

RESOURCES FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICE IN ONLINE EDUCATION

BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTRODUCTION

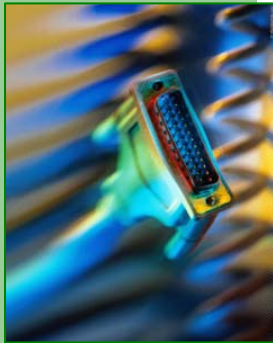
Resources for Effective Practice in Online Education has been written to assist you in enhancing the quality of your online course and ensuring its success. It has been assembled to present principles and practices worth considering in designing and implementing online education. Thus, the guide should be considered a continuing resource as you develop and refine your online courses. The guide should also be considered a “work-in-progress,” intended to be constantly updated and refined as experience and research enlarge our understanding of online teaching and learning.

The guide assumes that the course under development is intended to be an interactive experience, one that fosters the development of new knowledge, skills, and attitudes in learners by promoting their active involvement in the construction of knowledge and their active participation and responsibility for their own learning. Auto-tutorial, didactic, and non-interactive online instruction may be appropriate for some courses and some learners, but it is expected that most online courses at Boise State will emphasize interactive and active learning strategies. This perspective is incorporated into the guide.

The **first section** of the guide consists of a brief summary of selected general principles of teaching and learning that appear especially appropriate for consideration in online education. These principles have been drawn from commonly accepted theoretical and research sources and are intended to give broad general direction to developers of online instruction. Also included are brief descriptions of the characteristics of active learning—a crucial component of a successful online course.

The **second section** of the guide contains a set of suggestions or recommended practices for effective online instruction. These practices are drawn from the wisdom of experienced online instructors and the literature of web-based instruction. The suggestions are intended to be practical, effective, and specific practices worth considering as you implement an online course.

The **third section** of this guide contains a course-planning tool and a table listing features of the Blackboard course-management software used at Boise State. The table identifies features or capabilities of the software, provides brief descriptions of their intended use, and offers, where appropriate, questions or prompts for effective use of the software. Together, the course-planning tool and the table provide a starting point for planning a course and provide guidance for ensuring that course-management tools are being used to their full capability and effectiveness. ✕



SECTION ONE: GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Seven Standards of Good Practice
Learner-Centered Psychological Principles
Characteristics of Active Learning

SECTION TWO: EFFECTIVE PRACTICE GUIDELINES

Suggestions for Effective Practice in Online Instruction

SECTION THREE: DESIGN TOOLS

Course Planning Tool
Checklist for Designing an Online Course in Blackboard



HIGH EXPECTATIONS ARE IMPORTANT FOR EVERYONE—FOR THE POORLY PREPARED, FOR THOSE UNWILLING TO EXERT THEMSELVES, AND FOR THE BRIGHT AND WELL MOTIVATED.

SEVEN STANDARDS OF GOOD PRACTICE

by Arthur W. Chickering and Zelda F. Gamson

The following is a brief summary of the Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education, as compiled in a study supported by the American Association of Higher Education, the Education Commission of States, and The Johnson Foundation. These Seven Principles are also presented in Chickering and Gamson's *Applying the Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education* (1991).

1. Encourage Contact Between Students and Faculty

Frequent student-faculty contact in and out of classes is the most important factor in student motivation and involvement. Knowing a few faculty members well enhances students' intellectual commitment and encourages them to think about their own values and plans.

2. Develop Reciprocity and Cooperation Among Students

Learning is enhanced when it is more like a team effort than a solo race. Good learning, like good work, is collaborative and social, not competitive and isolated. Working with others often increases involvement in learning, while sharing one's own ideas and responding to others' reactions sharpens thinking and deepens understanding.

3. Encourage Active Learning

Learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much just by sitting in classes listening to teachers, memorizing pre-packaged assignments, and spitting out answers. They must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences, and apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves.

4. Give Prompt Feedback

Knowing what you know and don't know focuses learning. Students need appropriate feedback on performance to benefit from courses. When getting started, students need help in assessing existing knowledge and competence. In classes, students need frequent opportunities to perform and to receive suggestions for improvement. At

various points during college, and at the end, students need chances to reflect on what they have learned, what they still need to know, and how to assess themselves.

5. Emphasize Time on Task

There is no substitute for time on task, for time plus energy equals learning. Learning to use one's time well is critical for students and professionals alike. Students need help in learning effective time management. Allocating realistic amounts of time means effective learning for students and effective teaching for faculty. How an institution defines time expectations for students, faculty, administrators, and other professional staff can establish the basis of high performance for all.

6. Communicate High Expectations

Expect more and you will get more. High expectations are important for everyone—for the poorly prepared, for those unwilling to exert themselves, and for the bright and well motivated. Expecting students to perform well becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy when teachers and institutions hold high expectations for themselves and make extra efforts.

7. Respect Diverse Talents and Ways of Learning

There are many roads to learning. People bring different talents and styles of learning to college. Brilliant students in the seminar room may be all thumbs in the lab or art studio. Students rich in hands-on experience may not do so well with theory. Students need the opportunity to show their talents and learn in ways that work for them. Then they can be pushed to learn in new ways that do not come so easily. ☒

LEARNER-CENTERED PSYCHOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES *American Psychological Assoc.*

The following 14 psychological principles pertain to the learner and the learning process. They focus on psychological factors that are primarily internal to and under the control of the learner rather than conditioned habits or physiological factors. However, the principles also attempt to acknowledge external environment or contextual factors that interact with these internal factors. The principles are intended to deal holistically with learners in the context of real-world learning situations. Thus, they are best understood as an organized set of principles; no principle should be viewed in isolation.

Nature of the learning process.

The learning of complex subject matter is most effective when it is an intentional process of constructing meaning from information and experience. There are different types of learning processes (for example, habit formation in motor learning). Learning in schools emphasizes the use of intentional processes that students can use to construct meaning from information, experiences, and their own thoughts and beliefs. Successful learners are active, goal-directed, and self-regulating, assuming responsibility for contributing to their own learning.

Goals of the learning process.

With support and instructional guidance, the successful learner can create meaningful, coherent representations of knowledge. The strategic nature of learning requires students to be goal directed. Initially, students' short-term goals and learning may be sketchy in an area, but over time their understanding can be refined by filling gaps, resolving inconsistencies, and deepening their understanding of the subject matter so that they can reach longer-term goals.

Construction of knowledge.

The successful learner can link new information with existing knowledge in meaningful ways. Knowledge widens and deepens as students continue to build links between new information and their existing knowledge base. The nature of these links can take a variety of forms, such as adding to, modifying, or reorganizing existing knowledge or skills. How these links develop may vary in different subject areas and among students with varying talents, interests, and abilities. However, unless new knowledge becomes integrated with the learner's prior knowledge and understanding, this new knowledge remains isolated, cannot be used most effectively in new tasks, and does not transfer readily to new situations.

Strategic thinking.

The successful learner can create and use a repertoire of thinking and reasoning strategies to achieve complex learning goals. Successful learners use strategic thinking in their approach to learning, reasoning, and problem solving. They understand and can use a variety of strategies to help them reach learning and performance goals and to apply their knowledge in novel situations. They also continue to expand their repertoire of strategies by reflecting on the methods they use to see which work well for them, by receiving guided instruction and feedback, and by observing or interacting with appropriate models.

Thinking about thinking.

Higher order strategies for selecting and monitoring mental operations facilitate creative and critical thinking. Successful learners can reflect on how they think and learn, set reasonable goals, select potentially appropriate learning strategies or methods, and monitor their progress toward their goals. In addition, successful learners know what to do if a problem occurs or if they are not making sufficient or timely progress toward a goal.

Context of learning.

Learning is influenced by environmental factors, including culture, technology, and instructional practices. Teachers play a major interactive role with both the learner and the learning environment. Cultural or group influences on students can impact many educationally relevant variables, such as motivation, orientation toward learning, and ways of thinking. Technologies and instructional practices must be appropriate for learners' level of prior knowledge, cognitive abilities, and their learning and thinking strategies. The classroom environment, particularly the degree to which it is nurturing or not, can also have significant impacts on learning.

Motivational and emotional influences on learning.

What and how much is learned is influenced by the learner's motivation. Motivation to learn is influenced by the individual's emotional state; thinking habits; and beliefs, interests, and goals. The rich internal world of thoughts, beliefs, goals, and expectations can enhance or interfere with the learner's quality of thinking and information processing. Motivational and emotional factors also influence both the quality of thinking and information processing, as well as motivation to learn. Positive emotions, such as curiosity, generally enhance motivation and facilitate learning. However, intense negative emotions and related thoughts generally detract from motivation, interfere with learning, and contribute to poor performance.

Intrinsic motivation to learn.

The learner's creativity, higher order thinking, and natural curiosity all contribute to motivation to learn. Intrinsic motivation is stimulated by tasks of optimal novelty and difficulty, relevant to personal interests, and providing for personal choice and control. Curiosity, creativity, and flexible and insightful thinking are major indicators of the learners' intrinsic



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motivation to learn, which is in large part a function of meeting basic needs to be competent and to exercise personal control. Intrinsic motivation is facilitated on tasks that learners perceive as interesting, personally relevant and meaningful, appropriate in complexity and difficulty to the learners' abilities, and at which they believe they can succeed.

Effects of motivation on effort.

Acquisition of complex knowledge and skills requires extended learner effort and guided practice. Without learners' motivation to learn, the willingness to exert this effort is unlikely without coercion. Acquiring complex knowledge and skills demands the investment of considerable energy and strategic effort, along with persistence over time. Educators need to be concerned with facilitating motivation with strategies that enhance learner effort and commitment to learning. Effective strategies include purposeful learning activities (guided by practices that enhance positive emotions and intrinsic motivation to learn) and methods that increase learners' perceptions that a task is interesting and relevant.

Developmental influences on learning.

Different opportunities and constraints for learning arise as learners develop. Learning is most effective when development within and across physical, intellectual, emotional, and social domains is taken into account. Individuals learn best when material is appropriate to their developmental level and is presented in an enjoyable and interesting way. Because individual development varies across intellectual, social, emotional, and physical domains, achievement in different instructional domains may also vary. The cognitive, emotional, and social development of individual learners and how they interpret life experiences are affected by prior schooling, home, culture, and community factors.

Social influences on learning.

Learning is influenced by social interactions, interpersonal relations, and communication with others. Learning can be enhanced when the learner has opportunities to interact and to collaborate with others on instructional tasks. Learning settings encourage flexible thinking and social

competence when they respect diversity and allow for social interaction. In interactive, collaborative instructional contexts, individuals have an opportunity for perspective taking and reflective thinking that may lead to higher levels of cognitive, social, and moral development. Moreover, high-quality personal relationships can increase learners' sense of belonging, self-respect, and self-acceptance—and provide a positive climate for learning.

Individual differences in learning.

Learners have varying strategies, approaches, and capabilities for learning that are functions of prior experience and heredity. Individuals are born with and develop their own capabilities and talents. In addition, through learning and social acculturation, they acquire their own preferences for how they like to learn and the pace at which they learn. However, these preferences are not always useful in helping learners reach their learning goals. Educators need to help students examine their learning preferences and expand or modify them, if necessary.

Learning and diversity.

Learning is most effective when differences in learners' linguistic, cultural, and social backgrounds are taken into account. The same basic principles of learning, motivation, and effective instruction apply to all learners. However, language, ethnicity, race, beliefs, and socioeconomic status all can influence learning. Careful attention to these factors in the instructional setting enhances the possibilities for designing and implementing appropriate learning environments.

Standards and assessment.

Setting appropriately high and challenging standards and assessing the learner—and the learning progress—are integral parts of the learning process. At all stages of the learning process, assessment provides important information for both the learner and teacher. Effective learning takes place when learners feel challenged to work toward appropriately high goals; therefore, appraisal of the learner's cognitive strengths and weaknesses, as well as current knowledge and skills, is important for the selection of instructional materials of an optimal degree of difficulty. Ongoing assessment of the learner's understanding can provide valuable feedback to both learners and teachers about progress toward learning goals. ✦

CHARACTERISTICS OF ACTIVE LEARNING



As used in this guide, online learning is *active learning*—learning that fosters the development of new knowledge, skills, and attitudes in learners by promoting their active involvement in the construction of knowledge and their active participation in and responsibility for their own learning. This vision of online learning is inherently learner-centered and is characterized by reading, writing, reflection, collaboration, and interaction.

The terms *active learning*, *experiential learning*, *engaged learning*, *interactive learning*, and *hands-on learning* are often used interchangeably. Each focuses on involved and participatory learning as opposed to more passive forms of learning. An analysis of the research literature suggests that learners must do something more than just listen or read; they must do something with the content of their learning. Active learning suggests that learners are engaged with the content—engaged in exploration, discussion, problem solving, simulations, or other higher-order thinking tasks involving analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Strategies that promote active learning involve learners in doing things and thinking about what they are doing.

Value of Active Learning

Active learning has been shown to increase learner comprehension and retention of course material, and to promote the development of skills in thinking and writing. Several studies have shown that learners prefer active learning to traditional lectures. In addition, active learning can lead to social experiences among the learners and teachers, helping to build a sense of community within the course. Other cognitive research has shown that a significant number of individuals have learning styles best served by instructional strategies other than traditional lecturing.

While there is no one “correct” way to achieve active learning, there are reliable indicators that suggest that learners are engaged and involved in mastering content, developing skills, and acquiring targeted attitudes. These indicators, some of which are listed below, are like benchmarks that allow instructors to assess how well their teaching strategies and course activities are promoting active learning.

Active Learners

Successful active learning promotes the following:

- learners who are responsible for their own learning, including helping to define their own learning goals, selecting tasks, and evaluating their own achievement
- learners who are energized by their learning, finding joy in learning
- learners who know how to learn, with the skill to transfer knowledge to solve problems creatively
- learners who learn from others through collaboration, discussion, and joint projects

Learning Tasks

Successful active learning uses learning tasks and activities with the following characteristics:

- authentic and relevant to real-world problems and situations, corresponding to real tasks and situations in the workplace, discipline, or the world
- challenging, complex, and difficult enough to stretch and interest learners without totally frustrating them
- complex, demanding sustained amounts of time to be completed
- multidisciplinary, requiring understanding and problem solving from several perspectives or disciplines acquired through collaborative work with other learners, mentors, materials, and instructors

Assessment

Assessment of active learning involves presenting learners with an authentic task, project, or investigation and then observing, interviewing, and examining their presentations and artifacts to assess what they actually know and can do. Successful assessment for active learning should have the following characteristics:

- performance based, involving a performance or production of a purposeful and meaningful product
- meaningful to learners in ways that promotes learning and understanding and which involves learners in generating their own performance criteria and measuring and reporting their assessment

- integrated with instruction, providing data on all aspects of knowledge and performance including individual and group effort, attitudes and thinking processes, communication, and authentic applications
- based on multiple measures, such as surveys, inventories, journals, illustrations, concept maps, presentations, demonstrations, portfolios, and other products of learning

Strategies

Often resulting in learners teaching other learners, active learning is interactive, promoting engagement with other learners, mentors, instructors, outside experts, and learning materials and resources. Successful active learning strategies often have the following characteristics:

- problem-based, project-based, or goal-based, encouraging learners to construct and produce meaningful products and artifacts
- learners teaching other learners
- responsive, allowing learners to select from a menu of learning approaches and activities
- exploratory, promoting learning through inquiry, research, investigation, or projects
- collaborative, building a shared knowledge-base through such techniques as debating and discussing, summarizing, brainstorming, problem-solving, peer team-teaching, concept mapping, and Socratic dialogues

Context for Learning

For active learning to happen, the learning environment must be conceived of as a knowledge-building learning community. Such communities not only develop shared understandings collaboratively but also create empathetic learning environments that value diversity and multiple perspectives. These communities search for strategies to build on the strengths of

all of its members. Truly collaborative environments encourage learners to ask hard questions, define problems, lead conversations, set goals, have work-related conversations, and engage in entrepreneurial activities.

Collaboration

Learning-centered collaborative work often involves small groups or teams of two or more learners. Heterogeneous groups (including different sexes, cultures, abilities, ages, and socioeconomic backgrounds) can bring a wealth of knowledge and perspectives to different tasks. Flexible grouping, which incorporates heterogeneous groups and allows instructors to reconfigure small groups according to the purposes of instruction, is one of the most equitable means of grouping and ensuring increased learning opportunities.

Instructor's Role

In successful active learning, the role of the instructor shifts from the primary role of information giver to that of facilitator, guide, and learner. As a facilitator, the instructor provides the rich environments and learning experiences needed for collaborative study. The instructor also is required to act as a guide—a role that incorporates mediation, modeling, and coaching. Often the instructor also is a co-learner and co-investigator with the learners.

Learner's Role

One important learner role in active learning is that of explorer. Interaction with the physical world and with other people allows learners to discover concepts and apply skills. Learners are then encouraged to reflect upon their discoveries; this reflection is essential for the learner as a cognitive apprentice. Apprenticeship takes place when learners observe and apply the thinking processes used by practitioners. Learners also become teachers themselves by integrating what they've learned. They become producers of knowledge, capable of making significant contributions to the world's knowledge. ☒

SUGGESTIONS FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICE IN ONLINE TEACHING



INTRODUCTION

The following suggestions are specific, applied prescriptive statements of practice that other experienced instructors and authors have noted as constituting current effective practice. Many of these suggestions are rooted in principles of learning science, while others are derived primarily from experience.

ORGANIZATION & PLANNING

Develop a detailed, comprehensive syllabus and course schedule.

Create an organizational strategy for all course materials (for example, by module, by week, or by chapter).

Welcome students to the course via e-mail *before* the first day and in the first week acquaint them with the structure of the course.

COMMUNICATION

Clearly communicate high expectations.

Provide clear statements of course goals, performance objectives, evaluation standards, and, as appropriate, examples of student work.

Ensure that learning tasks are challenging.

Give opportunities as appropriate for revisions and repeated efforts with feedback.

Convey enthusiasm and passion for the subject matter.

Enhance student-to-student communication.

Have students share perspectives in discussions and forums.

Use peer-review techniques before work is submitted for grading.

Assign group projects and problem-solving exercises.

Use chat and group-discussion forums to stimulate the shared building of knowledge and meaning.

Provide a coherent, explicit structure for group-discussion forums, rather than allow all messages and replies to be posted in one place.

Send out progress reports to let students know how they are doing in chat and group-discussion forums.

Define your role in chat and group-discussion forums.

Set the tone for discussion right away. You can make discussion very structured and formal, so that it resembles a formal debate, or you can make it unstructured and informal.

Use instructional strategies that promote collaboration and teamwork, such as debates, role-playing, case studies, and projects.

Enhance student-to-faculty communication.

Be accessible and visible as an instructor.

Be proactive in engaging reluctant participants.

Hold virtual office hours for computer and phone consultation.

Model appropriate online communication and provide frequent summaries, prompts, and coaching in discussions.

Provide corrective feedback and constructive criticism in private e-mail rather than public forums.

Announce, announce, announce. Provide all information on assignments, deadlines, additions to content, and other revisions to the course.

Provide frequent and prompt feedback on student performance.

Evaluate frequently and make results available immediately.

Give frequent practice and diagnostic quizzes (graded or non-graded) to enable students to discover their learning deficiencies.

Provide multiple opportunities for students to practice target behaviors and knowledge mastery.

MEDIA

Provide a rich array of learning materials.

Use appropriate illustrations, diagrams, charts, tables, and other visual material to give meaning to text.

Post PowerPoint files for viewing or downloading in an easy-to-print form.

Make appropriate but sparing use of large media files or file formats that require special viewers or plug-ins. Consider course CDs or other offline distribution media such as videotape for media-intensive courses.

SUGGESTIONS FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICE IN ONLINE TEACHING

Require production of artifacts of learning.

Design assignments that require students to produce a product or artifact of their learning experience, such as a paper, report, project, experiment, or web site.

Require students to create original works demonstrating knowledge, such as art, writing, presentations, storyboards, lesson outlines, and other forms of appropriate expression.

Give students opportunities to give advice, explain concepts and skills, generate novel examples and metaphors, compare and contrast, and make generalizations and present arguments. Give students opportunities to organize and teach selected content to others.

Require self-reflection and assessment of students' learning outcomes and processes, such as writing journals, articulating lessons learned, or documenting the learning path taken.

WEB MATERIALS

Provide consistent and well-described organization of content and information, following the conventions of the Blackboard software.

Provide for students to be continually oriented as to where they are in the materials and progression of the course.

Distinguish explicitly between required online materials and optional materials, establishing a clear order of importance. On the web, all information tends to blur together.

Provide visual interest and good design to enhance motivation and interest in content.

Maintain a high level of interaction and engagement.

Provide *commented* examples of assignments, ideally one representing each grade point (A, B, C, D), with comments identifying aspects of the assignment that contributed to it earning that grade.

Keep content fresh; provide motivation to return to the course website often. However, be careful about changing

information, as students often print out web pages and resent having to go over material they thought had been covered.

COMMUNITY

Foster a sense of community.

Provide a means for secure and informal discussion and dialogue outside of the course.

Be deliberate and conscious in the tone of the course and your communication with students; foster a collegial, knowledge-building team environment.

Encourage cooperation and collaboration in learning among students.

Use group projects, changing group composition to allow students to interact with various people and perspectives.

Pose problems or quests to engage students together.

Use role playing, simulation, and debates.

Promote respect for diverse talents and ways of learning.

Accommodate different learning styles.

Recognize and reward creative thinking and original approaches.

Be flexible in allowing students to create alternative ways to acquire relevant knowledge and skills and demonstrate competence.

Provide for independent learning, working collaboratively with others, and having students assume different roles in the learning process.

ACTIVE LEARNING

Engage students with active learning techniques.

Engage students with active-learning methods, such as case studies, simulations, role playing, and debates.

Promote learn-by-doing techniques and opportunities for exploration

Encourage rehearsal and reflection.

Build in students-teaching-students.

Have students moderate and summarize some discussions after proper modeling by the instructor.

Engage students' minds through individual and group summarizing of multiple perspectives, brainstorming, Socratic dialogue, problem solving, and team teaching.

Promote student roles as explorers, teachers, cognitive apprentices, producers of knowledge, and directors and managers of their own learning.

Encourage time on task

Provide access to course materials 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Provide something for the student to respond to every day (must be graded or otherwise valued to elicit daily response).

Provide complex tasks that require sustained amounts of time.

Provide authentic tasks that correspond to tasks in the real-world settings of homes and workplaces.

Use open-ended questions and inquiries that promote research and thoughtful responses.

Use assignments that require students to apply knowledge in exercises, case studies, simulations, or authentic tasks.

Remove reliance on physical attendance

Develop creative approaches to satisfy course requirements traditionally met by in-person activity.

Provide alternative performance options to demonstrate skill and knowledge.

Substitute independent field trips, job-shadowing, observation, interviews and similar approaches in place of activities requiring everyone to be in the same place at the same time.

Require multiple assessment methods to substitute for proctored examinations. ❌

COURSE PLANNING TOOL

The following course planning tool is designed to help faculty by highlighting many key questions and decisions associated with transforming face-to-face instruction to online instruction. Though this list of questions is not exhaustive and does not represent every instructional or logistical decision, it can serve as a prompt to consider key issues in the course-design process.

Are specific performance objectives developed and agreed to for the online course?

- measurable outcomes in the objectives
- higher-order thinking skills required
- requirements equivalent to those of a campus course
- differences from a campus course are defined
- objectives address all required knowledge and skills for the next course in the sequence
- other: _____

How will content be conveyed to the students?

- textbooks
- study guides
- books and journals
- field trips
- online demonstrations
- online lectures or tutorials
- other: _____

What supplementary resources will be provided to students?

- links to external resources
- reading lists
- notes and outlines
- study questions
- PowerPoint presentations
- interactive exercises
- other: _____

What activities will students be required to engage in?

- interactive exercises and quizzes
- simulations and role-playing
- debates and discussions
- project and experiments
- tutorials
- case studies
- writing assignments
- web quests and other web research
- other: _____

What interaction is planned for the course?

- access to outside experts
- group discussions and other group activities
- debates and role playing
- team projects
- other: _____

How will feedback about performance be given to students?

- e-mail feedback
- responses to posts made in online discussions
- virtual office hours
- student access to the online gradebook
- other: _____

How will student performance be measured?

- journals
- quizzes and exams (online or proctored?)
- graded online discussions
- writing assignments
- projects and related work products
- labs
- overall participation in the course
- other: _____

How will assignments, papers, and other files be exchanged and organized?

- digital drop box in Blackboard
- file format standards (with examples)
- organization by chapter, module, or week
- e-mail attachments
- file-naming conventions
- other: _____

How will learner isolation be overcome and a sense of community created?

- use of discussion forum and chat room
- virtual office hours
- personal and private feedback
- student home pages
- online “presence” of instructor
- tone and style of communications
- personal encouragement and communication
- use of groups and changing group membership
- other: _____

How will learner progress be monitored and paced?

- timed discussions
- course web site statistics
- project and paper deadlines
- personal feedback and communication
- other: _____

Checklist for Developing an Online Course in Blackboard

✓	Area / Tool / Feature	Description
	Announcements	The first page displayed when any user enters a course site. Brief messages should be posted here, such as a message welcoming students to the class and messages conveying pertinent information about course assignments, updates, reminders, and exams.
	Identifying Information	Does the Announcements Page display the course title, course number, section numbers, start date, and a brief description of the course?
	Welcome Message	Have you included a welcome message that greets students, invites them to explore the course site, and directs them to specific information within the site? Have you made the announcement a permanent announcement, so it will be available throughout the semester?
	Navigation Cues	Have you included a permanent announcement containing a table or list defining what each of the main areas of the site contains (types of information, types of tools, etc.)?
	Updates	Have you instructed students to check announcements regularly? Are you using announcements to keep students informed and updated on important developments as the course progresses?
	Course Information	Used to display general information about the course. Typically, this area will consist of two folders, one containing a course syllabus and the other containing a course schedule.
	Syllabus	
	Course Title	Is the course title the same as the title listed in the <i>Directory of Classes</i> ?
	Course Number	Is the course number the same as the course number listed in the <i>Directory of Classes</i> ? Have you included the class number (for example, 01234), the subject/catalog number (for example, EDUC 207), and all relevant section numbers (for example, Section 002)?
	Credit Hours	Are credit hours listed?
	Course Start Date and End Date	Are dates listed for the start and end of the course? This information is particularly important for online courses, for which the start and end dates may differ from those of on-campus courses.
	Course Description	Does the course description contain, at a minimum, the official course description found in the <i>BSU Catalog</i> or <i>Course Directory</i> ?
	Prerequisites Defined by Catalog	Are all prerequisites listed as they appear in the <i>BSU Catalog</i> , such as prerequisite courses or minimum test scores?

Checklist for Developing an Online Course in Blackboard

✓	Area / Tool / Feature	Description
	Prerequisites Defined by Instructor	Are all instructor-defined prerequisites listed, such as level of computer experience or access to particular software?
	Textbook Information (Bibliographic and Purchasing)	Does the syllabus list the title, author, publisher, date of publication, cost, and ISBN? Are links to electronic bookstores provided, along with instructions for purchasing the textbook?
	Other Materials Information	Does the syllabus list all other required or recommended materials? Are links to online stores provided, along with instructions for purchasing materials?
	System Requirements	Does the syllabus list the minimum system requirements for participation in the course, including all necessary hardware and software? Are links provided for any required helper applications or plug-ins, such as PowerPoint Viewer or Adobe Acrobat Reader? Have you noted any special hardware or software required for course work (for instance, modeling or graphing software)?
	On-Campus Sessions	Does the syllabus list the dates and times of any on-campus sessions (for instance, labs or proctored exams)? Does the syllabus identify these sessions as either required or optional?
	Grading Criteria	Does the syllabus list grading criteria, including any specific criteria for individual assignments?
	Participation Criteria	Does the syllabus define expectations about participation in the class, including the frequency, timing, and quality of participation? If participation is graded, are grading criteria included?
	Schedule	Does the schedule contain due dates of all assignments, activities, and tests? Does it list class meetings and topics of discussion, where appropriate? Does it list all on-campus activities, such as labs or proctored exams? Does it note that the instructor reserves the right to make changes to the schedule and that changes will be announced on the Announcements page?
	Staff Information	Contact information and biographical information about faculty and staff involved with the course.
	Biographical Information	Does "Staff Information" include the names and titles of faculty and staff (for instance, graduate assistants)? Does it contain brief biographies of faculty and staff? Does it include photos of faculty and staff (optional)?
	Office Hours	Are virtual office hours listed, along with an explanation of how virtual office hours are conducted (through instant messaging, Voice-over-IP technology, etc.)? Are any on-campus office hours listed?
	Phone Number	Are phone numbers listed for faculty and staff?

Checklist for Developing an Online Course in Blackboard

✓	Area / Tool / Feature	Description
	E-Mail Addresses	Are e-mail addresses listed for faculty and staff? Is a policy on response time provided (for example, "I try to respond to all e-mail within 24 hours.")?
	Course Documents	Content-specific area containing the majority of content information delivered online, such as lecture materials, handouts, presentations, and related readings.
	Organization	Have you placed content in folders within the Course Documents area? Does each folder have a unique, informative name? Have you organized the folders in a logical, intuitive structure? For example, you might create folders organized chronologically (Week 01, Week 02, etc.); by module (Module 01, Module 02, etc.), by author (Updike, Bellow, Smiley, etc.), or by type of material (Handouts, Presentations, Lecture Notes, etc.).
	Plug-Ins and Additional Software	If the material requires plug-ins or additional software (such as RealAudio or PowerPoint), have you included links to sites where the plug-ins or software can be downloaded?
	Assignments	Course assignments, tests, quizzes, and surveys.
	Organization	Have you placed assignments in individual folders within the Assignments Area? Does each folder have a unique, informative name? Have you organized the folders in a logical, intuitive structure? For example, you might create folders organized chronologically (Week 01, Week 02, etc.); by module (Module 01, Module 02, etc.), or by author (Updike, Bellow, Smiley, etc.).
	Submission Requirements	Does each assignment specify the manner in which students are to submit their work, including file names and file format?
	Plug-Ins and Additional Software	If the assignment requires plug-ins or additional software (such as RealAudio or RealVideo), have you included links to sites where the plug-ins or software can be downloaded?
	Books	An area for posting reading lists and items relating to literature associated with the course.
	Content	If you have enabled the Books section, have you included reading lists or other material related to literature used in the course? Have you included full bibliographic information and purchasing information as appropriate? Are all required readings available online or in course packs? Have you considered whether the lists and other material would be more appropriate in the Assignments area?

Checklist for Developing an Online Course in Blackboard

✓	Area / Tool / Feature	Description
	Communication	Holds all of the communication tools. Links to the discussion board and e-mail are located here, along with student and group pages.
	Send E-Mail	Have you considered creating groups of students to make sending e-mail more efficient? When sending e-mail, do you send a copy to yourself so you maintain an archive of e-mail you've sent?
	Discussion Board	The Communication Area contains a link to the Discussion Board, which is also linked from a button on the main page. See "Discussion Board," below.
	Virtual Classroom	The Communication Area contains a link to the Virtual Classroom, which is also linked from a button on the main page. See "Virtual Classroom," below.
	Roster	Is the student roster complete and accurate? If not, contact the Blackboard Help Desk at blackboard@boisestate.edu .
	Group Pages	If you have formed collaborative groups of students, have you enabled the collaboration and communication tools for each group (e-mail, virtual classroom, discussion board, and file exchange)? Have you provided an accurate, informative description for each group?
	Discussion Board	A web-based, asynchronous communication tool that permits users to carry on a conversation without having to be available at the same time. Conversations consist of messages posted by the instructor and students and are grouped into forums containing threads and all related replies or responses.
	Forums	Have you created forums with unique, informative titles and useful, informative descriptions? Have you organized the forums in some logical, intuitive structure? For example, you might create forums organized chronologically (Week 01, Week 02, etc.); by module (Module 01, Module 02, etc.), or by author (Updike, Bellow, Smiley, etc.). Have you provided a forum for off-topic posts that may still be of interest to students?
	Content	Have you posted thought-provoking questions or assertions that will generate discussion? Where appropriate, have you steered the discussion by posting additional questions or assertions? Have you provided students with guidelines for participating on the Discussion Board? Have you provided students with examples of appropriate and inappropriate posts?
	Security	Have you carefully weighed the advantages and disadvantages of allowing anonymous posts? Have you considered any potential problems, such as viruses, that might be caused by allowing files to be attached to posts?

Checklist for Developing an Online Course in Blackboard

✓	Area / Tool / Feature	Description
	Setup	Have you carefully considered whether students should be able to start new threads? Edit or remove their posts? Upload file attachments? Post anonymously? NOTE: Anonymous posts cannot be graded.
	Virtual Classroom	Synchronous tool consisting of a chat room, a whiteboard, and a question-and-answer area, primarily for advance users. If you won't be using the Virtual Classroom, you should disable it in Course Settings.
	Applications	Have you considered using the Virtual Classroom to hold "live" classroom discussions, tutoring sessions, or virtual office hours? Have you considered using the Virtual Classroom to enable guest speakers and subject matter experts to communicate with members of the class? Have you considered asynchronous alternatives to synchronous Virtual Classroom sessions, which require that everyone participate at the same time?
	Logistics	Have you informed students that they must have a Java-enabled browser to use the Virtual Classroom? Have you provided instructions for enabling Java? Have you notified students of the start times and dates of any Virtual Classroom activities? Are the activities scheduled to accommodate working students (for example, with alternative or multiple times and dates outside of work hours)? Have you considered creating small groups when using the Virtual Classroom, to keep the conversation manageable and reduce confusion?
	Groups	Pages that allow groups of students to use collaborative tools (e-mail, virtual classroom, discussion board, and file exchange).
	Collaboration Tools	If you have formed collaborative groups of students, have you enabled the appropriate collaboration and communication tools for each group (e-mail, virtual classroom, discussion board, and file exchange)?
	External Links	Links to web sites and other online resources that contain content relevant to the course.
	Course Content Links	Have you provided links to websites, newsgroups, mailing lists, or other online resources relevant to the course content?
	Technical-Support Services	Have you provided links to information provided by campus technical-support services? Suggested links: OIT Help Desk (http://oit.boisestate.edu/accountrequest/); BSU Assistance at BSU (blackboard@boisestate.edu).
	Distance Education Services	Have you provided links to information provided by on-campus distance-education services? Suggested link: BSU Division of Extended Studies (http://www.boisestate.edu/conted/).

Checklist for Developing an Online Course in Blackboard

✓	Area / Tool / Feature	Description
	Other BSU Resources	Have you provided links to other online resources provided by BSU? Suggested links include Albertson's Library (http://library.boisestate.edu), the BSU Academic Calendar (http://registrar.boisestate.edu/Calendars.htm), BSU Class Directories (http://www.boisestate.edu/registrar/classes.html), Faculty and Staff Directory (http://oit.boisestate.edu/iLists/facstaff.asp), and the Writing Center (http://www.boisestate.edu/wcenter).
	Tools	Tools students use to submit and receive files in the Digital Dropbox, edit their home pages, review the course calendar, review scheduled tasks, and access the Electronic Blackboard, the Address Book, and the Blackboard User Manual.
	Digital Drop Box	Have you shown students how to use the Digital Dropbox to submit and retrieve files, either by demonstrating the Dropbox or by providing instructions for its use? (Instructions are available at blackboard.boisestate.edu .) Have you established a convention for naming files submitted by students? Have you notified students of acceptable file formats?
	Edit Your Home Page	Student home pages can help to build a sense of community and camaraderie. Have you encouraged students to create home pages containing information about themselves, their studies, and their interests? Have you provided guidelines for appropriate content, perhaps based on Boise State guidelines? Have you reviewed student home pages to ensure that no inappropriate content is present?
	Personal Information	Have you notified students that they can use this tool to change personal information, change their passwords, set the CD-ROM drive on their computer, and restrict or limit the private information available to others?
	Course Calendar	Does the Course Calendar contain an entry for the due dates of all assignments, activities, and tests? Does it list class meetings and topics of discussion, where appropriate? Does it contain institutional term information, such as course start/end dates, holidays, and withdrawal dates? The BSU Academic Calendar is available at http://registrar.boisestate.edu/Calendars.htm .
	Check Grade	Have you informed students that they can check their grades online? Have you notified students that the Assessment Average is the average of online quiz scores and not an average of all graded assignments? Have you assigned meaningful names to the entries in the grade book, so students can easily identify a particular assignment? Have you kept the grade book current?
	Manual	Have you notified students that an online manual is available? Have you encouraged students to use it?

Checklist for Developing an Online Course in Blackboard

✓	Area / Tool / Feature	Description
	Tasks	Have you encouraged students to use the Tasks feature to help them schedule their time? Have you considered ways to use the Tasks feature in conjunction with scheduled exams, upcoming assignments, etc?
	Electric Blackboard	Have you notified students that they can use the Electronic Blackboard to take notes?
	Address Book	Have you encouraged students to use the address book as a way of efficiently keeping in touch with faculty and classmates?
	Course Options (in Control Panel)	Tools that enable you to manage and revise the structure and appearance of your course web site.
	Course Properties	Have you provided the course title, course number, section numbers, and a brief description of the course? Does the title match the title found in the <i>BSU Catalog</i> or <i>Course Directory</i> ? Does the course description contain, at a minimum, the official course description found in the <i>BSU Catalog</i> ? Have you assigned the course to a subject area and discipline?
	Course Utilities	Have you used the Course Archive feature to make a backup of your course? NOTE: Backups should be made only at the end of the semester, after the deadline for turning in grades.
	Course Images	Have you selected an appealing color scheme for navigation buttons? Have you considered adding a banner to the title page of the course web site? (You can make a banner quickly and easily at http://webservices.adobe.com/banner/main.html .)
	Course Resources	Have you considered using the customizable, discipline-specific resources available from Blackboard.com? If you are using the resources, have you enabled the Resources button in Blackboard?
	User Management (in Control Panel)	Tools that enable you to add or remove users of your course, list and modify users of the course, and create groups of users.
	Add Users	Have you searched the online database of users to ensure that the person you wish to add has a Blackboard account?
	List/Modify Users	As necessary, are you using the List/Modify Users feature to list students enrolled in your class and to modify student information, including passwords and e-mail addresses.
	Remove Users	Self-explanatory.

Checklist for Developing an Online Course in Blackboard

✓	Area / Tool / Feature	Description
	Manage Groups	If you have formed collaborative groups of students, have you enabled the appropriate collaboration and communication tools for each group (e-mail, virtual classroom, discussion board, and file exchange)?
	Assessment (in Control Panel)	Tools for creating quizzes and surveys, as well as tools for displaying grades and course statistics.
	Assessment Manager	Are you using the Assessment Manager to manage passwords for quizzes and surveys and to specify the degree of feedback students receive?
	Pool Manager	Have you considered creating pools of questions that can be used to create quizzes and surveys consisting of randomly generated questions?
	Online Grade book	Have you informed students that they can check their grades online? Are you posting grades as soon as possible? Have you created unique, informative titles for each grade book entry, so students can easily find a particular assignment? Are you regularly backing up your grade book by exporting it as a comma-separated value file (.CSV) or saving the spreadsheet view as an HTML file?
	Course Statistics	Have you considered ways in which you can use the course statistics to determine how students are using the course web site? Have you considered using course statistics to identify areas of your course that need to be refined, revised, or further developed?
	Assistance (in Control Panel)	Links to technical support and other online resources.
	Online Support	Have you visited the Online Support pages at Blackboard.com to see what kind of technical support is available for instructors and students? Have you reviewed the other online resources at Blackboard.com?
	Online Manual	Have you reviewed the online manual for instructors (as opposed to the manual for students)?
	Contact Sys Admin	Self-explanatory: E-mail link to Blackboard Assistance at BSU (blackboard@boisestate.edu)

MORE INFORMATION . . .

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HTTP://BLACKBOARD.BOISESTATE.EDU

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