



ONLINE EDUCA BERLIN: INTEGRATING PRINCIPLES OF ONLINE COURSE DESIGN INTO PRACTICE

What is it about?

How do we design online courses that are intentional, meaningful, and effective learning experiences? We suggest using nine principles of online course design to inform decisions that educators make when they are planning learning activities, selecting learning materials, and designing learning assessments. One way to organize an online course is using learning modules, which are self-contained sections of a course that focus on specific content, knowledge, and skill development.

What did we do?

Quality online learning has become increasingly central to students' expectations of learning experiences in higher education. After two years of emergency remote teaching and learning, how are educators prepared to design, deliver, and evaluate high-quality online courses that meet the needs of a global student population? In this interactive Learning Café, we facilitated a discussion of about nine principles of high-quality online learning and aspects of each principle that influence course design decisions. More than 40 participants connected with others and discussed how they enacted these principles in their teaching practice and identified opportunities for integrating innovative strategies into their course design.



Need to know

Learning modules are self-contained sections of a course that focus on specific content, knowledge, and skill development. Designing a learning module can be a great first step to designing a full online course because you are able to think critically about how students are engaging with your course materials. Consider what types of activities, materials, and assessments are appropriate for each module, then build out from there.



What did we find?

Participants shared that seeing these principles laid out with reflective prompts made it easier to identify them in their teaching practices. Folks reflected that it can be useful to associate individual principles with different aspects of the course design process, rather than trying to integrate every principle into every component of the course. Indeed, when folks explored the relationships between activities, materials, and assessment, they found that using two or three principles for each component created visible pathways and connections that could improve student learning. These learning pathways not only benefit students; when learning activities and materials complement each other, educators are better able to design assessments that align with the work students have completed.

What does it mean?

By using these principles to inform online course design, educators can create engaging pathways for learning that improve the student learning experience. Here we share an example of principles to consider when developing the three components of learning modules:

- Planning learning activities: Relevance, inclusivity, and engagement
- Selecting learning materials: Accessibility, equity, and alignment
- Designing assessments: Flexibility, integrity, and balance

For each principle, there are reflective prompts to help you dive deeper into what you are trying to achieve in your course and how you can align your intention with the overall course experience. Learning modules and roadmaps are more than static elements on a screen. Use your learning modules and roadmaps to show your students what they are learning, why it is important, how they will be able to practice new skills, and when/how they will be assessed on their learning.

About this snapshot

This snapshot is about a conference workshop delivered at Online Educa Berlin 2022:

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