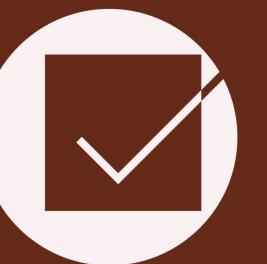


Assessment





"Is this in the test?"

We are all familiar with students who will put in additional effort when they know that "this is for marks". We recognize their logic. Assessment is a key influence on almost all of our learning.

We think that the regular and purposeful use of e-assessment technologies can be used to create a range of student friendly reference points. Measures that allow the learner (and not only the course facilitator) to ascertain own levels of understanding. A continuous approach to assessment can assist students to distil what they know, what they don't know and what they don't know that they don't know.

One chance

I spend the semester teaching students about my subject. I tell them that they have got one chance to show the world what they have learned. I explain that on the job, you don't get a second chance if you don't deliver. If you miss a deadline, you get a warning letter. If you fail, you get fired. That's how life goes. I'm teaching for the real world. Repeated testing is busy work, it takes away from important teaching time.

A feedback loop

Testing does not have to be uniform. I've used e-assessment to emphasize achievements, rather than failure. I've moved learning forwards by providing immediate feedback via quizzes. By using criterion referenced assessment, I'm reinforcing the idea that students have control over, and responsibility for, their own learning. Students are permitted to make mistakes, take risks, look at exemplars and judge what is expected. Assessment need not only be high stakes measures of achievement at the end of a course.



The capacity to self regulate

For some, the word “assessment” conjures up the idea of long hours studying, a final mark or an end of semester test. These familiar notions of assessment do not capture how e-assessments could be used to serve a range of purposes.

An online quiz about a reading can assist a tutor to see if the text has been read beforehand. An interactive problem completed during the in-contact sessions could quickly determine whether a concept has been understood. A set of self reflective journal entries that attest to others what skills they can offer. Interactive group assignments that require collaboration and develop social skills. Peer feedback offers insights that are specific and timely.

A blended course can reframe the way that assessment is used

Assessment for learning: a formative or developmental approach about topic(s) to which the student can relate to and can use to direct future learning. This kind of e-assessment takes place during the learning programme (rather than at the end – summative, or beginning – diagnostic) and can be used repeatedly.

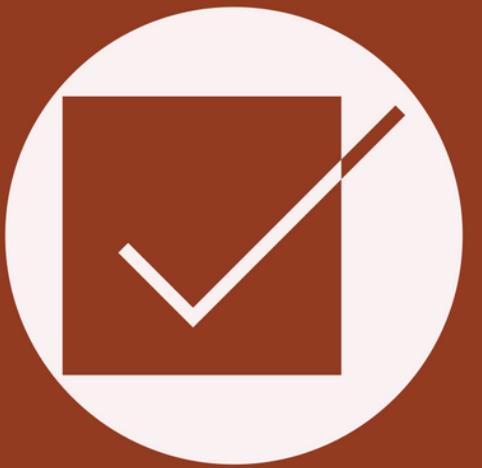
Assessment of learning: a final assessment of a student’s achievement, ultimately leading to a formal qualification or certification of a skill. This kind of e-assessment is generally undertaken at the end of a course or programme. It is used to make a judgment about the candidate’s overall achievement of learning outcomes.



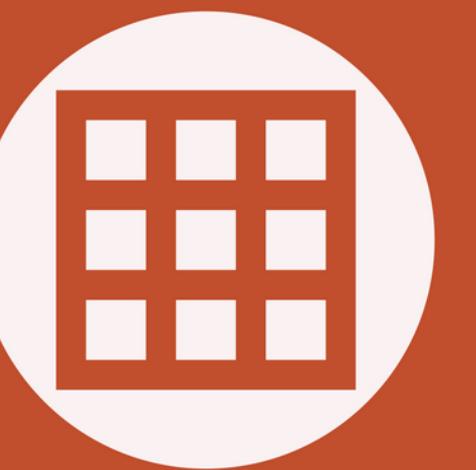
E-assessment Checklist



Self referenced assessment

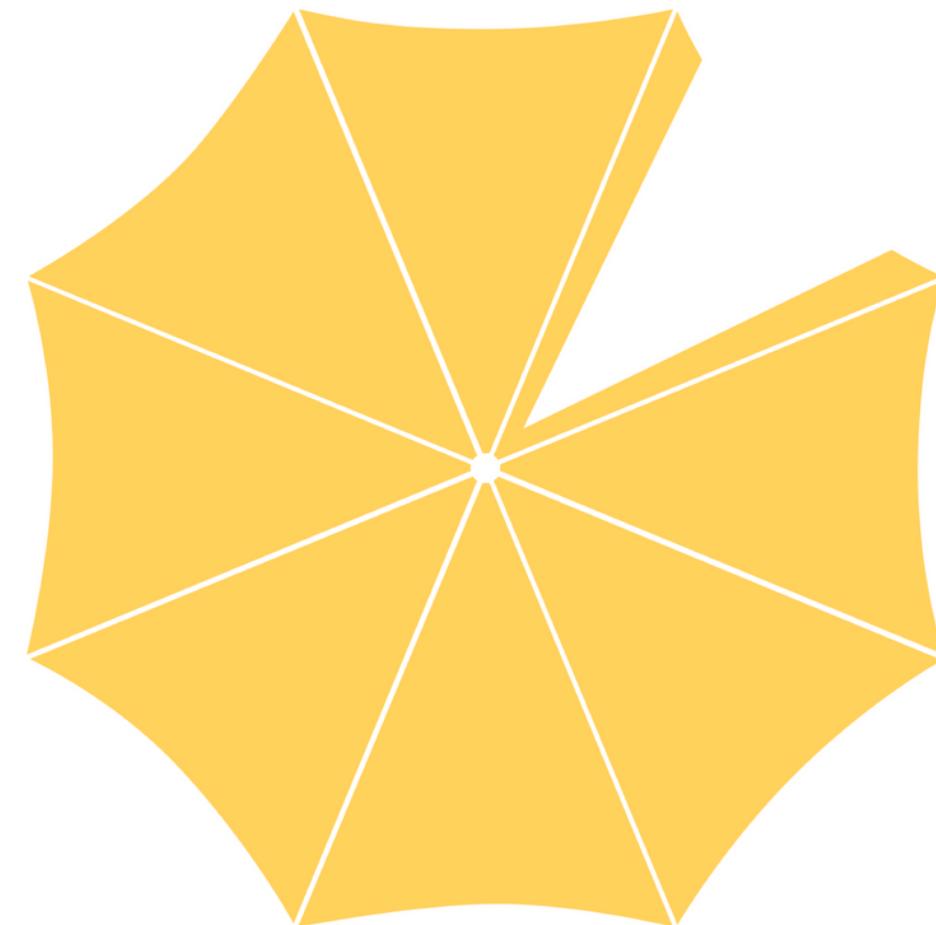


Convey expectations



Assessment Instructions





"Are we finished?"

We recognize the student whose focus is on other pursuits rather than the immediate task at hand. Digital technologies can be used to frame beautiful questions, extend learning beyond the class and connect what is being studied to broader society. We think that approaches such as inquiry based learning or authentic learning are enabled and enhanced with technology. We see digital as a lever to prompt and support the development of desired graduate qualities and as a means to prepare students for a "21st century" future.

T & L Strategies





A deficit of attention

Mobile tech has invaded my class. I find it very difficult to teach students when half of them are hidden behind screens. Phones and laptops decrease eye contact, distract or interfere with what is being taught. I realize that these devices are here to stay, but I don't want them living in my class. Devices have hijacked both the time and minds of students.

Fit for purpose

This is another lane for learning. Sometime I choose avoid the lane because it is unsuitable while other times we jump right in. When I choose to use technology, then I make sure that my intentions are clear to everyone. I'm not into gadgets. Devices can solve some problems as well as creating new issues. There must be clear returns on its use for my students.

The content tyranny challenge

"Content tyranny" happens when the need to cover the textbook receives the highest priority. Time is scarce and a quick and efficient means is sought to cover the necessary information. Digital tools and resources can reinforce content tyranny.

Backwards design (Wiggins and McTighe) challenges the content centred approach to curriculum design. It prioritizes learning outcomes and meaningful assignments or tasks.

When you design backwards, you support contextualized teaching approaches (inquiry based learning, authentic learning, mastery learning) that guide students towards understanding. In backwards design, students can "show what they know" and digital scaffolding can help them "come to know what they need to know."



Inquiry based learning

Addressing questions and solving problems is the hallmark of inquiry based Learning (IBL). It puts students' investigative work at the centre. The approach is used to acquire domain or topic specific knowledge, develop research and professional skills

IBL might take the form of a problem, project or case study. Scope can be a single contact session or could span a degree or programme. The nature of the inquiry might be guided, structured or open.

With an IBL approach, lecturers are not focused on the exposition of content or a topic. They take on the role of facilitators, enabling their students to take greater responsibility for how they go about learning

Students move from investigating questions posed by others, to formulating their own research topics and converting that research into useful knowledge.

Students gain both a deeper understanding of the subject-matter and practice other transversal skills required for tackling complex real world problems.

Mastery learning

In a mastery learning approach, the students are expected to progress through a sequence of levels. To level up each time they are tested for pre-requisite skills or understanding. This approach is frequently used to ensure that students who would not normally succeed in the given time can complete what is intended.

Variations of mastery learning are competency based education or personalized learning. Upwards progress depends on performance. Not on the amount of time that has been spent in a class or course.

Assessments create confidence about the extent to which students have learned. Levels are explicit and students see how individual learning outcomes fit together. Supports to help students achieve mastery are aligned with assessments. Decisions about who (teachers, peers, automated systems) are made about will provide these supports.



Peer based



Mastery



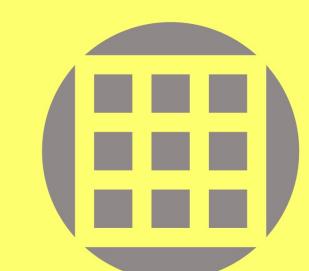
Engagement Characteristics



Inquiry



Learning Activities





"Is it downloadable?"

We can see a tendency towards passive learning among some students. We know that conceptual development occurs when students chose to participate and interact. We want to widen the scope learning within a formal class and beyond. We think that student centered activities can be deployed, even in a lecture hall. Technology supports this approach and allows students to make meaning with others, instead of only listening and processing to information by themselves.

Settle down and listen

I bring years of experience to my subject. I can tell students about what they need to know, why this is important and the context wherein that knowledge is needed. The prescribed textbook is very dense. My notes are concise and my slides focus on the application of this information. When I ask if there are any questions in class, they keep quiet. I must be explaining things very well.

Participatory pedagogy

I have high expectations about participation. My students are more than spectators. Listening to me and taking notes is a minimum expectation. I'm looking for new opportunities for students to respond to each other and then with me. I set "doing" tasks that make participation possible, even in a big class. You don't actually learn until you engage.



From student passivity to student activity

You walk into a room and see students huddled together in small groups discussing. The lecturer stops them after about a minute, call randomly on several individuals for responses and gets more responses from volunteers, and then proceeds with your lecture. The whole process takes less than three minutes, during which most or all of the students are awake and actively engaged with the course material.

“Giving away information” does not lead to meaningful use or internalization of information. In-class interactions are useful to activate learners' prior knowledge, motivate them to take action and help bridge ideas from familiar concrete contexts to an abstract concept. When technologies are combined with learning activities, then these tool offer new levers to enable a students centered class.

The transition towards a student-centred active learning approach can be taxing. Students sometimes see group work is often looked at “busy work”. An appreciation of different learning preferences could explain reluctance. An explanation about the value of different types of activity can justify the use of learning activities.

Activists respond most positively to learning situations offering challenge, to, new experiences and problems in their learning.

Reflectors respond most positively to structured learning activities where they are provided with time to observe, reflect and think, and allowed to work in a detailed manner.

Theorists respond well to logical, rational structure and clear aims, where they are given time for methodical exploration and opportunities to question and stretch their intellect.

Pragmatists respond most positively to practically based, immediately relevant learning activities, which allow scope for practice and using theory.



Learning Activity Snapshots

Groups & participation



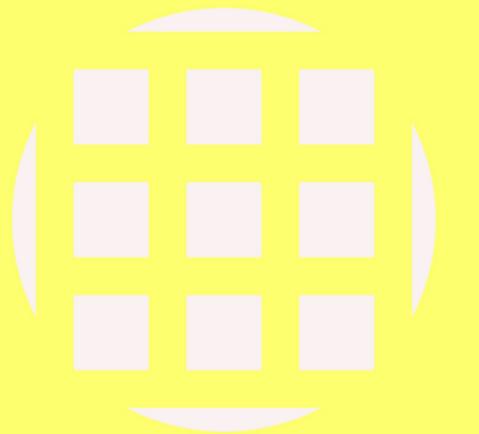
Learning Activities

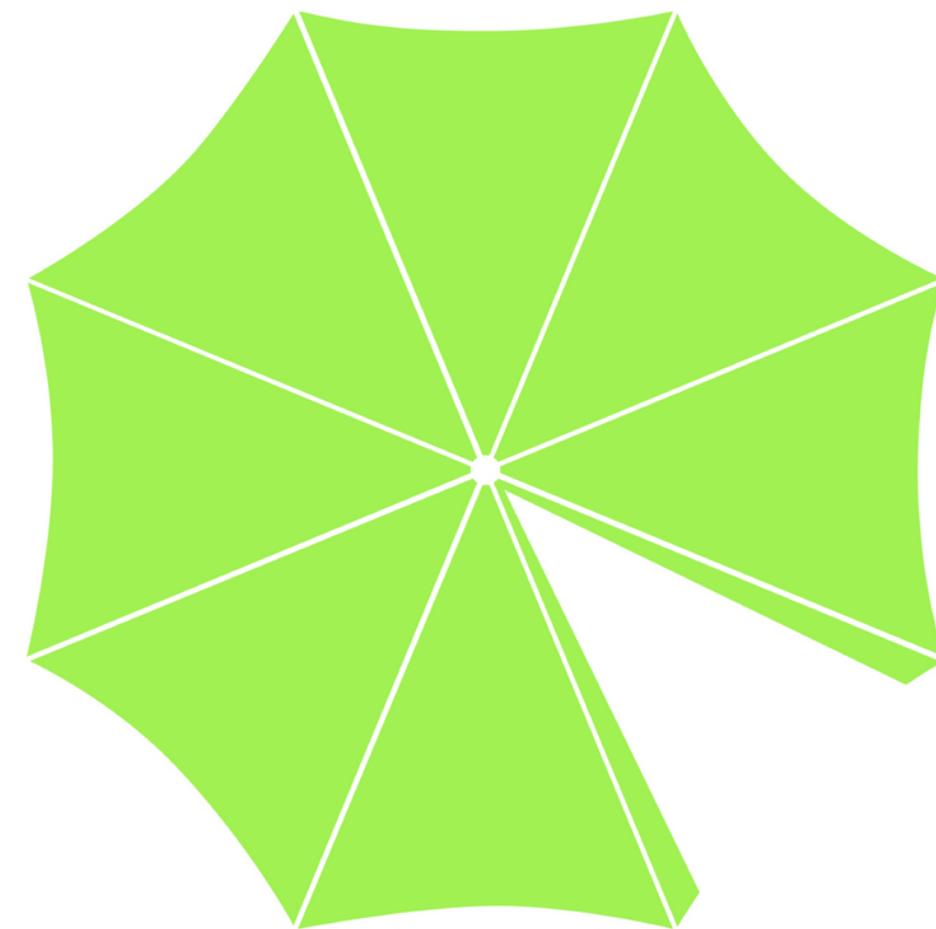


A checklist for activities

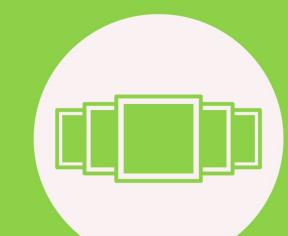


Structure of activities





Content



"It's a lot. My brain hurts"

We realize that the equivalent of a library sits in their palm of some student's hands. We are beginning to see the associated cognitive burdens and costs that come with access to a wealth of information. We think that curation tools offer lecturers (and students) a means to collect critical and up to date works, a hub from where these seminal and supplementary works can be accessed and an order or sequence

When curation is associated with Open Education Resources (OER), content becomes available at lower costs. Students can also be offered a richer media experience and begin to see where they have come from and where they are expected to go

The information superhighway

Since my time is tight, I usually take my course content from a single source, save them in an electronic format and ask an assistant to upload them. I am sure that my students appreciate the wide range of information available and will benefit from these resources.

Seek, sense, share

I see how students become overwhelmed with information. Their attention is affected by this cognitive load. I've taken to curating my course materials. Information is arranged and tagged according to date, unit or subject. Readings can be annotated, without damaging the original source.

Coherent Curators

Content can never stand by itself and should be accompanied by appropriate learning activities and assessments. Course content must be specifically selected to contribute to the achievement of learning outcomes.

"Curation" sets out to create a buffer between overabundance of information and our working memory. Online curation tools allows an academic to put selected content into a context, organize and annotate the information and then share it with students.

Open Education Resources (OER)

Student's confidence, digital skills and ability to affordably access the content are further criteria that will affect the choice of posted content.

Academics need to be aware of copyright and licensing status on all materials used in their courses. Open Educational Resources (OER's) are educational materials that either have an open licence (like creative commons) or reside in the public domain.

OER can be legally used, adapted and reshared at little to no cost, thus allowing students access to up-to-date, relevant and accessible subject material. If unsure about copyright, then verify how to use materials with your institution's librarian.

Course Inventory



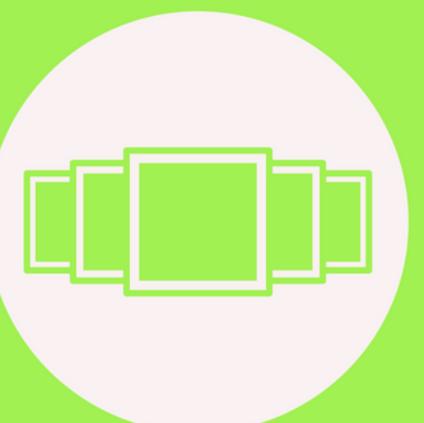
Open Education Resources

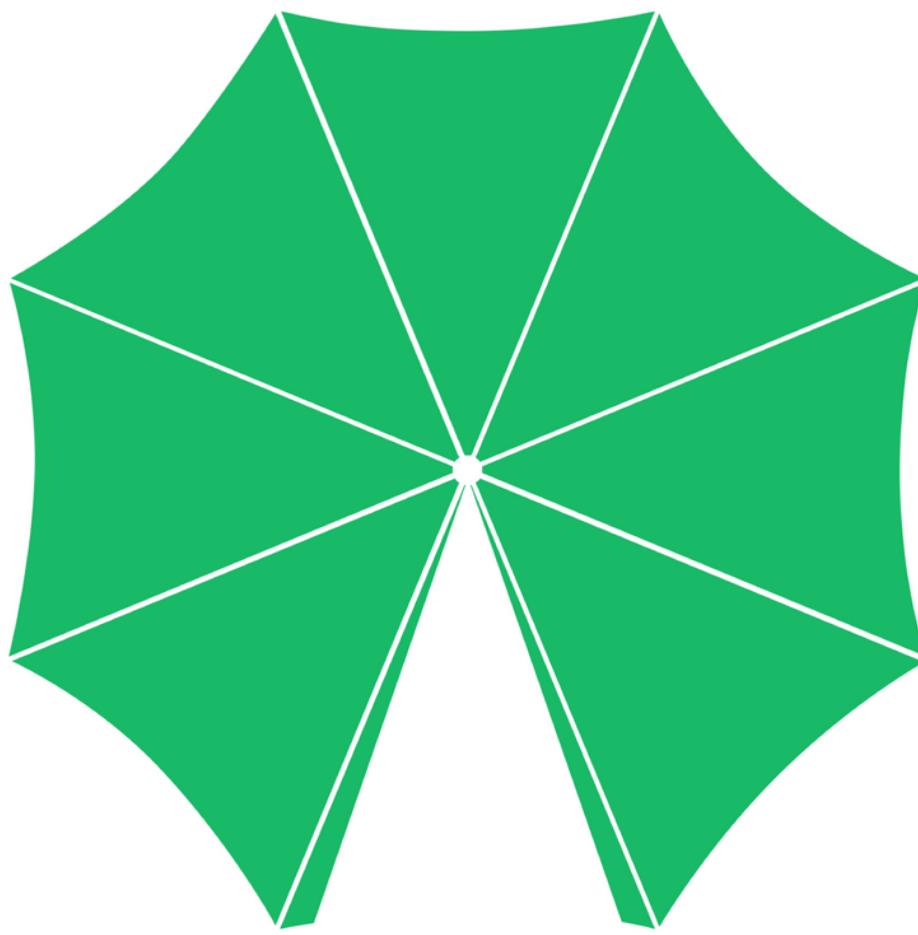


Checklist



Curation





Communication





"I'll stay under the radar"

We notice the students who don't like the spotlight, are reserved and prefer to keep their own counsel. We don't want to belittle anyone or put the on the spot. We think that interactions can be immediate and timely or asynchronous and considered. If care and connections are built into the fabric of a course, then we can interpret and attend to silent and loud voices.

Speak-up please

There is nothing better than the richness of face to face interaction. When we are present, when we connect, when we are all heard. Contact is crucial! I don't want to be replaced by a screen. I think that my students expect someone in person that will really pay attention.

Present & Connected

I've seen how the combination of F2F and online allows my students to feel more connected to me, their peers and the content they are studying. Screens do not have to be lonely and anti social. Many of my students are quiet in class and the online world is a place where they can be heard.



Voice and Choice

Concern: You have noticed that your students, despite all the communication devices at their disposal, seem reticent or removed from the interactions that you have set up in your blended course.

Your reaction: Whether in class or online, the screen becomes a barrier and not a mechanism for interactions between. Your first reaction: to send out a warning email insisting on participation and consequences. And then carry on with online activities and assessment.

Our Advice: There is often an expectations gap between the academic and the student. If you are to create a positive learning environments, then that expectation gap needs to be cleared

Rationale: If students have a clearer understanding of the roles and responsibilities of themselves and the academic, a better instructor-student working relationship can develop.

Concern: You are worried that mounting time pressures during a semester will make it increasingly difficult to give students the feedback they are asking for.

Our suggestion. Course feedback can shape the learning process and motivate engagement. It can also take up a lot of time and sap your attention. When designing the digital elements in a course, it might be appropriate to consider how you can combine different feedback types that suits you and your students.

Information feedback: a reply to a comments or query. Many of these questions are standard and students can be referred to a FAQ where the answer can be found.

Acknowledgement feedback: a brief automatic response that is provided when a requirement has completed a task. When students submit work, build in an auto response that appreciates the submission and provides them with next steps.

Constructive feedback: a response that is based on observations. This type of feedback depends on the lecturers time and teaching techniques.



Instructional Designer Checklist

Discussion Boards



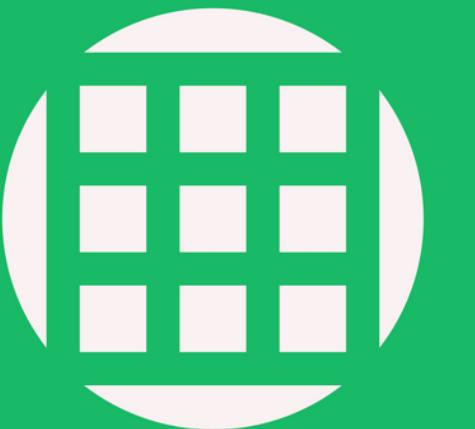
Announcements

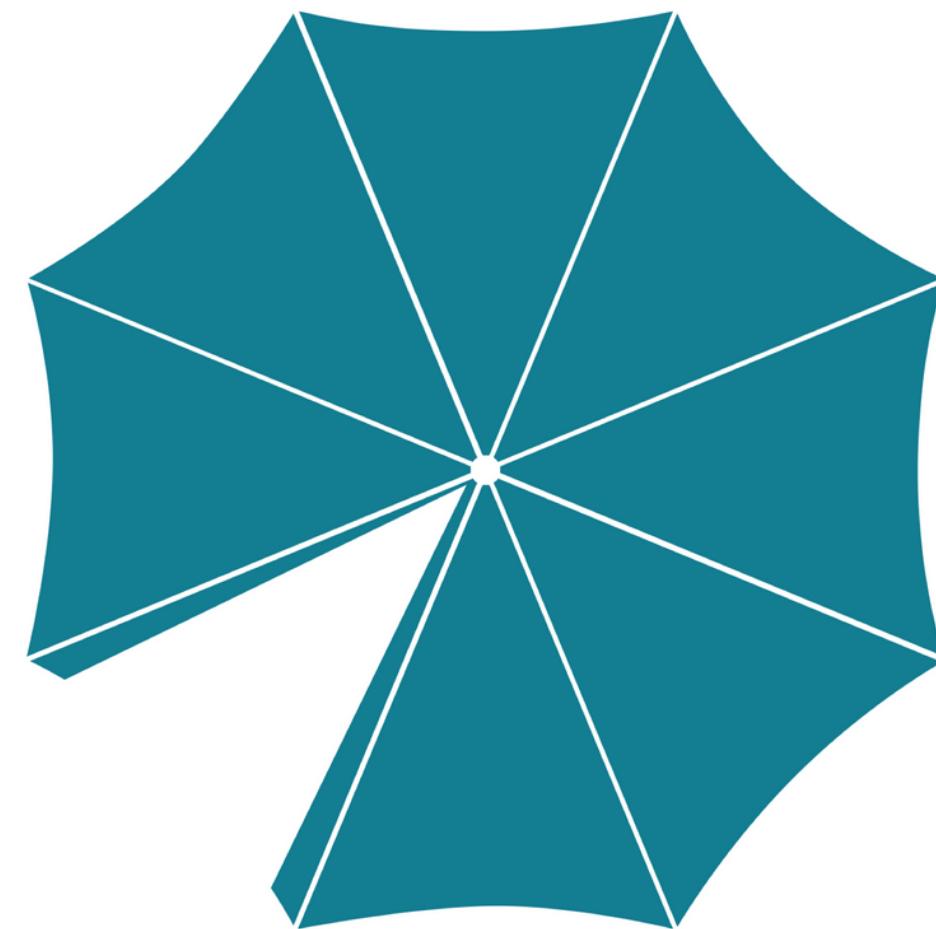


Social Presence



Participation Rubric





"I didn't know about it"

We are concerned when student's cannot find their way around administrative systems and academic procedures. We know about the many logistical challenges associated with staying on track. We have seen how some students lack experience within our organizational systems and are derailed during their learning journey.

Administration



Sink or swim

Students know what is required from them. The department published course policies, student service and tech support. I've completed my half of the bargain. If they are unsure about enrolling onto the course, completing their assigned work, meeting expectations, then they can logon to all assistance they need. I can't do everything. They need to manage their academic responsibilities.

Mitigate risk, build resilience

Probably the biggest challenge for my students is the ability to self regulate. I look for mechanisms to help students to manage their academic responsibilities. Digital tools within the LMS can be mashed up with students personal technologies.

Dazed and confused

The normal pattern of lectures and tutorials can be replaced with any combination of online discussion groups, simulations, discovery labs, multimedia lessons, tutorials, assignments, research projects, quizzes, and digital content etc. We think that this flexibility is wonderful, but concomitantly creates logistical challenges to students as they juggle their routines with an array of approaches that differ between different classes.

Course Schedule



Planning resources

It's a mistake to think that a blended course begins when the semester begins. Upfront planning is essential. There are a range of procedures that precede a blended or online course. This checklist of pre-course elements should prompt the academic to make all admin expectations and procedures clear.

Self Assessment Checklist



Orientation / Overview

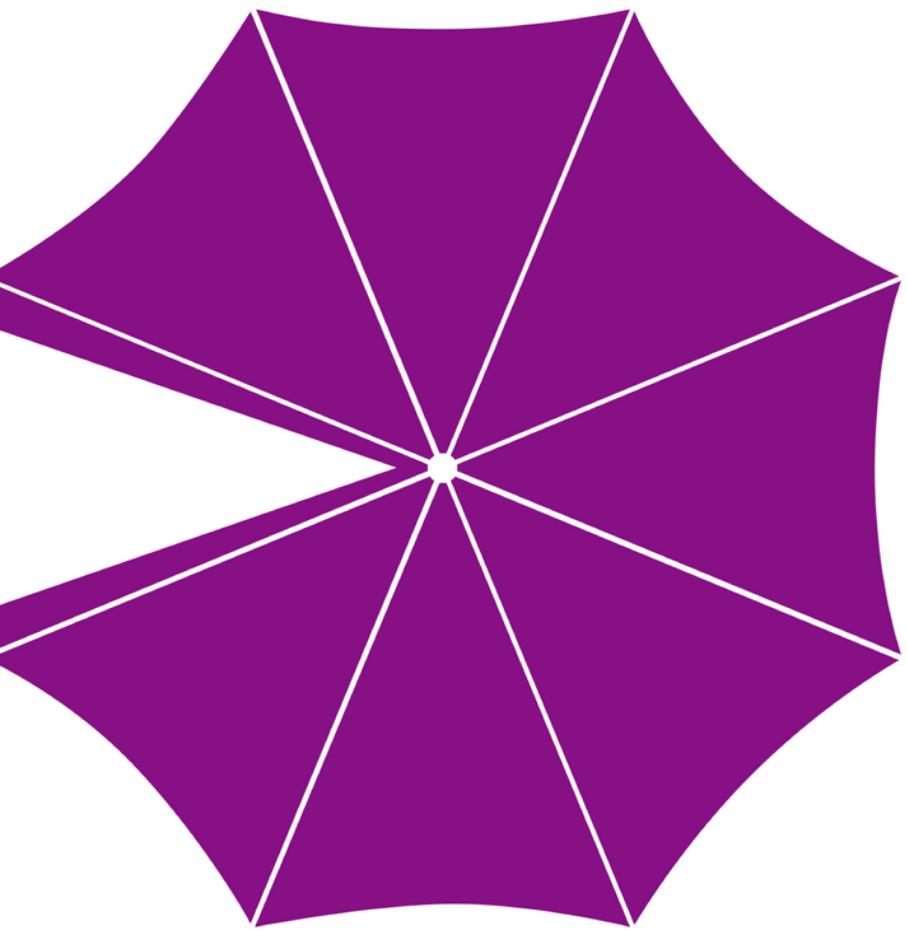


Frequently Asked Questions



Event scheduling





Design





"Click where?"

We've seen the frustration of students at the margins and how their learning experiences are marred by technical factors that are beyond their control. We acknowledge that a range of factors contribute towards usability and functionality of digital media. We think that user centered design principles must govern the design and use digital media and tools, so that the learning environment is inclusive and integrated, and students can achieve their learning goals to their satisfaction.

As good as it gets

We've got a wonderful campus, well equipped library, computer labs, free Wi-Fi. The architecture, buildings and spaces contribute towards a suitable learning environment. I'm not convinced that separating "traditional" learning from "digital" is appropriate. Online is the impoverished relative and cannot be compared

All users, many abilities

I've seen how I make assumptions. If I can do it, why can't they. The internet can be empowering for those who are fluent with its language and comfortable in the landscape. The net can also be alienating to those who cannot access it and have the skills to use the provided resources, for whatever reason.

Finding your way around

We've seen course sites with inconsistent layout, clashing colour schemes, large files, small fonts. We know students who've been frustrated by technologies. Whether it be incompatible operating systems, slow 3 G connection, limited access to wi-fi etc can make it difficult to access key texts, videos, diagrams etc.

When reading a book, there are commonly accepted principles that are applied to help the reader to find their way around. Importance is denoted by different sized headings with different weights. This helps us understand the hierarchical relationships between elements. Font size, weight and placement help the reader to distinguish chapters from sections and subsections, captions from quotes.

An accessible course site also subscribes to a set of principles and conventions. It is designed with the principles of universally designed instruction in mind will help to create a learning environment that are accessible to all students. The site will be navigable, consistent and accessible to all students, including those who have disabilities or cannot afford heavy data costs.

Universal ID



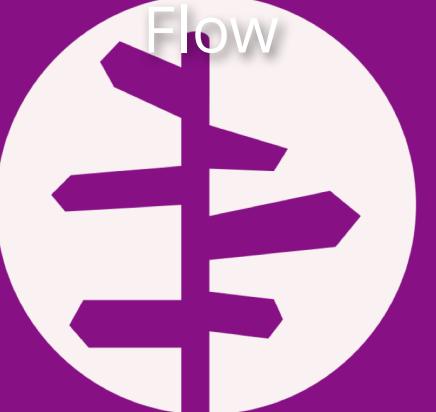
Navigation

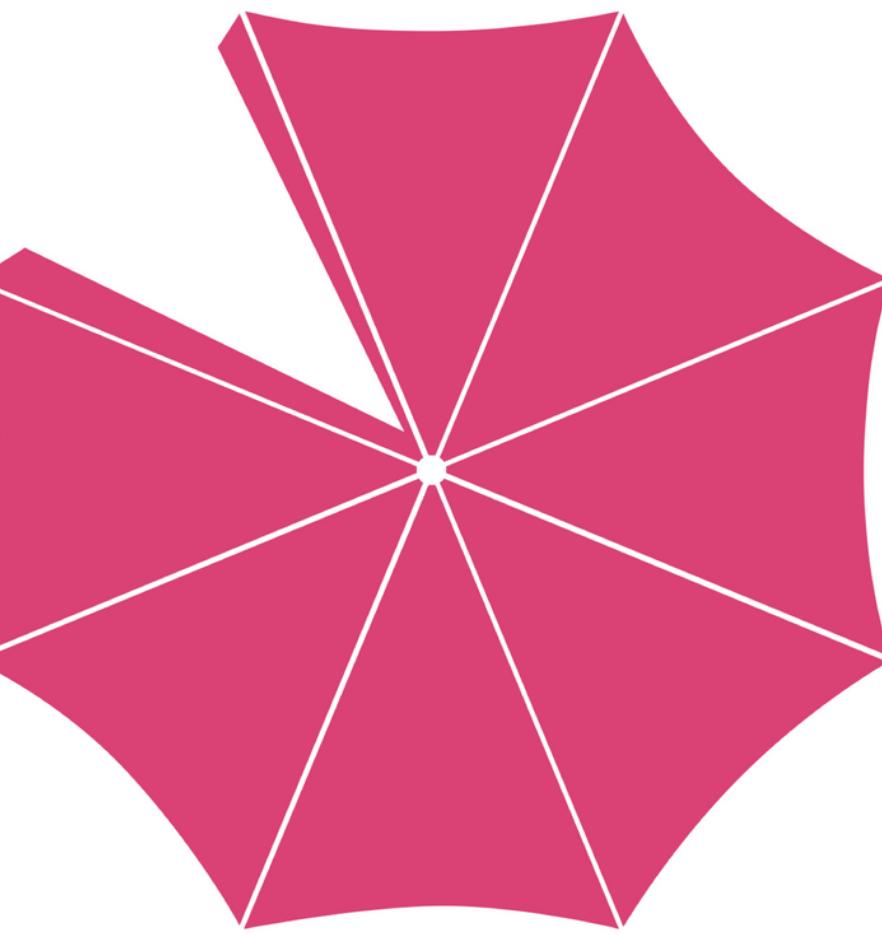


Course Evaluations



Sequence and Flow





Support Strategies





"I do not feel as if I belong"

We have noted that students are not equally prepared for tertiary studies. We recognize the diversity of student experiences within our classes and accept the arguments "access without support is not opportunity". We are working together on establishing a set of norms where receiving support is welcome and ongoing. We think that when tools and student data are combined, then we can proactively consider the needs of all students and offer necessary support to accomplish academic goals.

Pointing fingers

Students complain about the cost of data, that they didn't understand the instructions, they make the excuses of "no training given" or that the tech failed at the crucial moment. Students need to learn to learn, persevere, ask for help, teach themselves. They need to take responsibility

Acknowledge diversity

A blended experience is not just about venues, media mixtures or different kinds of teaching. Its about using technologies to address a sense of isolation or marginalization. And sense of belonging, where-ever our students are. Whether squinting into a mobile phone in the sunshine, watching a video in a taxi on the way home or quickly responding to a message while completing house hold chores.



At Risk

We are all aware that data, hardware, software and other peripherals are expensive, and some students do not have the financial means to use technology as expected. We know that these costs are unintentionally and inadvertently placing students "at risk"

A course facilitator can identify at-risk students and make early interventions. For example, a lecturer can step in when they see a potential area of risk and provide greater support. Using a dashboard, the lecturer can view visualizations of past behaviour and performances at the course or access statistically based predictions on likely future behaviours, academic outcomes and risk factors so they can engage with learners in a way that is targeted to their actual activity.

Beyond access

We are all aware that data, hardware, software and other peripherals are expensive, and some students do not have the financial means to use technology as expected. We know that these costs are unintentionally and inadvertently excluding from the blended learning environment.

We expect students on campus to access the help desk for tech support, to visit the drop-in centre for counsel, sign up academic writing workshops etc. There are certain types of access that cannot be transmitted or given to somebody.



Instructional Designer Checklist

BYOD



Data Informed Support



User Experience



Support Checklist





