Planning Worksheet for Inclusive & Equitable Teaching Online

With each issue of the Online Teaching Coaching Newsletter Summer Series, you’ll be provided with a planning worksheet so that you can apply the tips and best practices for inclusive & equitable teaching presented in the newsletter issue to your online course plans. In each planning worksheet, we suggest some best practices as possible examples for you to use in your online course. The list of examples is not exhaustive and we encourage you to try one or more of these examples when planning your course, or use them as a jumping off point for your own further research.

**GETTING STARTED**

***Download this document to use it for your planning!***

To get started, first reflect on your own biases and assumptions about your online students. You then will identify practices & plan activities –that you already use or that you wish to explore - to get to know your students as individuals, in order to build and create respectful, quality relationships. By knowing your students and their needs, you can increase engagement and better support their online learning.

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| **Reflection Questions for Getting Started*** What biases and assumptions do you have about online learning?
* What assumptions do you make about your students’ skills and abilities?
* What do you do now to get to know your students as individuals?
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| **Identify & Plan for Inclusive & Equitable Teaching Online*** View the listed examples of best practices on the following pages. Then consider & plan various ways you can (1) get to know your students and (2) build & foster quality relationships in your online course.

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| **Some Examples of Practices to Get to Know Your Online Students** * At the start of the course, ask each student to complete a brief **“What I Want You to Know about Me?”** survey about their interests, needs, strengths, prior knowledge, relevant experiences, challenges, and skills. Have each student also include their hopes and expectations for the course. This survey will be shared only with you (instructor) and can help you identify the learning needs for each student.
* At the start of the course, have your students share information about themselves in a class-wide introduction discussion forum, in order to build a learning community.
* Create activities and spaces in your online course where students can connect and hold informal conversations with you (instructor) and with each other, *e.g.,* Icebreakers, Virtual Water Cooler and Ask Your Instructor forum.
* Communicate your dedication to diversity by including diversity and disability statements in the course syllabus. See an example of a [**Mason Diversity Statement**](https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/purpose-and-mission/mason-diversity-statement/) to include in your syllabus.
* [**Develop community principles**](https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/effective-classroom-management/creating-community-of-learners-that-reflects-respect/)**,** together with your class, to create a safe, positive learning environment in which students’ ideas and viewpoints will be heard and respected.
* Be available to students outside of the course through office hours. Schedule regular open office hours during the course, so that your students can stop by when they know that you will be available. Also be available to schedule consultations with students, if needed.
* If you hold synchronous sessions online (using Zoom or Collaborate Ultra), open the live class sessions early, and stay on for a few minutes after class is over, to provide students an opportunity to chat with you.
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| **Some Examples of Practices to Build & Foster Quality Relationships with Your Online Students** * ***Start by using students’ names!*** Use learners’ preferred names (with correct pronunciation and spelling), and their preferred pronouns.
* Use inclusive language (we/our/us) to foster a sense of belonging and learning community. For example, say “This week, ***we*** will be exploring” instead of “This week, ***you*** will be exploring”.
* Send a Welcome Email to your students **before** the course begins, introducing yourself, and letting them know the expectations for the course. Also share link to the tips for online learning success from [**Mason Learning Services**](https://learningservices.gmu.edu/online-learning/)**.**
* Post Welcome Message and Welcome Video in Blackboard, encouraging students to contact you with their questions or concerns.
* ***Let students get to know you!*** Post your self-introduction with a positive, welcoming tone. Your introduction may include your CV, education, courses taught. Also include some personal information – your hobbies, favorite foods, pets, etc. Include a photo of yourself along with your introduction.
* ***Get off to an engaging start!*** Conduct icebreaker activities to engage students, create bonds, and also to infuse a bit of fun to kick off the course. Icebreakers usually are done at start of a course, but also can be used throughout semester in asynchronous and synchronous online courses.
* ***Be present in your course!*** Let students know that you are present and that you care about their learning. Maintain your teaching presence by responding promptly to student questions and postings. Establish your social presence by creating a friendly, engaging learning environment. Provide your managerial presence through your leadership, guidance and direction.
* ***Keep students updated!*** Use Blackboard Announcements to regularly communicate important, up-to-date course information to students, such as reminders of impending assignment due dates.
* Demonstrate and model respect for your students, and find opportunities for student affirmation. Use a respectful & authentic tone in all communications with students, take steps to invite participation by all students, and provide all with an inclusive learning atmosphere.
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**Resources to Learn More**

Cohn, J. and Plotts, C. (2021, March 22) [**How to structure your online class for inclusion, Part 1.**](https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/online-education/online-student-engagement/how-to-structure-your-online-class-for-inclusion-part-1/)*Faculty Focus*, Magna Publications.

Cohn, J. and Plotts, C. (2021, March 24) [**How to structure your online class for inclusion: Two principles for fostering engagement, Part 2.**](https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/online-education/online-student-engagement/how-to-structure-your-online-class-for-inclusion-two-principles-for-fostering-engagement-part-2/) *Faculty Focus*, Magna Publications.

Kohler-Evans, P. (2019, October 7) [**Creating a community of learners that reflects mutual respect.**](https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/effective-classroom-management/creating-community-of-learners-that-reflects-respect/) *Faculty Focus*, Magna Publications.

Stearns Center for Teaching & Learning, George Mason University (n.d.)[***Creating Inclusive Classrooms.***](https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/knowledge-center/student-engagement-classroom-managment/creating-inclusive-classrooms/)Retrieved June 4, 2021.

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| **For Additional Resources & Guidance –** **Contact Us!** **Office of Digital Learning** | Stearns Center for Teaching and LearningPhone: 703-993-6200 | Email: **stearns@gmu.edu** Suite 412 Innovation Hall, Fairfax CampusGeorge Mason University |

MY PLANNING NOTES