THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE KNOXVILLE

TEACHING & LEARNING INNOVATION

WINTER MINI-TERM 2021

DESIGNING A CONDENSED COURSE

Three Models that Support Student Success



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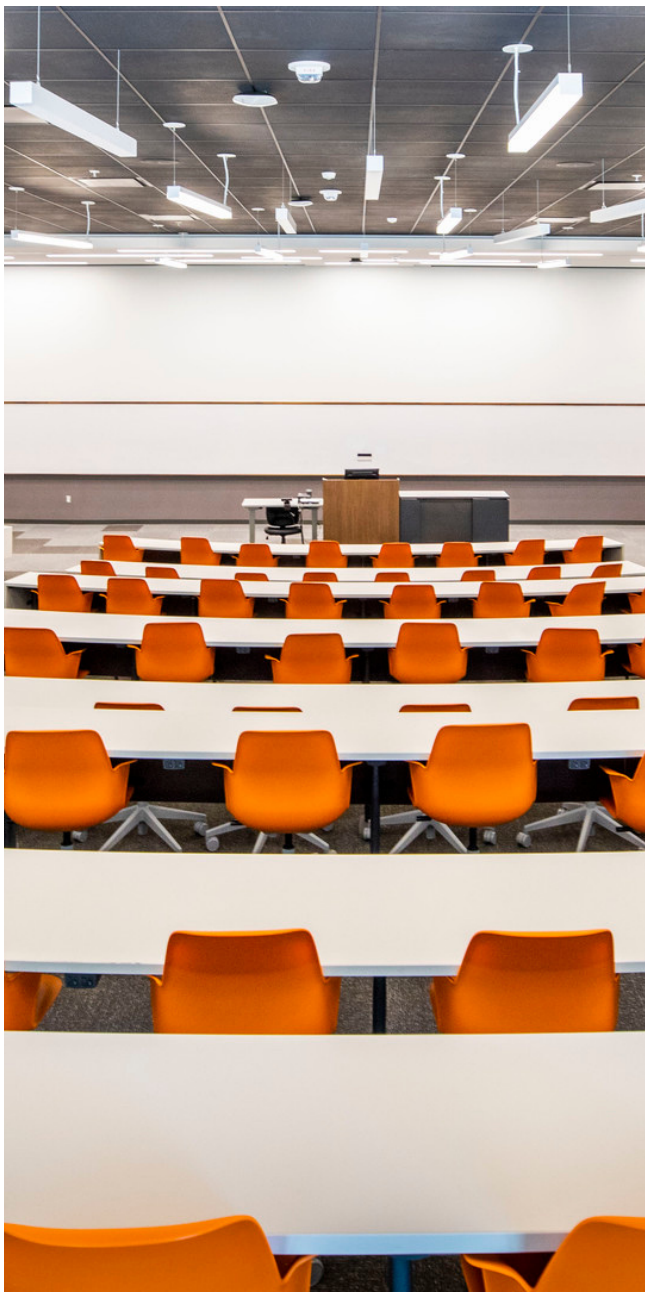


1 Introduction

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville is now offering a winter mini-term to provide students an additional opportunity to participate in coursework and advance toward their degrees.

A condensed-format course is learning outcome oriented and is beneficial because it fosters academic achievement, improves social interaction between instructors and students and/or between peers, promotes active learning, and facilitates creative teaching techniques (Gaubatz, 2003; Kops, 2014). For many instructors, one of the major challenges is taking a typical 15-week course and condensing the content while maintaining the quality of the course and the learning. To ensure that students can still achieve the same learning outcomes as a traditional semester, it will be important to make thoughtful and intentional modifications.

This resource provides 3 different models that faculty can use to build a three-week course: a project-based course model; an experiential learning course model; and a traditional assessment model.

2 High Quality Course Design

Focused, well-designed courses with clear expectations set students up for success.

Daniel (2000) and Kops (2014) point out that high quality condensed-format courses:

- **Are well-planned.**
- **Focus on student learning outcomes and appropriate assessments.**
- **Utilize intentionally selected methods of online/face-to-face/hybrid instruction (micro-lectures, collaborative work, individual work, etc.).**
- **Use many student-centered instructional strategies.**

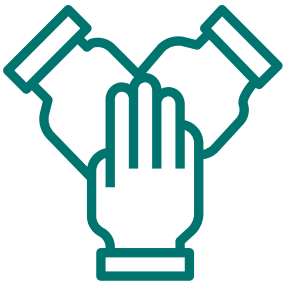
A well-designed condensed-format course should focus on its specific goal(s). As you begin to design your online condensed-format course, be sure to address Wilson's (2007) four considerations:

- **A vision of the student and what their needs are in such a format**
- **Course content selection**
- **Evidence-based assessment that is aligned with learning outcomes**
- **Organization and most appropriate content delivery**

3 The Three Models

Each of these models will help you design a high instructional quality course.

Learn more about each model in the following sections.

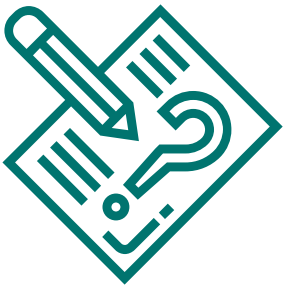


Group Project Based Course

This model provides an outline for a course focused on students achieving the learning outcomes by working with their peers to solve a problem.

Experiential Learning Course

This model provides an outline for a course focused on students achieving the learning outcomes through hands-on experience.

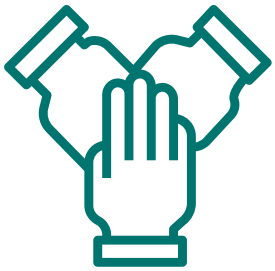


Traditional Assessment Course

This model provides an outline for a course focused on students achieving the learning outcomes through traditional assessment methods such as exams and essays.

4 Model 1: Group Project-Based Course

A project-based course helps students achieve learning outcomes by engaging them in solving a large problem over the course of the semester with a group of their peers. These courses support students in developing many transferable skills as well, such as project management, ability to work with others, and critical thinking.



WEEK 1

- **Welcome students to the classroom and provide time for them to get to know you and their peers.**
- Use ice breakers and other activities to help build community early on.
  - Resources:
    - Classroom Icebreakers
    - Building Community in Online Environments

- **Review the class syllabus to ensure that students fully understand the expectations of the course. Make the purpose of your syllabus clear!**
  - Resources:
    - Purpose of a Syllabus
    - TLI's syllabus resources

- **Develop clear student learning outcomes that set the expectations for the course. Share them with your students at the beginning of the mini-term.**
  - Resources:
    - Writing Clear Learning Outcomes
    - Understanding by Design (a guide to backwards course design)

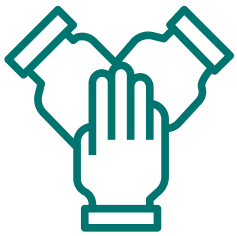
- **Set class expectations for online etiquette.**
  - TLI's The First Day of Class resource can help you establish these guidelines.

- **Create effective groups for the project.**
  - This can be done taking a strengths-based or role-based approach.

- **Identify, capture/create, and distribute learning materials.**
  - Learning materials may include lecture materials, videos on specific topics, readings on key subjects within the field, and guest speakers.
  - Load all materials (if possible) in Canvas modules so that they are clearly organized and easily accessible to students.

- **Connect your learning materials with group activities.**
  - Break up lectures with group work and active learning that encourages students to use the learning materials.
  - Allow sufficient time for this type of learning to take place.
  - Resources:
    - TLI Effective Lecturing Strategies
    - Pillars of Collaborative Work
    - TLI Classroom Activities

- **Use peer-/self-assessment in addition to other formative assessment so that students receive feedback early in the course.**
  - Reflection can be a useful tool for self- and peer-assessment. It can take place individually, in groups, in-person, or online.
  - Resources:
    - TLI Reflection Activities
    - Formative vs. Summative Assessment



WEEK TWO

- Reflect on the previous week's sessions and connect previous content with new content.
- Ensure that all learning materials required for the week are prepared and accessible to students.
- Connect the learning materials with group activities.
- Allow for sufficient time for groups to work on their project in the classroom.
- Integrate time for peer-/self-assessment or other forms of formative assessment so that students receive feedback on their progress.

WEEK THREE

- Continue the processes of reflection, material preparation, and group work from week two.
- Have students submit their group projects/summative assessment (e.g., presentation, written report, learning portfolios).
    - Provide students feedback on their summative assessment (the group project).
    - Integrate time for students to reflect, individually or as a group, on the assessment and your feedback.

5 Model 2: Experiential Learning Course

An experiential learning course focuses on helping students achieve learning outcomes through hands-on experience.

Before beginning your experiential learning course, we highly recommend TLI's Experiential Learning asynchronous certificate program.

WEEK 1

- **Welcome students to the classroom and provide time for them to get to know you and their peers.**
  - Use ice breakers and other activities to help build community early on.
  - Resources:
    - Classroom Icebreakers
    - Building Community in Online Environments

- **Discuss the benefits of experiential learning with your students.**

- **Identify a problem/project to solve using experiential activities (e.g., role playing, groups, service learning, simulations).**
  - Learn about all 12 types of Experiential Learning available at UT, and share them with students by incorporating one or two into your class.
  - Resources:
    - Online Service-Learning in a Nutshell
    - Online Service-Learning Exercises for Students
    - Service-Learning Course Design Guide
    - Service-Learning Course Workbook
    - Service-Learning Risk Management

- **Review the course syllabus and learning outcomes with students.**
  - Consider best practices for experiential learning in online courses.
  - Review TLI's Experiential Learning Student Learning Outcomes and information for incorporating them into your classroom.

- **Set class expectations and etiquette.**
  - Schedule a portion of class during the 1st week to hold an orientation about the experience. For advice on how to organize an orientation, use TLI's Introduction to Orientations & Trainings in Experiential Learning.
    - Keep an eye on inclusivity in your experiential classroom. It helps everyone with learning, growth, and understanding.
    - Make sure that you manage all risk appropriately so that everyone has a safe and supportive experience.

- **Identify, capture/create, and distribute learning materials.**
  - Learning materials may include lecture materials, videos on specific topics, readings on key subjects within the field, and guest speakers.
  - Load all materials (if possible) in Canvas modules so that they are clearly organized and easily accessible to students.

- **Engage in formative assessment (e.g., online/group discussions, critical reflection assignments, low-stakes assignments/quizzes) so students receive feedback early on and can adjust.**
  - Resources:
    - Reflection Exercises
    - TLI's Experiential Learning Assessment Toolbox
    - How to Assess Lifelong Learning
    - Direct Assessment (Experiential Learning)
    - Indirect Assessment (Experiential Learning)

WEEK TWO

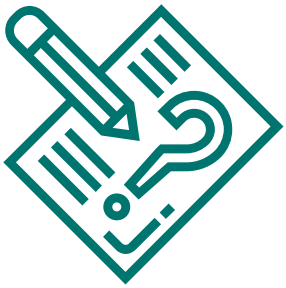
- Reflect on previous week's sessions and connect previous content with new content.
- Ensure that all learning materials required for the week are prepared and accessible to students.
- Begin experiential activities.
- Determine if modifications need to be made to the experience by using reflection and other formative assessments.

WEEK THREE

- Continue reflection and materials preparation from week two.
- Continue experiential activities and modify if necessary.
- Have students submit their summative assessment (e.g., presentation, written report, learning portfolios).
    - Provide students feedback on their summative assessment.
    - Integrate time for students to reflect, individually or as a group, on the assessment and your feedback.

6 Model 3: Traditional Assessment-Based Course

An assessment-based course focuses on the use of exams, essays, and/or quizzes as the main form of assessment. This work is typically completed by students on an individual basis.



To develop a course that uses traditional assessment methods, TLI recommends reviewing our Assessment webpage and our Active Learning and Engaged Teaching webpage which provide substantial guidance on implementing a course with a strong assessment framework, active and engaged learning, and a strong teaching and learning foundation.

WEEK 1

- **Welcome students to the classroom and provide time for them to get to know you and their peers.**
  - Use ice breakers and other activities to help build community early on.
  - Resources:
    - Classroom Icebreakers
    - Building Community in Online Environment

- **Review the course syllabus and learning outcomes with students.**
  - Make sure that the purpose of your syllabus is clear.
  - Resources:
    - Purpose of a Syllabus
    - TLI's syllabus resources

- **Develop clear student learning outcomes that set the expectations for the course. Share them with your students at the beginning of the mini-term.**
  - Resources:
    - Writing Clear Learning Outcomes
    - Understanding by Design (a guide to backwards course design)

- **Set class social expectations and etiquette.**
  - TLI's The First Day of Class resource can help you establish these guidelines.

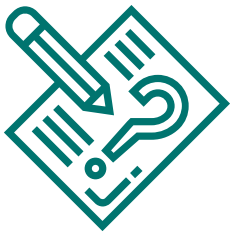
- **Identify, capture/create, and distribute learning materials.**
  - Learning materials may include lecture materials, videos on specific topics, readings on key subjects within the field, and guest speakers.
  - Load all materials (if possible) in Canvas modules so that they are clearly organized and easily accessible to students.

- **Engage students in active learning activities that help them connect the learning materials to the classroom.**
  - Allow sufficient time for the active learning exercises as well as time to discuss and debrief after they're done.
  - Resources:
    - Getting Started with Active Learning Techniques
    - Active Learning in Online Teaching

- **Introduce the final summative assessment (e.g., exam or paper).**
  - Include details about how students will be expected to show that they have achieved the student learning outcomes.
  - Discuss with students how they will be checking their learning as they progress through the course (e.g., quizzes, rough drafts, peer review) so that they will feel prepared for the final summative assessment.

- **Assign homework.**

- **Use peer-/self-assessment or other forms of formative assessment so that students receive feedback early in the course.**
  - Resources:
    - TLI Reflection Activities
    - Formative vs. Summative Assessment



WEEK TWO

- Reflect on the previous week's sessions and connect them with new content.
- Ensure that all learning materials required for the week are prepared and accessible to students.
- Integrate active learning activities.
- Connect the learning materials with active learning.
- Allow for sufficient time for active learning and debriefing.
- Integrate time for peer- or self-assessment.
- Discuss final summative assessment and go over any questions or concerns.
- Remind students how the classroom activities and formative assessments will help build toward the final assessment.
- Assign homework.
- Integrate time for peer-/self-assessment or other forms of formative assessment so that students receive feedback on their progress.

WEEK THREE

- Continue the processes of reflection, material preparation, and active learning integration from week two.
- Discuss the final summative assessment again and go over any questions or concerns.
- Have students complete/submit their final summative assessment (e.g., paper, exam, project).
- Provide students feedback on their summative assessment.

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