

Teaching Tip: Course Compression and Learning

We've all felt like we just don't have enough time in a semester to get through the content. If you're thinking, how do I teach a whole course in just 8 weeks, then this teaching tip is for you. In it, we will rethink how a shorter class structure is an opportunity for learning and go over some strategies for a successful online course. Research also has good news about the promise of course compression.

Tips

Pedagogy

- The goal overall is to compress the time without compressing the learning. This may mean less content, but it doesn't have to mean meeting fewer learning outcomes. [Austin and Gustafson \(2006\)](#), even found that a compressed course can improve student learning.
- This is an opportunity to return to your backward design skills as education scholars. Consider again what outcomes students need to master, how you can measure that, and what activities students need to complete to meet those outcomes in the shorter course format.
 - Keeping in mind that students can still be expected to work 9 hours per week for a 3-credit class, use the Wake Forest [Workload Estimator](#) to work out a reasonable load that still supports course outcomes.
- Since this is a shared task to move the program to 8-week courses, please collaborate with your colleagues. After finalizing the course sequence, please meet with your colleagues in the program to ensure that major assignments are not due during the same day.
 - One strategy here could be for some courses to have the larger assignment due in week 6 or 7 and a reflection assignment due in week 8 while other courses have a more traditional cumulative project or exam in week 8.

Structure

- Try to keep the same structure and appearance as much as possible as you compress from 16 to 8-week courses.
 - Following modular course design (dividing the course by weeks or units rather than by file type) can help with having a consistent structure across courses that is easy for students to navigate.
- In the "Getting Started" widget of the course homepage, please include links to your welcome letter, syllabus, course schedule, technical requirements, and standards of conduct during discussion (netiquette).
- Consider if a common point system across your online ELED and SPED will ease the transition and provide more structure for students

Timing

- Please try to activate the course 30 days before the first day of class if possible. Giving earlier access to a course has been associated with student success.
- To make sure that students can access content but not submit discussion posts, please change the start date in the "Restrictions" tab to the first day of class and select "Visible with submission restricted before start."

- Since the time with students is compressed, please make all content visible instead of opening modules week by week.
- To avoid confusing students when assignments are due, please set all due dates to 11:59 PM.

Resources

- [Workload Estimator](#)
- [Backward Design Template](#)
- [Further Reading](#)