



To ensure an effective learning experience for online students, Old Dominion University faculty teaching online or hybrid courses are strongly encouraged to implement the following best practices:

1. INITIAL PLANNING - GETTING STARTED:

- a. Participate in appropriate professional development opportunities offered by CLT. Register at <http://clt.odu.edu/facdev>
- b. Complete the Online Teaching Orientation at <http://clt.odu.edu/fofo/online.php>
- c. Submit textbook order to University Bookstore per University guidelines and deadlines.
- d. Identify and acquire permission to use copyright-protected material or work with the library to identify alternate sources to use.
- e. Identify and become familiar with the various technologies used in the course: Blackboard (Bb) for content delivery and communication, Acrobat Connect for online meetings, LockDown Browser for online testing, multimedia such as audio, video, etc.
NOTE: If this course was offered as an online course in the past, verify that the course technologies used at that time are still available and appropriate. If they are not, work with CLT to identify new technologies as needed.
- f. Work with CLT to address any outstanding issues, particularly if the course wasn't developed in collaboration with CLT.
- g. Verify that all content is accessible, including links.
- h. Discuss online teaching methods with experienced colleagues.

2. PRIOR TO THE BEGINNING OF THE SEMESTER - COMMUNICATION AND LOGISTICS:

- a. Ask your students to complete the online student orientation at <http://clt.odu.edu/oso>. Be sure to emphasize that they need to complete "Is Distance Learning for Me?", the "Computer Literacy Survey", and, most important of all, the Browser Check: <http://clt.odu.edu/browser>
- b. Provide an orientation to the course's technical requirements.
- c. Provide a detailed online syllabus that establishes guidelines and expectations several weeks before the start of class so that students can evaluate the scope of the course requirements and purchase the textbook(s) and/or coursepak(s) prior to class. Syllabus should include: instructor contact information, contact policy, student help resources, readings, description, objectives and expectations, teaching and learning methods, schedule, grading criteria, student responsibilities, and course policies (attendance, tests and make-ups, honor code, special needs, email policy, withdrawal, etc.). See Syllabus Generator site: <http://clt.odu.edu/sgen>
 - i. Post the syllabus on your faculty home page and on the Bb course site. In general, Bb courses sites are available 6-8 weeks before class starts.
 - ii. Use Bb email from the course site to notify students (1) that the syllabus is available and (2) when the Bb course site will be available. To make your course available, click "Yes" under Control Panel > Settings > Course Availability
 - iii. When the Bb course site is available, post a Welcome announcement (email the same message) to (1) advise students when and how to get started and (2) provide tips for successful online learning strategies.
See : http://clt.odu.edu/oso/index.php?src=lo_effective
- d. If you're planning to use Acrobat Connect, remind students of hardware and software requirements (high bandwidth, web camera and/or microphone). Conduct a practice session prior to the first class or allow a significant amount of time during the beginning of the first session.
- e. Establish a Teaching Journal with notes to yourself about how you plan to implement the course. During the semester you will add to the journal as you are teaching. You can save this document in your Bb course and hide it from students.

3. DURING THE FIRST WEEK OF CLASS – ORIENTATION TO THE COURSE AND COURSE TECHNOLOGIES:

- a. Start the course on time and follow the established course schedule.
- b. Send a welcome email message to all students which includes the following information:
 - i. Remind the student on how to access the course and how to get started.
 - ii. Inform students of your communication protocols – how and when to reach you (email, chat, virtual office hours, message turnaround time, etc.).
 - iii. Inform students of ways to reach institutional support services (online orientation, technical support, etc.).
 - iv. Inform students of major milestones in the course in order to facilitate good time management. These may include major projects, assignments or exams.
 - v. Inform students of ways to schedule a proctor for their tests and exams: <http://clt.odu.edu/proctor>
- c. Remind students to use and check their ODU email account for all course-related communications.
- d. Remind them to use proper email etiquette when contacting you, example: use course ID in subject line with assignment number, followed by question (ex.: DL101_Proj-1_how many pages?).
- e. Hold virtual office hours to answer students' questions about course requirements, expectations and deadlines. You can use Bb chat or Bb Virtual Classroom.
- f. Invite students to introduce themselves, using the Bb discussion board or Bb home pages. Provide guidelines for the type of information you would like them to include in their introductions (major, employment, hobbies, why did they enroll in the course, etc.).
- g. Include activities during the first week of class that utilize each of the course technologies. For example, if you will use technologies such as email, online meetings, discussion board, chat, audio, or video, include activities that will require students to use each one. Doing this early in the semester will help verify that students are prepared and capable of participating.

4. AFTER THE FIRST WEEK OF CLASS AND PRIOR TO MID-TERM - COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT:

- a. Remind your students of the course expectations, requirements and deadlines.
- b. Use Bb statistics option to monitor students' course activity and access. Inform the students that you're doing that.
- c. Remind students of scheduled course activities and upcoming deadlines.
- d. Provide clear, concise, and constructive feedback to students' questions according to your established communication protocols, preferably within one business day.
- e. Communicate course schedule changes and adjustments via announcement and Bb email.
- f. Post grades in compliance with established university policies and deadlines.
- g. Update your Teaching Journal to add a log of issues/problems reported by students, lessons learned, and projected changes.
 - i. Address issues that need to be corrected immediately (such as broken links and missing or incorrect content).
 - ii. Plan ahead for revision to the course for the next delivery.
- h. Facilitate and monitor interaction, while paying close attention to students' tone and emotions and enforcing course participation expectations and guidelines.
 - i. Engage students by being responsive, and by helping them to ask better questions.
- j. Praise and encourage students' efforts and progress on a regular basis.
- k. Respond to student concerns and questions promptly by clarifying any misunderstandings and by following up on promises.
- l. Create an FAQ to address commonly asked questions and/or technical issues. An FAQ may be posted in Bb in several ways:
 - i. content folder with each question as an item
 - ii. threaded discussion forum
 - iii. blog
 - iv. wiki

5. AT MID-TERM - LOGISTICS AND FEEDBACK:

- a. Provide enough time for students to complete exams, in case of technical problems.
- b. Check Bb gradebook during online exam time to clear the “attempts” of students unable to complete their exams because of technical problems.
- c. Request mid-semester feedback from students and make adjustments as needed.
- d. Review overall course activity and address any issues related to student participation, completion of any outstanding requirements, time management, and plans/suggestions for completing the rest of the semester.
- e. Post grades in compliance with established university policies and deadlines.
- f. Update your Teaching Journal to continue a log of issues/problems reported by students, lessons learned, and projected changes.
 - i. Address issues that need to be corrected immediately (such as broken links and missing or incorrect content).
 - ii. Plan ahead for revisions to the course for its next delivery.
- g. Back up the course gradebook periodically and save it to your network drive.

6. NEAR END-OF-TERM - FEEDBACK:

- a. Discuss importance of evaluation in improving future course offerings.
 - i. Repeat mid-semester feedback as end-of-semester feedback.
- b. Encourage students to complete the university course evaluation.
- c. Review overall course activity since mid-term and address any issues related to student participation, completion of any outstanding requirements, and plans/suggestions for concluding the course.

7. AFTER THE COURSE IS OVER - POST-COURSE REFLECTION:

- a. Post grades according to university policy and deadlines.
- b. Create both an exported backup copy and an archive copy of the course site from Bb and save them to your network drive.
- c. Make Bb course unavailable to students in Bb.
- d. Update the Teaching Journal by identifying lessons learned: what worked? what didn't? and what did you learn about new methods along the way?
- e. Use your Teaching Journal and lessons learned to revise the course while your memory is still fresh; don't wait until its next offering to try to recall suggested changes to the course. If new technologies will be used, acquire the necessary training to develop skills prior to next delivery.
- f. Share experiences with colleagues.
- g. Extract content that can be reused in future offerings of this course and others. For example, copy and save class FAQs, pertinent announcements, tutorials/handouts/tip sheets, etc.