# Common Concerns with Teaching Online and Strategies to Mitigate Them

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<th>Common Concern</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
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| Designing an online course will be very time consuming.                       | - Start course development well in advance of the start date.  
  - Research shows it takes 6-9 months to develop an online course from an existing classroom based offering.  
  - Designing and building a new online course can take >1 year if working independently  
  - Take advantage of on-campus support to reduce this time:  
    - Individual consultations with Teaching Support Centre (TSC) eLearning and Curriculum Specialists.  
    - Learning object development with the Instructional Technology Resource Centre (ITRC). |
| Managing an online course will require too much time and effort.              | - Thoughtfully plan your syllabus and create a manageable schedule. Clearly outline course policies, modules, assignments, rubrics, discussions, technical requirements and support.  
  - Schedule ample time in your weekly calendar to to prepare for your online course.  
    - More than 50% of instructors report spending >4 hours/week preparing for their online courses. |
| How can course subject matter be appropriately adapted to the online format?  | - Use diverse modalities to display course content, including audio, video, images, concept maps, etc.  
  - Use short (10 minute) audio and video lectures.  
  - Shorter presentations with varied media can optimize student engagement, and allow for ease of updating in the future. |
| How can assessments be designed and adapted for online learning?              | - Use a variety of assessments to evaluate diverse activities (interactive quizzes, discussions, reflections).  
  - Use a variety of large group, small group and individual work experiences.  
  - Use synchronous and asynchronous learning activities. |
| Use of new technology is overwhelming, lack of knowledge and resources to support student’s technological issues. | - Do not overwhelm yourself with new technology, learn a new tool well, and incorporate new tools one at a time.  
  - Provide resources on how to use online learning software.  
  - Take advantage of institutional technology training sessions.  
    - TSC eLearning Lunch and Learn Series  
    - Teaching with Technology Day  
    - Consultations with eLearning and Curriculum Specialists |
| Uncomfortable managing online discussions: how can instructors keep students engaged? | - Set explicit rules and expectations for online discussion etiquette, ensure instructor role is well defined.  
  - Use LMS to split large classes into smaller groups, assign roles and responsibilities to students to facilitate discussion.  
  - Use a variety of communication options (e.g. Collaborate UE, VoiceThread).  
  - Ensure expectations and evaluations for the quality and quantity of participation is well defined. |
## How to appropriately manage time and keep records?

- Schedule a set amount of time in your week for management of course materials, discussion forums, student e-mails.
- Establish a response policy for e-mail communication (i.e. 24 hours on weekdays, 48 hours on weekends).
- Set up online synchronous “class time” using Collaborate UE to facilitate instruction and keep it moving.
- Clearly relay expectations via multiple modalities (clear syllabus, online modules, direct instructor facilitation).
- Use LMS tracking tools to monitor student engagement with course materials, follow up with students as needed.

## Student remoteness and isolation. How to build community online?

- Use an icebreaking activity to get students to introduce themselves (e.g. introductory discussion, create a PowerPoint slide about themselves).
- Create a secondary forum such as a “Virtual Lounge” or “e-Café” where students can request assistance from one another, chat about the course, or other topics.
- Set up small groups where students can support and mentor each other, and work on group assignments.

## Lack of student interaction and engagement with online learning activities.

- Create attention grabbing content to introduce learning objectives (i.e. media clips, documentaries, case studies) to connect course content to the “real world”.
- Continue to nurture growth of student engagement.
  - Be present in your course, show presence multiple times/week.
  - Set clear expectations of when you will/will not be present.
- Teach and model self-regulated skills to improve student’s online learning abilities.
- Use collaborative projects, have students work in groups.

## How to grade assignments, while minimizing online marking, and provide appropriate feedback.

- Use clearly defined rubrics and grading criteria.
- Use self-marking quizzes in the LMS to decrease grading load, encourage self-evaluation.
- Use peer evaluations.

## Academic Integrity: Students cheating in online courses.

- Use diverse activities and assessment strategies.
- Use Turnitin to check for plagiarism.
- Use Collaborate UE for real-time evaluations (i.e. oral exams).

### Resources

1. Western eLearning Support – questions/consultations: [elearningsupport@uwo.ca](mailto:elearningsupport@uwo.ca)

### References