

Checklist for Distance Learning Instructors

Before the class begins

- Get familiar with your learning management system (LMS) and access any tutorials showing how to use specific features such as:
 - Posting/editing Announcements/Assignments; modifying due dates
 - Adding, editing, or rearranging discussion forums on the Discussion Board
 - Setting up quizzes and major exams
- Check for Broken links
 - If you copy your course from one semester to the next, be sure to check for broken links
 - Nothing says outdated or stale faster than a dead link
 - Keep your resources fresh and current each term
- Course Accessibility
 - Test course navigation and proactively correct to solve accessibility issues
 - Contact technical support staff for assistance in adding video introductions and video lectures to the online course and to verify that all multimedia meets disability accommodation requirements such as closed captions on videos, transcripts of all audio and videos including YouTube videos
 - Check all media for proper display, video playback, and create alt tags for all images so that screen readers can pick up the images.
- Welcome and Manage Course Content
 - Create an audio or video welcome from the instructor or post a photo and brief biography on your Home Page for the opening day of class
 - Modify the release dates for announcements/assignments/quizzes/exams/discussion posts that have been copied from a previous term
- Course Organization Expectations
 - Create a course calendar that clearly outlines due dates for readings and assignments
 - Provide students with your contact information, preferred method of communication, expected response times to email messages and questions (generally 24 hours)
 - Identify course policies, grading policies, attendance policies.
 - Send a welcome message to students with information such as required textbooks and/or software and other materials needed such as access codes. Include how to purchase such codes.
 - Include technical support contact information
 - Gradebook set up – confirm that your gradebook settings are accurate for calculations
- Pedagogical/Instructional Design Expectations
 - Ensure that your course goals and learning outcomes are clearly stated
 - Establish netiquette rules or course ground rules emphasizing how to participate in online discussion forums, acceptable behaviors in the online learning environment
 - Set up or revise course discussions to encourage critical thinking on the discussion board
 - Student Orientation -- Use a scavenger hunt activity to get students familiar with your course and where to find course materials

The First Week of Class

- Managerial Expectations
 - Contact missing students; watch out for non-participants during the first week of class and contact them by phone to see if they have login/access difficulties – avoid using the email within the LMS program as students may not be able to login to the LMS to receive said email
 - Inform students of withdrawal timelines (academic calendar listing important dates). If students are unable to gain access to course materials or if they decide this is not the right class for them, inform them about deadlines and how to contact the registrar's office
 - Minimize delays – if students are late adds, contact them promptly with support information about how to gain access to course materials and how to login to the LMS
- Set the Climate
 - Communicate regularly through announcements. Nothing makes an online student feel more isolated or alienated than the sense that the instructor is rarely present
 - Facilitate an icebreaker activity related to a course key objective or content
 - Model discussion response behavior and tone
 - Monitor the discussion area daily as well as email and respond within 24 hours
 - Challenge your students by asking questions that apply to the readings and communicate high expectations