



### **Overview:**

Designing materials for online courses takes significant planning and time. Once materials are designed, however, they can easily be copied into future semesters and runs of many sections of the course. When designing materials it will be to your advantage to make them easy to maintain and edit in future runs of the course. Here are some strategies to consider as you develop and design your online course materials.

### **The Textbook is Not the Course:**

The textbook is a resource utilized by the course. In an online environment students can have much greater access to outside resources, learning activities, and media materials than they would in a traditional face-to-face class. Start with the course outline and the list of course learning objectives; these are the basis of the course. Locate resources, readings, and activities which will support these learning objectives; many of these will not be in the textbook.

### **Shop Around:**

Just because you've been using the same textbook for years, there's no requirement to continue using that textbook when developing your online class. When choosing the textbook, also consider what types of online and media resources are made available in the instructor resources materials available as companions to the textbook. If a publisher has substantial online resources, demonstration videos, graphics and illustrations, and online self-assessment activities already developed and packaged with their textbook, choosing that publisher may substantially reduce your own course design efforts.

### **Create Granular Documents:**

Write your materials in a granular manner based on specific topics covered within the course. If a new textbook edition is released and the order of topics are presented in a different order, it is much easier to rearrange the list of hyperlinks to your documents than it is to rewrite your course content.

### **All Deadlines Only in the Course Schedule Document:**

Recognize that your course may not run in 16 weeks; it may run in eight weeks, or as an independent study. You should gear the course learning activities by topic rather than timeframe. Any and all deadlines for assignments in activities should be placed within the course schedule, so that all dates are located in a single document which is easy to edit and maintain.

### **Keep a Consistent Document Layout:**

It is helpful to use a template for each course document which has a consistent set of headings and layout. This not only helps students better navigate through each course document (because they are already familiar with the same structure in other documents), but it helps in the editing process by localizing items which need to be changed to a particular place in each document. As an example, an introduction to each unit could contain an overview of the unit, a list of learning objectives, a list of vocabulary, the list of learning activities and readings, and the list of other resources and hyperlinks for further exploration. Since hyperlinks often go out of date, collecting them all in one section of a document makes them much easier to track, verify, and correct.

### **Over-Explain Everything:**

When developing instructions, over-explain every action and expectation. Students who already understand the material can quickly skim over the instructions and information, while students who need greater support will have the detailed explanations that they need. Anticipating and answering questions ahead of time will prevent a large number of emails which will need to be answered individually later on.

### **Require Students to Find and Share Resources for the Course:**

You don't need to create all the content and the course, because each term you can have students locate and share content which they find. Wherever appropriate, have students search out and utilize credible web based resources in their studies and assignments. When students graduate from their programs and are employed in their professions, they will have better research and critical thinking skills to find their own answers when questions arise on the job. This will also ensure that the course content is kept up to date for each run of the course.

### **Notes:**

- There are some templates you can use that are found in the Faculty & Staff > e-Teaching > [Tools & Templates](#) section of the SCTCC website ([www.sctcc.edu/online-tools](http://www.sctcc.edu/online-tools))