Managing Online Student Expectations

While teaching your fall online course, you'll find that your students come to your course with a range of experiences in online learning. For some of your students, online learning may be a totally new experience; while others already may be familiar with learning in an online environment. You'll also see that your students bring their own **assumptions** and **expectations** about online learning to your online course. Whatever your students' past experiences with online, it's important for you (as instructor) to manage their expectations from the very start of your course. In this newsletter issue, we'll review **why** it's important to manage student expectations, and we'll present some strategies for **how** to manage student expectations.

Why manage student expectations?

- Managing expectations will help ensure that your online course runs smoothly, resulting in an optimal online experience for your students... and for you!
- Learn more about **managing expectations in online courses.**

How to Manage Student Expectations?

If key elements of your online course are unclear, students may feel confused, anxious, and isolated. Research has shown that uncertainty, anxiety and isolation will impact online student learning. Make sure that you provide your students with clear information for **these three key elements** of your online course.

- **Instructor Role**
    - What can students expect from you (as instructor) in the online course?
    - Will you be participating & commenting in online discussions?
    - How will you be monitoring group work and group projects?
    - If applicable, what will be the roles of Teaching Assistants (TAs) in your online course?
- **Assignments & Grading**
    - How will assignments be graded?
    - Will you provide students with rubrics?
    - What is expected turnaround time for grading, once an assignment has been submitted?
- **Communication & Office Hours**
    - What is the preferred (or best) way for students to contact you?
    - When students send a message, how soon will you get back to them?
    - When are your office hours? Will you be holding virtual office hours?
    - Are there times or days of the week when you are not available to students?

It's also critical for students to know **what you expect from them (as learners)** in the online course. Make sure that these expectations for your students are clearly described and detailed in your syllabus and revisited during the course throughout the semester.

Reflecting On Your Many Roles as Online Instructor

In an online course, there are many roles of an effective online teacher (*e.g.*, Bull, 2013; Taylor-Massey, 2015).

Online instructors serve as learning designers, guides, cheerleaders, learning/content coaches, co-learners, as well as many more roles in the online course and program.

As you teach your online course, please regularly reflect on your role(s) as online instructor, using these questions to guide your reflection:
- Which of these roles correspond to my **teaching style & teaching persona?**, *i.e., "Who I Am as a Teacher?"*
- Which of these roles do I find most important for student learning in my online course?
- How do these roles serve to empower student learning in my course?
- How do I communicate my instructor role(s) to my students?

Resources about Managing Expectations Online

Expectations for Instructors: What are various roles for online instructors?
- Bull, B. 2013. **Eight Roles of an Effective Online Teacher.** *Faculty Focus.* Magna Publications.
- Taylor-Massey, J. 2015. **Redefining Teaching: The Five Roles of the Online Instructor** CSU ValuED Blog Online, Colorado State University Online.

Expectations for Students: How to convey expectations for your students in online courses?
- **Conveying Expectations for Online Courses.** (YouTube Video from The Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching Effectiveness at the University of Saskatchewan, 5:08 minutes)

Contact Us!

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