

## **Online Course Development Guidelines: Time and Quality**

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Instructors many times ask how long it will take to develop or convert a course to the online format. My answer is: The time it takes to develop an online course varies depending the type of course, the course design, your experience level, and your technological skills. It also depends on whether you are creating a new course from scratch or are converting an existing face-to-face course to online delivery.

Like many new to instructional design principles, faculty tasked with designing instruction make the mistake of jumping right into the design process and by doing so risk having to make many changes or revisions. To avoid this and make the process go smoothly follow this rule of thumb: “Prevent Poor Design, Start with a Plan”.

What many instructors and institutions fail to understand about online course conversion is that existing materials must be reviewed. The conversion must include modification and format of presentation, delivery and development technology, as well as changes to pedagogical strategies so the content transitions well to the online modality. This requires a good deal of thought and a planning phase. Many institutions have adopted standards and requirements that online courses must meet for quality, which can assist in the process. Consider all the factors, investigate and plan before embarking on the design/conversion of an online course.

### **Time Considerations**

Of the planning elements the amount of time needed to properly develop an quality course is most often grossly underestimated. Time considerations are extremely important when planning an online course and both the institution and the instructor need to be aware of just how much time should be devoted to development.

To convert an existing course to online, plan on a minimum of 120-180 hours of development time, generally 4-6 weeks. For a new fully online course it will take a minimum of 240-360 hours of development. Relying solely on tests for learning assessment is poor online practice. Allow plenty of time to develop authentic assessments in which students can demonstrate learning. Include performance, alternative & direct assessments. If you do utilize tests, plan on 2to 4 hours of time per quiz or exam to input into the LMS and adjust the settings. If you use course pack questions make sure you have the tools/software to properly upload them. You will still need to choose test settings.

The best advice is to plan ahead. The Teaching & Learning Center recommends that faculty allow at least a semester of development time for creating a fully online course. It is not 6 months of full-time work on the course but it allows faculty members to fit in web course development among their usual teaching loads and

other commitments. Some institutions provide release time to instructors so they can dedicate time to design & development.

For a hybrid course that replaces half of the "seat time" with "web time," plan on 80-120 hours of development time. For a web-enhanced course, plan on 1-2 hours per document that you plan to put online, assuming the documents are already written. Remember to consider alternative presentation methods for content to enhance student engagement ( e.g., audio, video, images/graphics, interactivity), and make sure to provide any course documents in cross platform compatible PDF format. For test creation allow the same amount of time as fully online courses, 2-4 hours per quiz or exam.

Note that If your course includes many media elements (graphics, video, audio, animations, interactive elements, etc.), the development time will increase quite a bit. Make sure you have the requisite technology/software skills to properly develop multimedia and format it for web and mobile. Always check with your school to find out what tools and resources are available to you and if the campus provides instructional assistance or services. It always helps to talk to colleagues who have designed online courses. They can provide valuable input on what works well and potential sticking points in the process.