depending on your instructional needs.

Screen Capture Software for Video Instruction
- Screencast-o-matic
  - [https://screencast-o-matic.com/](https://screencast-o-matic.com/) (Free)
- Bamboo Ink (Free)
- Ink2Go ($20)
- SoftChalk (Free download-go through VTAC)
Training/Professional Development

ITCP

ITCP, or the Instructional Technology Certification Program, was specifically designed for college instructors who wish to infuse technology-rich, engaging lessons, learning activities, and teaching materials into their classrooms. Go through nine 3-hour instructional sessions and one presentation session.

Email Latoya Hardman Lewis (Latoya.H.Lewis@lonestar.edu) for details on the next available cohort.

Lynda.com

Lynda.com is an online platform available through a Lone Star College subscription that allows access to high-quality software, technology, and design instructional videos. https://www.lynda.com/signin/organization

Microsoft Office 365 Training and Certifications

Log in with your Microsoft Office 365 account and become certified on how to use Skype in the Classroom, OneNote, Accessibility Tools, and more. https://education.microsoft.com/start/welcome
Tips & Tricks

Learn from the best. Shared ideas from your fellow instructors.

Engagement Ideas

- Before class begins, email students with some helpful information to get them started. Use the roster in myLoneStar to access their email addresses. Include the following:
  - orientation requirement
  - time requirement for course
  - textbook requirement
  - procedures for the first day of class.

- Make a video to introduce yourself to the class like the Adobe Spark Video included above.
- Include tech support information in a variety of places like your syllabus and in the course itself

Engage with students early and often. Students want to feel their instructor is present for them and cares about their success.

Experienced instructor recommendation

Tech Support

24/7 tech support through LSC online

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Email</th>
<th><a href="mailto:online@lonestar.edu">online@lonestar.edu</a></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phone Number</td>
<td>1-866-614-5014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional info</td>
<td><a href="http://www.lonestar.edu/evere-at-tomball.htm">http://www.lonestar.edu/evere-at-tomball.htm</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Syllabus Additions

- Consider adding a blurb about netiquette. As one of our experienced instructor says, “An online class doesn't mean that respect isn't expected.”
- A syllabus quiz is a useful tool to encourage students to read the syllabus in Week 1.

The Extra Module

Set up an extra module called Helpful Resources or Important Documents and Links

- Include info such as:
  - Advising Information
  - Links to Lone Star Academic Calendars
  - Link to Office 365 download webpage

The Class Chat

- Set up an open discussion board for students to use. This can be used for students to ask and answer each other’s questions. You can monitor the discussion and intervene if needed.

Email tips

- Forward your d2l email to your Lone Star email.
- Add your Lone Star email to your personal cell phone. This allows you to quickly respond to students even if it is just to let them know you got the email and will respond in detail later.

- Consider holding online office hours.

Email your students who are doing well to pay a compliment. We frequently email those who are missing work but forget those who are doing well. Students are often surprised to get a positive email. This may also be helpful in keeping those students move forward as they know their professor is encouraged by their hard work.
Evening and daytime if possible. There are a variety of ways you could do this from web-based video chat tools to simply having a phone number available.

**If you do not want to give out your personal phone number, you could set up a Google voice phone number.**

Tools like Google Hangouts and Microsoft Teams are useful ways to connect with your students.

All students have access to Microsoft 365 for free. You can set up the Team and add your students.

For Google hangouts, this could be an opportunity to teach students how to set up a professional email address and have them sign up for a gmail account. This gives them access to all the Google tools like Drive, Slides, and Hangouts.

**LMS Specific Tips**

- Email directly from the gradebook
- User Progress - A useful way to see how often your students are logging in
- For more specific information, chat with VTAC about particular students
- Save your weekly announcements and discussion postings and reuse them for the next course.

Provide video or audio feedback directly in the dropbox.
Extra Resources

Web resources

- 10 Principles of Effective Online Teaching: Best Practices in Distance Education

Books

- The Online Teaching Survival Guide by Judith V. Boettcher and Rita-Marie Conrad

Special thanks to the following faculty and staff for their invaluable advice and help in compiling this handbook: Sara Bynum, Harold Fisher, Patrick Gilbert, Mary Hood, Margaret Jelinek-Lewis, Latoya Lewis, Pat Lyon, Gloria Maristany, Donielle Miller, Jennifer Richardson, Rachel Smith, and Donna Willingham.