Self Review of Online Teaching Guide

Introduction

In 1987, Arthur Chickering and Zelda Gamson published "Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education," a summary of 50 years of higher education research that addressed good teaching and learning practices. Their findings, and faculty and institutional evaluation instruments based on the findings, have been widely used to guide and improve college teaching, not only at the undergraduate level but the graduate level as well.

The Seven Principles

Good practice:

1. Encourages contact between students and faculty;
2. Develops reciprocity and cooperation among students;
3. Encourages active learning;
4. Gives prompt feedback;
5. Emphasizes time on task;
6. Communicates high expectations; and
7. Respects diverse talents and ways of learning.

Chickering, A. & Gamson, Z. (1987). Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. AAHE Bulletin (39)7.

The Seven Principles provide a useful framework to evaluate the effectiveness of online teaching and learning. Therefore, this *Self Review Guide*[1] adapts the Seven Principles to facilitate the review of Pitt Online courses.

In the following sections, each principle is described in detail, including examples of how a principle may be met. While, ideally, good practice would suggest that all seven principles would be supported in some way in an online course, variations in course format, size, and faculty teaching experience can make reaching that ideal difficult. It is assumed that you will discover room for improvement when examining a course through the lens of the Seven Principles. This Self Review Guide provides space for you to note teaching and learning strengths, as well as areas for improvement. Please keep in mind that the examples of evidence are examples only and that each principle may be met in a variety of ways.

[1] This document is based on the Peer Review Guide for Online Teaching at Penn State, developed by Ann H. Taylor and published by the John A. Dutton e-Education Institute, a unit of the College of Earth and Mineral Sciences, Pennsylvania State University. Retrieved March 19, 2012 from https://www.e-education.psu.edu/files/sites/file/PeerReview_OnlineCourses_PSU_Guide_28Sept2010.docx. The College's peer review resources are freely available for non-commercial use under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-Share-Alike 3.0 License. License available at http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/us/.

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Principle 1: Good practice encourages contact between students and faculty. Frequent and timely student-faculty contact is an important factor in student motivation and involvement, particularly in a distance education environment. Evidence of faculty concern helps students get through challenging situations, inspires them to persevere, enhances intellectual commitment, and encourages them to think about their own values and future plans. **Examples of evidence to look for:** • A "welcome message" is provided at the beginning of the course that encourages student-to-instructor contact for course-related discussions or concerns. • The instructor initiates contact with, or responds to, students on a regular basis in order to establish a consistent online presence. • A prominent announcement area is used to communicate important up-to-date course information such as reminders of impending assignment due dates, course changes, scheduled absences, etc. • The instructor holds regular office hours during which he/she is available for telephone calls with students. • Student inquiries are addressed in a timely manner. **Where to look:** • Discussion forums • Posted announcements • Course syllabus • Read Me First	**Evidence Found:** **Strengths:** **Areas for Improvement:**

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Principle 2: Good practice develops reciprocity and cooperation among students.	**Evidence Found:**

Learning is enhanced when it is more like a team effort than a solo experience. Good learning, like good work, is collaborative and social, not competitive and isolated. Working with others often increases involvement in learning. Sharing one's own ideas and responding to others' reactions sharpens thinking and deepens understanding.
 	
Examples of evidence to look for:
• Regular opportunities for students to engage in one or more of the following activities:
  ○ Formal and/or informal discussions of course topics.
  ○ Collaborative course assignments.
  ○ Study groups.
• A "meet one another" activity at the beginning of the course so students can begin to make personal connections.
• Group assignments that follow the basic tenets of cooperative learning such as assigning roles and responsibilities or providing due dates for deliverables.
• An explanation and examples of the criteria for “good” discussion participation.
• Discussion prompts guide student participation by eliciting diverse and unique responses.
• Instructor facilitation of class discussions by encouraging, probing, questioning, summarizing, etc.
• The course provides students with the ability to self-enroll in a study group with access to communication tools (e.g., wiki, discussion board, group email).
 	
Where to look:
• Instructional materials / Assignment directions
• Discussion forums
• Course syllabus
	Strengths:
	
	Areas for Improvement:

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Principle 3: Good practice encourages active learning.
 	
Active learning methods engage students in the learning process by encouraging them to discover, process, and apply information.
 	
Examples of evidence to look for:
• Student activities that involve one or more of the following:
  ○ Writing, speaking, and other forms of self-expression that integrate course concepts.
  ○ Opportunity for information gathering, synthesis, and analysis in solving problems (including the use of library, electronic/computer, and other resources).
  ○ Engagement in collaborative learning activities.
  ○ Application of intercultural and international competence .
• Opportunities for students to "customize" their learning by tailoring assignments to their personal and professional interests and needs.
• Examples of student work in which they
  ○ Think, talk, or write about their learning.
  ○ Reflect on, organize, apply, synthesize, or evaluate information.
  ○ Perform research, lab or studio work, or physical activities.
  ○ Participate in, design, or develop educational games and simulations.
 	
Where to look:
• Course syllabus
• Instructional materials
• Assignments page
• Discussion forums
	Evidence Found:
	
	Strengths:
	
	Areas for Improvement:

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Principle 4: Good practice gives prompt feedback.	**Evidence Found:**
Instructor feedback helps students assess their knowledge and competence. Students need multiple practice opportunities on which to receive feedback. Quality feedback is timely, constructive, specific, and measurable. It describes target performance and explains how to achieve it. **Examples of evidence to look for:** • Information about course feedback methods and standards on the course syllabus (e.g., "I will respond to emails within 24 hours except on weekends." OR "I will grade written assignments within 7 days of the due date." OR "I will monitor the Q&A discussion board regularly and respond to questions within 24 hours during the week and 48 hours on the weekend."). • Option (or requirement) for students to submit drafts of assignments for instructor feedback. • Meaningful feedback on student assignments that is provided within a publicized and reasonable time frame. • Assignment feedback that is clear, positive, specific, and focused on observable behavior that can be changed. • Clearly communicated course and individual assignment grading criteria; for example, a rubric that describes criteria or standards of achievement. • Up-to-date, student-accessible course gradebook. • An open discussion forum where students can ask questions and receive instructor feedback about course content and activities. **Where to look:** • Course syllabus • Instructional materials • Assignments page • Course gradebook • Discussion forums	**Strengths:** **Areas for Improvement:**

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Principle 5: Good education emphasizes time on task. The frequency and duration of study, as well as effective time management skills, are critical for students and professionals. Students need help in learning to manage and prioritize their study time. **Examples of evidence to look for:** • A published course schedule that outlines topics to be covered and assignment due dates, so students can plan their work accordingly. • Course-specific study tips that provide students with strategies for utilizing their time well. • Assignment feedback that provides students with information on where to focus their efforts. • Repeated postings of timelines and deadlines for assignments and reminders of due dates. • Opportunities to take scheduled practice tests as this increases time on task with course content. • Term papers and projects broken into smaller tasks with scheduled due dates for each task starting early in the term. **Where to look:** • Course syllabus • Course schedule • Announcements	**Evidence Found:** **Strengths:** **Areas for Improvement:**

Principle 6: Good practice communicates high expectations. Effective instructors have high, but reasonable, expectations for their students. They clearly communicate those expectations and provide support to their students in their efforts to meet those expectations. **Examples of evidence to look for:** • Explicit information on the pre-requisite skills and knowledge every student needs in order to be successful in the course. • Expectations communicated through course goals and objectives explain how assignments are designed to help students achieve goals and objectives. • Detailed feedback for students' improvement. • Specific rubrics for assignments. • Specification of participation requirements in discussion boards and group work. • Language in assignment instructions that motivates students to move past easy answers to more complex solutions. **Where to look:** • Course syllabus • Instructional materials • Assignment directions	**Evidence Found:** **Strengths:** **Areas for Improvement:**

Principle 7: Good practice respects diverse talents and ways of learning. Students bring different strengths, talents, and styles of learning to the learning environment. They need the opportunity to demonstrate their talents and to "personalize" their learning so that it is relevant to them. Instructors should therefore incorporate various ways to present course materials, conduct activities, and assess learning. **Examples of evidence to look for:** • A variety of assessment tools that gauge student progress. • Alternative assignment options that allow students to demonstrate their progress in a manner that is conducive to their talents and interests. For example, a podcast might be accepted as learning evidence instead of a written paper. • Supplemental online materials provided to students who lack prerequisite knowledge or who would benefit from having content presented in an alternative manner. • Universal design principles applied to materials in order to ensure accessibility for all students. • A policy for accommodations that is stated on the course syllabus along with inclusive language that proactively offers accommodations to students with disabilities. • A positive online climate where students are encouraged to seek assistance with course content, learning activities, and technology if needed. **Where to look:** • Course syllabus • Instructional materials • Assignment directions • Discussion Forums	**Evidence Found:** **Strengths:** **Areas for Improvement:**