

Improving Your Online Course



As you finish up your online teaching this semester, you already may be thinking ahead to when you'll be teaching online again, whether next semester, later in this academic year, or sometime in the future.

In this issue of the Online Teaching Coaching Newsletter, we share steps to thoughtfully plan improvements to your online course and online teaching. We provide tips for how to reflect on your online course design & online teaching; and how to prepare an Action Plan to guide your planned changes for improvement.

Please also Stearns Center website for further information about [improving the quality of your online courses & online teaching.](#)

How to Improve Your Online Course and Online Teaching?

Reflect on Your Online Course Design and Online Teaching

- What worked and what didn't work so well in your online course, in terms of course design, course content, course activities, assignments & assessments?
- How did it go with your teaching, facilitation and ongoing management of the online course?
- What did you learn from student feedback and course evaluations?
- How does your online course and online teaching demonstrate quality standards?

Based on your self-assessment, consider what aspects of your online course and teaching that you wish to improve, enhance or explore. Use this information to prepare your Action Plan.

Make an Action Plan for Improving Your Online Course

- What are your plans to improve your online course?
- What are the priority Action Items that you will focus on before teaching your course again?
- What resources will you need to make these changes?
- What is time frame for making your identified improvements?

Based on student feedback, student course evaluations, and the self-assessment of your online course, select at least 2-3 priority items for your Action Plan to improve your online course. Prepare a simple chart for your plan; choose just a few items to focus on right now. Identify resources you'll need and prepare a realistic timeline for how to make it happen.

Get Guidance

- Contact [Stearns Center](#) for guidance and feedback on your self-assessment and Action Plan.
- Please see the [Stearns Center website](#) for information and resources for [Teaching Online.](#)
- Review [Online Teaching Newsletters](#) from AY 2020-2021 posted on the Stearns Center website.
- Check out "how-to" videos on [Stearns Center Digital Learning's YouTube Channel.](#)

Continuous Improvement of Your Online Course



As you plan, build, and teach your online course, it's helpful to think of continuous improvement as a cycle (as shown in the image above), centered on quality. The cycle follows a series of steps or phases: **Planning, Building, Teaching, and Closing**. Each time you receive feedback about your course is an opportunity to reflect on your goals and to consider ways to improve the overall learning experience for your students.

Key Takeaways about Continuous Improvement of Your Online Course

- As you plan and teach your online course, always keep a Plan B/contingency plan in mind for some online course activities in case you need to make a last-minute shift. For instance, let's say you have planned an online discussion board, but the students just aren't participating. Perhaps the prompt is not clear. A contingency plan for this might involve you having additional prompts on-hand to further clarify and guide the discussion. Be prepared and plan for such contingencies as you build and teach your online course.
- In the continuous improvement process, the cycle will start again after your online course has ended. Once you've created and taught an online course, your course is never really "done" (as with all good teaching). You should think of your online course as dynamic and make changes which improve student learning in your course.
- Changes in your course don't necessarily need to involve BIG changes (which require a full course re-design); you should plan to make small meaningful changes for improvement every time you offer your course. Small changes can have a big impact on online student learning!
- Use student evaluations, peer reviews (from colleagues or from Stearns Center), and your own self-assessment of your online course and teaching, to help you identify possible areas for improvement.

Contact Us!

Office of Digital Learning | Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning
Phone: 703-993-6200 | Email: stearns@gmu.edu
Suite 412 Innovation Hall, Fairfax Campus
George Mason University