

21 Online Instructor Responsibilities

Adapted from "25 Tips for Successful Online Course Facilitation" by Matthew Guyan
<http://elearningindustry.com/25-tips-for-successful-online-course-facilitation>

If you have any questions, or need any help with these tasks, please contact the Teaching & Learning Center. We are here to help you provide engaging and effective online classes.

Before the class starts:

1. Review the Base Course.

You should be familiar with the layout of the class, the course materials and activities. Remember that only approved course maintainers should make any changes to a base course. If you do not have access to a base course for the class(es) you are teaching, contact Christina Schwiebert to get access.

2. Import the content into your live course.

Follow the Site Rollover Process to import the content from the base course to your live course. You should always import content from an approved base course, never a live course from a previous semester.

3. Add your information to the live course.

Once you have imported the content, you must add your name and contact information where needed. You may need to modify or replace the course syllabus with your own.

4. Publish the course.

Students are unable to see the course site until you publish it. If the site is not published, you will see an alert and a Publish Now button at the top of the navigation pane on the left. The course site should be published and available to students by 8 AM on the scheduled start date.

At the start of class:

1. Post a welcome announcement.

Welcome announcements should be encouraging and positive in tone. The announcement is the equivalent to the introduction instructors would do on the first day of a class on-ground. Consider including an overview of the class, required material, and instructions for getting started.

2. Introduce yourself.

This could be part of the welcome announcement or in the forums. Encourage your students to introduce themselves in the forums.

3. Make sure everyone can access the class.

Use the statistics tool to make sure everyone is logging in. Research has shown a correlation between the number of times a student visits the class within the first week and their final grades in that class. Reach out and provide support to anyone who has not accessed the class.

4. Encourage student communication.

Encourage students to communicate with each other and with you. The forums can be a very valuable component of an online class. Make it clear that you are available to help them.

5. Verify student attendance/activity.

Attendance must be reported to the Registrar within the initial two weeks of class. Attendance should be determined by an initial assignment, test, or discussion post, not simply by site visits reported by the statistics tool.

During the class:

1. Be a positive, supportive presence.

Your role in an online class is a "guide on the side" rather than a "sage on the stage". You are more of a coach and mentor here.

2. Respond to student's emails and posts in Ask Your Instructor.

By contract, instructors are required to respond to student communications within 48 hours. In an online class, where this is the only connection students have with you, try for within 24 hours whenever possible to help resolve problems and ensure that student's learning is not disrupted.

3. Reach out to the entire class regularly.

Weekly or bi-weekly announcements should be used to update the class on their progress, any changes to the course, or remind them of upcoming projects. Don't overwhelm your students - keep the announcements to a reasonable length.

4. Provide prompt, detailed feedback.

This is more than just providing scores for assignments and tests. Good feedback helps the students develop. The timeframe for feedback varies based on the complexity of the assignment or project, but always aim to get students feedback as quickly as possible. For items like weekly assignments or discussion posts, make sure you have the feedback to students several days before they would start the next week's activity.

5. Provide additional explanations and direction as needed.

Be clear. Don't just direct students to search for information - provide the exact location or directions.

6. Support, engage, challenge, inspire and connect with your students.

Encourage active participation, critical thinking, and learner responsibility.

7. Monitor student progress.

Reach out to students who appear to be struggling or falling behind. Also watch for changes in student performance. Initiate contact with students; don't expect them to always come to you if they are having problems in the class.

8. Be available!

Don't limit your communication to just email. Are you willing to call a student who is struggling? Also consider using real-time video chat through Google Hangouts or Scopia Desktop. All students and employees have access to Hangouts through the NSCC email system. A call or video chat can help make a stronger connection with students. Consider offering weekly online "office hours" as well.

After the class ends:

1. Get feedback from students.

How did they feel the class went? What problems did they encounter? Gather suggestions for improving the course. Some, you may be able to forward to the dean and course maintainer.

2. Report final grades to the Registrar.

Your division Dean may also require you to submit a copy of the gradebook for their records. If so, you can easily export the Sakai gradebook as an Excel file or PDF.

3. Close the course site.

In Site Info, use the Manage Access option to return the course to Draft status. This will remove the course for students, so they do not have old classes cluttering up their view. Make sure you allow enough time for them to view scores and feedback!

4. Engage in a little self-reflection.

How well were you able to engage, support, challenge, engage, and connect with your students? How do you feel that you could do better next time?

These guidelines were approved by the NSCC Distance Learning Committee, September 24, 2014.