

How Can Online Instructors Better Manage Their Workload?

Presented by:

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Brian Udermann, PhD has more than 20 years of teaching experience in higher education. He started teaching online in 2005 and has served as the director of online education at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse since 2007. In addition to his administrative duties, he facilitates online workshops through the Online Learning Consortium (OLC) and is an alumnus of OLC's Institute for Emerging Leadership in Online Learning. Udermann has published more than 70 peer-reviewed scientific manuscripts, five book chapters, and two books, and has done more than 200 national and international presentations.



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Self-reflection questions

Do I currently email my students one to two weeks prior to my online course starting with pertinent information about the class? If no, should I start? If yes, are there ways that email could be improved?

Is it currently easy for my students to get started in my online course? For example, is there a welcome message with instructions to students on how to get started in the course? Is the course navigation simple and straight forward? Are students clear on what they are to be doing when they first log into my course?

Do I currently utilize a general course questions discussion forum in my class? If no, is that something I should add? If yes, is there a way I could improve that, for example, by encouraging students to respond to questions from their peers?

Do I currently post questions I receive from students about my class in a general course questions discussion forum? If no, is that something I should start doing with appropriate questions?

How often do I currently post updates and announcements in my course? Do I feel that is adequate or should I increase the frequency of those?

Do I routinely answer student questions when I know the information is readily available to students (e.g., in the syllabus)? If yes, should I change that practice?

Do I provide clear directions and expectations to students for all course activities, assignments, and assessments? Are there ways I could improve in this area?

Do I currently stagger when major assignments, that require intensive grading and feedback, are due in my courses to help spread out my workload? If no, is that something I should consider?

Do I currently anticipate heavy non-teaching workload related responsibilities (intensive committee work, grant writing, community service projects, etc.) when determining due dates for students work? If no, is that something I should think about for future course offerings?

How am I at utilizing to tools in our institutions learning management system such as using the rubrics function for grading or utilizing auto grading functions to help diminish my workload? Is that something I need to explore further?

Might I be able to better manage my workload when teaching online by reusing prior course materials (e.g., course updates and announcements, feedback, discussion summaries)?

When I am teaching a course do I keep a log or written record of items that need to be revised or updated the next time the course is offered? If no, is that something I should start doing?