Teaching a Print Based Distance Course? Getting Started Tips

Welcome to your role as instructor for a distance education course delivered the Office of Learning Technology (OLT) for the Winter Session 2007.

The following Resources were pulled together based our collective experience working with instructors and learners. We hope you'll find them useful.

Your Resources

Faculty Service Centre (FSC): You should (by now) have a login and id required to access the FSC portal. This will allow you to view your classlist, send group emails prior to the opening of the course and enter final grades . If you are not set up with this id, please request access at http://www.students.ubc.ca/facultystaff/fsc.cfm?page=access

Campus Wide Login (CWL): Along with your email address, **your CWL ID is the primary identifier** you use in making contact with support resources on campus. If you haven't set up your CWL account yet, click here: http://www.cwl.ubc.ca/accounts/createanaccount.html.

OLT Instructor's Guide: This guide is your key to information about distance education and your instructional role: http://olt.ubc.ca/distance_learning/instructors_guide/

TAG: For information about upcoming workshops related to online teaching, WebCt, etc.: http://www.tag.ubc.ca/

Technical Support: olthelpdesk@exchange.ubc.ca

Teaching at a Distance Weblog: Resources and information specifically for instructors teaching distance courses**:** http://weblogs.elearning.ubc.ca/distanceteaching/

Resources for Learners

Resources for Learning: It is useful to familiarize yourself with the resources available to learners who are new to distance education.

Welcome/orientation email from OLT: A welcome email is sent to your students prior to the start of course outlining the process for getting course materials, finding their Learner's Guide and other learning support resources which may be helpful. We also provide students with instructor contact info. If you didn't receive a copy of this email and wish to view it, contact susan.wong@ubc.ca

Distance Learning Information and Course Descriptions: http://www.olt.ubc.ca/

OLT's Learner's Guide: recently been updated. A revised version is accessible via the OLTwebsite: http://olt.ubc.ca/distance_learning/learners_guide/

LEAP: students' online resource for academic support: www.leap.ubc.ca

Communicating with your Learners

It is important to send an email to all of the students in your course within the first few weeks after the course starts. You can do this easily by using the email tools through the Faculty Service Centre.

Following is a sample of an email message sent to learners on the opening day of a correspondence course. Feel free to modify this according to your own preferences if you want to use it.

Welcome to (Course name and number)!

Please follow the directions you have been provided with for accessing your course and acquiring course materials. If you need further reference, check the OLT website at: http://olt.ubc.ca/distance_learning/

Once you have purchased and received your course materials, you should review the intended objectives, required assignments, grading structure and schedule of submission.

If your course is has an online component, go into the section called Discussions or Forums. You should always read the Announcements forum first, since this is where I will be posting important messages. You will notice that I have already posted a welcome message--try posting your own 'hello' message in the Main forum that introduces yourself to your classmates.

If you are having any technical problems, you can contact the DET helpdesk at olthelpdesk@exchange.ubc.ca*. It is also important that you read your Learner's Guide. It contains important information about distance education.*

Note: it is important to follow the guidelines and schedule for submission of assignments. (this is where you will want to note specific requirements and expectations around assignment submission).

I will be available to you during the following times by email at …….. or by phone at…….

Welcoming Learners Into Your Course

A welcome message is important in setting the tone for the course.

You have only about one minute and one opportunity to make a first impression … what would you like your students to think about the course, how are you going to grab their attention? In your first message you want to capture the learner's interest and motivate.

Think back to the 'first day' of a course that you enjoyed. Can you remember what the instructor said that immediately grabbed your interest on the course? Can you remember how it was said?

Most certainly it had to do with presenting you with an interesting and challenging course that would test your abilities, but that he or she would be there to offer support when required.

According to the Task Value Expectancy Model (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002), two conditions have to be present to engage and motivate learners:
- They must value what they are doing.
- The perceived cost to be successful at what they are doing should not be greater that the value assigned to it.

As an instructor, part of your role is to manage learner's perceptions of these two conditions, and the task begins in your first interaction with the students: the Introduction Welcome message. Other important considerations for setting the tone are in the course description and the course schedule where the course elements are laid out, timelines attached and the assessment structure is made clear. These will be discussed in later updates.

Remember, most people experience some level of anxiety when presented with something new and unknown; setting support structures, clear expectations, scaffolding, and guidance will help students succeed in their course. Learners will find value in the course if they perceive it as interesting (relevant), if it helps them achieve a goal (or many small goals), or if they feel they have or will be developing the competencies required to be successful learners.

Reference:
Eccles, J. S., Wigfield, A. (2002). Motivation, beliefs, values, and goals. Annual Review of Psychology, 53, pp. 109-32.

Preparing for Exams

If your course has an invigilated face to face exam, you can refer to Exams information posted on the Student Services site for distance learners . This will provide you with tentative dates until the exact date is confirmed by Enrolment Services. **Note that all students must now apply to write exams – except if the exam is delivered online.**

Invigilators are hired for exams so you do not need to attend the exam session for your course.

Guidelines for Teaching

Effective Teaching Principles and Practices are posted on the TAG website (UBC's Centre for Teaching and Academic Growth) at:
http://www.tag.ubc.ca/resources/evaluation/appendixc.php

The Senate ad hoc Committee on Teaching Quality, Effectiveness and Evaluation (1998/99) developed this set of principles and examples of practice. They are generic in nature, and can be modified to suit specific disciplinary approaches to teaching and learning, include online learning.

Please have a look at these in considering your own teaching practice.

Key Contacts

Student registration issues/problems:

Before close of registration: distance.education@ubc.ca . Telephone 604 822 9836 or long distance at 604 1 877 272 1422. In the case of an urgent problem requiring attention contact Paul Poole at 604 822 1428.
After close of registration: distance.education@ubc.ca

Course extension requests:
distance.education@ubc.ca or Linda Haftner at 604 822 3768.

Course withdrawal information:
distance.education@ubc.ca. Telephone 604 822 9836 or long distance at 604 1 877 272 1422.

Course materials issues (for instructors only) contact our Course Support Liaison: Susan Wong at 822 6550 or susan.wong@ubc.ca. Student questions should be directed to the Bookstore.

Examinations:
sheila.williamson@ubc.ca 604 822 8116.

Course content/ Print Course Manual edits:
Contact doug.cronk@ubc.ca