The Importance of Online Learning Expectations

Introduction

Online Learning Expectations outline how instructors and learners should behave in an online environment. Very similar to establishing "Norms", an instructor can develop online expectations prior to delivering an online course to communicate expected participation levels, communication techniques, netiquette and behavioural patterns. The key to creating effective expectations is to ensure they are specific, realistic and most of all, something you can commit to as an instructor.

Developing clear and concise expectations are an extremely important and often critical aspect of delivering an online course. Your expectations as an instructor need to be as specific as possible and should leave no room for misinterpretation among students.

Instructor Expectations - What can instructors commit to?

1. **Login Frequency**: Outline how often you will be checking your course site, moderating discussions and any other tools you will be using.
2. **Communication Response Time**: Give your learners an indication of how long they will have to wait for a response. Be as accurate as possible.
3. **New Information**: Highlight when you will update your course site with new information. Pick a day/time that best suits your schedule and stick with it. If changes need to made, communicate to learners immediately.
4. **Schedule Check-ins**: Offer Virtual Office Hours for students on a weekly basis for students who may have questions.

Student Expectations - What can students commit to?

1. **Complete D2L Student Orientation** within the first 2 weeks of class.
2. **Communicate needs** that are not being met early on in course through a private email or in a help forum.
3. **Practice Good Time Management**: Plan out your time across your course load.
4. **Login Frequency**: Login frequently to ensure you are up-to-date and reviewing new information from peers.
5. **Participation**: Participate in online activities and refer to course schedule and/or instructions for details.
6. **Utilize appropriate communication channels** for asking for help.
Our Communication Strategy

As a class, decide on:

1. Preferred mode of communication?
2. Triage for issues/concerns (public/private)
3. What tools in our course would you like to use to support your learning experience?
4. How will we manage group work?

The Essential Ingredient: Communication

Really it comes down to communicating and getting to know your students in the online environment. Developing clear expectations minimizes hidden surprises along the way. If there is an issue with a specific expectation, students and instructors need to generate solutions that work for everyone involved. Developing online learning expectations can be a fun activity to conduct in an asynchronous discussion or in Collaborate (as a synchronous activity).

Team Learning Agreements: Sample Activity

This week I’d like you to create a team learning agreement that outlines the ground rules you will abide by as a team. As a team, work through the following focus questions:

1. **Expectations**: Outline the expectations (ground rules) your group will follow (I.e. attendance, meeting frequency, etiquette)
2. **Communication**: How will you communicate as a team? What strategies will you use to keep your team on track throughout the course?
3. **Supporting Tools**: What tools will you use to connect with each other?
4. **Assigning Roles, Responsibilities & Tasks**: How will you divide out/assign key tasks? Decide on key deadlines, etc.
5. **Dealing with Conflict**: How will your team deal with conflict? What process will you follow if specific deadlines or assignment milestones are not met?

Submit your Team Agreement to Assignments when complete.