What Online Students Want to Tell Faculty

- Design a course that is clear and well organized. Make sure we know what is expected and when. Clear deadlines are important to students. "Course outlines should better outline all the assignments that must be completed. That way it would be easier to gauge your time."
- Designing your course to promote quality interaction between faculty and students and among students is essential. Consider emphasizing the course conference by making it a part of your class assessment possibly as a substitute for test, paper, or project.
- Be patient and available. Remember some of us are first time online learners and are still trying to figure out this method of teaching and learning.
- Facilitate student access to other students by helping them share email and phone numbers so they can communicate among each other easily.
- If you use testing for assessment, clarify what material is most important and would be emphasized on tests.
- Be accessible. "Professor X sent emails of concern." "Quick response to my questions." "You could email at any time with a question or comment."
- If you are going to assign group projects, do so with the knowledge that we signed up for these courses due to their time flexibility.
- Put yourself into the class. "The professor was always available, encouraging and even made the lessons humorous by adding personal tidbits." "She gave us constant feedback and encouragement."
- Think about your role in the discussion. Students want you to be present. "The instructor responded to almost all postings, he gave very good feedback and insight." But students also want to hear each other's voices. "She let us discuss topics amongst ourselves and added her feedback."
- Make sure students have the ability to communicate with you alone, outside of the course conferences. "Online your questions to the instructor are posted so the whole classroom can see them. Sometimes it has made me feel stupid to ask a question that everybody in the classroom already knew."
- Give frequent feedback on assignments so students have a sense of what they have mastered and where they need to focus attention.
- Your presence in the class is important. These courses should not be seen by the student as "self-taught."

What Online Students Want to Tell New Online Students

- Online learning is time consuming. Many students believe that online learning is more work than onground learning. It may not take more total time since you don't have to drive to class, find a place to park, and sit in class, but it should seem that you are spending more time than what you are used to in terms of "homework." Reading and writing always take longer than talking and listening.
- It helps to be clear about your technical skills. Take the sample course or talk with the professor ahead of time and make sure your computer, keyboarding, email, and attachment skills will support your learning online.
- Choose your professors wisely. Just like an onground class, some professors are better than others at teaching online. "This is far and away the best of the 5 online courses I have taken. The instruction quality made the biggest difference."
- Your ability to interact on line may be constrained by your writing and typing abilities.
• Online courses require self-discipline. Even when there are definite deadlines, you must make yourself go do the work.
• Online learning gets easier after you get used to it.
• Most online classes use a threaded discussion forum or bulletin board for class discussions. Students have differing reactions to this form of communication:

  · Some people don’t like the lack of face to face interactions. “I’m a big people person and quite social.” “The way we can see people’s facial expressions and hear their voices makes a major difference.” “Online classes are great, but not for me. You still haven’t captured the teacher-student interaction that I get in the classroom.”

  · Some people like the online discussion because they allow students to think before they write rather than on ground classroom discussions which "tend to be blurts of raw, not necessarily thought out ideas."

  · People who are “shy” or don’t speak up in class seem to like this format. “I felt I was more inclined to participate and express myself in the online format, as opposed to the classroom situation where I feel self-conscious about raising my hand.”

  · Because shy people “speak up”, some students like the fact that they hear from all of their classmates, not just the most vocal.

What Online Students Want to Tell Institutions

• Students should be able to examine the course syllabus and curriculum before signing up for the course. This allows them to make informed judgments about their ability to do the work.
• Have early lists of required books with ISBN numbers so students can order online.
• Control class sizes. “When classes are too large and not split into groups it becomes tedious to read 50 students papers and responses.”

What Online Students Want to Tell Course/Web Designers

• Add the suggestion to print the results of quizzes before the Next button is clicked, so that students don’t lose any opportunity to review or print results
• The web page design of the lessons used “pop-ups” to add information about key points. This made it very difficult to print out the lessons for reading off-line. There should be web page selector for “printable lesson” to facilitate ease of printing.”
• I’m currently enrolled in two courses and going back and forth between the two to check threaded discussion means that I have to re-enter the entire program. Once a student has logged on, they should be able to move more freely through the site and back and forth between classes and programs.”
• It would be nice to have a link to the library or reference area.
• This online format requires one to paste from word processing software; however, it does not accept the formatting of the software.