

# Four Principles for Online Course Design

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## CONSISTENCY IS KING

The more consistent things are (design, schedule, layout, etc.), the more easily students can navigate the course and its workload:

- Provide clear and repeatable activities and expectations (e.g., help students anticipate workload by making things due the same day each week);
- Be timely and consistent in feedback;
- Establish stable, repeatable, and scalable practices and procedures.

## NO POINTS NO PURPOSE

If there are no points attached to an assignment/activity, students are not likely to complete it. All critical (i.e., required) designed learning engagements (from readings to media assets) need to have a corresponding point value:

- Add activities (e.g., digital creative engagements) to mediated learning assets;
- Use points to assess what students know, but also to help value (assess) the time, energy, and effort it takes to demonstrate a particular level of mastery.

## FOCUS ON FEEDBACK LOOPS

Focus on finding ways to create meaningful feedback loops between instructors and students (and student-to-student interactions). Emerging media technologies can play a critical role in this process:

- Use audio/visual media for feedback on all major/significant assignments;
- Make sure at least 50% of feedback loops are response, timely, and personalized;
- Create 2+ points of contact each week; create 1+ meaningful loop every other week.

## CREATE MEDIATED EXPERIENCES

Creating mediated experiences applies to both instructors (i.e., making learning assets) and students (i.e., undertaking different assignments/activities).

- Instructors: build media learning assets (videos, Spark pages, etc.) to help introduce course concepts, demonstrate methodology, and/or serve as modeling of inquiry;
- Students: working in different media (e.g., video projects, image creations, audio responses) can help foster creative engagement, open new ways of thinking about content and practices, and break-up the textual flatness of online learning.