10 Quick Tips for Moving Online

June 2020

Teaching and Learning Services

Re-thinking Key Course Elements

There is no "perfect recipe" for online course delivery. Just like face-to-face, every course that is delivered online will differ based on the instructor's experience; subject area content and pedagogies; available technologies; and other contexts. That said, here are some general best practices and recommendations to keep in mind when you're re-thinking your face-to-face course for online delivery.

1. Don't reinvent the wheel. As much as possible, use the lessons, activities, and assignments from your existing face-to-face class. You don't have to radically re-think everything in your course. The tips below will go through some of the key elements that we recommend you consider changing for online delivery, but keep as much of the rest as you reasonably can.

2. Plan a consistent weekly structure for your course. Many students (and instructors) find self-regulation in online courses challenging and find a consistent weekly structure beneficial. For example, make reading quizzes due every Friday at midnight, live sessions every Tuesday during scheduled class time, and weekly assignments due every Sunday at midnight. It doesn't matter which days and times you pick for each type of activity, but do your best to keep a consistent weekly structure. Also consider organizing your course this way in the learning management system (LMS).

3. Re-think your lecture time. While it's tempting to simply convert 3 hours of face-to-face lecture time into 3 hours of live, synchronous class, that's not the wisest course of action for several reasons. Consider breaking your weekly lecture time up into a ratio of 1:1:1: One hour of recorded videos that cover foundational materials, one hour of live class with interactive activities (and micro-lectures as needed), and one hour of self-directed learning activities where students work independently or in small groups to complete tasks like problem sets, worksheets, or case studies. This ratio won't work for every course; it's just a starting point for re-thinking lecture time.

> There is no "perfect recipe" for online course delivery. Teaching and Learning Services is here to help you work through your choices and to triage you to other supports, as necessary.

Next Steps…

1. Do the self-paced online workshop, *Moving Your Face-to-Face Course Online Quickly* (http://bit.ly/macewantlsmovingonlinequickly). This workshop provides a big-picture overview of how to re-think your course for online delivery and takes approximately 1.5 hours to complete.

2. If you're teaching live online (synchronous) classes, watch the Blackboard Collaborate Ultra training videos from the eLearning team (http://bit.ly/macewancollabtraining), and then sign up for the *Adding Interactivity to Engage Students in Live Collaborate Sessions* workshop by visiting the TLS web site and clicking on "Workshops/Courses" (https://bit.ly/macewantls).

3. If you still have questions, unique teaching circumstances, want some practice with a tool, or are feeling overwhelmed by choice, book a consult with us by emailing teaching@macewan.ca.

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4. Re-think midterms and exams. Delivering high-stakes exams online means that students' grades might depend on the quality of their technology, and that can mean extra stress. They also present several academic integrity concerns. Do you *really* need to give online midterms and final exams? Could you convert your assessment into a take-home or open-book test, or provide an alternate project or activity? If you feel that you must give online midterms and exams, consider the following point…

5. Keep your content chunky. There are several benefits to having smaller, more frequent learning activities in your course. If you're recording lecture videos, keep them under 10 minutes if possible. If you must give large-stakes midterms and exams, break them up into smaller weekly tests. If you have major assignments, break them down into several parts that are due throughout the course.

6. Be continually mindful of accessibility. While it's always essential to be mindful of accessibility, teaching online adds an extra layer of consideration related to technology. You might be surprised by how many students don't have a computer or reliable internet access. Some things you can do to reduce technology inequity for students include:

- Doing a survey of your students' technology capabilities at the start of the course.
- Giving students the option to attend live classes or watch the recording and submit a summary.
- Giving students the option to work in groups or alone if connecting with others is challenging.

7. Enhance your virtual presence. Instructor virtual presence usually correlates positively to student satisfaction in online courses. Enhance your virtual presence by doing things like using your webcam in recorded lectures, recording welcome videos, sharing photos, and replying to students in discussion forums. Above all, just be present in your course.

8. Develop and share a communication plan. A big part of successful online teaching is managing expectations, especially around communication. Create a weekly schedule for when you plan to be replying to emails, checking discussion forums, running live classes, and available for live support. Be sure to share that plan with your students.

Sample Communication Plan	
Answer emails	M/W/F/Sun from 9-10 AM
Check help forum	M/W/F/Sun from 9-10 AM
Check other forums	Friday mornings
Office hours	Wednesday from 2-3 PM
Live class	Monday from 2-3 PM

9. Plan interaction thoughtfully. Instructional designers often think about how students interact with three elements in online courses: the content, the instructor, and their peers. Ideally, your course will provide opportunities for all three types of interactions. Just be thoughtful about what you require. Give students opportunities to interact with each other in discussion forums, live sessions, and/or by doing optional group work. Also make sure that students have opportunities to get to know each other personally by doing things like having them post introductions and sharing relevant personal experiences related to the course content.

10. Ensure your course content is well organized. Your online materials might seem organized and make perfect sense to you, but that might not be the case for your students. Have a colleague who doesn't know your course well go through it with "fresh eyes" to see if the way it's organized online makes sense to them. Consider asking your students for feedback as well, so that you can refine your course materials for the next time you teach online.