**Planning a Remote Course: A Checklist**

One of the questions that we’ve heard from instructors is, “Could you take a look at my course? I want to know if I’m doing it right.”

Even though I understand that teaching is not prescriptive – that there aren’t right answers or sure-fire, 100% guaranteed tips that will work all.the.time – I understand where the question is coming from. Remote teaching is new! It’s asking us to leave behind some of our tried-and-true ways of teaching and find new ways to help guide students through the course material.

So, while we won’t know for sure how effective the course has been until it’s finished, this tip-to-tail checklist might help you assess the course you’ve planned, to see if it has a reasonable chance of working for students.

As you work through this check list, remember that it’s comprehensive but not exhaustive. We’ve got a lot of checkpoints here – but not every one for every situation. Also keep in mind that when you check the “Take a Second Look?” box, you might have discovered an aspect of your course that needs more thinking.

**Define the learning goals for the course.**

|  |  | **Yes** | **Take A Second Look?** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Do the learning goals define what the students will know, be able to do, or believe by the end of the course? |  |  |
|  | Are the goals understandable to a student unfamiliar with the discipline or content of the course? |  |  |
|  | Do the goals identify outcomes (rather than activities)? |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

**Organize the course into components and define the learning objectives for each part.**

|  |  | **Yes** | **Take A Second Look** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Have you identified the stages of learning for the course (possibly units, lessons, modules, stages, or weeks)? |  |  |
|  | Do you have clear, easily understood learning goals for each unit, module, lesson, or week? |  |  |
|  | Is there a good connection between the learning goals of the course and the learning goals for each stage (or unit, lesson, module, or week)? |  |  |
|  | Do you have a clear idea of how much of the course will be asynchronous and how much will be synchronous? |  |  |
|  | Do you have good reasons for that particular combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning activities? |  |  |
|  | For every synchronous learning activity, are you making sure that there is an asynchronous way that students can do the same learning? |  |  |
|  | Have you decided and communicated when the stages/units/modules/lessons will be released? |  |  |

**Create a course plan by selecting learning activities and materials.**

|  |  | **Yes** | **Take A Second Look** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Does each unit, module, lesson, or week have a THINK ABOUT activity that asks the student to check in with their own assumptions about or familiarity with a particular topic or skill? |  |  |
|  | Does each unit, module, lesson, or week have some READ/WATCH/LISTEN activities that asks the student to consider new ideas or approaches? |  |  |
|  | Does each unit, module, lesson, or week have some DO activities which ask the student to apply their learning or practice a new skill? |  |  |
|  | Do the learning activities in each unit, module, lesson, or week proceed in an order that is consistent, even predictable? |  |  |
|  | Are there a variety of learning activities that will sustain interest? |  |  |
|  | Have you decided how you will be present in the course? |  |  |
|  | Do the learning activities connect you to the student? |  |  |
|  | Do the learning activities connect the students to each other? |  |  |
|  | Do the learning activities give students feedback on how well they are doing? |  |  |
|  | Have you provided opportunities for students to participate and contribute their ideas? |  |  |
|  | Have you avoided lengthy lectures? |  |  |
|  | For any synchronous activity, do students have a way to participate asynchronously? |  |  |
|  | Have elements of fun or surprise been embedded into the activities? |  |  |

**Make sure that the assessments evaluate the knowledge or skills identified in that stage or part of the course and in the overall course itself.**

|  |  | **Yes** | **Take A Second Look** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Do the assessments measure the understanding or skills identified in the learning goals? |  |  |
|  | Do the assessments encourage student learning? |  |  |
|  | Have students had time to use the knowledge or practice the skills needed for the assessment? |  |  |
|  | Are the assessments varied, so that they test for different kinds of learning? |  |  |
|  | Can students see how well they are doing during the course? |  |  |
|  | Will the assessment be fully explained, describing what you want students to do, why you want them to do it, how to do it, when to do it, what criteria you’ll use when marking (and what makes an exceptional assignment), and how to submit it. |  |  |
|  | Do students know when and how they will receive feedback? |  |  |

**Develop the materials.**

|  |  | **Yes** | **Take A Second Look** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Is the syllabus posted in an easy-to-see place on the Blackboard site? |  |  |
|  | Is there a welcome from you, in which you introduce yourself and how the course works? |  |  |
|  | Is there a description of why the content is interesting or relevant and why you like teaching it? |  |  |
|  | Have you been clear when each unit/module is to be done? |  |  |
|  | Have you made a decision about the home page for your course? |  |  |
|  | Have you introduced the lab demonstrators and teaching assistants (and their roles)? |  |  |
|  | Have you indicated how and when students can contact you and/or a teaching assistant? |  |  |
|  | Have you enrolled the TAs and lab demonstrators in the course? |  |  |
|  | Have you indicated how students can get help when they are having trouble with technology? |  |  |
|  | Have students been given clear reasons why they are asked to do an activity? |  |  |
|  | Are instructions specific, clear, and complete? |  |  |
|  | Are instructions understandable by students? |  |  |
|  | Have you been clear about how you want students to use the discussion boards? |  |  |
|  | Have you defined how frequently you want students to post (e.g., one original post, one reply)? |  |  |
|  | Have the timing on the posts been defined (e.g., at least one by Wednesday, a second by Monday)? |  |  |
|  | Have you defined what a good post looks like? |  |  |
|  | Have you defined how you will be involved in the discussion board? |  |  |
|  | Have you determined how discussion groups will be assigned? |  |  |
|  | Have you provided links to a discussion group? |  |  |
|  | Do you have a method for tracking participation in a discussion board? |  |  |
|  | Are the questions in the discussion board open-ended and relevant questions? |  |  |
|  | Have you divided students into smaller groups for discussion boards (if possible)? |  |  |
|  | Have reminders for assignments been provided? |  |  |
|  | Are your videos engaging and focused? |  |  |
|  | Do the videos convey good energy? |  |  |
|  | Are the videos captioned? |  |  |
|  | Are the videos edited so that they are clear – but still preserve some of your common speech patterns? |  |  |
|  | Have you made appropriate accommodations for students (particularly on the issues identified in the letters from SAS)? |  |  |
|  | Have you identified an appropriate time for the submission of assessments? |  |  |
|  | Have you decided on the timeframe for quizzes? |  |  |
|  | Have you defined academic honesty and your commitment to it? |  |  |
|  | Have you set up the grade book? |  |  |
|  | Does the left-hand navigation pane have a clear organizational structure, possibly with well-defined sections? |  |  |
|  | Are all activities students are required to complete on Blackboard linked above the word “Course Management” on the left-hand navigation pane or in a content area |  |  |
|  | Are the parts of the course labelled clearly in the left-hand navigation pane? |  |  |
|  | Have you provided a checklist for students so they know what to do at each stage, module, unit, or lesson? |  |  |
|  | Is the material easy to find for students (i.e., not buried at the very bottom of a long page or placed behind too many clicks)? |  |  |

**Test materials.**

|  |  | **Yes** | **Take A Second Look** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Are all the dates right for your Zoom Live Sessions? |  |  |
|  | If you’ve put instructions in different places, are they consistent? |  |  |
|  | Have you made visible the right module, unit, week, or lesson? |  |  |
|  | Do all the links – on the left-hand navigation pane and embedded in the course content – take students to the right places? |  |  |
|  | Have you turned on “Student Preview” mode and learned how the students will experience the course? |  |  |

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