EHHP Best Practices in Online Education

A. Overview and Orientation

On OAKS, create an orientation module where students can find key information for the course. The orientation module should have the following elements.

Required:

❏ Syllabus

Syllabus should include additional items for online courses: office or consultation hours availability, preferred method of communication and response time expectations for student success and participation, and online technical support.
**Please remember that the college-wide "Policy on Course Syllabi" applies to all courses taught by College of Charleston faculty: http://policy.cofc.edu/documents/7.6.10.pdf

❏ Welcome announcement

A warm welcome helps create a safe, trusting environment critical to online course success. It is highly recommended that you create a welcome video so that students can put a "face to a name."

❏ Instructions and links for online platforms other than OAKS

(i.e. how to enroll in theSupersite, Zoom, Voicethread, Flipgrid, Google Classroom and other technology required during the course).

❏ Methods for communication

You may prefer a specific discussion forum for the students to ask general and technical questions about the course. This will help avoid answering the same questions through individual emails. However, if email is your preference, indicate that in your orientation module.

Recommendations:

❏ **A forum for the students to introduce themselves (Discussion board, Flipgrid, Voicethread, etc)**

In order to foster community-building and interaction, it is crucial to have an introductory forum and icebreaker in the beginning or share favorite pictures, songs, etc. If teaching synchronously, allow time for students to introduce themselves live. If not, have students introduce themselves on the Discussion board, Flipgrid or Voicethread. A similar icebreaker should be done midway through the semester to reinvigorate the community.

❏ **Information about the Honor Code**

Whether teaching exclusively online or online with synchronous meetings, create a Powerpoint or video about the honor code. Be clear about what is acceptable and not acceptable in an online environment.

❏ **Quiz about the syllabus and the honor code**

Here you can ask students key questions about the syllabus and the important policies that will drive the rest of the semester. This is a great way to make sure your students read the syllabus and remind them about academic honesty!

❏ **FAQ Section**

❏ **Course Expectations**

Outline course expectations and Include an explanation of what a successful student in your course "looks like." Be crystal clear.

B. Content, Organization, and Navigation

Structuring your online course in a well-organized and easy-to-navigate format will clearly communicate expectations to the students without the benefit of in-person communication. The following course components will reduce confusion and maximize student success.

Required:

- ❏ Organize your course by module, topic, or week. Try to have a similar structure and timing in posting for every module (topic, or week) so students are familiar with the structure.

- ❏ In addition to the syllabus, include a course calendar with all the activities that need to be done and due dates.

- ❏ Instructions must be clear and explicit for students to understand what they need to do, as you are not there to tell them in person. Provide examples when available to set appropriate expectations. For an asynchronous class, you could make a video describing the assignment as you would in class, pointing out the important parts, and giving tips.

- ❏ Follow a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework that emphasizes (1) variety and flexibility in the way information is presented and the ways students demonstrate learning and (2) reducing barriers to instruction while maintaining high achievement standards for all students. UDL principles prioritize multiple methods for engagement, representation, action, and expression. Additional information can be found in the [Accessibility and Usability section](#).

- ❏ Clearly state all course technology requirements, including accounts that must be made, platforms regularly used, and policies regarding webcams and participation in the online platform. Include instructions for all tools.

Recommendations:

- ❏ Include regularly scheduled announcements and/or screencasts and encourage setting notifications on OAKS.

- ❏ Clearly state time commitment expectations per module/week to ensure students know how much time it takes to take your online course.

C. Assessment, Feedback, and Academic Honesty

Timely and actionable feedback is a critical part of the online teaching and learning experience. When students receive a substantive evaluation of their performance in the course frequently and with regularity, it helps them stay motivated to persist.

Required:

❏ Use a method for communicating the criteria and expectations for students' submitted work products. This can be a rubric, grading scale, or samples of exemplary assignments from previous semesters (obtain permission from former students prior to showcasing their work).

❏ State, post, and reiterate the timeline for when students should expect to receive graded feedback (e.g., tests are returned within one week; homework assignments are returned within three days).

❏ Set permissions in OAKS so the gradebook is always accessible and up-to-date. Students need to know how they are progressing in the class, and if there are any outstanding assignments that must be completed in order to pass the course.

Recommendations:

❏ When possible, use low-stakes assessments (e.g., group work discussions, KWL charts, review quizzes). These types of assignments can provide students with formative information that helps them prepare for summative evaluations, such as final exams and unit projects.

❏ Add all assignments, discussions, and online quizzes to the OAKS calendar by clicking "Add to Calendar" when setting dates.

❏ In online discussions, set one due date for the initial post and another due date for the replies to prevent students waiting until the last minute.

❏ In addition to using rubrics and other objective grading criteria, offer qualitative feedback to students as well (e.g., via Turnitin, or with video/audio feedback through OAKS, VoiceThread, Zoom, or Screencast-o-matic). Communicate to students where they can find this type of feedback and give suggestions on how to use it to improve on future assessments.

❏ To maintain academic integrity, place a time limit on exams. Set the OAKS quizzes tool to show one question per page. In "Submission Views" set feedback to the **default view** to prevent students who take the assessment early to share correct responses with their classmates. Consider randomizing questions and answers. Also utilize proctoring tools, such as Respondus Lockdown Browser, to reduce academic dishonesty.

❏ Provide education about the formatting conventions of your discipline (e.g., APA Style) and talk with students about the importance of properly citing references and giving credit to others for their work.

❏ In PEAC courses, use accessible movement tracking applications, video feedback on movement, and/or journals to ensure compliance with necessary activity levels and standards for each course.

❏ Courses with online lab components should utilize videos and simulations in a train-the-trainer format with multiple assessment points to ensure equivalent integrity of the lab experience.

D. Communication, Interaction, and Participation

Frequent, accessible and organized communication is an integral part of a successful online learning experience.

Required:

❏ Establish clear expectations for students' participation requirements, including:
    ❏ netiquette for online discussions and Zoom meetings (if applicable).
    ❏ information on how both asynchronous and synchronous course communication will factor into assessments and grades.

❏ Provide expected response times for student communications, including but not limited to email (recommended at 24-48 hours depending on the length of the semester/maymester), discussion posts and assignment feedback.

❏ Give explicit guidelines for how various types of course communication should occur (such as private email for personal or grade related communications via CofC email accounts, or public forums for content/assignment related questions, utilization of TLT's "Ask 3, Then Me" policy, etc.).

Recommendations:

❏ Create initiatives and assignments intended to develop and foster a sense of community within the online course. This can be done through assignments/course resources that encourage or require regular faculty/student and student/student communication.

❏ Include a variety of ways in which students can engage and communicate in online courses. Examples may include utilizing the Announcements or Activity Feed in OAKS, Discussion Boards, or external learning tools such as Google Classroom, Zoom, Voicethread or Flipgrid among others.

❏ Communicate with your students weekly either via OAKS Announcements, email, or another method of choice. Consider using OAKS Intelligent Agents to communicate on your behalf.

E. Accessibility and Usability

It is your **professional** and **legal** responsibility as an educator to make all of your materials accessible to all students.

Required:

❏ **Alternative text on images** (alt text) in OAKS and within documents you create. *[Learn more about alt text and how to add it to different file types.](#)*

❏ **Closed captioning or audio/video transcript** of all audio or video used in class whether created by you or another source. *[Learn more about live transcripts and closed captioning audio and video.](#)*

❏ Ensure all **links/hyperlinks are descriptive** and/or text within a sentence to foster readability. Avoid naming links "click here." Instead name the link something meaningful to the end user, such as "[the College of Charleston](#)." *[Learn more about naming links in a document, presentation, or in OAKS.](#)*

❏ In **synchronous meetings**, always turn on the Live Transcript or Live Captions option so students can turn on live captioning if they need it. *[Learn more about live transcripts and closed captioning audio and video.](#)*

Recommendations:

- ❏ When creating your own documents in Word/Google Drive, use **Styles** to organize your content (ex. Header 1, header 2, etc.)

- ❏ Provide multiple ways for students to learn (e.g., use a combination of text, video, audio, and/or image; speak aloud all content presented on slides in synchronous presentations and then record them for later viewing).[1]

- ❏ Provide multiple ways to communicate and collaborate that are accessible to individuals with a variety of disabilities. For example, some discussions can be on OAKS and some of Flipgrid.[1]

- ❏ Provide multiple ways for students to demonstrate what they have learned (e.g., different types of test items, portfolios, presentations, single-topic discussions).[1]

- ❏ Provide links to tutorials for all required software for the course.

- ❏ Seek out assistance of instructional technologist for the school

1 - 20 Tips for Teaching an Accessible Online Course - By Burgstahler, Sheryl, Ph.D.