



Best Practices for Online Instruction

Improving Student Engagement

1. Know your learner.

- Provide opportunity for students to introduce themselves to you and their peers in week 1.
- Use polls during synchronous class meetings to tailor lessons.
- Utilize questionnaires or surveys to gather data about students.
- Encourage students to share personal and professional experiences as they apply to the content.

2. Establish clear expectations.

- Clarify when you are available and how quickly you will respond to emails.
- Establish norms for student behavior and interaction.
- Provide explicit instruction for students to review the syllabus and the course shell.
- Help students plan ahead by scaffolding major assignments.
- Clarify any specific expectations that are unique to you as an instructor.

3. Create an active online presence.

- Create a personalized welcome to class announcement.
- Add a robust bio (with photo) in Course Information.
- Invite students to introduce themselves in a week 1 discussion board post.
- Establish weekly, virtual office hours.
- Use announcements throughout the course.
- Be active in the discussion boards, responding to students directly or to the group as a whole.
- Use synchronous class meetings 3 times during term.

4. Provide effective feedback.

- Respond to students' questions in a consistent and timely fashion.
- Provide a criteria for grading and/or use a rubric.
- When commenting on student work, use specific examples or the student's words.
- Utilize synchronous class meetings to give students guidance with major assignments and tips for success.
- Address FAQ or common errors that occur by posting announcements and providing resources as needed.

5. Facilitate a supportive learning community.

- Establish norms for student behavior and interaction.
- Maintain a positive and motivational tone/voice when communicating with students.
- Create or use an existing exercise in which the students get to know one another and you get to know them.
- Be active in the discussion boards (at least 4x a week).
- Encourage students to share helpful ideas or resources with class.
- Provide a "Wrap-Up" each week.
- Provide an opportunity at the end of the course for students to reflect.

6. Respect diversity.

- Assess for different learning styles.
- Refer students to the Start Here button where students can access resources provided by Brandman University.
- Provide easy access to recordings of lectures, lecture notes, and additional resources.
- Incorporate videos and web sources to supplement content.

7. Expand your repertoire of best practices.

- Correspond with Course Contact/Maintainer/Custodian regarding changes in course material before the term.
- Expand resources each time you teach a course.
- Share additions you make to the course that were successful with students with Course Contact/Maintainer/Custodian.
- Attend CII trainings to stay current with the LMS and other course technologies (e.g., Blackboard, Adobe Connect, and Turnitin.com)