Tips For Engaging Large Classes Online

Ask for help: Can you get assistance (e.g. a student to help monitor the chat, facilitate small groups, etc.?)

For all online modalities (asynchronous, synchronous and mixed)

- **Consider your time in planning for the course**
  - Space out larger assignments to allow time for grading and timely feedback.
  - Communicate with students about expected grading timelines
  - Use rubrics or other grading criteria checklists to ensure consistent student evaluation.

- **Define roles and responsibilities for TAs and Facilitators**
  - Consider best use of TAs and Facilitators in classroom management and grading
    - Breakout rooms
    - Chat monitoring
    - Defined groups for grading/engagement
    - Have specific graders for each large assignment for consistency and provide model grading
  - Communicate with students the defined roles and responsibilities of the TAs so that they know whom to contact for what
  - Meet regularly with your TAs and facilitators to check in about any challenges or difficulties.

- **Provide a clear and consistent course platform (e.g. Blackboard)** so that students know where and how to find the information that they need (see Document on Tips and Suggestions for Blackboard Organization).

- **Send reminders of what’s coming up, due dates etc.**

- **Break large class into groups to complete activities and discussions.**
  - Groups may all be working on the same problem/topic, or you may have them tackle different issues
  - Have small groups report out to the larger group
  - Ensure that misunderstandings are addressed

- **Manage Email**
  - Provide clear expectations on what email should be used for, response time, etc.
  - Send group/topic-based emails
  - Consider referring students to a FAQ or Question and Answer discussion board.

- **Manage Office Hours**
  - Consider “targeted” office hours (topics-based) and invite groups of interested students to join
  - Record session and make available for those who cannot attend
    - Inform students that they will be recorded. Give them the option to turn off their camera.
  - Offer individual meeting time for students who do not feel comfortable coming to the open office hours
• Early Evaluations (anonymous)
  o What is working well?
  o Provide 2-3 suggestions on how I can further facilitate your learning
  o Reflect back/discuss with them their responses
  o Consider asking for feedback at various time throughout the course.

Specific tips for Online Modalities - The following tips are in addition to those listed above

If using a mix of virtual synchronous and asynchronous approaches.
• Consider “Flipping the Classroom”: course content is presented asynchronously; synchronous time is used for critical thinking activities. See the presentation and materials on Flipping the Classroom for more details, or
• Use synchronous time to meet with smaller groups instead of the whole class.

If your class must be presented in one consistent mode:

For fully asynchronous online courses
• Help students connect to the course, to the faculty and to each other (please see Effective Asynchronous Online Teaching and its materials)
• Students access written material, podcasts, short recorded lectures, etc., asynchronously. Have quiz or guided questions and/or reflections associated with material
• Provide opportunities to break large class into smaller teams; use discussion boards, voicethread, shared documents, etc., for students to work on higher order thinking problems together
• Make use of online synchronous office hours. Record sessions for students unable to attend.

For fully synchronous online courses:
• Consider presenting the majority of content outside classroom time. Use your time together for higher-order thinking
• Begin with a short icebreaker (use the chat feature)
• Hook the class at the beginning (expect a “product” from them)
• Use breakout rooms for discussions/problem-solving but only if they can be there for 15 minutes or so. Assign and rotate roles (time-keeper, note-taker, summarizer, devil’s advocate, reporter
• Consider Whiteboard/Google doc/ for synchronous teamwork activities
• You may pop in and out of different groups
• Bring everyone back together for report outs/wrap-up, reflections, etc.

If giving synchronous lecture (i.e. Live Content Delivery),
• Intersperse formative assessments (Top Hat/Poll Everywhere/Kahoot, etc) throughout the lecture
• Consider whether breakout rooms would be useful (see above)
• Assign a post-lecture reflection/follow-up activity
• Consider “weekly” review/tutorial sessions
• Record lecture sessions so that students can go back and review the material
  o Inform students they will be recorded.

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