Improving Your Online Course

As you finish up your online course 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:
- Reflecting on your online course design and online teaching
- Preparing an Action Plan to guide improvement
- Finding resources, help, and guidance

Please also see Stearns Center resources for **Online Course Quality**, including the **Faculty Self-Checklist.** The Checklist includes essential online course design and teaching elements, reflecting online quality standards. Use the Checklist regularly to review your online course and online teaching.

For any questions regarding Online Quality Assurance, please contact Stearns Center Digital Learning Quality Assurance Team at **qateam@gmu.edu.**

How to Improve Your Online Course & Teaching?

REFLECT & ASSESS

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

PLAN

- What is your Action Plan?
- What are 2-3 priority Action Items to change & improve the course before teaching it again?
- What resources and guidance will you need to make these changes?
- What is your schedule and time frame for making these improvements?

GET GUIDANCE

- Please see the Stearns Center website for information and resources for **Teaching Online**.
- Contact **Stearns Center** for guidance and feedback on your **self-assessment** and Action Plan.
- Review the **Online Teaching Coaching Newsletters** posted on the Stearns Center website.

View the "How to Improve Your Online Course & Teaching?" Infographic Online

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). The cycle follows a series of steps or phases: **Designing & Planning; Building; Teaching; and Closing & Evaluating**. Each time you receive feedback about your course is an opportunity to reflect on your goals and consider ways to improve the overall learning experience for your students.

Tips for 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 if 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 might involve having additional prompts to clarify further and guide the discussion. Be prepared and plan for such contingencies as you build and teach your online course.

- The cycle will start again after your online course has ended in the continuous improvement process. 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 that improve your course's student learning.

- 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 feedback, evaluations, reviews from colleagues, and your self-assessment of online course and teaching, to help you identify possible areas for improvement. Use Stearns Center **Faculty Self-Checklist** to check for quality indicators in your online course.

Contact Us!

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