Course Development & Teaching Guide

# How to Use This Guide

This document is meant as a guide to help you develop or redesign your course, regardless of modality. The strategies identified are key to fostering student success within the course. Each strategy will include rationale, resources for further study, and ideas for how to incorporate that within your own course design. The ideas come from fellow faculty at Seattle Central College and our Instructional Design team, and reflect a wealth of experiences collected and collated in January 2020. The ideas for incorporation presented in this guide are not the only solutions available, and we encourage you to develop your own approach as well. Use the ideas as appropriate for your class along with your own, based on your analysis of your learners and in alignment with your master course outlines.

## Course Design Process

1. Read through each strategy, and the ideas presented
2. Review the resources for each strategy to better understand the benefits to you and your students that strategy provides, or for resources you can use to include that strategy in your own design
3. Use the ideas presented for implementing each strategy, along with your own experiences, to help you design or redesign your online course to meet yours and your students’ needs

# Course Design Principle & Strategies

## Course Development and Teaching Principle

Seattle Central College faculty develop and teach courses in a manner that respects diverse talents, needs, and ways of learning by utilizing principles of Universal Design, Accessibility, Equity, and Inclusion.

## Course Development and Teaching Strategies

The eLearning department promotes five (5) strategies of instructional design and teaching to support student success:

Every course is designed and taught in a manner that:

1. Articulates course outcomes, expected workload, and academic performance specific to the modality.
2. Aligns content, activities, and assessments with Master Course Outlines.
3. Articulates skills necessary to be successful in the class; provides resources for getting help with technology tools and course-specific content; shares college resources.
4. Promotes instructor presence and student engagement through the following three types of instructor-initiated interactions: student-to-content, student-to-student, and student-to-instructor.
5. Implements communication tools and strategies that support quality, timely student feedback specific to academic performance in alignment with course outcomes.

# Purpose

The purpose of this tool is to guide faculty in the development and teaching of equitable and accessible courses which center student success no matter the modality. Detailed rationale for the above five strategies can be found within their appropriate section of this document.

Rather than Universal Design, Accessibility, Equity, and Inclusion serving as one of the above strategies, we feel these concepts need to be embedded throughout the design and teaching processes. Therefore, the resources and examples aligned with each strategy are suggested with an EDI lens, and both equity and accessibility should be reflected within the design and delivery of the course.

Equitable and inclusive teaching practices are vital to student success in all course modalities. As of 2014, only 16% of our students of color graduate within four years with even lower rates for our historically underserved and black male students. Students with disabilities make up [12% of the students enrolled in community college](http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Publications/datapoints/Documents/DiverseDisabl_MD.pdf).

By focusing on design and teaching strategies for systematically non-dominant students, we anticipate higher success rates for all students. For example, a captioned video is not only helpful to a student that is deaf or hard of hearing, but it can help a student trying to watch the video in a noisy public space or help a student for which English is not their native language.

# Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in Action

To better ensure courses promote diversity and are equitable, inclusive, and accessible, here are some general teaching and learning principles to include throughout all five strategies provided in this guide.

## Critical Pedagogy

* Assignments provide opportunity for students to share their experiences, question authority, critically evaluate current/past events, and focus on social injustice.
* Students have choices in how they demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and abilities in alignment with course outcomes.

## Accessibility

* Abide by the W3C [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)](https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/) AA Standards.
* Maintain easy [navigation](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10460#jive_content_id_Course_Navigation) using a consistent organizational structure throughout the course.
* Provide information about Disability Support Services in the syllabus
* Ensure closed captions are on initially for all videos used in the course
* Include text-based transcripts for audio content
* Use alternative text to describe images and tables
* Use Heading, Sub-Heading, and Paragraph Styles are used when creating/formatting Word, Google, HTML, and other pages/documents using a rich content editor.
* Provide vertical lists (like this one, rather than lists within a sentence) where applicable for easier comprehension and navigation, such as assignments or readings.
* Ensure sufficient contrast between foreground (text or graphics) and the background to support low vision and colorblind users.
* Do not convey information through color alone; use bolding, alternating shapes or lines, and other tools to make information available to people who can and can’t perceive color.
* Use tables for organizing dataset and include heading and row formats; tables should not be used for designing page layouts
* Use accessible instructional technology web tools, publisher content, media, and other outside resources

# Strategy 1: Learning Outcomes & Student Expectations

Articulates course outcomes, expected workload, and academic performance specific to the modality.

## Rationale

Students have access to course description when registering for a course. However, descriptions often do not cover all expectations within a class. By providing this information up front, students can create a path to success that includes scheduling time and resources in alignment to course expectations.

## Resources

* [Tips for Getting Started With Your Course Design](https://www.bellevuecollege.edu/elearning/designing-your-onlinehybrid-course-tips-and-tricks/)
* [9 Ways to Make Your Course Easier to Navigate](https://teachonline.asu.edu/2016/04/online-course-navigation/)
* [Course Navigation](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10460#jive_content_id_Course_Navigation) in Canvas (Canvas Guide)
* Using [Canvas Modules](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10460#jive_content_id_Modules) (Canvas Guide)

## Ideas for Incorporating the Strategy

* Follow accessibility guidelines to ensure that all content is readily available and appropriate for students with mobility, sensory, and cognitive disabilities
* Include a course home page with clear directions on how to get started in the course and your expectations, a welcome message from the instructor, and a link to the accessible course syllabus
* Send a welcome email no later than the first day of class, including information/links relating to the course, encourages attendance/logging in (within the first 48 hours of an online class)
* Follow up with students who do not attend class or login within 48 hours
* Include a Getting Started module with course orientation materials
* Include a video introduction providing a general course overview
* Provide learning outcomes for the overall course as provided in the approved Master Course Outline
* Include clear and measurable learning outcomes for the module, aligned with the course-level outcomes, in a way that builds the skills students need to complete the course-level outcomes
* Use Modules to organize content in a logical, sequential manner.
* Create an easy, consistent navigation structure within the course so students quickly and easily review the tasks needed and plan accordingly
* If applicable, distinguish between online, hybrid, and face-to-face learning elements

# Strategy 2: Alignment

Aligns content, activities, and assessments with Master Course Outlines.

## Rationale

While individual content and activities may differ in sections of a course, it is important that all students who complete a course do so with the same readiness to move forward. By aligning content, activities, and assessments with your Master Course Outline, we provide students across sections with an equitable learning experience

## Resources

* [Classroom Assessment Techniques](https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/cats/)
* [Using Bloom’s Taxonomy to Write Effective Learning Objectives](https://tips.uark.edu/using-blooms-taxonomy/)
* [Why Should Assessments, Learning Objectives, and Instructional Strategies be Aligned?](https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/assessment/basics/alignment.html)
* [Transparency in Learning and Teaching](https://tilthighered.com/tiltexamplesandresources)

## Ideas for Incorporating the Strategy

* Follow accessibility guidelines to ensure that all content is readily available and appropriate for students with mobility, sensory, and cognitive disabilities
* Align the course and module outcomes relevant to the course content, determining what content is meant to prepare students to meet each outcome and what content is meant to assess the students’ mastery of the outcomes
* Use the TiLT Framework to share with students the purpose of the assignment, alignment to outcomes, start date, end date, submission instructions, and a clear grading policy (i.e., a grading rubric and/or outline of the requirements)
* With consent, share examples of student work that demonstrate advancement toward learning goals
* Include a variety of assessment types that align to and measure the stated learning outcomes
* As appropriate, allow for alternative assignment options for students to demonstrate their progress in a manner that is most reflective of their abilities and understanding
* Include supplemental materials for students who lack prerequisite knowledge or who would benefit from having content presented in an alternative manner

# Strategy 3: Student Skills & Resources

Articulates skills necessary to be successful in the class; provides resources for getting help with technology tools and course-specific content; shares college resources

## Rationale

Along with basic technology skills (how to use a computer, navigate the web, and send and receive emails with attachments), students will need particular skills for your course. By articulating those skills, along with the expected technology skills and support resources, you help students to have a clear understanding of what they need to succeed and where to get help if needed.

## Resources

* SCC [Student Orientation to Canvas](https://canvas.seattlecentral.edu/courses/1780161)
* [Canvas Overview for Students](https://community.canvaslms.com/videos/1124-canvas-overview-students) (Video)
* [Canvas Student Guide](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10701)s (Table of Contents)
* [Online Course Design: Time on Task](https://www.rit.edu/academicaffairs/tls/sites/rit.edu.academicaffairs.tls/files/docs/Course%20Design_Online_Time%20%20on%20Task_v1.5.pdf)
* [iStudy Module (for students) on Time Management](http://tutorials.istudy.psu.edu/timemanagement/)
* [How Students Develop Online Learning Skills](https://er.educause.edu/articles/2007/1/how-students-develop-online-learning-skills)
* Seattle Central’s Simple Canvas Templates

## Ideas for Incorporating the Strategy

* Follow accessibility guidelines to ensure that all content is readily available and appropriate for students with mobility, sensory, and cognitive disabilities
* Include in course orientation the soft skills, technological skills, and other course-required skills students will need in order to succeed in the course and how students will be expected to use those skills
* Include links to and/or information about support services for students, including the Seattle Central ITS Student Helpdesk, the (LMS) Canvas support team, the LMS student guide, technical support for publisher online tools, the library, and other student services
* Use the TiLT Templates and Canvas navigation options that already provide links and information for various support services
* Align your assessments with the stated skills and think critically about how supplemental skills might impact your grading schemes, and refocus your grading appropriately (for example, if assigning a writing assignment, how integral are grammar and formatting to students’ grades, especially if English 101 is not a prerequisite course)

# Strategy 4: Instructor Presence & Community

Promotes instructor presence and student through the following three types of instructor-initiated interactions: student-to-content, student-to-student, and student-to-instructor.

## Rationale

Students rely on the subject matter expertise and experience of their instructors and benefit from that exchange of knowledge. In addition, they come to us with a variety of life experiences and benefit from drawing on and sharing those experiences. Instructor-facilitated opportunities for students to engage with the instructor, their peers, and the course content, allow students to experience multiple learning perspectives and build a personalized learning foundation.

## Resources

* [Regular and Substantive Interaction Primer](https://www.everettcc.edu/files/programs/elearning/Regular_and_Substantive_Interaction_Primer.pdf)
* [Student-to-Student Interaction Online](https://www.rit.edu/academicaffairs/tls/course-design/teaching-elements/student-to-student)
* [Creating a Sense of Instructor Presence in the Online Classroom](https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/online-education/creating-a-sense-of-instructor-presence-in-the-online-classroom/)

## Ideas for Incorporating the Strategy

* Follow accessibility guidelines to ensure that all content is readily available and appropriate for students with mobility, sensory, and cognitive disabilities
* Include a variety of learning activities that foster active learning, inclusion, and student interaction in alignment with the learning outcomes and indicate which materials are used in the face-to-face classroom and which are used in the online portion of the course if applicable.
* Include a variety types of instructional materials such as Open Education Resources (OER), textbooks, other publications, instructor-created resources, recorded lectures, websites, adaptive courseware, or multimedia, chosen in alignment with the course and module outcomes and the needs of your students
* Include pass/fail activities with useful feedback to allow students the chance to learn from the content, make mistakes, and correct those mistakes before the assessment
* Include an introduction activity where you and your students can introduce themselves to the class and include your instructor's biography, picture, contact information (including preferred contact method, office location, office hours, and clear expectations for response time)
* Allow for discussion activities which give students a chance to learn from and interact with each other, with facilitation by (but minimal interaction from) the instructor
* Promote or otherwise recognize insightful or useful comments from students to model the types of responses and critical thinking skills expected as well as give positive reinforcement to the contributing student
* Follow suggestions from Strategies 1 and 5 to increase instructor presence in the online classroom

# Strategy 5: Communication & Feedback

Implements communication tools and strategies that support quality, timely student feedback specific to academic performance in alignment with course outcomes.

## Rationale

Students experience significant anxiety over their academic performance, both on individual assignments and their overall course grade. By providing students with individualized feedback aligned with course goals and outcomes within a clearly communicated timeframe, we reduce this anxiety and allow students to apply greater cognitive focus to their work.

## Resources

* [5 Research-based Tips for Providing Students with Meaningful Feedback](http://www.edutopia.org/blog/tips-providing-students-meaningful-feedback-marianne-stenger)
* [Providing Timely and Frequent Feedback](https://tomprof.stanford.edu/posting/1288)
* [Making the Grade: What Benefits Students?](http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/oct94/vol52/num02/Making-the-Grade@-What-Benefits-Students%C2%A2.aspx)

## Ideas for Incorporating the Strategy

* Follow accessibility guidelines to ensure that all content is readily available and appropriate for students with mobility, sensory, and cognitive disabilities
* Provide a policy on grading and feedback, including expected turnaround time for e-mails or other communication and returning grades
* Provide feedback which includes substantive critique, comment, and/or evaluation for work submitted by individual students or groups, referring to additional sources for supplementary information where appropriate.
* If using a rubric, provide specific feedback tailored to the student’s performance in addition to the standard text within the rubric categories
* Use the feedback process to continue the learning experience by adding depth and insight to the response shared by the student, reaffirming key concepts, and providing closure or next steps as appropriate
* Use the LMS to maintain a current and accurate gradebook that allows students to see their own grades and monitor their progress within a course as it relates to mastery of learning outcomes
* Integrate theory with observations and applications when appropriate
* Advertise and adhere to your stated office hours.
* Provide an open discussion forum where students can ask questions and get answers from the instructor or their peers about course content and activities (not grades)
* Evaluate students’ experiences and make adjustments to your course design as needed based on those evaluations