

Ten Commandments of Online Learning*

1. Put the pedagogy (not the technology) first.

Think about what they need to learn then think about how it is best for them to learn it. Only then think about which technology is best used to accomplish this. Don't be too ambitious. Start out small (eg. just a discussion board) and build on this in subsequent years.

2. Be aware of workloads and work patterns (yours and theirs).

Replace (don't augment) other teaching and learning activities with online learning. Consider how much reading and writing they are required to do each week. Use groups to limit/manage this. Consider how much reading and writing you'll be required to do each week. Design and structure the activities to manage this. (Eg. Develop/harness peer learning opportunities). Avoid activities where students rely on colleagues to complete work before they can complete theirs so that students who meet deadlines or want to work ahead aren't penalised or held back by those who don't. Limit the number of synchronous activities. Remember: lurking is a valuable learning activity.

3. Balance risks with safety.

We want students to take intellectual risks but they need to feel safe in order to do so. It needs to be a safe place to be. Going online can feel very 'risky' to many people – so make the first few activities 'familiar' and 'safe' such as introductions, reflection etc. In other words, bear in mind 'social' risks as well as intellectual 'risks'.

3. Balance obligations with rewards.

Use compulsory elements to require students to participate (assessed elements, attendance requirements, deadlines etc). But make sure these are balanced with elements that make participation worthwhile for them in terms of their learning needs.

5. Make ethics a priority.

Don't give anyone access to the site who doesn't have to be there. Inform students about who is there, why they are there and what they have access to. Let them know if/how they are being surveilled.

6. Model good practice.

Write posts in a way that you would like your students to write them (i.e. concise, well paragraphed, proof read etc. Be online when you say you'll be and do what you'll say you'll do (no more no less). Keep and use your sense of humour. Observe appropriate netiquette.

7. Make expectations clear.

Establish clearly what are the minimum expectations you have of them.

Establish clearly what are the maximum expectations they can have of you. Ensure the module works in the space between these two.

8. Establish patterns and stick to them.

Build spaces and use them consistently (always put the same sorts of things in the same places so they are easy to find, use colour coding to differentiate different types of documents etc). Don't move things around too much. If you form students into groups don't alter them for the duration of the module unless you have to. Establish learning patterns or cycles (eg Explore, Describe, Apply) that students work through routinely (eg weekly or fortnightly).

9. Keep spaces available for students to use and shape to their own needs.

A 'notes' or 'general discussion' forum on the discussion board.

A space where students can upload documents or set up weblinks to share.

10. Use/develop protocols.

- For saving and uploading documents, assessment etc.
- For using a chat space.
- For formatting reader-friendly posts.
- For using blogs.
- Don't reinvent the wheel – someone else may have already created and tested one.
- Joint VLE support groups both locally and nationally to share effective practice.

**Ten Commandments of Online Learning - Developed by Cath Ellis, School of Music, Humanities and Media, University of Huddersfield*