Achieving Online Teaching Success

The *Best Practices Team* is a group of full-time BCC Faculty who work with ALL faculty who wish to enhance or adapt their teaching.

Email us: teaching@brookdalecc.edu

Dear Professor Pat…

My online students typically wait all week, until Sunday afternoon or evening, to post to weekly discussion forums. It drives me crazy because that doesn't promote a discussion. It's like showing up in the last 10 minutes of a face-to-face class! How can I get them to post throughout the week?
—*Weekend Warrior in the History Dept.*

Dear Warrior —
This comes down to creating a good grad-ing rubric for your discussion forums.
Make sure, in addition to the quality of the post, you add <u>when</u> they should post. A student who wants an A should post on a Monday or Tuesday, then again on a Wednesday or Thursday, and finally again over the weekend. You could even be specific about how many times they need to post each time the student is in the forum on those days (For an A, three posts each time, for a total of 9 during the week, for example.) Keep in mind—that's not much compared to the participation expected from an A student in a face-to-face class! Students can still pass the class by posting only on the weekend, but by setting up clear expectations, you'll see more students get in there during the week. I promise! **—*Prof. Pat***

Need some teaching advice? Email your question to:
ProfessorPat@brookdalecc.edu

Creating an Online Classroom Community

Build a visually appealing online classroom:
- Choose easy-to-read font type and integrate relevant images.
- Make pages and links easy to navigate and provide instructions for doing so.

Post an instructor introduction video:
- This video should be welcoming, generate excitement for the course and make clear that the instructor's "virtual door is always open" via email and online office hours.

Administer an "Introduction Board Assignment":
- For example: "In two (2) to three (3) strong paragraphs, please introduce yourself by presenting the following information:"
  - ✓ *Name and town.*
  - ✓ *Degree and reason for taking the course.*
  - ✓ *Five interesting facts about yourself.*
  - ✓ *Any questions you have about the course, after reading the syllabus in full.*

The instructor first posts with personal responses and responds within 24-hours to each of the students' posts.
To encourage student-to-student interaction, students must respond to at least three classmates.

Assign learning activities that encourage students to engage beyond discussion board submission, essay writing and test taking:
- Examples include:
  - ✓ *Video viewing analysis.*
  - ✓ *Field trip investigations.*
  - ✓ *The creation of a resource repository dedicated to a specific topic.*
  - ✓ *Participation in on-line debates using the chat tool or webinar platform.*

"Shout Out" Students:
- Invite students to submit articles, images, and video links related to the course. Once vetted by the instructor they can be integrated into the course.
- Create a page or folder where you feature outstanding student work at least once per week. Students may strive to earn this honor as well as learn from reviewing the high quality work of classmates.

CANVAS Tip: Create a Discussion Rubric

A scoring rubric that attaches point values to the quality of student discussion posts and peer responses offers numeri-cal (in addition to written) feedback and can stream-line the grading process.

Discussion Rubric			
Criteria	**Ratings**		**Pts**
Initial Post Did you answer the question thoroughly? Did you use your own words and NOT copy/paste? Did you utilize evidence/information from the course?	5 pts Full Marks	0 pts No Marks	5 pts
Responses Did you respond to at LEAST 2 of your classmates? Were your responses engaging?	5 pts Full Marks	0 pts No Marks	5 pts
		Total Points: 10	

Creating effective online Discussion Forums:

How can you manage online discussions?

- Communicate in advance when you will grade and return all assignments and exams. Providing grades and feedback within a week is reasonable, but communicate to students if they should anticipate a longer time.
- Set the tone, communicate expectations and establish ground rules for expected posting style, acceptable language, and collegiality.
- Hold students accountable for posting answers to discussion questions and responses to their peers by a certain deadline. *(See Professor Pat column.)*
- On the first discussion board, provide an example post that exemplifies full-credit work. Direct students to review the example post before undertaking the first discussion board assignment.

- Address any incivilities as soon as they happen to avoid a tarnished learning environment. Refer to previously established rules and address inappropriate behavior offline in a private setting.
- Watch out for orphaned comments and silent students. The authors of comments that get little or no response may become discouraged and drop out of the discussion. If you see this dynamic, encourage students to respond to the orphaned comments.
- Avoid letting a threaded discussion lose its way or simply fade out by periodically posing questions that require synthesis and summary of the thread.
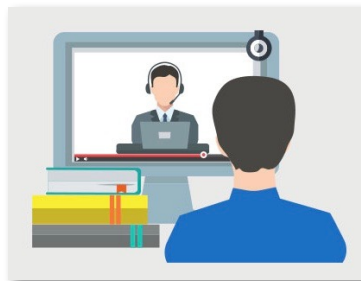
How can you grade and provide feedback?

- Provide feedback to students within one day. Because online learners must manage their time carefully, timely instructor feedback is especially important to them.

- Provide meaningful feedback on student work using clear and concise language. What was it that made the work good? What needs more work and how can they improve the quality of their work.
- Accept late work no more than two weeks after its due date. This policy allows for the occasional missed deadline yet keeps students from falling too far behind and abandoning the course. Include this policy in the syllabus and remind students of the policy early in the course.

Prevention & Intervention (online classroom edition)

- Provide a brief introduction and overview for each new unit/module.
- Offer instructions on accessing campus resources such as the Writing and Testing Centers and the Bankier Library.
- Written work is assigned at least every other week so students are regularly engaged in learning, assessed on what they've learned, and prompted to log into the course often.

- Personalized phone or email outreach or a CANVAS "chat" can be used to connect with struggling or non-engaged students. Initiate contact at the 2 week, 6 week, and 10 week marks.

Best Practices Team: Juliette Goulet, Environmental Sciences - Chair; Sara Burrill, Psychology; Debbie DeBlasio, ESL; Meg Natter, English; George Reklaitis, History

Can we be of assistance?

Would you like to set up a Master Course on Canvas that anyone in your department can copy and use? (This is especially helpful for adjunct faculty and to maintain a common thread throughout all the sections of a particular course.)

Are you interested in creating a Discussion Rubric, beginning to use CANVAS features like "Chat" or "Conference," or getting more ideas for online teaching?

*Contact the **Best Practices Team**: teaching@brookdalecc.edu*

OR

*Visit the **Teaching and Learning Center** in Bankier Library.*