

Eight Elements for Effective Online Courses



1

Focus on Course Creation. Rather than trying to make traditional courses fit into a new format, take this opportunity to build the course of your dreams without the restrictions of tables, chairs, and four walls. What are the experiences and needs of your learners? What are the essential questions? *Ideas: Learning outcomes, digital resources, professional interaction, engage learners*

2

Consider the “You” Factor. Share your professional research interests and enthusiasm. “You” make your course unique. Seek ways to create an online presence that conveys your professional personality and reflects a caring, supportive atmosphere. *Ideas: Virtual office, focused videos, email updates*

3

Structure Learning Experiences. How do you and your students see the “big picture” of the course? Visualize the course content and activities. Create a centralized theme and an area for “the” course. Create an environment for student knowledge construction. *Ideas: CourseQuest, course diagrams*

4

Think Different. Explore totally new ways of approaching your course content and communications. Focus on REAL: Relevant, Engaging, Authentic Learning. *Ideas: Blogs, collaborative writing*

5

Model Techniques. Set expectations high and model outstanding performance. Demonstrate effective writing and discussion techniques. Share ideas for dealing with information overload. *Ideas: Labeled readings, sample forum discussion*

6

Differentiate Learning. Online courses provide an opportunity for assignment choices and options to meet individual interests and needs. Carefully follow student progress and provide feedback, guidance, and support. *Ideas: Choice of discussion tracks, varied readings and assignments, multiple communication channels*

7

Establish Learning Communities. Create opportunities for students to develop supportive and collaborative online relationships. *Ideas: Cohort groups, collaborative assignments, open discussion areas*

8

Encourage Independent Learning. Seek ways to generate enthusiasm, expand thinking, and challenge students through reflective questions, varied resources, and professional connections. Continue to learn yourself and share your experiences. *Ideas: Extended readings, practical projects, professional online connections*