

Online/Blended Teaching Plan of Action: Jacki Soister Fall 2020

Proposed teaching strategies defined using the Quality Learning and Teaching (QLT) instrument

QLT Section 1: Course Overview and Introduction
1.1 Instructor uses the course environment to provide clear and detailed instructions for students to begin accessing all course components, such as syllabus, course calendar, assignments, and support files.
1.2 Detailed instructor information is available to students and includes multiple formats for being contacted by students, availability information, brief biographical information, and instructor picture.
1.3 Course description includes the purpose and format of the course, as well as prerequisite knowledge and competencies, if applicable.
1.4 Online etiquette expectations for various forms of course communication and dialog (e.g., chat, "hangout," email, online discussion) are presented and clear to the student.
1.5 Academic integrity or "code of ethics" is defined. Related institutional policies for students to adhere are clearly stated and/or links to those policies (e.g., online catalog; institution web page) is provided.
1.6 A list of technical competencies necessary for course completion is provided, identifying, and delineating the role/extent the online environment plays in the total course.
1.7 Instructor provides samples of prior student work and opportunity for students to ask related questions.
1.8 Instructor asks students to share their own learning goals for the course.

Plan of action for Course Overview and Introduction:

All of our institution's online course syllabi are characterized by 1.1 – 1.6. In most cases student samples (1.7) are provided in the course LMS.

But 1.8 is lacking. My plan of action here is to translate a portion of 1.1 (the course environment including a syllabus) into adding a dynamic and editable syllabus in the form of a shared Google Doc accessible through the LMS. This has been an element of most of my CU Denver INTE courses and has been very helpful.

Each student will be asked to highlight one of the course's learning objectives and add a comment on how it can, or will, relate to "their own learning goals for the course" (1.8). In this way, students have self-awareness and self-stated expectations for their investment and engagement in the course. But also, this will help the instructor maintain focus on their established Learning Objectives as stated in the syllabus, rather than expanding, adding to, or changing the LO's (or accompanying learning activities) beyond the scope of the course. Another benefit is that the instructor has insight early on as to how the students anticipate meeting the LO's.

QLT Section 2: Assessment of Student Learning
2.1 All student learning outcomes are specific, well-defined, and measurable.
2.2 Grading policy is provided in a manner that clearly defines expectations for the course and respective assignments.
2.3 The learning activities (including graded assignments as well as ungraded activities) promote the achievement of the student learning outcomes.
2.4 The assessment instruments (e.g., rubrics) are detailed and appropriate to the student work and respective outcomes being assessed. This includes assessing modes of online participation and contributions.
2.5 Throughout the semester, instructor provides multiple opportunities to give feedback on student learning, as well as helping students "self-check" their learning.
2.6 Periodically, instructor solicits feedback from students regarding their learning and potential improvements that may be made to the course.

Plan of action for Assessment of Student Learning:

This semester has inspired me to make sure my Learning Objectives listed in the syllabus are robust enough to meet my course’s goals so that I do not find myself veering toward less than what should be expected of the students, nor toward more than the scope of the LO’s (2.1). Then I can return regularly to the LO’s as a guide for learning activities and assessments (2.3). This also ensures that the student activities do not assess something different from, or even more than, the original LO’s. Over the years this has been a great temptation for our instructors, as they add more and more content and activities with the good intentions of expanding student learning and engagement. But often this becomes unsustainable, both for the students and the professors.

QLT Section 3: Instructional Materials and Resources
3.1 Instructor provides students with adequate notice and time to acquire course materials.
3.2 Syllabus clearly indicates whether textbooks and materials are required or recommended.
3.3 Instructor articulates the purpose of all materials as to how they are related to the course and module learning objectives.
3.4 When possible, instructor promotes or provides options in terms of how students acquire course materials, including Open Educational Resources.
3.5 There are a variety of instructional material types and perspectives, while not overly relying on one content type such as text.
3.6 Modeling academic integrity, instructor appropriately cites all resources and materials used throughout the course.

Plan of action for Instructional Materials and Resources:

In order to address 3.1 – 3.4, our institution now attempts to provide *all* resources digitally as eReserves, whether required textbooks, recommended texts, or e-resources for papers and projects.

However, we can definitely grow in terms of 3.5 (“not overly relying on one content type”). Our course content is overly weighted with prof’s lecture videos (and accompanying lecture PowerPoints).

The plan is to guide faculty toward designing their online courses with more variety, such as podcasts, blogs, and/or web-based articles or videos (e.g. TedEd). The most important part of these additional resources is allowing for more contemporary and expert scholarly voices, with the added benefit of prompting more vibrant discussion and debate.

QLT Section 4: Students Interaction and Community
4.1 At the beginning of the course, instructor provides an opportunity for students to introduce themselves to develop the sense of community.
4.2 Instructor provides information about being a successful online learner/student.
4.3 Navigation throughout the online components of the course is logical, consistent, and efficient.
4.4 Learning activities facilitate and support active learning that encourages frequent and ongoing peer-to-peer engagement.
4.5 The modes and outcomes for student interaction are clearly communicated.
4.6 Instructor clearly explains his or her role regarding participation in the online environment. Instructor participates and manages, yet lets students take reasonable ownership.
4.7 The course learning activities help students understand fundamental concepts, and build skills useful outside of the course.

Plan of action for Students Interaction and Community:

It is worth mentioning for 4.1 that for all online courses at our institution there is a Week 1 VoiceThread video discussion: “Introduce Yourself.”

In terms of 4.6 (“instructor participates”), this is such a struggle to get instructors to engage in online discussions (Threaded or VoiceThread). The discussion instructions clearly state that students are required to respond to the posts of both their fellow students *and* their professor. But in many cases profs post nothing to respond to.

My plan is to put more focused energy on encouraging – but also equipping – profs to participate inside the online discussions. One way to do this will be to provide sample instructor posts for them to emulate (while being careful not to be patronizing if they lack these skills).

QLT Section 5: Facilitation and Instruction
5.1 Instructor helps identify areas of agreement and disagreement on course topics.
5.2 Instructor helps students understand importance of course topics and content in support of course activities and any related practical experiences.
5.3 The instructor presents the course material and concepts in an effective and engaging manner.
5.4 Instructor encourages students to explore new concepts through the course experience.
5.5 Instructor helps focus discussions on relevant issues.
5.6 Instructor provides feedback in a timely manner.
5.7 Instructor provides communications about important goals and course topics as opportunities arise.
(Core) 5.8 Instructor provides reminders of due dates and duration of respective modules, as well as other instructions to keep students on task.

Plan of action for Facilitation and Instruction:

Addressing 5.6 (“instructor provides feedback in a timely manner”), I sympathize with our professors in the challenge of providing timely feedback because we also require them to provide “formative” feedback (which takes more time). I have provided instructors with suggested timeframes for returning papers and projects to students. But my plan is to provide sample feedback – a feedback ‘cheat sheet’ – d with examples of formative feedback provided in other courses by their colleagues. Tips and suggestions are often received much better if coming from one’s peers.

QLT Section 6: Technology for Teaching and Learning
6.1 Tools and media support the course learning objectives/outcomes.
6.2 Instructor takes advantage of the current tools provided by the Learning Management System (or similar) to enhance learning.
6.3 Technological tools and resources used in the course enable student engagement and active learning.
6.4 Instructor provides clear information regarding access to the technology and related resources required in the course.
6.5 Acceptable technological formats for assignment completion and submissions have been articulated.

Plan of action for Technology for Teaching and Learning:

Regarding 6.2 (“current tools in the LMS to enhance learning”), I have recently created an embedded rubric in Turnitin (our paper submission 3rd party software that also serves as a plagiarism check) for instructors to grade research papers. It is customizable in grading categories and their descriptions, and in score/point ranges. I tested it in the last two semesters with positive feedback from the initial professors.

My plan is to offer this rubric to more professors for Spring 2021 and to customize it to their particular course and paper/project. I have begun implementing the plan by having scheduled a department meeting with my Educational Technologies team to introduce the rubric, show them how it works, and how it can be customized. In this way our other Instructional Designers members can offer the rubrics to the particular profs they work with.

Regarding 6.4 (instructor and tech support), I believe our professors are overly dependent on us in Educational Technology for student tech support. My/our plan is to further train profs in the tech tools in the LMS so they can be more autonomous in supporting students.

QLT Section 7: Learner Support and Resources
7.1 Instructor states her or his role in the support process.
7.2 The course syllabus (or related) lists and/or links to a clear explanation of the technical support provided by the campus and suggestions as to when and how students should access it.
7.3 Course syllabus (or related) provides an introduction to campus academic (non-technical) support services and resources available to support students in achieving their educational goals. E.g., Disability Support Services, Writing Center, Tutoring Center.
7.4 Course syllabus (or related) provides information regarding how the institution's student support (non-academic, non-technical) services and resources (E.g., advising, mentoring) can help students succeed and how they can use these services.

Plan of action for Learner Support and Resources:

Addressing 7.1 & 7.2 seems related to 6.4 (instructor and tech support) above. To repeat, I believe our professors are overly dependent on us in Educational Technology for student tech support. My/our plan is to further train profs in technical support skills so they can be more autonomous in supporting students rather than passing them on to ET or IT.

Regarding 7.4 (non-academic, non-technical student support, e.g. Advising), our institution has just this month established a clearly defined and formal advising department that is distinct from the Admissions office (working only with applicants and incoming students). Advising used to reside in the Registrar's office but was ineffective because it was more logistical in working with registrations, course caps, etc. The new Enrollment Management office includes Enrollment Advisors specifically dedicated to working with each student in choosing courses as they progress toward program completion.

The new challenge will be in 'publicizing' these dedicated people. I intend to suggest our syllabus as an option, which can include direct links to this department's services, as described in 7.4.

QLT Section 8: Accessibility and Universal Design
8.1 Syllabus (or similar) links to the campus accessible policy, whether it is required or recommended by the institution.

8.2 Instructor supports a range of learning styles and abilities for all students, rather than making reactive accommodations for those with registered disabilities.
8.3 A clear explanation of the disability support services (DSS) is provided and clear links to DSS resources are provided.
8.4 Students can clearly ascertain the role of the instructor in providing support for those officially registered with the campus disability services office.
8.5 Course documents and text materials created by the instructor or from external sources are in formats that are accessible to students with disabilities.
8.6 The instructor and course use supported campus technologies which are already fully accessible and assistive technology ready. Any third-party tools used are accessible and assistive technology ready when feasible.

Plan of action for Accessibility and University Design:

Regarding 8.2 (“instructor supports a range of learning styles and abilities for all students”), we are much more “reactive” in providing accommodations for students, mainly because we have not been faced with related circumstances. However, currently we have a student using a screen reader for eyesight issues.

I have already begun to implement my plan to support the Online Student Support Specialist (and related department) with ideas for proactive accommodations. I have shared my accessibility research and report from INTE 5200. My Solution Design Project for this CU Denver course was entitled: “Accessibility for Student Success” and was specifically designed to establish an accessibility plan of action for our institution. It also includes a proactive idea for addressing the use of screen readers. One example is that now all of our online course lecture PowerPoints have been translated into Outline View which provides a text-based version accessible to screen readers (addressing 8.5 above).

QLT Section 9: Course Summary and Wrap-Up
9.1 Instructor provides students with opportunities to ask questions as a form of closure and to foster insight into their accomplishments.
9.2 Instructor provides students with feedback about their overall learning and progress made during the term.
9.3 Instructor provides opportunities for students to reflect on their learning and connect their individual learning goals with the expectations (stated learning objectives and outcomes) of the instructor.

Plan of action for Course Summary and Wrap-Up:

I believe that in terms of sections 9.1 & 9.3 of this QLT we are lacking in many of our online courses. Our instructors need to provide opportunities for closure, as well as exercises in self-reflection (e.g. reflection journals) to coalesce their learning for the semester. As their Instructional Designer, I plan to offer some

suggestions for course closure and reflection (personal or group) in the final week(s). E.g. a culminating group Zoom Session, a course “lessons learned” VoiceThread video discussion, or a personal online reflective journal.

I am encouraged by the fact that many of our courses have address 9.2 (feedback on learning and progress during the term). More of our professors are moving to periodic (3x per semester) self-assessments that also service as prof-assessments with formative feedback.

Summaries of Reflections on Practice:

Although I do not have any formal Reflections on Practice documents to share, I can say this: It is of crucial importance to me to apply (to “practice”) what I have learned in each of my LDT courses to my professional life. My work supervisors have also recognized how our institution has benefitted. Although not submitted in writing, a few of these practice opportunities:

- (1) Trained a professor in how to write “Reply Post prompts” for online discussions (“improving social presence and interactivity for students by enhancing online discussions with next level strategies”);
- (2) Launched one accessibility initiative with the simple step of editing lecture PowerPoints for Outline View so they can be read by a screen reader for students with impaired eyesight (“Applying learning to a real-world problem that has immediate impact on learners”); and
- (3) Created an embedded rubric in our Turnitin paper submission software for ease, accuracy, and consistency of grading.