PREPARING YOUR COURSE

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN TIPS AND CONSIDERATIONS

This two-page guide provides a brief overview of course design decisions you may need to make when preparing a course at the University of Miami.

1

Pick your teaching mode
Will you be teaching your course hybrid, flipped, or fully online?

Consider the pros and cons of each modality, and the ways you will need to adjust your teaching.

2

Design major assessments
How will you assess your students based on the course learning objectives?

- Start mapping out your course by working backwards. Think of what major assessments you want your students to perform to achieve course learning objectives, then plan weekly activities and lecture materials to build up to those assessments.

- Decide if you are to have traditional assessments such as exams, or authentic assessments such as a case study project or individual portfolio. Read this guide to learn more about different types of assessments.

- Use a combination of low-stakes assessments (quizzes, discussion board entries) and high-stakes assessments (final exams, research papers), so students are not as stressed about grading.

- Consider opting out of proctored exams and providing alternatives such as open-book or a multi-modal assignment while still having students uphold academic integrity.

3

Plan in-class activities
How will you engage with students on a weekly basis?

- Facilitate student discussions through a variety of modalities such as in person and/or online. An example is using the Blackboard Discussion Board so students can answer questions, post responses, upload media, and respond to other student posts. This short video and guide describes how to set up a forum (individual and group) to assess and grade participation.

- Support a balance of lecture, and individual or group work in class, especially on days when students attend in-person. An example is using Blackboard Collaborate Ultra or Zoom to create breakout rooms for students to work in pairs and then share out with the class.

- If choosing flipped mode, have students work on major assessments or projects during class time and provide one-on-one feedback or facilitation.

4

Create and locate supporting course materials
Will you create new resources or use existing course materials in your course?

- In addition to Zoom or Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, Blackboard Learn's Kaltura Screen Capture allows faculty to capture and upload a screen recording of a presentation, and host other videos within Blackboard directly. The Creative Studio can provide phone and email guidance about how to edit sound and video content. View the Creating Videos Help Guide.

- Instead of creating new content, leverage existing learning resources for students to engage with. Curated by UM librarians and experts-in-training, Research Guides point you to library materials and resources appropriate for particular disciplines, courses, and special topics. View the Online Teaching Library Resources Research Guide.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
ACADEMIC
TECHNOLOGIES
MIAMI

- Electronic textbooks can be read on a desktop, mobile device, or e-reader device. For questions about textbook adoptions or availability, reach out to Wendy Smith (wendy.smith@miami.edu), Manager of the U|Campus Store.

5 Draft your syllabus

For your course this semester, you might want to consider including:

- A statement on your chosen modality and the expectations that come with it such as how your class will be structured (how many days will you meet in person, synchronous or asynchronous online).

- Course schedule of major assessments and activities so students can plan accordingly.

- A communication strategy statement of how you plan to communicate with your students whether via email, Blackboard Announcements, or virtual office hours. Establish an expected response time.

- Any COVID-19 related statement in regard to in-person instruction policies and recording classroom sessions.

6 Structure your Blackboard course

Keep your Blackboard simple and decluttered by removing any unnecessary tabs or links. You can "chunk" your course into weekly modules by creating Blackboard folders to better streamline course materials. Start building any major assessments or activities you will host on Blackboard such as assignments, tests, journals, discussion forum, or blogs.

7 Pick your learning technologies

Use your design as your guide to choose the best educational technologies for your course. It's recommended to pick technology that is familiar to you and your students, supported by the University, and to make it simple (e.g. only picking 2-4). View supported technologies.

8 Establish how you will communicate with students

- Use Blackboard's Announcements tool to send class-wide notifications to all enrolled students in your course such as due dates for assignments and projects, changes to your syllabus, corrections of materials or exam schedules.

- Create a Blackboard Q&A Discussion Board Forum and encourage students to post questions for you and other students to respond to.

- Host virtual office hours via Zoom, Collaborate Ultra, or Microsoft Teams. Confirm frequency and timings.

9 Identify feedback and grading strategies

How will you provide feedback to your students?

- Use the Blackboard Grade Center to communicate student progress and provide feedback. The Blackboard Grade Center is a central location to share grades and provide feedback comments for each assignment that students can view. This playlist and this recorded workshop will help you become familiar with setting up your gradebook.

- Share personalized, detailed feedback using annotation tools. Tools like Blackboard Annotate, allow faculty to highlight text, add comments, draw notes, and attach additional resources directly within a browser, mobile or desktop application. View this investigation for more annotation tool implementation guidance.

- Prepare and download a backup working copy of your gradebook, via the Canelink gradebook, or download grade data from Blackboard. Also, advise students to keep copies of all assignments and grades for their records.