



# Key Principles and Practices of Effective Design for Blended and Online Student Learning

*Based on Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education (Chickering and Gamson, 1987), The Nature of Learning: Using Research to Inspire Practice (OECD, 2010), How Learning Works: Seven Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching (S. Ambrose et al., 2010) and The Three Principles of Universal Design for Learning (National Centre for Universal Design for Learning) – the following 7 principles have been expanded to apply to online/blended learning examples.*

## 1. Encourage Contact between Students and Faculty

- Send welcoming email to students before class
- Provide helpful instructor contact info
- Hold virtual office hours for video/synchronous chats
- Post weekly video summaries of course/topics/what was learned
- Email individual students throughout semester to stay in touch
- Post timely notices, announcements and inspiring messages for students to let them know you are there, thinking of them etc.

## 2. Develop Cooperation Among Students

- Create variety of mixed smaller discussion groups over course
- Foster discussions and sharing of ideas among students early on
- Post debate concepts to spark emotions, passion and interest
- Provide a student space to discuss, without instructor
- Ask students to complete profiles so they get to know each other
- Use wikis, blogs, journals, portfolios for students to work together
- Provide for peer assessment of activities and assignments
- Allow for synchronous video conferencing discussions

## 3. Encourage Active Learning Techniques

- Implement rich projects and reflective portfolios for demonstration of learning
- Engage students in authentic and meaningful learning activities outside of digital learning environment
- Stagger release of content /activities when specific criteria are met
- Use the assignment tool for uploading work for assessment
- Use quizzes and self-assessments for developing mastery
- Use discussions, collaboration tools, wikis, blogs, classroom response systems/polling, shared documents for active learning
- Ask students to create new learning and content such as authoring their own textbook, producing a video, engaging in a community action project etc.

## 4. Give Prompt and Targeted Feedback

- Be timely and detailed in your feedback
- Return assignments within a week with focus on feedback than grade
- Give students personal video or audio feedback on work so they hear and see you
- Let students know frequently and in varied formats how they are doing, where they can improve, what are strengths
- Use rubrics (single point or varied) for grading assignments and projects
- Use low-stakes assessments to provide feedback

## 5. Emphasize Time on Task

- In syllabus, welcome email or announcements let students know how much time they should be spending on course activities, homework and assignments, when activities take place, etc.
- Clearly outline learning outcomes for course and alignment with assessment
- Pay close attention to student progress and frequently share feedback with students
- Assist students in managing time, assessing learning strategies that work best, learning how to study etc.
- Create a checklist of weekly tasks to assist students staying on track
- Break larger tasks into smaller chunks to allow students to be successful throughout the course/project
- Encourage students to brainstorm work for a project, build project plans for time and work etc.
- Share helpful digital tools for academic learning and building awareness of successful strategies

## 6. Communicate High Expectations

- Be clear with students about expectations for learning (criteria, exemplars etc.) especially about how much and how frequent they need to access online environment, what does participation look like etc.
- Always provide clear explanations of modules, assignments, and assessments (create video to explain)
- Develop suitable marking tools for demonstrations of learning
- Encourage students to self-assess on criteria before submitting work
- Be clear with format and style of discussion forum posts, number, quality and what a good post looks like

## 7. Respect Diverse Talents and Ways of Learning

- Provide course content and feedback in varied ways throughout course
- Allow flexibility in demonstrations of learning (e.g., write essay, do a podcast, create a web site, undertake a project they are passionate about etc.) in multiple means and expressions
- Provide an option of tools and techniques for students to be able to complete an assignment or activity
- Encourage students to develop new ways of personalizing their learning
- Release learning activities according to learning needs