An **E-CORE** Quick Guide to
Ensuring Appropriate Student Workload in Online Courses

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Learning is hard work. Not all work is equally effective to promoting learning. An excessive workload can actually detract from learning, or simply encourage surface rather than deep learning. Thoughtful and accurate workload planning is central to course design and delivery. To continue the conversation on this topic, visit the [Student Workload Discussion Forum thread](#).

Course Design Tips

1

Video Styles
Consider various lecture styles such as videos shot in course relevant locations (e.g. workplaces, outside).

2

Workload Calculators
[The Beer 2019 calculator values for online courses](#) can provide estimates of the student workload in remote learning. Keep the objective workload of a course **under 10 hours/week.**

3

Divide your course into weeks
Divide your course into weekly modules on your student calendar. This way, students can see the expectations for the week and better manage their time.
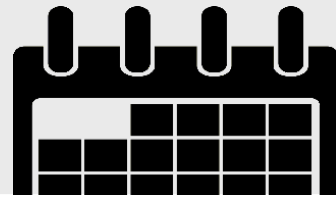
4

Asynchronous Lecture Timing
50 minutes of asynchronous class time should have no more than 30 minutes of watching videos so that students can use the remainder of the time to process the knowledge (e.g., solve problems or do self-assessment).

5

Feedback forms/surveys
Solicit regular student feedback on assessments and workload to see if students report having excessive work and to see which course activities they feel are benefiting their learning.

6

Streamline course work
Critically review and streamline your coursework to identify activities (e.g. reading, set of problems, quiz, assignment, etc.) and topics that can be dropped or made optional.
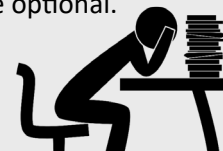
Course Delivery Tips

1 **Communicate learning expectations and outcomes**
Provide an outline to students at the start of each week (e.g., a 1-2 min video). Knowing what will be taught helps students get a better sense of where they are in the course, where they should be at the end of the week, and how this information fits into the course.

2 **Communicate your estimated time required for tasks**
Give students a general idea, or range, of how long you expect a task to take.

3 **Post your major deliverables on your course calendar**
Post your assignment deadlines, tests, and other deliverables on your course calendar (available on most LMSs) so that students can easily find all important deadlines from your course.

4 **Use flexible deadlines**
Where possible, provide flexibility to help students manage their workload across their courses. Consider allowing a one time only exemption for a late submission.

5 **Use interim deliverables**
Break larger assignments into smaller chunks with interim deliverables. This can reduce stress and help students stay on track. Students can use the interim feedback you provide to learn from misconceptions, revise their work, and stay on track.

6 **Be honest and encourage motivation**
Consider ways to support your students' ongoing motivation throughout the course. Speak openly with your students about the challenges of being an undergraduate student, how to best manage workload and mental wellbeing, and that it is normal if they are not be able to complete all items of work perfectly.

7 **Tracking Student Learning**
Use low stakes self-assessment quizzes to track student learning through asynchronous content and identify students that are falling behind. Let them know it's normal if they are not be able to complete all items of work perfectly.

The scholarship and literature underlying this guide is described in supporting document.

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