



Tips for Creating Great Online Courses

Online Courses should be engaging and more than just a download of information that you can find online or in a self-help book. Here are some tips you can use to create a great online course.

1. Select Your Course Topic

Choose a course topic you love and know – this passion and knowledge will then flow through to your course. Of course, your topic should also have relevance to your participants.

2. Provide Clear Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes identify the knowledge and skills your participant will have gained after your course. Use measurable verbs to describe outcomes. For example, after the first week of a four week short course on setting SMART goals, your participants will have achieved the following learning outcomes.

At the end of the first week, participants will be able to:

- a. *DEFINE* the components of a SMART goal (knowledge).
- b. *WRITE* a SMART goal related to writing (skill).

3. Create a Logical Structure for the Course

Structure your course into a logical sequence. For example, a four week short course on *Goal Setting and Challenges to Achieving your Goals for Writing* might have the following sequence:

- a. *Week 1 – Set SMART goals*
- b. *Week 2 – Challenge barriers to goals – thoughts*
- c. *Week 3 – Challenge barriers to goals – actions*
- d. *Week 4 – Review your goals and the way ahead*

4. Effectively Structure Each Week

Break your content into parts. For example, a four-week short course should have at least 4 x 1 hour sessions included with approximately 40-50 minutes of content per week, and 10-20 minutes allowed for interaction and feedback. Depending on your course, you might structure this differently with one larger opportunity for feedback at the end, but each section of the content should generally try to include the following parts:

- a. **Point** – What point do you want to make?
- b. **Example** – Use an example to illustrate your point.
- c. **Application** – Have an activity so participants can apply your point.
- d. **Feedback** – Provide feedback so participants know they are on the right track. Note: Peer feedback can be useful, but expert feedback is even better. You should provide feedback at least once during your course – this helps to distinguish you from reading a self-help book or blog.

5. Use a Range of Mediums to Engage Your Participants

Member feedback suggests that the more successful courses are those where participants are engaged through the use of different mediums as opposed to those where content is presented only in PDF format. Note, this might be slightly different for one-on-one courses where the focus is on discussion and feedback.

Moodle, the online learning platform RWA utilises for its online courses, has a variety of different tools that can be used to achieve such engagement. Access will be given to presenters in the month leading up to their scheduled OWL, so allow plenty of time to research the tools available. Consider ways to engage your participants through the use of:

- Reading, visual, video or audio content – to convey content, or to illustrate a point.
- Activities – to apply knowledge. E.g. writing prompts, worksheets, visual prompts, etc.
- Interaction – to encourage participation and peer discussion and to increase relevance to individuals. E.g. forums, polls.

In summary, when you are creating your course, remember to keep asking yourself the following questions:

- How am I different from a self-help book or blog?
- What is my unique selling point?
- How am I going to engage my participants?
- What are participants going to walk away with so they feel satisfied with my course?