

Online Education

Managing Time Online (Part 2)

Last week we discussed the gold standard of online learning experience design: Your course is complete prior to students ever sitting in their virtual seats. Your intended outcomes are firmly in your sights and you can now devote time during the semester to feedback, assessment, and mentoring. Your solid design and your consistent presence work together to achieve everyone's educational dreams.

But time demands online are unique. Face-to-face, we're used to being "on" — in class, during office hours, and occasionally "by appointment." Now that you are teaching online, how do you manage the irregular and sometimes near-constant flow of student demands?

STRUCTURE WITH INTENT

Consider your own work habits and time constraints as well as those of your average students.

- Do you like to grade work on the weekends? Have student work due on or before Friday nights.
- Do you want to give your busy and often employed students time over the weekend to work? Have work due on Monday or Tuesday.
- If you assign a large final project, presentation or term paper, consider having it due well before the end of the semester when so many other requirements compete for time.

Think of your students. Think of yourself. Design accordingly.

SET EXPECTATIONS

Tell students when you'll be available and when you will not. If you want your weekends to be your own, let students know they can expect a response within 24 hours Monday through Friday. This eases understandable anxiety when students reach out and don't hear a response right away and reserves your weekend for yourself.

If you have 15 students in a course, every hour you invest equates to about four minutes per student, 20 students and an hour equates to three minutes each. If you spend six to eight hours per week guiding learning experiences and providing feedback, that equates to 20 or 25 minutes of your time per student per week. Is this a reasonable expectation



that a student may have of you? Try scheduling about an hour a day, at a minimum, to maintain consistent presence.

MANAGE YOUR PRESENCE

Trying to respond to every instance of student contribution in paragraph form can be exhausting. Consider your role within discussions. Are you a participant or a moderator? Developing your emoderating skills can save you considerable time. University of Western Sydney has a brilliant short e-moderating guide¹.

If a student asks a question privately, ask yourself if the whole cohort will benefit from your response. If appropriate, make a course announcement or send a group email in addition to your individual response. When providing direct feedback on assignments, can you respond to a cohort of students and their work in general, and then provide specific details for each student? Cutting and pasting responses is tempting, but many students connect and share feedback. It can be disheartening to receive an exact copy of the kudos or critique received by one's peer.

MASTER THE TOOLS

Knowing your way around your online platform of choice can always save you time. If your course is in Blackboard, OIT has put together some handy online tutorials². OIT also provides regular training opportunities during the semester. If you want to tackle course design and a variety of the latest tools, consider applying for iTeach. Lastly, your eLearning Instructional Designer is always ready to help.

LEARN MORE

¹<http://goo.gl/EUOeE4>

²<https://goo.gl/wDMPzy>

<https://iteachu.uaf.edu/online-training/grow-skills/time-management/>