



## Online Course Development Guidelines

The purpose of this document is to provide the course developer with “best practices” guidelines to create online courses. These guidelines are based on successful practices at top-tier universities with successful online programs <sup>(1)</sup> and research-informed instructional design principles <sup>(2,3,4)</sup>. These guidelines address two issues: a) course template components and b) pedagogy of learning.

**Materials:** To accommodate geographically disperse and different types of learners, all course materials must be available in various electronic formats (e-books, pdf, ppt, videos, etc.)

**LMS Template:** Every course should have a similar learning management system course template with a standard homepage layout and navigational links. The goal is to reduce user interface complexity so that students can focus on course content and learning instead of re-learning, where a feature is located every time they take a new course.

Resource: Jones College of Business D2L *MBA Course Template*. (See Figure 1)

**Course Intro Video:** Every course should have a Course introduction video. This video serves multiple purposes: first, it introduces the faculty that develops the course; second, it welcomes students to the class; third, it briefly summarizes the purpose of the class. The idea is to get the students “excited” about the class. This video should be 3-5 minutes long max.

Resource: LRC Professional Video Services, JCB Studio, One-Button Studio +, Panopto

**Course Syllabus and Schedule:** Every course should have a course syllabus and a course schedule/outline, which include all deadlines for assignments, quizzes, etc. Two key issues are:

- **Clear Deadlines:** Courses are not self-paced, submit the work when you can. Students are provided with clearly communicated weekly activities and enforced deadlines that help them make progress every week towards completing the course and achieving success in final assessments.
- **Proactive Follow Up:** Students who are not participating in the course should be contacted proactively to encourage retention and to show students we care about their learning experience <sup>(2)</sup>.

Resources:

Jones College of Business provides a *Course Syllabus Template* with:

- Syllabus and the Schedule template documents.
- D2L Calendar feature to show deadlines
- D2L Account Notifications feature to send alerts via email and text messages (Pulse app)
- D2L Dropbox feature, “Email Users Without Submissions” to alert students

**LMS Content Modules:** The recommended model is to have 1 module of content per each week of the course.

- ❖ **Icebreaker Module:** Every course should start with some sort of icebreaker/introductory activity that allows the faculty member to know about the students in the class, and that will enable students to get to know each other at a distance. These activities vary by course and can be used as a rough pre-test for knowledge as well. This activity is necessary since students don't have on-campus social groups.

Resources: open surveys, discussion groups, show and tell games, TopHat, Panopto, Padlet, etc.

- ❖ **Weekly Modules – Gagne's 9 Events of Instruction**

Weekly modules contain the material that needs to be mastered each week. Our recommendation is to use Gagne's 9 Events of Instruction <sup>(3,4)</sup> and adult learning theory as a guideline to create these modules. The following information includes an explanation of each of the activities and some examples of how an instructor may apply Gagne's 9 Events of Instruction (See Figure 2) in the development and instruction of a course. The recommended sequence of activities (can vary, certain events can be iterative, others could be omitted) is:

1. **Gain attention**

The main goal is to quickly get the students' attention and engage them in the topic so that they will watch and listen, while the instructor presents the subject content. Get to know your audience and find out what excites them <sup>(5)</sup>.

Examples: utilize attention grabber activities, show unusual facts, current news, and events, case studies, YouTube videos, open-ended questions, show a blog about the topic, show student's top work from previous assignments, etc.

2. **Inform learners of objectives**

Clearly identify the learning objectives to allow the students to organize their thoughts around what they are about to see, hear, and/or do.

Examples: include learning objectives in lecture slides, the syllabus, and instructions for activities, projects, papers, and so on; write them on the whiteboard, etc. Explain why this topic is useful to their personal present and future.

3. **Stimulate recall of prior learning**

Recall events from previous lectures, integrate results of activities into the current topic and relate previous information to the current topic. Allow the students to build on their prior knowledge or skills. Allow them to "connect-the-dots."

Examples: a short quiz about previous knowledge, open questions to the class, discussion board forums that relate topics about last learning to what they are about to learn, show results of previous surveys and gather their opinions, views, attitudes, or perceptions, etc.

4. **Present the content**

Utilize a variety of methods, including lectures, readings, activities, projects, multimedia, etc.

Examples: faculty-created lecture content, such as lecture videos, voice-over course slides, voice-over document materials, voice-over walkthrough exercises, etc.

5. **Provide “learning guidance.”**

Provide student instructions on how to learn, i.e., guided activities with step-by-step instructions. With learning guidance, the rate of learning increases because students are less likely to lose time or become frustrated by basing performance on incorrect facts or poorly understood concepts.

Examples: include detailed information such as “rubrics” for projects and assignments; use LMS tools to foster interaction with the content; provide expectations, instructions, and timelines.

6. **Applied Practice (Elicit performance)**

After reviewing the module’s content, students are asked to practice by submitting a low-stakes quiz, discussion activity, short assignment, etc.

Examples: user LMS tools to quickly measure understanding and retention; use clickers or another response system; allow students to apply knowledge and skills learned and to apply knowledge in a group or individual projects and activities, written assignments, lab projects, and so on.

7. **Provide feedback**

Provide timely feedback on individualized tasks, thereby correcting isolated problems rather than having little idea of where problems and inconsistencies in learning are occurring. Try to provide personalized feedback via “teaching moments.”

Examples: show clicker responses and explain results; provide detailed feedback on assignments teaching students what was done correctly, what must be improved, and why; utilize rubrics when possible; give formative (practice) feedback as well as on assessments; provide discussion feedback; use peer evaluation and self-evaluations.

8. **Assess performance**

After having practiced the content and received formative feedback (even if just a score), students are assessed on that content (higher-stakes test, individual/group assignment, or project).

Examples: utilize a variety of assessment methods including exams/quizzes, written assignments, projects, and so on; use rubrics when grading activities that are not standard exam and quiz questions; allow students to see content areas that they have not mastered.

9. **Enhance retention and transfer to the job**

Provide a venue for the students to apply learned information to personal contexts. This activity tends to increase retention by personalizing/individualizing knowledge.

Example: provide opportunities for students to relate the work to their personal experiences; elicit their own experiences to reinforce what they have learned.

**References**

1. This document is derived from the work done by Emily W. Thompson Ph.D., Sr. Manager of Institutional Technology at The University of Georgia.
2. Gallup surveyed 30,000 US graduates to find out six elements of emotional support and experiential learning in college that correlated with long-term career and life success. <http://www.gallup.com/opinion/gallup/182312/college-worth-depends.aspx?version=print>
3. <http://citt.ufl.edu/tools/gagnes-9-events-of-instruction/>
4. <http://www2.southeastern.edu/Academics/Faculty/nadams/etec630&665/Knowles.html>
5. [How to Create Memorable Online Training Courses: 6 Tips for eLearning Professionals](#), Christopher Pappas, ElearningIndustry.com, 5/25/2015.

My Home | Email | Groups | Locations | Seating Chart | Calendar | Attendance

**Learn** MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

MBA Course Template

Course Home | Content | Discussions | Dropbox | Quizzes | Grades | Classlist | Surveys | Edit Course | Log Out

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**News** | Welcome to <Course Title>

**JENNINGS A. JONES COLLEGE OF BUSINESS**  
MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

**MGMK 9999 - Course Title**

Welcome to the <Course Title> course. Enter a brief course description of your class here. Use the News Edit option to update the course number and course title. The table below shows some basic links to open the syllabus, the weekly schedule and the homework assignment schedule. To edit these links use the News Edit option. To edit the Syllabus, Schedule and Homework files use the Manage File feature to download and edit the respective files on your local computer then, save the files as PDF. Finally upload the files to D2L using the Manage Files feature.

**Welcome Message video (Transcript)**  
**Teacher Contact Information:**  
Phone: 615-898-1111 email: teacher@mtsu.edu

 <b>Syllabus</b>	 <b>Schedule</b>	 <b>Homework</b>
 Item 4	 Item 5	 Item 6
 <b>Lynda.com</b> Lynda Resources	 <b>Using CAM (video)</b> CAM Instructions	 <b>D2L Tutorials</b>

**Important Links**  
Jennings A Jones College of Business  
JCB University Computer Lab | Distance Learning Student Services  
University Advising Center | James E. Walker Library  
Academic Integrity and Misconduct | Disabled Student Services  
Lottery Scholarship Information | D2L Support

**Important Resources**

- ITD Help Desk: 615-898-5345
- MTSU's D2L Support: [Click here!](#)
- Distance Learning Student Services: [Click here!](#)
- James E. Walker Library: [Click here!](#)
- Disabled Student Services: 615-898-2783

**Updates**  
There are no current updates for MBA Course Template

**Publisher Resources**

**Course Administration**

**Site Setup**  
Navigation & Themes  
Course Offering Information  
Homepages  
Widgets

**Site Resources**  
Course Design Accelerator  
Calendar  
Content  
Frequently Asked Questions  
Glossary  
Links  
Book Management  
Manage Dates  
Instructional Design Wizard  
Course Builder  
Learning Activity Library  
Import / Export / Copy Components  
Manage Files  
External Learning Tools

**Learner Management**  
Attendance  
Classlist  
Locations  
Seating Chart

Figure 1. D2L MBA Course Template



Figure 2 Gagne's Nine Events of Instruction