

There's a lot to remember when it comes to setting up, managing and delivering your online course. Below is a checklist of suggestions which can help streamline that process and make for a smooth experience for you and the students.

Several Weeks before class begins

Import your master course shell into the upcoming Moodle site and run through the course checklist:

- Check deadlines in all assignments and activities in the site and adjust for the new semester.
- Update the course syllabus as needed with college policies and links to academic resources, which may have changed. If you list assignment dates on the syllabus, check these too.
- Check all links in Moodle to make sure they still function.
- Review all your Moodle pages and check links, content and dates.
- Review Assignments in Moodle and update as needed. Check the spacing and sequencing against the format where you are teaching (3 week, 5 week, 7 week) to see if spacing and sequencing of assignments will need to be adjusted.
- Post all grading rubrics at the top in the "Start Here" section so students know how they will be graded on all projects.
- Review the gradebook and make sure it is setup and current for the course.
- Review all discussion forums and update links, content and dates.
- Hide Moodle items from student view as needed depending on how you teach your course.
- Make sure your introductory discussion or ice breaker forum is available the first few days so students can get to know each other and make introductions. This builds community.
- Review your communication policy and turnaround time for grading in the syllabus—this will be very different than during a typical semester. Students will need feedback on all assignments quickly so they absorb and synthesize feedback and apply it to future work submitted. Don't make students wait too long to get their grades. In an accelerated format they need feedback to make improvements.
- Include the 2 course evaluations at the end of the Moodle site. One is the Albright evaluation that will appear in Moodle. The other is the Online Course Experience Survey, which is a link at the bottom of your course site. Remind students that these are anonymous and encourage all students to complete them. These will be extremely important as we get student feedback on their experience with online courses. DSI can add the wording and links to your Moodle site. [Contact us for assistance.](#)
- Make sure all supports present in your course. The Writing Center is available for online students but there is no tutoring available with the ALC so be sure to go through your syllabus and make the adjustments from what you would have during a traditional semester.
- Consider adding a participant agreement to the online course. Several faculty use these at the end of the Start Here module to capture student responses as to whether they understand expectations of them throughout the course. DSI can add a sample one to your Moodle site and you can customize it as needed. [Contact us for assistance.](#)

Send an email to the students in your course

- Welcome them to the course.
- Browse through your roster – are there students from other institutions who are taking your course to transfer back to their home institution? If you have any of these students, include information in the email to make them feel welcome and acclimated to our institution. This is most likely to occur in the summer sessions in both SPS and traditional course offerings.
- Detail your expectations and how much time students should expect to spend each day or week on the course. Emphasize that they have chosen to take a course in an accelerated format and so it will be intensive for both them and you. Include the number of days you expect them to login to Moodle each week.
- List the texts students will need and remind them that if they don't have them by the first day of class they should drop the class. There is no time to obtain them at that point since this is an online, accelerated course. If the text is available electronically within the Moodle site, let them know this.
- Review any special equipment they may need (ie microphones, speakers, software)
- Give them the date the course will open in Moodle – it is suggested that you open the Moodle site 1 to 2 weeks early for those who want to begin before the first day of class.
- If this is a course with extensive reading, consider sending them what they should read so they could get started before the first class.
- If there are assignments which must be completed within the first 24-48 hours of the start of the course, consider listing these and encouraging the students to begin working as soon as the Moodle site opens.
- Consider sending this email 2 times so students adding the course later will be able to have the information.

Create your videos for the Start Here area

- Create at least one welcome video at the start that explains how this course will work. If you have videos from previous instances of this course being offered online, please review because in many cases they will need to be updated
- Consider creating a syllabus overview video which reviews the syllabus, much like you would do in a face-to-face course.

Include a check-in assignment

- How do you know the students are attending the first class? This could be in the form of the introduction assignment or anything else that tells you they are “present” the first day. Have this due within 24 hours of the first class. This is your “check” to make sure all students are present and engaged. Include this information in the welcome email and also on the syllabus

Include an attendance policy on your syllabus

- How do you know that students are attending your course? This is different than the grading policy. An example might be “if you miss X number of assignments in a row then this means you have not been attending my course and ...” adding what the consequence for them will be – that they can't pass the class, or can't get higher than a certain grade, or are encouraged to drop the course. Another popular attendance policy is “if you don't complete all discussion forum requirements you have not been attending the class”. Federal financial aid guidelines say that institutions can't count “students logged into the LMS”. The policy is yours to choose and helps the institution determine a refund should the student drop the course.

Offer an assignment grid at the top of the course

- Give students some kind of grid or list of “what’s due when” in the “Start Here” section of everything they have to do in your course and the date it is due. Include the time zone of when it is due – students may be traveling or live in a different time zone over summer or interim. Consider it a roadmap to help them with time management so students know exactly what they should be working on each day right down to the times they should have it complete. It should be a format that they can print, such as pdf, Word or Excel.

One to two weeks before the course begins

Open the Moodle site

- Go to the settings and change it from Hide to Show.

Send the second email to the students

- See list of items above for suggestions of what to include

Daily

Login in to the Moodle site

- How often you check the class is an individual decision but be consistent with whatever policy you have on your syllabus. Checking in *at least* once each business day and a few times over the weekend is a good rule of thumb. Many faculty strive to read and respond to all e-mail conversations and discussion forums within 24 hours during the week and 48 hours on the weekend.
- Monitor and guide class discussions, as needed.
- Monitor and respond to all email conversations
- Monitor and respond to the class FAQ discussion forum questions at the top of the Moodle site

Weekly

Post instructor announcements

- At least once a week, more as needed, post an announcement telling students what you will be covering that week and reminding them of any due dates. See the [Addendum](#) for examples.

Update any due dates on assignments and task lists with revised dates

Grade all work within your stated time frame per your course policy

- Students appreciate timely feedback on their assignments. How long it takes to grade assignments and send meaningful feedback to students depends, of course, on the nature of the assignment. However, students may not be able to proceed in your course until they get your feedback on how they are doing. If you anticipate that it will take longer than a week to return student work, it is best to inform them in advance when their grades and feedback will be available. Doing so will forestall a lot of questions from students. It is also best to grade assignments in sequence (i.e., assignment 1, then assignment 2, and so on) so students can apply the feedback from one assignment to the subsequent assignments

Summarize discussion forum conversations

- Since it can be hard for students to wrap up a discussion or cull out the important points before moving on to other discussions. See the [Addendum](#) for an example.

Consider holding online office hours with Zoom

- Giving your students a chance to communicate with you in real-time can help build strong relationships and motivate students to fully engage in the class.

Last Week of Class

Encourage students to complete course evaluations

- Research has shown that the biggest influence on whether a student completes an end-of-class survey is the instructor. So a note from you in either an email or a post in the course announcements encouraging your students to complete the survey and assuring them that the information will be kept confidential and used to improve the class is essential for a high response rate.

Last Day of Class (and soon after)

Post an end of class announcement

- This will wrap up the class and include a final request to complete the 2 course evaluations, which should be posted at the bottom of your Moodle site.
- Remind students to download/print any work they want to keep as the Moodle site may become unavailable.

Handle any incomplete/deferred grade requests

Consider hiding the Moodle site from student view

- There is no official policy at Albright about when to hide a Moodle course from student view but to protect academic integrity and to keep student and faculty Moodle pages uncluttered, consider hiding the course from the student's view as soon as final grades are submitted. This will remove it from their view and force the course to be listed below any active courses in your view, making it easier to navigate in Moodle.

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Examples of Weekly Announcements	Example of Forum Summary
<p>Example 1: Hi everyone</p> <p>Nice work on the quizzes again this week. Over the next couple of days I will be contacting people to see if I can add your responses to the exemplary work folder for last week & this week. Overall it has been exciting for me to see the depth that you are digging into the issues. There are no simple answers. In many cases, there are several "good" choices (or several bad choices), that's what makes it a dilemma. I enjoy reading your opinions. Remember, ethics is about understanding HOW you think about things (your thought processes), WHAT you think (your opinions), and WHY you think that. You are getting really good at identifying the important parts of the issue, but don't forget to fully articulate what is going on in your brain and follow the ethical argument all the way through to the end.</p> <p>One general piece of feedback... Last week we learned about some of the most unethical and destructive journalists in the business: Blair & Kelley, in particular. This week, all of the journalists in the case studies are GOOD journalists. The big take-away that crossed all of the situations is the PERCEPTION of bias. None of these journalists had complaints or reprimands about actual bias or other unethical practices. Instead, their editors were struggling to make decisions about what the public MIGHT think given certain salient facts.</p> <p>This week's assignment is a little different: a discussion board. It is required and graded, so please make sure you understand the expectations. There is a rubric posted online at [insert link here]. Don't wait until the last minute! A discussion is an ongoing process. You can receive up to five (5) points for QUALITY and up to five (5) points for QUANTITY for a total of 10 points.</p> <p>Purpose of the Discussion Board: to analyze course concepts as a class on a deeper level than in the readings or to use the readings to facilitate a deeper understanding.</p> <p>Method for Discussion Board: interact with classmates and instructor by posting thoughtful discussion ideas in the discussion areas. There technically is no right or wrong answer for these assignments, but you must make your points based on factual evidence and in a clear and concise manner. This means with</p>	<p>Great job everyone on the first discussion in our course! Already we saw fine examples of sharing of resources, of budding identification of DE topics you would like to investigate further, and of enriching collaboration to help everyone in the group move ahead.</p> <p>Several threads emerged over the week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A definition of DE seems to be challenging to nail down, maybe because of the complexity of blended courses. While it might be hard to keep technology in any definition of DE as a component, not the center, we're reminded that approaching DE as multifaceted format of education allows us to address the "consequences" of the temporal and physical separation of the learner and the teaching resources system. - What's the relationship of learning, teaching, and responsibility? In week 2, you're exploring some historical roots of DE. You'll note its strong connection to adult education as it developed to provide access to education for those who did not have access to traditional educational opportunities – those "at the back door" as Wedemeyer would have said. Has the technology boom "opened" up DE to the point where basic notions of "adult learning principles" (go ahead and jump to pages 141-143 in our text) are no longer guiding principles? Lots we can discuss further there! - Who has/doesn't have access to the digital world (Digital Divide) is still a concern. Originally DD was about not having a computer/Internet also concerns limits of access because of skill level. - The growth of DE over the past decade is complicated by not new, but surely more visible challenges to traditional educational institutions to the point that they're increasingly under scrutiny by governmental and accrediting bodies. - Some theories relating to interaction among components of DE were touched on. We'll surely revisit that discussion! <p>Enjoy reading/reflecting/discussing the history of DE now in unit 2.</p> <p>~Mike</p>

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clear thesis statements, detailed explanations, apparent connection between concepts and behaviors, and strong organization.

READ: Knowlton: Part II: 22 & 23

WATCH: Part I of the PBS special series, News War, [insert link here]

Please let me know if you have any questions or if you want to re-write your quiz.

Sandra

Example 2:

Hello Everyone,

I hope that you are all doing well and feeling more comfortable in the new Learning Management System (LMS).

Please let me know if you have questions or concerns about it.

Make sure that you did all of the items that were due last weekend:

Week 1: August 23 - August 28

- Read Syllabus
- Find Course Content
- Complete Academic Integrity Quiz
- Read course email
- Log in to the Adobe Connect online meeting space for the entire class (let your instructor know if you have any problems)
- Read the Team Technology Video Project
- Complete the Introduction Assignment

Also look at the other major assignments and make sure you are familiar with what is expected.

Remember these items are due tomorrow (Sept 4) by 8 pm EST:

Week 2: August 29 - September 4

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- Read Course Content: Introduction to IST
- Apply for your Penn State Web Space
- Complete the Practice Quiz
- Complete Discussion Activity 1 for "Online Course Success"

Here is a question someone asked:

Q: Does the Practice Quiz count or should I study for it?

A: No, it does not count at all. Don't study for it. It is only meant to help you try the quiz tool prior to the real thing.

Looking toward next week, these are due by Sept 11 at 8 PM EST:

Week 3: September 5 - September 11

- Read Course Content: Introduction to Project Management
- Complete Discussion Activity 2 for "Introduction to IST"
- Complete Facebook Activity

You should be starting to discuss your project with your team.

Remember to add me to your Google docs with my Gmail account.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns. Have a great weekend!

Carlos