

Challenges in Teaching an Online Course

Kathy Cousins-Cooper, Ph.D., J.D.
Associate Professor of Mathematics
North Carolina A&T State University
Greensboro, NC 27411
cousinsk@ncat.edu

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Abstract

This talking points paper template will present some issues that occur when preparing, teaching, and evaluating an online class. If you have not taught an online class before, there are issues that arise that you may not think about until they present themselves. In this paper, the author provides notes on these issues and offers guidelines on how she handled them.

If you are planning on teaching a course online, are currently teaching an online course, or are providing online assignments to a class with which you meet, you want to consider the issues presented in this paper. The presenter has taught online courses in College Algebra.

Outline/Presentation Notes

Overview

- Preparing for your online course
- Teaching your online course
- Evaluation of your online students' progress
- Suggestions

Preparing For Your Online Course

- Planning for an online course is much more stringent than for a traditional course (Meyen et al., 1997).
- Approach the planning phase by using your students' perspectives on entering the course.
- Things that you have an opportunity to say in class, you will have to post to the course online and in advance.
- Instructors should provide a detailed explanation of the course materials, organization of the course, and the expectations and responsibilities of the course before learning begins (VanSickle, 2003).
- As a part of the planning process, you may have to state the obvious as we do in traditional classrooms (e.g., print a copy of the syllabus).
- Provide students with an information sheet that requests data on the students and require them to submit it back to you as soon as possible
- You may want to include in the information sheet items that request students' interest in online instruction, prior experience with the Internet, and technical skills (Meyen et al., 1997).
- Similar to a traditional course, make sure you establish rules. Examples include the following:
 - 1) Late work policy
 - 2) Academic honesty

- 3) University attendance policy and your own class attendance policy
- 4) Military deployment policy
- 5) Instructions on how to turn in work
- 6) Incomplete and late assignments
- 7) Posting grades
- 8) Online behavior
- 9) Departmental organizational chart

Example: Late Work Policy

LATE/MAKE UP WORK: For homework, late work will NOT be accepted. For quizzes, late work will NOT be accepted. For tests, notify me in advance if you cannot take a test on a scheduled day so that you can take the test early. You must present or fax a valid written excuse in order to take a test early. If you miss a test due to some **emergency**, you will only be given a make-up test accompanied with an official, written excuse (e.g., a note from the emergency room of a hospital or a funeral program). Notes from the infirmary or from your parents will NOT be accepted to make up a test. You must make up the test within one week of the scheduled test date. Exceptions to this rule will be analyzed on a case by case basis. After that time, you will not be given a make-up test, and a score of zero (0) will be recorded for your test grade.

Example: Online Behavior

Online Courtesy Code

Common courtesy (e.g., in e-mail messages, threaded discussions, chat sessions) is expected. Please do not use inappropriate or offensive language in communications.

Teaching Your Online Course

- Research indicates that interaction is important to distance learner satisfaction (Berge, 2002).
- An important component to Web-based instruction is communication (VanSickle, 2003).
- Students expect more feedback and prompt responses.
- The more you provide students with opportunities to participate, the more successful your online course will be.
- Do not expect students to remember important deadlines.
- Students will complain about technical difficulties.
- Encourage all students enrolled in your online course to participate as soon as possible.
- Online teaching time is devoted to responding to students' work and e-mail communications (Meyen et al., 1997).
- Establish your office hours and post them several places on your course Web site.
- With the exception of office hours, try not to establish a set time for students to log on to the course. Students appreciate flexibility.

Evaluation of Your Online Students' Progress

- Monitoring your students' progress is important because online instruction is a form of independent study (Meyen et al., 1997).

- All quizzes, tests, homework assignments, and assigned readings should be prepared before the course begins so that students will know what is required from day one of the course.
- Alternate forms of assessment can be used in an online class, such as a student's participation in the class.
- Also, the use of rubrics help to clarify the grading process for students (Havice et al., 2000), and rubrics allow the students to evaluate themselves and concentrate on areas where they need improvement.

Suggestions

- Plan on spending more of your time in the preparation part of an online course.
- Realize that most of your teaching time will be devoted to communication in the form of responding to e-mails and providing feedback to students' work.
- Be prompt in responding to students' e-mails.
- Remind students of deadlines.

URLS

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