

# 7: Course Design

## Required Course Components & Design Elements

### Initial Support

- Welcome & Introductory email sent to students prior to course start date
- Training information on how to Navigate course and use Learn
- Orientation activities, including an assessment that covers syllabus and Learn features
- Required Textbook information

### Course Information

- Course Calendar and/or Schedule includes all activities and due dates
- Syllabus information including Online or In-person Office Hours (Asynchronous/Synchronous)
- Semester-long activities explained
- Special instructions provided for third-party software, (be aware that if you are using third party software OET cannot provide support), furthermore engagement with the course should be primarily through Learn with only the help of the third-party

### Building Community

- Introduction discussion thread for students and instructor
- Open discussion forum(s) (i.e. “Raise your hand” or “Ask the class/instructor”) provide space for communication not related to a specific assignment/activity
- Announcements posted regularly

### Content Presentation

- Students should be able to move around the class with ease. The following options will be laid out in template format within the Learn training course provided by OET.
  - Option 1: Organized by learning objectives – Example: the course has seven units, organized by learning objectives, and students are given very clear instructions on what they are expected to be able to do at the end of each unit.
  - Option 2: Organized chronologically – Example: the course has 16 week folders for a full semester course, organized by assignment and deadline.
  - Option 3: Thematic organization – Example: the course had Modules or Folders organized by the main topics/themes that the course content covers.

- Includes personal commentary from the instructor (written, video, and/or audio) that incorporates personality of instructor
- Goes above and beyond reading assignments – illustrates course topics, makes relevant to life beyond the books
- Anticipates where students may struggle and provides support (in text or FAQ)
- Appropriate use of media:
  - Access to different multimedia and traditional materials is one of the major benefits of taking an online course. Multimedia does not just mean a video lecture. When instructors offered innovative ways of using different mediums to relay course objects.
  - Also remember that there is a balance between offering enough engaging material and overwhelming students with options. “Sometimes, overloading a course with too many extras can be confusing to students. Good online courses enhance learning by including videos, interactive activities, podcasts, and other multimedia elements. TO make multimedia successful, these elements must always have a solid purpose and must be done in a professional way.” Jamie Littlefield, a distance education expert who specializes in writing about alternative education.
  - It is important to always note what material is required for the course and what is optional (extra resources).
- Keeps accessibility and UDL in mind. Universal Design for Learning is an educational framework based on research in the learning sciences that guides the development of flexible learning environments that can accommodate individual learning differences.

UDL calls for courses to be developed using three core principles:

1. Provide multiple means of representation to give learners various ways of acquiring information and knowledge. Provide multiple, varied examples to your students.
2. Provide multiple means of expression to offer learners more than once way to demonstrate what they know. Use more than one form of assessment and allow opportunities for practice and feedback.
3. Provide multiple means of engagement to tap into learners’ interests, challenge them appropriately, and motivate them to learn. Present the concepts in more than one way.

## **Activities**

- Linked to learning objectives
- Build from concept knowledge to practice, application, and analysis
- Discussion encourages synthesis
- Discussion follow-up encourages reflection
- Quizzes used for reinforcement of concepts and auto-grading of homework

## Student Engagement

Ultimately, how much students take away from the course, will depend upon how much they have engaged in the course. While they must be motivated to take on the learning challenges presented to them, it is also incumbent upon you to create an environment of engagement. There are three main capacities for student engagement in the course.

The degree to which students participate in each of these three capacities varies from course to course, but **each capacity should be included every week of your course.**

1. Student – Content (reading, researching, reflecting, completing assignments, and watching videos)
2. Student – Student (group work/collaboration, class discussions, peer reviews, and informal exchanges)
3. Student – Instructor (discussions, online office hours, feedback)