Best Practices when Teaching Online

Be Present

Students will benefit greatly from frequent interaction with you. You can let your presence be known with your students in the following ways:

- When utilizing discussion boards, interact with your students and participate in discussions.
- Encourage students to speak to you if they have questions or concerns and respond to them in a timely manner.
- Clearly communicate any changes or updates in your course to your students.

Emphasize Interaction

Creating a collaborative online learning environment is imperative to student success and can be done in many ways. Some examples are:

- Utilize the Discussion Board feature in Blackboard to:
  o Facilitate discussions or debates on course content as you would in class.
  o Allow your students to share their work to receive feedback from their peers.
  o Encourage your students to ask questions about course logistics and content. This will allow you to respond to the students, as well as for them to assist each other.
- Have your students work in small groups to complete a task.

Emulate the Face-to-Face Experience

If you are using an online learning environment as an alternative to face to face instruction, there are a few things you can do to emulate the face-to-face learning experience. By mapping out your plan, your students can fully understand their transition into online learning.

Example of plan mapping

Provide

Date	Activity	Online Equivalent
Monday, March 23rd	Lecture on… Discussion of…	Collaborate Ultra meeting
Wednesday, March 25th	Lecture on… Quiz	Collaborate Ultra meeting Quiz in LMS
Friday, March 27th	Lecture on… Paper due	Collaborate Ultra meeting Assignment Submission
Etc.		

Design Your Course Effectively

Having your course designed in a way that is easy for the students to navigate and understand is crucial. In order to design your course in an effective way, you could:

- Split up your content into module, units, or folders.

- In each module, unit, or folder you could include:
  - A description of what will be covered.
  - Learning objectives specific to that module, unit, or folder.
  - A To-Do List containing everything the students need to accomplish.
- Adopt a naming convention for the different components of your course. For example:
  - Module 1 could contain: M1 Assignment, M1 Reading, M1 Quiz

Clear Expectations

Clearly communicating criteria to your students will eliminate possible confusion and will allow for students to focus on the content. To communicate your expectations and criteria, you can:

- Provide rubrics and examples of exemplary work for your students so the criteria and standard of work for a particular assignment is clearly articulated.

Example of Discussion Board Rubric

Criteria	Exemplary	Proficient	Limited	Unsatisfactory
Quality of Post – Evaluate your students on the appropriateness of their responses and how they prompt further discussion.				
Relevance of Post -Evaluate your students on how their posts relate to the topic.				
Contribution to the Learning Community – Evaluate your students on their awareness of the group's needs, and their effort in participating in the learning community.				
Timeliness of discussion contributions – Evaluate whether your students are posting often enough, and during the required period.				
Writing (Mechanics) – Evaluate your students' posts for spelling errors. Grammatical errors, and proper citation.				

Give Feedback

Offering feedback to your students is crucial for their improvement. The following strategies will allow you to have an efficient stream of feedback for your students:

- Inform your students of your "feedback schedule" by stating, for example, "Most often, a student can expect a response to email within…"
- Be open with students on how they can improve their work and offer them practical suggestions.