

Applying the Seven Principles of Good Practice to Online Learning

Principle of Good Practice	Ideas for Implementation
<p>1. Encourages contact between students and faculty.</p>	<p>You can encourage interaction by sending out a welcome letter before class starts or asking your students to introduce themselves the first few days of class. These are two simple ways to ease students' anxiety and help them feel like they're part of an online learning community.</p> <p>Provide lots of activities for student interaction throughout the course. Setup team assignments, discussion forums, or chat rooms so that students have an opportunity to interact and share opinions and experiences.</p> <p>It's highly recommended that you log in to your course several times a day (even on the weekends) to check for messages from students and contribute to discussions. At the very least, check for messages from students once a day and respond in a timely manner. Most students are comfortable with a response that is received within 1-2 days, but are appreciative if one comes sooner. If you are going out of town or will be unreachable, let your students know ahead of time.</p> <p>Try to make yourself more available when you know that a deadline is approaching in your course. This is a time when students might need some reassurance or some guidance about a project.</p>
<p>2. Develops reciprocity and cooperation among students.</p>	<p>Your students will eagerly welcome your voice and perspective into their online discussions. They view you as the expert and are eager to learn from you and your experiences.</p> <p>If a student is being disrespectful of another student's opinion, then make sure they know it's not an acceptable way to behave. An online classroom should be a safe place to learn and share, so respect needs to be present (just as it is in a face-to-face classroom). It's okay to have</p>

	<p>debates or disagreements, but it needs to be done in a respectful manner.</p>
<p>3. Uses active learning techniques.</p>	<p>In an online class, students are in charge of their own learning. The instructor is there to facilitate or guide the learners, but the learner is primarily responsible for interacting with the content and the learning community.</p> <p>Many of the face-to-face methods, such as “think-pair-share” can be used in the online environment. Tools like discussion forums, can be adapted for use with these techniques, as long as your instructions and expectations are clearly made beforehand.</p> <p>Active learning is based on students reflecting and then applying ideas covered by the course. So there are both traditional forms of expression (e.g. projects, portfolios) as well as more contemporary methods you can try (e.g. games and simulations). (See: Conrad and Donaldson, 2011, for examples)</p> <p>Many online active learning approaches will involve collaborative work involving teams of students. You will need to know how best to organize the students into teams, to prevent frustration in setting up each activity.</p> <p>When introducing new types of activities, it’s important to help all students experiment and adjust to the approach you are using – perhaps using low stakes grading at first (or no grading) to help students acclimatize and adapt.</p>
<p>4. Gives prompt feedback.</p>	<p>The keys to successfully providing feedback in your online course are being timely and detailed. Try to return your students’ assignments in 2-3 days. They don’t see you like they would in a face-to-face course, so they’re often wondering how they’re doing. Work very hard at providing more thorough, detailed feedback to your online learners. This is one of the few forms of communication they have with you about their learning and progress in their course. Simply letting your learners know that they understand a concept, or have done well at a particular task, will give them a boost and let them know that you have a vested interest in their learning.</p>

	<p>If a student is struggling with a particular topic or assignment, then give them some guidance and an opportunity to improve their work. They may just need a little clarification about what's expected, or may need to have a real-life example shared with them to help them grasp a difficult concept.</p>
<p>5. Emphasizes time on task.</p>	<p>In your syllabus or welcome letter, you need to let students know how much time you expect them to dedicate to coursework each week. Throughout your course modules, let students know how long they should expect to spend reading articles, responding in forums, and/or completing assignments and assessments. This will help them better manage their time.</p> <p>Help your learners be successful. Send out a brief list of deliverables that are due each week. This will help keep them on task and ensure that they haven't missed something.</p>
<p>6. Communicates high expectations.</p>	<p>Before your course even begins, send out a brief welcome letter to students and let them know what your expectations are. As the course progresses, provide clear expectations and guidance within your content modules, assignments, forum topics, and assessments. Grading rubrics are an excellent way to communicate your expectations to students because the student knows what criteria you'll be focusing on as you review their work.</p>
<p>7. Respects diverse talents and ways of learning.</p>	<p>Provide course content and feedback in various ways throughout the course. Some students prefer written content, while others enjoy audio and video formats.</p> <p>Provide some flexibility in your assignments and assessments. Give students the option of writing an essay, preparing a video response, or constructing a presentation.</p>

Created based on the 7 Principles outlined in:
Chickering, Arthur W. and Zelda F. Gamson. "Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education"
AAHE Bulletin. (1987): p3-7. Print.