ETUDES-NG Basics Workshop

The focus of this workshop is two-fold. First, it introduces you to the concept of online distance learning and teaching. You must first gain an understanding of what online teaching is like and what it entails before you can decide if it is something you want to do yourself. Second, we will review the basic functionalities of the ETUDES-NG software that WLAC uses to deliver its online courses.

ETUDES-NG Login:  http://etudes-ng.fhda.edu/portal

Is Online Teaching Right for Me?

The online instructor plays a vital role in developing and maintaining an effective online learning environment and must possess a unique set of tools to perform successfully. Some instructors from the traditional classroom environment will easily adapt to the online model, while others may find the transition challenging. Reflect on your teaching style, circumstances and technical skills to see if teaching online is right for you.

Questions:

Computer skills

- Do you have (or are you willing to obtain) access to a computer and Internet connection at home and/or at work?
- Are you willing to upgrade your computer equipment or purchase new software if needed?
- Do you know how to use email and access the Web using a browser?
- Can you download files from the Web and save them to your own computer?
- Can you attach a document to an email message?
- Can you cut/copy and paste from one program into another?

Experience in the online learning environment and qualifications

- Have you ever taken an online course as a student (i.e. the ETUDES-NG training course)?
- Have you used Webpages to supplement your on-the-ground course or seminar?
- Have you used online quizzes, a discussion board or chat room as part of your teaching?

Attitudes towards teaching and learning in the online environment

- Do you believe that high-quality learning can take place without interacting with your students face-to-face?
- Do you believe lecturing is the best, or only, method for delivering education in your field?
- Do you feel that discussion is an effective teaching strategy for your subject matter?
- Do you believe it is important to structure activities so that students can learn from each other via interactivity and collaborative learning?
- Do you believe increased learning can occur when work/life/knowledge experiences are shared among peers?
- Do you think creating a sense of community amongst learners is a priority in your teaching?
Teaching style and habits needed to teach online

- Can you dedicate a significant number of hours per week (any time during the day or night) to participate in the online teaching process?
- Are you willing to log on and contribute to your online classroom discussions and interact with students online at least 4 times a week, and ideally more?
- Are you able to create schedules for yourself and stick to them? In other words, are you a self-disciplined, independent worker?
- Are you flexible in dealing with students' needs (due dates, absences, make-up exams)?
- Are you comfortable in communicating almost entirely through writing (since online courses are text-only environments)?

Training and commitment

- Are you willing to invest a significant amount of time and energy in preparation for teaching your course online?
- Are you willing to spend time rethinking and redesigning your teaching materials to fit the needs of the online environment?
- Are you willing to invest time in professional development to continue learning new online teaching and/or technical skills in the future?

Feedback:

Experience in the online learning environment and qualifications

If you have had first-hand experience as an online student, you will likely have greater insight into your own online students' needs and a better understanding of the unique requirements of the online environment. Experience using the Internet and the Web to enhance your teaching in the traditional classroom can be a good first step to teaching entirely online.

Attitudes towards teaching and learning in the online environment

An online instructor should be able to accept the value of facilitated learning as equal to the traditional model. If a teacher feels the only way that true learning can take place is through the traditional means of educating in a classroom, the person is generally not a good fit for the online paradigm. This is OK, but we must be honest with ourselves. Both an accelerated learning model and the online process depend on facilitative techniques for their success. The online classroom requires new teaching strategies and instructional techniques; you should not try to recreate the on-ground classroom in the online paradigm. The person leading a successful online class must be a proponent of facilitative learning, and have confidence in the system in order to make it work.

Teaching style and habits needed to teach online

The online facilitator should be open, concerned, flexible, and sincere. An online instructor must be able to compensate for the lack of physical presence in the virtual classroom by creating a supportive environment where all students feel comfortable participating and especially where students know that their instructor is accessible. Failure to do this can alienate the class both from each other and from the instructor and would make for a very weak learning environment. Online students are as busy, or busier, than anyone else in today's hurried world. An online instructor should be willing to give individual attention to students who may need extra help. Being sensitive, open and flexible is mandatory for success in the online realm.
Seven Principles of Good Teaching

Based on considerable educational research, Chickering and Gamson (1987) outlined Seven Standards of Good Practice for Undergraduate Education, principles that have been widely accepted as measures for judging the effectiveness of classroom teaching. ETUDES-NG incorporates elements in each of the seven areas, as demonstrated below:

**Principle 1: Encourage student-faculty contact**
Through Private Messages students and faculty can communicate. Among other things, this allows instructors to be proactive by following up on students who are not participating in chats, discussions, etc. Students and faculty can also communicate through the discussion forums.

**Principle 2: Encourage student cooperation**
The same areas of ETUDES-NG that allow for student-faculty contact can also be used for student-to-student contact. Assignments can be created to take advantage of this. Furthermore, the discussion forums can help foster group work and collaboration among students. Consider incorporating peer reviews, project sharing, and thread-leaders to moderate discussions. Student collaboration leads to a sense of community and higher learning outcomes.

**Principle 3: Encourage active learning**
Instructors can take advantage of the rich interactivity on the Web by designing assignments around appropriate Websites. When students come to these sites, they make choices, and they learn from their choices. Active learning also takes place when students work cooperatively. Give students more control, leadership roles, and options in what assignments to complete. Leave the center stage and transform yourself into a guide on the side.

**Principle 4: Give prompt feedback**
In ETUDES-NG, students can see results of their tests and view solutions to graded assignments immediately after submission. Instructors can and should promptly respond to student questions. ETUDES-NG allows you to provide both acknowledgement and information feedback.

**Principle 5: Emphasize time on task**
For example, give students something specific to respond to in each module via the discussions. Build in a reward system of points for each post and reply to the discussion forums. In other words, make posting and responding mandatory. Create a structure that can be followed, broken down week by week or unit by unit, allowing for acceleration of pace.

**Principle 6: Communicate high expectations**
In your syllabus you should include course goals and performance objectives. You might include model assignment submissions that can serve as examples for students to follow. The bottom line is that you must be explicit and clear in communicating your expectations to students.

**Principle 7: Respect diverse talents and ways of learning**
Create assignments that offer students options. Giving students choices in their learning experience increases satisfaction and retention. Consider giving students options as to what format to submit assignments or projects. For example, they might design a Webpage, write an essay, or develop a PowerPoint presentation. There is no reason why all students should submit the exact same homework or participate in one discussion topic. Variety is the spice of life and your online class; teach to the various learning styles of your students.
3 MAIN ETUDES-NG AREAS

- Course Content (modules and sections)
- Communications (announcements, discussions, private messaging, chat)
- Evaluation (tests & quizzes, assignments, gradebook)

OVERVIEW OF ETUDES-NG TOOLS

ETUDES-NG offers a variety of features, but you do not need to use all of them. Choose the tools that add value to your course and disable the others without guilt. Remember to keep things as simple as possible for your students. Including a feature that adds little value but may distract or confuse your students is a mistake. In my courses I tend to focus on the following tools, while ignoring the others: Schedule, Announcements, Syllabus, Modules, Assignments, Discussion & Private Messages, Tests & Quizzes, Gradebook.

My Workspace
A personalized view of information and your preferences for all of your sites.

Schedule
For posting and viewing deadlines, events, etc.

Announcements
For posting current, time-critical information to all students.

Syllabus
For creating and posting the course syllabus.

Modules
For publishing and viewing course content in sections.

Assignments
For posting, submitting, and grading student work.

Discussion & Private Messages
For asynchronous discussions, group work, and collaboration, as well as for private communication amongst students and with the instructor.

Chat
For real-time, synchronous conversation in written form.

Email Archive
For viewing email sent to the site's group email address.

Tests & Quizzes
For authoring and administering exams, quizzes, surveys, etc.

Gradebook
For posting and managing student grades.

Resources
For posting documents and URLs to all students.

News/RSS
For viewing content from online sources (RSS feeds).

Web Content
For accessing external Websites from within the NG shell.
ETUDES-NG Basics

ETUDES-NG Tips

Don’t Use Back Button
Don’t use your browser’s back button as you normally would. Instead, use the “Jiffy Lube” icon to move backwards through NG areas. Tell your students to do the same.

Admin and Student Views
Open two browser windows to see both the student view and the administration view when working on your course. To do this, you need to create a sample student, but you can only create one by using a valid email address. Go to Site Info, then “Add Participants.” In the “Guest” box, enter a valid email address where you receive mail. An email message will be sent to you with the password for this new account. The Login ID will be the email address you entered and you can change the password once you login for the first time.

Don’t Lose Your Work
When you create materials in ETUDES-NG, you are working live on the Web, and it is possible that you may get disconnected and lose your work. So, if you are going to write for more than a minute or two, or type anything longer than a paragraph, use notepad or your word processor, save it, and then paste it into the ETUDES-NG window. This way you will not lose any work and you will have a backup of what you post to your course shell. Plus, this way you can spellcheck everything before you post it. I suggest advising your students to do the same.

Upfront Investment
Have at least 50% of your course completed and at least a few quizzes and assignments loaded before the first day of class. Ideally you should have much more prepared in advance. Veteran online instructors will recommend that you have 100% of your course completed before the first day. And be prepared -- you will probably have to make many revisions the first time you teach the course online.

Set Up an Intuitive Course
Use the Assignment area for submissible assignments. Use the Modules area for course material. Use the software the way it was intended; it is intuitive for students to look for assignments in the Assignments area, tests in the Test area, etc. Students need to easily know where to go for the various components of a class.

Build in Redundancies
For example, list an assignment in the Modules area, the Assignment area, and in the Syllabus itself, so that students cannot help but know what to do. Another idea is to put your course guidelines in the form of a Module and a skills check Quiz. Make the skills check requisite to the second lecture so that students must know what you expect and how to use ETUDES-NG early in the semester.

Don’t Rely on Email
Don’t rely on email to communicate with students, as many do not have active accounts or do not check regularly. Instead use Private Messaging and Announcements. After your initial welcoming email, avoid using external email during the course. This will keep all classroom communication within ETUDES-NG and thus help you and your students to avoid confusion.

Economies of Scale
Keep a simple text document filled with common remarks or corrections that you use often so you don’t have to retype them every time. There is no need to continually reinvent the wheel from term to term. When you make a new correction or comment to a student's assignment that
you think you will end up having to type again later on, copy it into your file so you can reuse it
again later.

Refer Students for Help
Add a link on your syllabus or elsewhere within your course where your students can go for
technical support with ETUDES-NG. At WLAC, we have set up a Student Help Desk for this
purpose. However, for content-related questions, you are in charge.

Stay Current
Visit the ETUDES-NG Support site, http://foothillglobalaccess.org/etudes2, often for links to
support, FAQs, shell requests, updates on the software, and courses and events. Become an
active member of the ETUDES-NG community.

Adapted from: www.fgamedia.org/etudes_online, www.foothillglobalaccess.org/etudes/user_resources.htm, and