

Module Descriptions

Course in Effective Teaching Practices

This document contains descriptions of each of the 28 modules in the Course in Effective Teaching Practices. It is ordered according to the Course's five units of study.

Unit 1. Designing an Effective Course and Class

Module 1A: Establishing Powerful Learning Outcomes

In this module, faculty learn how to write course learning outcomes that effectively define what students will know and be able to do at the end of a course. The module introduces a set of steps for writing outcomes that are student-centered, actionable, specific, sequenced from foundational to more complex, and aligned—when appropriate—to program, department, and institutional outcomes.

To satisfy the module requirements, practicing faculty must apply the recommended techniques to write new learning outcomes or revise their existing learning outcomes.

Advising Subject Matter Expert: Thomas Angelo, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Module 1B: Aligning Assessments With Course Outcomes

In this module, faculty learn how to design assessments that most effectively and efficiently allow students to demonstrate mastery of course outcomes. In addition, the module includes techniques to help students prepare to meet assessment expectations.

To satisfy the module requirements, practicing faculty must apply at least one technique, such as revising a course assessment based on the cognitive levels of applicable learning outcomes, developing an assessment blueprint, or creating a course assessment plan.

Advising Subject Matter Expert: Thomas Angelo, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Module 1C: Aligning Activities and Assignments With Course Outcomes

In this module, faculty learn how to select activities and assignments that are aligned to the cognitive levels of their learning outcomes, prepare for in- and out-of-class time, and design transparent assignments.

To satisfy the module requirements, practicing faculty must develop or revise a course activity or assignment aligned to course outcomes and designed to help students better attain those outcomes.

Advising Subject Matter Experts: Mary-Ann Winkelmes, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and Thomas Angelo, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Module 1D: Preparing an Effective Syllabus

In this module, faculty learn how to design a syllabus that both communicates essential information and facilitates student success. The module includes a checklist and guiding questions instructors can use to identify essential items and important resources. Instructors learn how to design calendars to assist students in meeting key deliverables and build a graphic or big ideas syllabus to support students in visualizing the organization of the course.

To satisfy the module requirements, practicing faculty must apply at least one technique, such as using a checklist and guiding questions to revise their syllabus or creating their own graphic or big ideas syllabus.

Advising Subject Matter Expert: Linda Nilson, Clemson University (retired)

Module 1E: Planning an Effective Class Session

In this module, faculty learn how to effectively leverage each portion of a class session to positively impact student learning. The module includes techniques designed to begin class—the most critical learning time—with a powerful opening. Faculty also learn strategies to segment class sessions with student-active breaks and end by engaging students in summary activities.

To satisfy the module requirements, practicing faculty must apply the techniques to plan a class session with an effective start, middle, and end.

Advising Subject Matter Experts: Stephen Brookfield, University of St. Thomas, Minnesota, and Elizabeth Barkley, Foothill College

Unit 2. Establishing a Productive Learning Environment

Module 2A: Leading the First Day of Class

In this module, faculty learn how to plan for a successful first day, start building a community of learners, and implement active learning strategies that help students understand course expectations.

To satisfy the module requirements, practicing faculty must apply at least one technique, such as creating an outline for the first class session, using an icebreaker, or assigning a syllabus activity.

Advising Subject Matter Expert: Linda Nilson, Clemson University (retired)

Module 2B: Promoting a Civil Learning Environment

In this module, faculty learn how to work with students to set expectations for a civil learning environment. In addition, the module helps faculty address low-, mid-, and high-level disruptions to the learning environment.

To satisfy the module requirements, practicing faculty must apply at least one technique, such as writing policies regarding classroom civility, writing classroom norms with students, or using appropriate methods to respond to student behaviors.

Advising Subject Matter Experts: Barbara Frey, Pitt Online; Kristen Knepp, Cranberry Psychological Center; and Linda Nilson, Clemson University (retired)

Module 2C: Connecting With Your Students

In this module, faculty learn how to create a classroom environment that supports learning, make their course content relevant, and communicate their belief in students' ability to meet course expectations.

To satisfy the module requirements, practicing faculty must apply at least one technique, such as using seating charts, talking with students before class, or using data from student surveys to adjust instruction.

Advising Subject Matter Expert: Linda Nilson, Clemson University (retired)

Module 2D: Motivating Your Students

In this module, faculty learn how to motivate students by developing students' appreciation for their discipline. In addition, faculty learn to support student success through goal setting, incentivize assignment completion, and use a variety of assessment and instructional strategies to meet the needs and showcase the strengths of different types of learners.

To satisfy the module requirements, practicing faculty must apply at least one technique, such as discussing their interest in the discipline, establishing incentives for assignment completion, or teaching students the DAPPS formula for setting goals.

Advising Subject Matter Expert: Linda Nilson, Clemson University (retired)

Module 2E: Engaging Underprepared Students

In this module, faculty learn how to assess students' levels of readiness in order to inform instruction and encourage the use of campus resources for academic support. The module also teaches faculty how to clearly communicate their expectations and use grading practices that fully support student success.

To satisfy the module requirements, practicing faculty must apply at least one technique, such as using ungraded assignments early in the semester, inviting a panel of past students to share advice with their current students, using a performance prognosis inventory, or sharing academic support resources.

Advising Subject Matter Experts: José Bowen, Goucher College, and Sandra McGuire, Louisiana State University

Module 2F: Helping Students Persist in Their Studies

In this module, faculty learn how to build intrinsic motivation by offering choice, providing targeted feedback and revision opportunities, and connecting course learning to career goals. It also introduces the concept and motivational impact of a growth mindset.

To satisfy the module requirements, practicing faculty must apply at least one technique, such as providing students with a choice in the type of project they will complete, offering students an opportunity to use feedback to revise an assignment, or showing students how course content is connected to their career goals.

Advising Subject Matter Expert: Jane Muhich, Seattle Central Community College

Module 2G: Embracing Diversity in Your Classroom

In this module, faculty examine how their own experiences have shaped their perspectives and the importance of valuing different viewpoints. In addition, faculty learn about the power of explicit and implicit messages (microaggressions, stereotype threat) and how to create an inclusive classroom environment, as well as a curriculum, that is representative of diverse student perspectives.

To satisfy the module requirements, practicing faculty must apply at least one technique, such as assessing and revising their curriculum to represent a diverse society or writing ground rules for productive discourse in the classroom.

Advising Subject Matter Experts: Jerome Williams, Rutgers University–Newark, and Stephen Brookfield, University of St. Thomas, Minnesota

Unit 3. Using Active Learning Techniques

Module 3A: Using Active Learning Techniques in Small Groups

In this module, faculty learn to implement the essential components of effective active learning, including providing a rationale for the activity, promoting group interdependence, holding group members accountable, and collecting student feedback to identify strengths and areas for improving the activity. The module helps instructors implement three active learning techniques—Think-Pair-Share, Jigsaw, and Analytic Teams—depending on the learning objectives they have set for their class session.

To satisfy the module requirements, practicing faculty must apply at least one technique, such as holding students accountable for their participation in group activities or implementing an appropriate active learning activity.

Advising Subject Matter Expert: Elizabeth Barkley, Foothill College

Module 3B: Using Active Learning Techniques in Large Classes

In this module, faculty learn how to effectively plan and facilitate active learning in a large class. The module teaches faculty to use an active learning cycle to pique student interest, build foundational knowledge, and then require students to apply new concept(s). In addition, the module includes techniques for using formative assessment and leveraging technology to inform and improve learning.

To satisfy the module requirements, practicing faculty must apply at least one technique, such as using cues to keep students on task, designing lessons according to an active learning cycle, or closing with an activity to hold students accountable.

Advising Subject Matter Experts: John Pollard, University of Arizona, and Edward Prather, University of Arizona

Module 3C: Delivering an Effective Lecture

In this module, faculty learn how to determine if the lecture approach is aligned to their learning objectives, develop well-organized and effectively paced lectures, keep students engaged, and seek student feedback.

To satisfy the module requirements, practicing faculty must apply at least one technique, such as opening with an interesting quote or question to pique students' interest, providing skeletal notes, or chunking information into manageable segments.

Advising Subject Matter Expert: Stephen Brookfield, University of St. Thomas, Minnesota

Module 3D: Planning Effective Class Discussions

In this module, faculty learn how to write well-sequenced, thought-provoking questions to increase student engagement in class discussions. The module helps instructors effectively set expectations for participation, explain the role of discussion for positively impacting learning, and develop an effective grading policy. Faculty will also learn how to leverage class discussion so students come to class prepared and having done the assigned reading or homework.

To satisfy the module requirements, practicing faculty must apply at least one technique, such as sequencing questions to progress toward higher order thinking, developing a grading policy for participation, or assigning students a self-grading activity.

Advising Subject Matter Expert: Jay Howard, Butler University

Module 3E: Facilitating Engaging Class Discussions

In this module, faculty learn activities they can use to launch productive discussions, including Hatful of Quotes, Sentence Completions, and Fishbowl techniques. The module also helps instructors balance student participation using wait time, prompts to manage dominant talkers, and techniques to encourage quieter students while also limiting their own talking.

To satisfy the module requirements, practicing faculty must apply at least one technique, such as using a Fishbowl activity, wait time, or prompting.

Advising Subject Matter Expert: Jay Howard, Butler University

Module 3F: Integrating Civic Learning Into Your Course

In this module, faculty learn how to design assignments that incorporate civic knowledge, skills, and values and teach students to strategically use research to solve local problems, share their findings with the community, and develop their civic values.

To satisfy the module requirements, practicing faculty must create a civic learning assignment for one of their courses.

Advising Subject Matter Experts: Kristin Webster, California State University, Los Angeles, and Michael Willard, California State University, Los Angeles

Unit 4. Promoting Higher Order Thinking

Module 4A: Providing Clear Directions and Explanations

In this module, faculty learn how to provide a set of high-quality directions for complex tasks and the essential techniques for giving clear explanations of challenging content. In addition, the module includes techniques for obtaining student feedback on the clarity of directions and explanations designed to inform instructional adjustments when needed.

To satisfy the module requirements, practicing faculty must apply at least one technique, such as providing written directions, sharing multiple examples, or assigning a class-reaction survey.

Advising Subject Matter Expert: Linda Nilson, Clemson University (retired)

Module 4B: Using Concept Maps and Other Visualization Tools

In this module, faculty learn how to use concept maps and a variety of visualization tools to assist students in understanding complex concepts, principles, and ideas and the important relationships between them.

To satisfy the module requirements, practicing faculty must apply at least one technique, such as using a flowchart during a class session, asking students to use visual tools to answer questions, or teaching students to use concept maps to prepare for exams.

Advising Subject Matter Experts: Derek Bruff, Vanderbilt University, and Todd Zakrajsek, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Module 4C: Teaching Powerful Note-Taking Skills

In this module, faculty learn how to motivate students to take notes and effectively support note-taking by sharing pointers, providing skeletal outlines, allowing processing time, and using cues to signal important points.

To satisfy the module requirements, practicing faculty must apply at least one technique, such as sharing research that supports the benefits of note-taking, teaching students how to take notes, or providing a skeletal outline.

Advising Subject Matter Expert: Linda Nilson, Clemson University (retired)

Module 4D: Using Advanced Questioning Techniques

In this module, faculty learn how to plan a questioning strategy that prompts critical thinking. The module also helps instructors use advanced questioning techniques, like the Socratic Method, and activities for helping students develop their own questioning skills.

To satisfy the module requirements, practicing faculty must apply at least one technique, such as using a taxonomy to appropriately scaffold questions, using the CLOSE-UP method, or assigning students a task that requires them to write their own questions.

Advising Subject Matter Expert: Stephen Brookfield, University of St. Thomas, Minnesota

Module 4E: Developing Self-Directed Learners

In this module, faculty learn how to assist students in understanding and taking ownership of their own learning process. Techniques include using cues to guide student learning, presenting and having students develop work plans for completing complex assignments, prompting self-reflection with rubrics or other grading guidelines, and making worked examples available.

To satisfy the module requirements, practicing faculty must apply at least one technique, such as sharing examples of prior students' work, using an exam wrapper, or having students complete the Critical Incident Questionnaire.

Advising Subject Matter Expert: Stephen Brookfield, University of St. Thomas, Minnesota

Unit 5. Assessing to Inform Instruction and Promote Learning

Module 5A: Delivering Fair, Consistent, and Transparent Grading Practices

In this module, faculty learn to implement research-based grading practices aligned to their grading philosophy and course content. In addition, the module includes information on setting grading policies for late assignments and extra credit and effectively communicating grading practices to students.

To satisfy the module requirements, practicing faculty must apply at least one technique, such as sharing their grading policy with students, assigning different values to assignments based on learning opportunities, or offering extra credit for improved learning.

Advising Subject Matter Experts: Trudy Banta, Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis; Virginia Anderson, Towson University; and Linda Nilson, Clemson University (retired)

Module 5B: Developing and Using Rubrics and Checklists

In this module, faculty learn how to select a grading tool that aligns best to the assigned task and offers the type of feedback most helpful to students. In addition, the module includes techniques for helping students understand how to use different grading tools to their benefit and helping instructors understand how they might use the data generated from grading tools to inform instruction.

To satisfy the module requirements, practicing faculty must apply at least one technique, such as creating an assignment checklist, having students use a rubric to analyze sample papers, or analyzing rubric data.

Advising Subject Matter Experts: Dannelle Stevens, Portland State University; Phyllis Blumberg, University of the Sciences; R. Eric Landrum, Boise State University; and Linda Nilson, Clemson University (retired)

Module 5C: Providing Useful Feedback

In this module, faculty learn how to offer students effective feedback. In addition, the module includes techniques to help students more effectively use feedback for improvement and to help instructors leverage technology to increase feedback efficiency.

To satisfy the module requirements, practicing faculty must apply at least one technique, such as providing timely feedback, conducting structured peer review sessions, or distributing handouts that address common errors.

Advising Subject Matter Expert: Thomas Angelo, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Module 5D: Checking for Student Understanding

In this module, faculty learn how to effectively check for student understanding by using quality questioning techniques and whole-class formative assessment strategies including the One-Minute Paper, Muddiest Point, and In Your Own Words.

To satisfy the module requirements, practicing faculty must apply at least one technique, such as calling on both volunteers and nonvolunteers, using wait time, asking students to clarify or expand on their responses, or implementing a classroom assessment technique.

Advising Subject Matter Experts: Elizabeth Barkley, Foothill College, and Thomas Angelo, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Module 5E: Using Student Achievement and Feedback to Improve Your Teaching

In this module, faculty learn how to use patterns of student achievement on key assignments and assessments to inform instruction. In addition, the module provides techniques to secure mid- and end-of-semester feedback from students and techniques to use colleague observations and consultations with faculty development specialists to inform improvements in instruction.

To satisfy the module requirements, practicing faculty must apply at least one technique, such as creating a data analysis insights chart, securing midsemester feedback, or documenting teaching practices in a journal.

Advising Subject Matter Experts: José Bowen, Goucher College, and Trudy Banta, Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis