



Christian Stoll 2021

## Tips and hints for online courses

### Basic questions

As with any course planning, we must first ask ourselves a few basic questions:

First, what is the intended skill development within my course? Or put another way, what specific skills and abilities will learners have acquired after completing my course? What is the goal of my course?

From this context, the following questions arise:

What are typical domain-specific, subject-specific, or even profession-specific problems and solutions within my discipline? What are typical working methods within my subject area? And which of these working methods can be applied by learners within a course?

These questions in brief:

What skills do I need to have in order to solve which typical problems with which working methods? or even further shortened: What do I need to know in order to solve which problems with which methods?

After we have become aware of these questions, we can now look at a few characteristics of online courses.

### Characteristics of online courses

From a media didactic perspective, it does not work to implement traditional teaching concepts one-to-one in online courses. A good example of this is live streaming of lectures. It is often uncomfortable for teachers to give a lecture sitting in front of a screen for a long period of time without feedback from an audience. Lecturers are more used to being able to move around the room, e.g. to walk back and forth and to use body language, hand movements and different materials. In addition, it can be a

technical challenge for the video conferencing system, especially with a large number of participants.

For learners it is also an unfamiliar situation. It is often perceived as strange to watch a video at a fixed time, over a longer period of time, without having the possibility to pause the video or to skip back and forth. One must therefore ask what is the added value of a live stream or video conference in which a large number of people are present at the same time, but in which only one person is active. Asynchronous teaching concepts supplemented with synchronous elements are therefore recommended for online courses.

### **What can something like this look like?**

Instead of streaming lectures or teacher presentations live, it is advisable to provide learning media. Suitable learning media include audio files, videos or documents. Always link the learning media to concrete tasks or questions that the learners can work on. This can also be in the form of a quiz. Ideally, you should then discuss the results of the tasks in a face-to-face event or a video conference.

Video conferences can also be used to answer learners' questions, discuss further problems or possible areas of application in practice. Use learning media that can be consumed by learners in their own time and use video chats to engage in an active exchange with learners.

### **What is the added value of this?**

Learners have the opportunity to deal with content in a self-selected speed and in their own time. This is particularly beneficial for heterogeneous learning groups, especially students with children and students who work while studying. For teachers, the advantage is that learning media created once can be reused and also shared with other teachers. The only additional time burden for teachers is the creation of learning media.

### **Here are a few more tips**

**Be transparent.** Make expectations, requirements and goals clear and give clear work instructions. Ideally, you should make it clear how long a learning unit or the completion of a work task will take. It has been shown that learners are more motivated when dealing with, for example, short video sequences and many individual work assignments that can be „checked off“ one after the other. Learners are more prone to procrastination with extensive work tasks and very long videos. Communicate consistently. Ideally, send all information and work instructions through one channel.

**Be accessible.** For example, offer online consultation hours to help with questions and problems.

**Offer a medial variety and application possibilities.** Every person learns differently. Every person prefers a certain learning channel or a certain approach to a topic in certain situations. Be it through reading or watching a video. However, the majority of people learn best by doing things themselves or deepening what they have learned by applying it.

**Encourage learners to share and learn together.** Again, video conferencing systems can be used to meet, work through problems together, and discuss content.

**Provide opportunities for learners to develop their own solutions and also get creative.** Make it possible to relate to the real world. Point out where learners are confronted with certain problems in everyday life or where certain problems may await learners in their future working lives. It helps learners to be motivated to deal with certain problems if they know why this is relevant to

their world and why it is worthwhile to acquire a certain competence.

**Be realistic.** This applies to teachers as well as learners. The shift from face-to-face teaching, for which I attend educational institutions, to online teaching, in which I participate entirely from home, is a major change for everyone and breaks with most traditional expectations of teaching and learning. It can therefore be assumed that courses or even work processes will not initially run as smoothly as we might have expected.

## Conclusion

Always be aware of what the goal of your course is and what competencies you want students to develop. Design appropriate teaching media and use video conferencing to engage in an active exchange with the learners. See your role less as a teacher and more as an advisor who accompanies the learning process.

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