**Faculty Self-Assessment: Preparing for Online Teaching**

Source: <https://weblearning.psu.edu/FacultySelfAssessment/>

Below are the results from the Faculty Self-Assessment Tool for Online Teaching Preparedness. Please read over the results carefully. The references located in the feedback area will provide you with valuable resources if you are interested in learning more about teaching online. Remember to consult with colleagues who have taught online and instructional designers or elearning support persons available to you for more information relevant to your institution.

**Category 1: Organization and Time Management**

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| **Criterion** | **Benchmark** | **Score** | **Feedback** |
| Time to Teach Online | I expect online teaching to take more time and am prepared for it. | 5 | It is great that you understand the extra time that online teaching requires, and that you can make that time available to serve your students well.  The research literature has conflicting reports on whether online teaching takes more, the same, or less time as teaching a face-to-face course. There are several variables that influence the amount of time it takes to teach online in comparison to a face-to-face course. It depends on the type of course, the course activities, and the role(s) the faculty member takes in the course. However, for your first online course you should expect to spend additional time preparing for and facilitating the course. In general, faculty report about a 10% increase in time for the first or second online teaching experience. In a study by Keeton (2004), faculty "agreed that teaching well online is more time-consuming than teaching face-to-face" (p. 77). |
| Organizational Skills | I am extremely organized. | 5 | It is great that you are well organized. This could be an important strength for you.  Classroom management is just as important, if not more important, in an online course environment than it is for a "resident course." Having a plan in place for record keeping, e-mail/communication, grading assignments, and teacher-to-student interactions can make online teaching and learning a positive experience for all involved. |
| Planning | I consistently plan my courses in advance. | 5 | The fact that you consistently do things in advance bodes well for your success in online teaching.  Due to the "virtual nature" of much of the online teaching experience, keeping organized and on schedule can greatly impact your online success. The online classroom provides less flexibility to adjust to changing schedules and topics than the face-to-face classroom. If organization is not your forte, devising strategies or seeking assistance in developing and maintaining a regular schedule can be of tremendous help to the online instructor. |
| Detail Orientation | I am extremely detail-oriented. | 5 | It is good that you report being extremely detail-oriented, because attention to the details such as who is participating, when they are participating, and how close to deadlines students submit work can all be important details that can help you become more effective.  Online instruction has several advantages in the management of the class details due to the fact that most learning management systems (LMS) have extensive tracking systems for class participants. The challenge for the online instructor is to learn to use these tools to their advantage in order to bring the learning experience to a successful completion. |
| Time Management | I am able to stick to self-imposed schedules and I meet all or almost all deadlines. | 5 | Since you reported that you are able to stick to self-imposed schedules and meet all or almost all of your deadlines, your future in online teaching looks bright. Many online teachers have most of the other skills it takes to be successful, but because they cannot push away other attractive or high priority activities they do not give online teaching the time it requires. This typically results in a negative experience. Since you have the ability to stick to a self-imposed schedule, the prospects look much brighter for you.  Time management is one of the most critical skills for the successful online instructor. Because an asynchronous learning environment does not impose time constraints present in a face-to-face classroom experience, it is important for the instructor to establish and adhere to time allocations in order to manage the online workload. Clearly defining when the instructor will be active in the course, and communicating that to the class participants, can help by ensuring that online teaching time does not get usurped by other priorities and by potentially reducing the instructor workload. |
| Frequency of Course Participation | I plan to log in several times a day. | 5 | Since you indicated that you will generally be able to monitor class activity several times a day, online teaching should work well for you. Online students, especially adult online students, have limited windows of opportunity during which they can devote time and energy to coursework. A question that goes unanswered can be frustrating as students watch those precious opportunities to work slip by while waiting for a key piece of information from you. However, since you can attend to students' needs several times a day, this online teaching challenge will be minimized.  It is generally accepted as a best practice that the instructor actively monitor online class activity by logging into the course section at least once per day, Monday through Friday. The instructor should communicate their course work schedule at the beginning of the course. Since many online learners are active in the course over the weekend, the instructor may wish to articulate week! end hours as appropriate. Ko and Rossen (2004) suggest that faculty can manage student expectations in this area by including a "simple statement in the syllabus to the effect that the instructor will look in frequently during the week but may not be in the classroom every day" (p. 70). Other information you might want to include is your availability for real-time chat sessions as virtual office hours. |

**Category 2: Communicating Online**

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| **Criterion** | **Benchmark** | **Score** | **Feedback** |
| Communicating In Writing | I can communicate in writing very easily and naturally. | 5 | It is good that you report being able to easily and naturally articulate your thoughts in a clear and concise manner. This skill will make the online learning experience positive for everyone involved.  Since what is communicated online is written and, in some ways, permanent, higher standards are necessary and an instructor's writing serves as a model (Cummings, 1998). One commonly used strategy for ensuring clear and concise communications is to ask a colleague, graduate student or support staff to read and respond to sample course writings. This will often highlight style or content issues that can be improved upon in future course communications. |
| Conveying Personality | I can do so very easily and naturally. | 5 | You reported that you are able to easily and naturally convey your personality and/or emotions through your writing. This skill will help you to establish a feeling of comfort among your students. Students tend to respond favorably to online instructors who can express their emotions clearly.  In a classroom, you have your physical presence - your voice, body language, intonation, expressions, and gestures - to help you communicate with your students. In most online environments, instructors do not have this luxury. Therefore, online learning puts an inordinate emphasis on writing style, attitude, and intonation because it is being expressed in text. None of the conventional ways of modifying ambiguous or ironic statements such as the wink, the raised eyebrow, the shrug and/or the smile are available online. Thus, an instructor must pay particular attention to communication nuances. |
| Comfort with Internet-based Communication Tools | I am comfortable with most or all of these tools. | 5 | It is great that you reported being comfortable with most or all of the tools listed, because the use of Internet-based communication technologies will enhance your ability to engage students in the online learning environment. As you implement communication tools with which you are already familiar, you will be ready to investigate other types of communication tools that can make online learning so effective.  E-mail and discussion forums are essential tools in online teaching and learning. One use of live chat sessions and web conferencing is virtual office hours. Blogs and wikis are helpful tools for collaborative writing. |

**Category 3: Teaching and Online Experience**

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| **Criterion** | **Benchmark** | **Score** | **Feedback** |
| Online Learning Experience | I have taken an online class as a student, either totally online or a blended/hybrid class. | 1 | It is great that you report having taken an online course. As you teach online, use that experience. Think about what did and did not work for you in this class, and use your experience to integrate effective experiences into the class you teach.  Experiencing an online course from the student perspective will give you insight on what works and what does not work. You can integrate your experience with your teaching style to design your course. |
| Training Experience | I have reviewed a number of other faculty's online courses. | 5 | It is great that you have reviewed courses created by others. As you prepare to teach your own courses, keep these questions in mind: What did you learn from these courses? Did you have an opportunity to talk with the faculty member who designed the course? Do you feel ready to teach a course on your own? Are there courses you might take, or help you might request to support you as you prepare to teach your first online course? Research indicates that a formal faculty development process to get started in the online environment will improve your online teaching experience.  A faculty development program to help faculty work through the redesign process and learn new skills for the online environment is highly recommended (Aycock, et al., 2002; Dziuban, Hartman, Juge, Moskal, and Sorg, 2005; Dzuiban, Hartman, and Moskal, 2004; Dziuban, Hartman, Moskal, Sorg, and Truman, 2004; Laws, et al., 2003, Robison, 2004; University of Wisconsin, 2005; Voos, 2003). The faculty development program should include access to instructional designers, best practice models, and collaboration with experienced online faculty. It should also include sessions in online pedagogy to facilitate interaction and manage student expectations, and sessions to help faculty acquire the technical skills they need (Aycock, et al., 2002; Garnham and Kaleta, 2002; Laws, et al., 2003; McCray, 2000; University of Wisconsin, 2005). |
| Learning Objectives | I always include learning objectives and I clearly communicate them to my students. | 5 | It is great that you always include learning objectives in the lessons you design and teach. Kudos! Clearly written learning objectives are important when teaching online.  Learning objectives are especially important in an online learning environment where the instructor and the student have little or no face-to-face time. Functioning as guideposts, learning objectives help students organize their efforts toward accomplishing the desired outcomes. Learning objectives also help the instructor identify whether students have gained the appropriate skills and knowledge. A learning objective is a statement:   * Specifying in measurable terms what a learner will know or be able to do as a result of your instruction and their learning. * Describing the intended outcome of the course rather than a description or summary of the content. * Describing the intended results rather than the means of achieving the results.   Mager ! (1984) states that each learning objective has three parts:   1. Performance - describes what a learner is expected to be able to do. 2. Conditions - describes the environment under which the performance occurs. 3. Assessment Element - describes how well the learner must perform for it to be considered acceptable. |
| Teaching Plan | I plan ahead all the time. | 5 | You reported that you plan ahead, all of the time. Great! You present the best scenario for teaching online. Have your course ready at the beginning of the semester so you can focus on your students and manage the course.  Just as you would when you are creating a new face-to-face course, begin planning your online course by identifying the overall goal(s) and analyzing the purpose. A strong understanding of the needs of your learners and how your course can meet those needs is important. Consider what you want your students "to walk away with" at the conclusion of their coursework. All your course objectives, instructional strategies, content, and assignments should facilitate learners' attainment of your course goal(s). Some questions to consider as you begin planning your course are:   * What are your learners' characteristics? * What types of learning are involved? * What content and information is needed to facilitate learning! ? * What tasks do learners need to master to achieve the overall course goal(s)? * What sequence of content and activities is needed? * What technologies are available and best suited to present the content to facilitate learning? |
| Course Management System | Yes, I have used a course management system. | 3 | It is good that you have used a course management system. You might want to familiarize yourself with all the tools your CMS offers because you might identify a new one that can improve communications or save you or your students time. Check out the help area of the system you are using and see what other tool options are available to you. Also, check with your institution for advanced training courses or materials.  Course Management Systems bring together the tools, policies, systems, methodologies, tips, and practices that are necessary to develop and deliver highly effective online instruction. |
| Publisher's Resources | I have researched and examined many publishers resources for course content. | 4 | It is good that you have located digital content from publishers.  Digital content makes it easy to add compelling and interactive instructional material to online courses. Many publishers' resources contain pre-developed components such as animations, practice exercises, self-tests, case studies, and simulations. Based on instructor feedback, conversations with publishers, and the latest research on online learning, publishers' resources often contain up-to-date materials that are ready to use. |
| Teaching Resources | I have searched the Internet often and have located many resources for teaching. | 4 | You reported that you have searched the Internet often for resources with which to enhance your course, and that you have found many. You know, then, that excellent resources are available via the Internet. Consider creating a "delicious" account ([http://del.icio.us](http://del.icio.us/)) to share these resources with your colleagues.  Instructional resources are abundant on the World Wide Web. Below are great resources for higher education faculty to enhance instruction and build learning communities.  MERLOT: [http://www.merlot.org](http://www.merlot.org/) Higher education online teaching and learning materials personal collections and assignments Blackboard: [http://www.blackboard.com](http://www.blackboard.com/) Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/>   * Online, dynamic encyclopedia * Anyone may add or edit content * Monitored for accuracy. |
| Learning Department | Yes, I have discussed the proposed course. | 4 | You reported that you have discussed the course you plan to develop with the Teaching and Learning Center or Distance Learning department at your institution. Excellent! Did they provide the assistance you needed? If not, check out professional organizations and other institutions.  Check your institution for support units to help you with technology and pedagogy for online teaching. Also, some institutions have units dedicated to online courses. If your institution does not have these resources, consider joining an association such as Educause, Educause Learning Initiative, Merlot, The Sloan Consortium, etc. The availability of an institutional supporting system is an important factor that may affect the success of online teaching in higher education. |
| Content Permission | Yes, I own or have obtained permission to use content or materials I plan for this project. | 5 | You reported that you have appropriate copyright permissions for all of the materials you plan to use in your course. That's great!! You are all set!  When you include any content in an online course you are performing two actions:   1. Converting the material into a digital format, (creating a derivative work) and 2. Distributing that material via the Internet.   These two rights belong to the copyright owner only. If you want to display, perform, or distribute something copyrighted, the safest course is to obtain permission (in writing) from the owner and give them credit. When it is not possible to obtain permission, do not use any copyrighted materials unless the use of that portion of the work weighs heavily in favor of the Fair Use Doctrine or other recognized guidelines.  Four specific factors must be considered in each instance to determine if Fair Use applies:   * Purpose must be for non-profit, educational ! use; * Nature of the material used (factual vs. fictional); * Amount of material used (the percentage of a work used in relation to the whole); and, * Effect on the current market as well as the future, potential market, or value of the work.   Each of the four factors must be applied and weighed together to make a case for Fair Use. |

**Category 4: Technical Skills**

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| **Criterion** | **Benchmark** | **Score** | **Feedback** |
| Computer Terminology | I am very adept and confident. | 4 | Because you are very adept and confident with regard to computer terminology, you appear to be ready from a technical knowledge standpoint.  A little knowledge will get you a long way. Understanding the basics of computer terminology is essential when teaching online. It will help you identify and troubleshoot issues that may occur. If the need arises where you seek assistance from a help desk, it is important to be able to communicate and understand what is occurring. To learn more about basic computer terminology, visit <http://www.techterms.com/> |
| Document Creation and Management | I am very adept and confident. | 5 | Perfect! Basic word processing skills and the ability to use other basic communication tools are necessary for communicating with students and delivering your content online.  Basic word processing skills are necessary for communicating with students and delivering your content online. |
| Ability to Multitask | Yes. I multitask frequently. | 5 | Being an accomplished multitasker is a useful skill for teaching online.  Multitasking is the ability to have several files and/or applications open at one time and to move efficiently between them. This skill will allow you to have the online course open while you are reading a student's assignment in a Word document, and perhaps while you are doing other work during the day. Multitasking ability can improve your efficiency as an online instructor. |
| File and folder Management | My files are consistently managed and organized. I am a pro! | 5 | Wonderful! File management is a key skill needed for teaching online. Organization of files enables you to manage your time efficiently.  File management is a key skill needed for teaching online courses. Organization of files enables you to manage your time efficiently. |

**Overall Evaluation**

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| **Criterion** | **Benchmark** | **Score** | **Feedback** |
| Total Score |  | 100 | Congratulations! According to the input you have provided, you appear to be well suited for online teaching. As you proceed towards your first online teaching experience, locate colleagues with online teaching experience, instructional designers, or other elearning professionals available at your institution for ongoing support. |