

### Online Course Development Best Practices

Based on the work of many experts in the field, Kenneth Switzer (2002) presents a series of recommendations profitable for the design and delivery of online courses:

1. Require new learners to take a pre-course student tutorial to familiarize them with hardware and software requirements.
2. Course elements, objects and controls, like those that aid learners' navigation, should be visible, obvious and, ideally, intuitive.
3. Keep the number of actions and objects to the minimum necessary for good functionality and the optimum delivery of your course material.
4. Learners should be in control of seeking needed help.
5. 'Chunk' material into usable sections that can be accessed easily and completed readily.
6. Use good balance in visual design regarding the use of colors, fonts, icons, and graphics.
7. Include interactivity between learners, learners and outside-the-course web sites.
8. Provide feedback on assignments and assessments that are accessible to the students.

Switzer, K. (2002). Students as learners and users: Enhancing usability for your online course. *Educator's Voice*. Retrieved April 11, 2007, [http://www.ecollege.com/news/EdVoice\\_arch\\_019.learn](http://www.ecollege.com/news/EdVoice_arch_019.learn)

### Applying Switzer's Best Practices

In consideration of this list of Best Practices, here are some corresponding means of applying these Best Practices.

1. An eCollege student tutorial is available to students under the "myCourses" tab when logged in to eCollege.
2. Provide links to rubrics, other areas of the course, and web pages on content pages, assignment pages and the like.
3. Hide or delete unused content items. For example, if you are not giving a quiz in Week 1, hide that quiz.
4. Provide information in your syllabus on when and how students may contact you. Provide clear explanation of coursework, assignments, and the like in your course. TAMU-C provides students 24-7 technical support through eCollege.
5. Divide your course into student-manageable instructional pieces, for example, weeks, units, chapters.
6. Ask a colleague or an IDU support team member to review your course for visual design.
7. Use discussion forums, ClassLive Pro, cooperative learning projects, blogs, peer review projects, or the like. Break your students into small groups by going to the 'course admin' tab and selecting the 'group management' button.
8. Post grades with comments to your course gradebook. Email your class during the semester to encourage their active engagement in the course. This reminds them that you are active in the course.

### Online Courses—Formative Survey

Students in online courses (01W, 02W...) are required to complete a formative survey approximately two weeks into the term. The purpose of the formative survey is for the instructor and department head to monitor successful start-up of the term. Survey administration dates and delivery of the survey results to faculty and department heads is

Term	Dates Surveys are Administered to Students	Results to Faculty/ Department Heads
Jan 14-May 9 (16 Weeks)	Jan 25 - Feb 1	February 4
Jan 31-May 9 (14 Weeks)	Feb 15 - Feb 22	February 25
Feb 4-May 9 (13 Weeks)	Feb 15 - Feb 22	February 25

Jan 31-May 9 (14 Weeks)	Feb 15 - Feb 22	February 25
Feb 4-May 9 (13 Weeks)	Feb 15 - Feb 22	February 25
Feb 15-Apr 28 (12 Weeks)	Feb 29 - Mar 7	March 10
Feb 8-Apr 11 (11 Weeks)	Feb 22 - Feb 29	March 3
Feb 25-May 9 (10 Weeks)	Mar 7 - Mar 14	May 16
Jan 14-Mar 7 (8 Weeks)	Jan 25 - Feb 1	February 4
Mar 10-May 9 (8 Weeks)	Mar 21 - Mar 28	April 1
Jan 31-Mar 14 (7 Weeks)	Feb 14 - Feb 18	February 22
Mar 24-May 9 (7 Weeks)	Mar 27 - Mar 31	April 1
Jan 14-Feb 22 (6 Weeks)	Jan 24 - Jan 28	February 1



## New Resource Available for Faculty to Assess Student Readiness for Online Learning

The Readiness for Education At a Distance Indicator (**READI**) is a web-based tool designed to serve as an early warning device to identify students who may be deficient in the skills and attributes necessary for successful distance learning. READI indicates the degree to which an individual student possesses attributes, skills and knowledge that contribute to success in online learning, including: self-motivation; time-management skills; self-discipline; reading comprehension; persistence; ability to use a laptop, printer, software and the Internet; and typing speed and accuracy. **READI** provides an immediate score and diagnostic interpretation of results to the student and the instructor

If you would like your online students to take advantage of the resources provided through **READI**, please include this link in your online course <http://tamuc.readi.info/>. **Students will login with the following username/password combination: tamuc/online.** Students will be directed to create a personal login and be given access to the assessment.

As instructors you may receive a summative report detailing the individual **READI** scores of your students. Results are presented in easy-to-interpret charts and graphs. The on-screen report consists of colorful charts that indicate the participant's level of READIness in reading speed & comprehension, technical competency, individual attributes, typing speed & accuracy, and preferred learning styles. To learn more about how to access these reports for your students, please e-mail [online@tamuc-commerce.edu](mailto:online@tamuc-commerce.edu).

### Online Courses—Information

**Student Access of Courses in eCollege:** Students are able to access their course(s) the first day of the term. If the term began Monday, January 14th, students were able to enter the course for the first time on Monday, January 14th. If students are enrolled in a course that is in a flex term which begins February 4th, students will not be able to enter the course until February 4th.

**Official Course Rolls—Online Courses:** The official roll for your online course(s) is found in your myLeo. Students are pulled into your eCollege course by a program run routinely by Technology Services. Your myLeo roll should match your eCollege roll. Select the 'course enrollment' button under the 'course admin' tab to see enrolled and dropped students in your online course. 'Dropped students' are listed at the end of the roll at this location.

### IDU Staff

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