NORTH ISLAND COLLEGE

Top Ten Tips for Course Design

The following list outlines key tips to keep front of mind when translating your course into a digital format.

1. **You are not creating online courses. You are translating your existing courses to digital formats.**
   You are translating in-person, on-campus courses to digital instruction formats. Fully online courses take months to create. Take what you do well in the classroom and find suitable digital alternatives.

2. **Keep it simple. Make it your motto. All. The. Time.**
   Do not make things complicated when they do not need to be. Limit the technologies, strategies and activities to ensure you have rigorous and quality learning experiences. Keeping it simple means streamlining, organizing and focus on essential concepts – not reduced quality.

3. **Leverage what the institutional learning platform (Blackboard Learn) does best.**
   Use for hosting course content, sharing instructions for learning activities, giving short quizzes on readings and content, and having students hand in assignments. Grades can be organized here too. It does a very good job with these tasks. If you wish to move beyond Blackboard you have Kaltura, WordPress and BlueJeans as other tools. Beyond that, there are many opportunities for exploration.

4. **Create a routine learning schedule and format for students.**
   Be clear and consistent so students can know what to expect each week in terms of what to do and what to hand in etc. Establish a routine of what happens each day so students can follow the pattern and know what to expect. Ensure your course engagement (both synchronous and asynchronous) follows a common format each week. Ensure your communication is frequent and students know when to expect updates and feedback from you. Anything you can do to follow a pattern, a routine, a similar set up each week – will help with learning.

5. **Care and compassion front of mind when planning how many and what kind of assessments to include in course.**
   When translating your course to digital forms of instruction, students are translating and adjusting too. They are trying their best to manage the new way of learning amongst all else going on in their lives. Give students more choice, keep things simple, make smaller assessments for managing with technology and communicate frequently to your class. Remember, you can adjust your ACD in terms of assessment and % allocations, as long as you put your focus on the course learning outcomes.

6. **Rethink high stakes assessments.**

Exams and tests do not work well in digital environments for a variety of reasons. Try more lower stakes assessments, quizzes in Blackboard to ascertain if they are reading/grasping content etc. Consider take home exams, open book tests and projects where students need to consolidate and demonstrate their learning – and often experience a more challenging opportunity to demonstrate their learning.

7. **Flip your classes and chunk content.**

Flipped learning means you move from content delivery from the classroom to recorded and narrated content students can access on their own. You use any live online sessions for applications of learning, engagement activities, answering questions, building community, getting to know students. To do this make short (2-3 minute) videos using content you already have and add your voice. Separate content into small components, concepts, themes, or topics. Students will appreciate the smaller digestible chunks of learning. It will also be easier to follow with everything else they are learning in a digital format.

8. **Organize ongoing engagement activities.**

Try to build varied and appropriate engagement across a digital learning experience. For example, each week you may have engagement experiences such as: Monday - a quiz to assess readings, Tuesday – reply to a discussion post Wednesday - read and watch content, Thursdays – submit a short assignment or reply to another post, Fridays - touch base with a course 'buddy' to share what they are learning etc. and read/watch more content for preparation for a quiz on Monday. This helps with being consistent and establishing that routine for learning. Be clear so students can know what to expect each week in terms of what to do and what to hand in etc.

9. **Engage learners in more asynchronous activities and fewer synchronous engagements.**

This means focusing on primarily independent learning sprinkled with some collaborative/group learning. Asynchronous learning is more equitable for all learners given technology and internet access challenges. Asynchronous/independent learning allows students to learn at their own pace and think through new concepts. As you feel your way through your courses, think about adding more of this kind of learning. Use web conferencing software (BlueJeans) for office hours, review sessions and consultations where live connections are best. Find out information from students about time zone, technology, and internet speed before you schedule live sessions.

10. **Establish frequent communications with students to build community.**

Focus on one-to-many communications over individual emails or meetings for optimal use of your time. Leverage discussion forum in Blackboard for students to help each other out with common questions. Send an email or message to students every week or a couple of times a week. Host a weekly live BlueJeans session (optional) just for students to ask questions, see each other, come together etc.