A GTA’s Essential Guide to Teaching at KU
## GTA Guide to Teaching at KU
### A HANDBOOK OF RESOURCES

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Introduction

As Graduate Teaching Assistants at the University of Kansas, you have the opportunity, and the responsibility, to develop and hone your skills as both a scholar in your field and a college instructor. Few activities are more satisfying than this: creating a community in which people grow intellectually and become life-long learners. And while it may be tempting to devote all your scholarly energies to your own classroom work and research, your teaching, too, can benefit from the same analysis, interpretation and revision you apply every day in your work as a graduate student and emerging scholar. There’s much more to teaching than just the time spent in a classroom, laboratory, studio or field site.

Teaching is more enjoyable when it’s well constructed and well received. Teachers create opportunities for learners to demonstrate their understanding, knowledge and skills through projects, papers, performances and answers to questions. Successful students can use ideas and skills in ways that weren’t directly taught to them. Once feedback is given to students, effective teachers go beyond assigning grades; they examine patterns of learning to identify topics or skills that need different preparation in the next course offering.

Being a complex craft, teaching evolves over time, with additional layers of skill and nuance being added with successive offerings of a class. Even very good classes, successful in generating learning, continue to develop as teachers learn from how students respond to their instruction. It’s best to start simply in teaching, by offering clear, interesting, and useful skills and knowledge to students. More features of learning and more complex measures of understanding can evolve over time, and iterative refinement in teaching is one important source of the enjoyment we as teachers experience. This guide allows teachers to find useful strategies for both framing a course initially and for refining it over time.

This teaching guide is designed to provide support for college instructors, both those with experience and those just beginning their teaching careers. Whether you are assisting a professor, leading a lab section or teaching your own course, the practices examined here will help you to employ the same skills you use as a student and scholar in your work as a teacher, thus creating the maximum benefit for both you and your students. The four topics below will provide you with concrete information on the basic principles of teaching a college course, on the skills needed for teaching more specialized courses, on how to represent your teaching to members of the academic community, and on KU policies and procedures.
ALIGNING GOALS, ASSIGNMENTS AND PRACTICES

Course design involves identifying course goals, planning what to teach, what opportunities students will have for learning, and how you’ll evaluate whether students are meeting course goals. Designing a course can be done adeptly with backwards design: determine concepts you want students to master, then plan how you’ll determine whether they have learned the concepts. This guides which resources and methods you use to facilitate learning.

As you plan, you may experience some tension about how much you should cover in your course. Identifying key course topics can help you achieve balance. Three questions from Wiggins and McTighe (1998) can help you identify these key topics:

1. To what extent does the idea, topic, or process represent a “big idea” having enduring value beyond the classroom?
2. To what extent does the idea, topic, or process reside at the heart of the discipline?
3. To what extent does the idea, topic, or process offer potential for engaging students?

Consider students’ goals and characteristics. Students may take your course to understand principles, learn to communicate effectively, learn to organize ideas or interpret data, or understand how researchers gain knowledge. Use this information, along with course goals, to guide your course structure and teaching pace.

After you choose material, establish criteria for obtaining evidence of learning. A key feature of backwards design is that understanding increases across time, as students process, reassess and connect information. Therefore, assessments to measure increasing levels of understanding should be conducted throughout the semester by various means such as discussions, tests and quizzes, and projects in which students analyze their own understanding. Once you decide upon course concepts and assessment criteria, focus on which teaching strategies will help students reach course goals; key concepts, rather than a methodology, drive teaching.

**Essential Practices**

**WHAT DOES ALIGNMENT MEAN?**

When we speak of alignment, we’re talking about connecting course goals and course practices. We may have clear course goals, but they may not relate to the way we structure a course. Instructors may insist that their goal is to encourage application and analysis, but then only test students on fact memorization.

If your goal is to encourage critical thinking, then a course activity aligned with that goal may be having students practice reading and analyzing dissenting viewpoints. If your goal is to help students become effective consumers of research, then aligned assignments may be reading and integrating scientific research. In this way, relationships between our goals and our practices are transparent and reinforced.

A key part of Holly Storkel’s success as a teacher has been how she carefully aligns course goals with students’ assignments and her teaching practices. At the end of a course, she examines student work to identify specific skills students have difficulty with, then targets those skills during the next offering of the course. In this way, she is using student performance to guide her course goals, and evolution of her course’s design stems from those performance markers. You can find out more about her work in her course portfolio in the CTE portfolio gallery: [www.cte.ku.edu/portfolios](http://www.cte.ku.edu/portfolios).

### Backwards Design

1. Goals
   - Papers
   - Exams
   - Rubrics
   - Other
2. Assessments
   - Inside Class
   - Outside Class
3. Practice
**WRITING A SYLLABUS**

When you’re writing a syllabus, start with basic information: the year and semester of the course, title, class number, number of credits, and meeting time and place. Provide your name, office address (and a map if it’s hard to find) and contact information. Indicate whether students need to make appointments or may just stop in. If you list a home number, specify restrictions for its use. Clarify prerequisites, knowledge, skills or experience you expect students to have or courses they should have completed. Suggest how they might refresh skills if needed.

Outline the course’s purpose: What is the course about and why would students want to learn the material? Describe three to five general goals, and explain why you’ve arranged topics in a given order and the logic of concepts you’ve selected. Tell students whether the class involves fieldwork, projects, lectures or discussion, and indicate if any activities are optional.

Explain why textbooks and readings were chosen. Show the relationship between readings and course objectives. Also provide details about additional materials that will be needed.

Specify the nature and format of assignments. Give exam dates and indicate the nature of the tests (e.g., essay, short-answer). Explain how assignments relate to course objectives. Describe your grading procedures, including components of the final grade and weights for each component. Explain whether you’ll grade on a curve or use an absolute scale, and if any grades can be dropped. Also explain any other course requirements, such as study groups. Clearly state your policies about class attendance, late work, missing homework, tests or exams, makeups, extra credit, requesting extensions, reporting illnesses, cheating and plagiarism. You might also list acceptable and unacceptable classroom behavior (see Communication Guidelines, page 61). Let students know that if they need an accommodation for any type of disability, they should meet with you to discuss what modifications are necessary. You can find a sample statement for this at [http://www2.ku.edu/~disability/faculty/syllabus_statement.shtml](http://www2.ku.edu/~disability/faculty/syllabus_statement.shtml).

Include a calendar with a sequence of topics and readings. Exam dates should be firmly fixed; dates for topics or activities may be tentative. Also list the last day students can withdraw without penalty. Give them a sense of how much work the course requires.

A syllabus is a contract between you and your students. Consider adding a statement to protect yourself if changes must be made: “Course schedule and procedures are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances.” For more information, see [www2.ku.edu/~ombuds/syllabussuggestions.html](http://www2.ku.edu/~ombuds/syllabussuggestions.html).

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**SYLLABUS CHECKLIST**

1. Basic information: Course title and number; semester and year of course; meeting time and place; faculty information
2. Course description
3. Prerequisites
4. Course goals and objectives
5. Textbooks and readings by authors and editions
6. Assignments, term papers and exams
7. Student evaluation and grades
8. Course policies
9. Options for students with special needs
10. Course calendar/schedule
DEVELOPING ASSIGNMENTS

Some of the most important features of a course are the design of opportunities for students to demonstrate what they know, how well they understand, and the set of skills they can engage in. Some of these occasions will be low-stakes, for practice to aid in the growth of understanding, and some will be high-stakes, for a significant portion of a final grade. Whether for practice or for evaluation, the performance asked for on assignments should closely represent your course goals (see box on page 5), and students should always receive informative feedback on their performances. Learning is maximized when students use their understanding in challenging ways and find out from you which features of their work match your expectations and which don’t.

The performance appropriate for any individual course is likely to cover a wide range of domains. Within a single course, students will identify basic terms, facts or information about a field and also apply concepts in new, untaught situations. It’s possible that they may combine ideas or generate their own evaluation of observations or findings. It’s not possible to engage in complex analysis or critical thinking without some basic knowledge of a field, but merely reciting basic knowledge without being able to use it or evaluate it is equally limited. As an instructor, you’ll decide how to distribute the assignments you give across that continuum, from remembering to using to evaluating. Most courses should include a range of performance. Research on memory consistently finds that rote learning is forgotten most quickly, but ideas and information that are used in new contexts or connected to existing understanding will be remembered best.

Consider work done by Benjamin Bloom (1956) and his colleagues many decades ago. They framed a set of categories of learning performance, ranging from rote remembering to complex evaluation, hoping that teachers would include a variety of opportunities for students. Subsequent scholars have added new language to the basic ideas (often called Bloom’s Taxonomy), and many people list verbs that go with the different categories of skills. When you give assignments using those verbs, the notion goes, you are likely tapping into that category of learning. In the box at right, we reproduce one contemporary treatment of these categories and accompanying assignment verbs for your use. Consideration of these categories will help you distribute student work across the range of this useful intellectual continuum.

BLOOM’S TAXONOMY

Evaluation
Synthesis
Analysis
Application
Comprehension
Knowledge

Descriptions of each level and appropriate terms for asking questions at each level follow:

Evaluation—Make judgments about the value of materials or methods for given purposes; make appraisals that satisfy specific criteria: appraise, compare, conclude, contrast, criticize, describe, discriminate, explain, justify, interpret, support.

Synthesis—Combine elements to form a whole; arrange elements to form a new structure: categorize, combine, compile, tell, devise, design, explain, generate, organize, plan, reconstruct, revise.

Analysis—Break material down into elements; make relationships between ideas explicit: differentiate, distinguish, illustrate, infer, point out, relate, select, separate.

Application—Use abstractions in concrete situations: demonstrate, modify, operate, prepare, produce, relate, show, solve, use.

Comprehension—Use information without necessarily relating it to other material or seeing fullest implication: convert, defend, distinguish, estimate, explain, extend, generalize, give examples, infer, predict, summarize.

Knowledge—Recall specific facts, general concepts: define, describe, identify, list, match, name, outline, select, state.
ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

For testing to be as effective and worthwhile for you and your students as possible, consider the exams you’ll implement when you’re designing a course. If evaluation is considered only in hindsight, it’s likely your time will be used ineffectively and students will be discontent with how their learning was assessed.

Design tests that will measure the goals you set out to achieve in the course and be clear in your instructions. Walvoord and Anderson recommend teachers ask themselves the following question: “By the end of the course, I want my students to be able to (fill in the blank).” Use your responses to guide assessment design.

It’s often advantageous to mix types of items (multiple choice, essay, short answer) on a written exam or to mix assessments throughout the course (e.g., a performance component with a written component). Weaknesses connected with one type of item or aspect of students’ test taking skills will be minimized. It’s also useful to ask how students in the future would be likely to use what they are learning in your course. If they’ll be expected to recognize an example of a phenomenon or category, then give them opportunities to attempt such recognition in your course. If they’ll be asked to evaluate the evidence for a claim relevant to your field, then your assignments should give them practice in such evaluation and graded feedback on their skill at it. Be sure that your assignments (both for practice and for grading) engage students in the kind of knowing or understanding that will be useful to them in future courses and in application to real life.

The process of placing a category judgment such as a grade on student work is rarely easy. In some cases, you can simply count the number of factual or simple items done correctly, but understanding measured by a more complex performance will need to be judged. Walvoord and Anderson (2010) outline strategies for grading in a variety of fields, with plenty of examples. They claim that establishing a set of clear criteria ahead of time will make grading easier for the teacher, more consistent across students, and even faster to get done. The key is to think through the range of feedback you want to give (e.g., points from 1 to 10 or letters from A to F) and identify how you would recognize or characterize a performance in each category. What are the strengths of an answer at each level, and what might be missing that would keep it from being in a higher category? What are the habits of mind or the kinds of knowledge demonstrated that characterize various levels of understanding?

When you engage in this kind of thinking, your work giving feedback will be less challenging and more efficient. If you then share those criteria with your students, they can learn more clearly what

Ben Eggleston redesigned his introductory ethics tests to avoid simply testing memorization while still making his exams easy to grade. His tests retained their multiple-choice format but required students to apply knowledge and definitions instead of simply restating them.

Unlike questions that test only memorization of definitions, the new questions, which were set up as conversations in which students were asked to choose certain statements that reflected particular ethical positions, require students to apply deeper understandings of concepts to novel situations. The advantages of the conversational format are that the student has to grasp the content rather than merely recall a phrase or expression that he or she could remember from the book or class notes and that they better test the kind of understanding that will serve students well outside the classroom.

Old question: What is the main idea of cultural relativism?

(I) Moral beliefs vary from one culture to another.

(J) Morality itself (not just moral beliefs) varies from one culture to another.

New question: In the following dialogue, which of the following statements is incompatible with cultural relativism?

(A) Some countries rely heavily on child labor, and would suffer devastating economic consequences if they were forced to give it up.

(B) Despite these consequences, the harms to children are too great to ignore. It is wrong of those cultures to force children to work.
you mean by understanding, and there will be fewer occasions for disagreement about feedback. Ambiguous or unstated criteria are a common cause of conflict and frustration for students. Investing time up front to think through your grading criteria will pay dividends in saved time and hassle later.

DESIGNING WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

John C. Bean (2011) states that writing assignments, particularly essay exams, can help students exhibit their mastery of material, synthesize course material, and better understand the goals and direction of the overall course, thus increasing overall retention and understanding of material. He states, “Essay exams send the important pedagogical message that mastering a field means joining its discourse, that is, demonstrating one’s ability to mount effective arguments in response to disciplinary problems.”

In order for students’ writing in assignments and exams to improve, students need to be taught how to write essays. One strategy is to provide students with copies of essays from previous years’ classes, without any instructor comments. Have students rank the essays from best to worst, and ask the class to list which factors they think distinguish an A paper from a B, C, and so on. After that, explain your grading criteria and discuss them with the class. In that way, students are more likely to internalize these criteria and apply them to their own work.

Allowing students to assess previous writing assignments could also be used with a Primary Trait Analysis-designed rubric. With PTA, the teacher determines criteria for each score within the rubric and describes this in a handout given with the assignment or included in the syllabus. Having students work with the rubric to assess another student’s work will help them understand the assignment and hopefully aid them in their own work.

Other ideas for teaching students how to write essay exams include allowing students to practice writing cogent thesis statements in small groups, thus gaining insight and guidance from others, and allowing students to revise an essay, so they receive guidance and learn strategies for future writing assignments.

Another method for increasing processing of information through the design of in-class essays is including time for pre-writing and synthesis before the essay is given. Some ways to achieve this include providing students with a list of all potential essay questions before the day of the exam, requiring students to create and bring to the exam a crib sheet for each essay question, which they can use to answer the essay questions, or assigning take-home essay exams. All these methods allow students time for deeper critical thinking and organization of their arguments.
For course-specific guidance on developing writing assignments, contact the KU Writing Center at 864-2399 or writing@ku.edu.

EVALUATING LEARNING

Once you’ve created assignments for students to carry out, you’ll need to give students feedback on how well they’ve performed. To be efficient you’ll need to accomplish all your feedback goals with a single consideration of the work. You’ll do this for several reasons. One version of the multiple purposes of feedback in the form of grades comes from Walvoord and Anderson (2010), who identify four roles of the grading process:

1. The overall distribution of grade categories evaluates student learning in relation to course material and goals; the performance lets the instructor (and an academic program) know how well the course has succeeded in generating learning.

2. The grade category of an individual student communicates the level of learning to the students, as well as to employers and to other teachers; it serves as an indicator of individual achievement and likely subsequent performance in the field.

3. Since our academic and employment communities value successful learning, grades also function as a motivation device for students; to the degree that students desire recognition for their work, they will focus on their achievement.

4. Graded assignments also organize course components by marking significant transitions between topics and by bringing closure to particular segments of the class; both students and the instructor know how well prepared everyone is for the topics that follow.

Conventional grading can accomplish these goals when criteria for grading are made very explicit. This would include general descriptions of the kind of performance that would be recognized in different categories of grade, as well as individual feedback on how and why performance did or did not match the features of the grading categories. Research evidence consistently shows that students who receive more detailed feedback on the reasons for their grades improve their performance more than students who simply receive a grade.

In order for grading to be an effective and meaningful part of the learning-centered classroom, it must be part of the teaching and learning process as a whole. Walvoord and Anderson (2010) write that grading must be integrated into all planning, teaching and interacting in the classroom, but that learning must always remain the central function of the classroom. In her essay “On

In my Cognitive Development course, students write a paper that takes the form of an advice column, providing recommendations to parents based on psychological research. To complete this assignment, students identify and locate appropriate sources, read and evaluate psychological research, apply findings to a real-world question, and write a response to that question. The project is the culmination of the course and is designed to integrate skills I want students to take away from this class.

When I first taught the course, students were required to locate, analyze, integrate and apply at least five research articles in their papers. I found that students had difficulty with each step of this process. As a result, I’ve made a number of changes to better scaffold, or support the attainment of, these skills. Across multiple offerings, I’ve decreased the number of articles required for the paper and increased the number of supporting assignments. Students turn in articles early in the semester for feedback, analyze a scientific research report, write brief essays that require application of research, summarize each article they’ll use in their paper, and meet in groups to discuss and review summaries. I encourage students to submit rough drafts for further feedback. Each semester I’ve used a rubric to evaluate students’ mastery of skills and changed the assignment based on areas that need more support.

For more about this process, see my portfolio on the CTE Gallery (www.cte.ku.edu/portfolios).

—Andrea Greenhoot
Design and Liberation,” Sharon Bass, KU professor emerita of journalism, remembers grading a student’s 2,000-word essay with a 4,000-word comment. She realized at that point that neither she nor her students had enough time for that kind of help and that she needed to redesign her course to make grading more efficient and more effective for increasing student learning. By prioritizing what she wanted her students to learn, she was able to pare down the number of course assignments from 15 to four, a move that helped her tailor each assignment more specifically to her learning objectives. This change earned her better reviews from her students, who were able to see exactly how each assignment they completed contributed to their learning. Bass immediately noticed that, with some extra planning, she was spending less time on grading, office consultations, and emails, and that she had more time for her own professional and personal life.

ASSESS THROUGHOUT THE SEMESTER

To assess student progress, try to collect information continuously on student learning and growth. According to Angelo and Cross (1993), the most effective times to provide low-stakes feedback to students are before chapter tests and before the midterm and final exam, so that both instructors and students gain information about areas that are clearly understood and areas that are not. It’s also helpful for instructors to test students early in the term and consider discounting the first test if results are poor; students often need a practice test to understand the format and anticipate the best way to prepare for and take particular tests.

Empirical evidence for Angelo and Cross’ recommendation to assess often was supported recently in a series of studies done by a group of memory researchers at Washington University in St. Louis (Glenn 2007). Their studies showed that giving short quizzes to students early and often helps implant facts in long-term memory. Tests written in a short-answer format proved to be superior to multiple-choice tests in regard to helping students retain information. Other studies cited in the report demonstrated why cramming doesn’t work: When students studied an unfamiliar fact again and again in immediate succession, it felt better embedded in their memory than it actually was. Creating an interval between the times students studied an item led to higher retention rates.

ADMINISTERING TESTS

Time-limited assessments such as tests or presentations can be very stressful for all concerned. Especially in large classes that play a role in sorting out students’ future careers, there can be tension and challenges to academic honesty. Whenever possible, it’s best to create testing occasions that avoid some of the tension and potential for abuse. If your tests are mostly at the rote end of the Bloom framework of understanding (see page 7), students will

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GRADING STRATEGIES

Walvoord and Anderson (2010) have established nine grading strategies to make the task more efficient and effective:

1. Separate commenting from grading, and use them singly or in combination according to your purpose.

2. Do not give to all students what only some need; for example, give unofficial grades to those students who need them, and only comments to those who don’t.

3. Use only as many grade levels as you need; grading work A, B, C, etc. is more time-efficient than grading work A+, A-, B+, B, B-, etc.

4. Frame comments to your students’ uses; if students do not need or want your comments at a particular time, don’t waste time writing them.

5. Do not waste time on careless student work.

6. Use what the student knows. If a student can evaluate parts of her own work, there is little need for the instructor to do so as well.

7. Ask students to organize their work for your efficiency. For example, having students fill out a checklist of completed tasks can save time on worrying about assignment logistics.

8. Delegate the work, such as instituting peer reviews to check for certain issues on papers.

9. Use technology to save time and enhance results.
perceive that their primary job is to memorize and regurgitate bits of knowledge; these are the kinds of tests that are most amenable to various forms of unacceptable collaboration or information transfer. Whenever possible, include items that ask students to do more than merely memorize. You can even provide the basic information in the question, but ask students to demonstrate their ability to use intellectual skills to analyze the information given. Items that involve written answers present fewer issues than items with multiple choice formats. Exam items that are more complex in the Bloom framework are not as amenable to academic misconduct. That will relieve your testing situation of some tension due to mistrust and avoid the necessity for maximum security procedures.

If you decide to use test performances that lend themselves to various forms of misconduct, then you’ll need to adopt a more skeptical attitude. There are many sources of practical advice, such as alternating forms and mixing bluebooks. See Davis’ (2009) guidelines in Tools for Teaching for more suggestions.

REPEATED TESTING

An additional strategy for relieving some of the tension around testing is to provide more than one opportunity for students to demonstrate their understanding; e.g., students take an exam, but if they’re not satisfied with their grade, they are given the option to retake it. If students know that they can learn from their experience of the first test to prepare for the second, they have less reason to be anxious and less rationale for misconduct. With two tests, you have the opportunity to provide feedback and re-teach the more challenging parts of the work that students showed they didn’t understand well. Particularly in a foundation course, in which your goal is to prepare students for further study in your field, it’s most important that students learn as much as possible. No one benefits from students moving forward in a sequence of courses if there’s still a substantial body of understanding, knowledge or skill that hasn’t been learned.

This strategy has advantages and disadvantages. If more students learn, then grades will be higher and some people will complain the course doesn’t differentiate the best students. With more time taken on testing (and re-teaching), there will be fewer in-class hours for content coverage, and some audiences will consider that a problem. On the other hand, nominally covering material isn’t of much value if the evidence from tests suggests that many students have failed to learn much of it; a tactic that generates more learning is of some value. And it’s worth remembering that most academic work we care about (theses, dissertations, journal articles, grant proposals) are always done over and over until they reach a high level of quality. It seems odd to presume that students should get one try and one try only for their work.

TEST DRIVES

Robert Magnan (1990) suggests taking your students on a “test drive” to help them prepare for your exams. When you design a test, save items you decide not to use. Make a practice test with these items along with instructions for the exam, including the percentage or points for each section or exercise, and have students complete this practice test in class.

This technique has two advantages: You can test your exams and expose students to instructions. If an exam structure is weak, you can improve it before the exam. If instructions are unclear, you can clarify them.

The test drive should include only a sample of test items. Correct and discuss them as a group. If there are several possible answers, indicate which are better and why. If you’ve included essays, ask students to list the essential points they think should be included when they answer the essay question, and then evaluate their responses.

The key is to use the minimum amount of time to get the maximum benefit for you and your students.
If you want to set a tone for your course that learning is a shared goal and cheating isn’t a sensible option, using complex forms of assessment and encouraging repeat work will go a long way toward establishing a climate that supports learning.

**GRADING WRITING ASSIGNMENTS AND ESSAY EXAMS**

When you’re grading a stack of papers, it’s easy to mark mistakes or note negative points and give a grade—nothing more. But a positive word or two might make a big difference to students. When you need to point out an error, telling students to “Clarify this” may be like telling them to “Be tall”; they might not know how to do what you ask. Consider how you can help students see why they might have made the error, to help them focus their thinking on areas where they need the most work.

Bean (2011) offers four recommendations for grading essay exams. First, don’t look at students’ names when you read the exams, or have students write an ID number [editor’s note: not a Social Security Number] on the test instead. This way, you’ll be able to eliminate grader bias. Second, grade the exam one question at a time, rather than reading the whole exam of each student. This will help with grading reliability.

The third recommendation Bean provides is to shuffle the exams after you complete each question so that you read them in a different order. Record scores in such a way that you don’t know what a student received on Question 1 when you grade Question 2. Finally, if time permits, you should skim a random sample of exams before you make initial decisions about grades. Your goal is to establish anchor papers that represent prototype A, B, and C grades. Then, when you come to a difficult essay, ask yourself, “Is this better or worse than my prototype B or C?”

Instead of using anchor papers to determine grades, you may find it beneficial to use a scoring rubric to grade essays and papers through Primary Trait Analysis (PTA). Developing a PTA scale requires four steps (see right).

The advantage of using rubrics or PTA is that, rather than writing out extensive comments, you score the essay or assignment using the rubric, making this an efficient way of grading. Students can refer to the rubric when writing the assignment, as well as use their scored rubric to examine their work’s strengths and weaknesses. This method also increases inter-grader reliability when multiple individuals grade assignments. See Walvoord and Anderson’s *Effective Grading* (2010) for an in-depth discussion of PTA.

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**FOUR STEPS TO CREATING A RUBRIC**

1. Choose a test, assignment or group of assignments that you’ll evaluate. Clarify your objectives.

2. Identify the criteria or traits that will count in this evaluation. These are usually words or phrases such as “thesis,” “use of color,” or “use of relevant examples.”

3. For each trait, construct a two- to five-point scale. Each point relates to a descriptive statement; e.g., “A 5 thesis is clear and appropriate for the scope of the essay; it neither repeats sources nor states the obvious.”

4. Try out the scale with a sample of student work and revise as needed. CTE also has samples of rubrics available.

Jorge Pérez’s course portfolio contains an excellent example of both a means for developing a rubric and ways to use it effectively.

Kim Warren’s course portfolio also provides an excellent example of a rubric.

You can find them both in the CTE portfolio gallery: [www.cte.ku.edu/portfolios](http://www.cte.ku.edu/portfolios).

You can also see some examples of rubrics starting on page 76.
YOUR TEACHING WILL BE MOST EFFECTIVE IF THE ASSIGNMENTS YOU GIVE ARE RELATED AND SIMILAR TO THE EXAMS AND ASSESSMENTS YOU GIVE THROUGHOUT THE SEMESTER. IN A SIMILAR WAY, ACTIVITIES THAT STUDENTS ENGAGE IN (BOTH DURING CLASS TIME AND BETWEEN CLASS MEETINGS) SHOULD BE CLOSELY RELATED TO HOW STUDENTS WILL BE EVALUATED. IN GENERAL, THERE WILL BE MORE LEARNING IF STUDENTS’ IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES ARE MOST SIMILAR TO THE ACTIVITIES YOU WANT THEM TO SHOW YOU AS EXAMPLES OF DEEP UNDERSTANDING AND RICH KNOWLEDGE. THERE’S A PLACE FOR SHARING INFORMATION IN CLASS, BUT OPTIMAL TEACHING PRACTICE IS NOT SIMPLY REPEATING ORALLY WHAT’S WRITTEN IN A TEXTBOOK.

ONE OF THE NATION’S LEADING RESEARCHERS ON HIGHER EDUCATION PRACTICE AND THEORY IS A COGNITIVE PSYCHOLOGIST NAMED JOHN BRAUNSFORD (1998). HE AND A COLLEGE WROTE A POWERFUL ARTICLE DESCRIBING THE BEST USES OF LECTURING IN HIGHER EDUCATION, NOTING THERE CERTAINLY IS A “TIME FOR TELLING” STUDENTS WHAT WE KNOW AND HOW WE KNOW IT. THEIR RESEARCH SUGGESTS THAT LECTURES ARE VERY EFFECTIVE TOOLS FOR LEARNING WHEN THE AUDIENCE IS ALREADY VERY FAMILIAR WITH THE GENERAL TOPIC BEING DISCUSSED. SUCH LISTENERS ARE ABLE TO PROCESS THE ARGUMENTS AND EXAMPLES, AND THEY CAN EVALUATE THEM AND RE-WORK THEM IN REAL TIME; THEIR EXPERIENCE INCLUDES READY RECALL OF WHAT IS SAID AND INDIVIDUAL RE-ANALYSIS AND CONSIDERATION. IN CONTRAST, THEY FOUND THAT NOVICES WHO ARE GETTING THEIR FIRST EXPOSURE TO MATERIAL SPEND MOST OF THEIR ENERGY DURING A LECTURE SIMPLY TRYING TO RECOGNIZE WHAT’S BEING SAID AS THEY ATTEMPT TO CREATE A RECORD OF THE CONTENT. THEIR EXPERIENCE IS MORE LIKE SOMEONE TAKING DICTATION AND NOT AT ALL THAT OF SOMEONE CONSIDERING ARGUMENTS OR PUTTING RECOGNIZABLE IDEAS AND FACTS INTO AN ORGANIZED SYSTEM OF UNDERSTANDING. THEY’RE VERY UNLIKELY TO BE ABLE TO EVALUATE OR CHALLENGE WHAT THEY HEAR, OR ENGAGE IN THE KIND OF CRITICAL ANALYSIS OR SYNTHESIS THAT’S SO OFTEN THE GOAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

As a practical matter, then, how can college teachers take best advantage of the efficiency and insight characteristic of a good lecture, when most often the audience is made up of novices in our fields? This is an important challenge for all college teachers, and developing the optimal use of class time is not an easy matter. It seems clear that class time needs to be a mix of presentation by the instructor and construction of a meaningful understanding by the student, but there is not one single way of facilitating that mix which is always best.

To get you started in thinking about your own strategy, we begin by describing some of the ways that students can be engaged in the content of a course during class meetings. Any course should include some time that allows and requires students to discuss, analyze, argue or even write about the day’s topics. These activities will be aligned with the performances that are required of
students on assignments and tests, and they will constitute the backbone of the learning activities in a course. The insights and examples provided in lectures by the teacher are woven around those activities to provide context, to give additional examples of professional thinking and analysis, and to stretch the students’ horizons on the topic. In the end, the period of an optimal class meeting will likely be broken into several segments, each with its specific contribution to students’ learning. The variety itself is even an asset, as all human beings have limits to their attention span, and mixing up the activities will sustain better engagement.

ACTIVE LEARNING

Active learning involves implementing “learning experiences in which the students are thinking about the subject matter” (Svinicki & McKeachie 2011). It’s based on the premise that students must do more than just listen to fully comprehend new information: They must read, write, discuss and solve problems. By using active learning, you’ll increase your teaching effectiveness and your students’ learning.

Reading

One active learning method is The Treasure Hunt (Magnan 1990). It’s based on the premise that if you’ve assigned a reading, there must be something valuable in it. Choose several pages or sections, then ask students to find the most important point, idea or argument and write it down, along with a sentence or two justifying their selection. If you choose assigned passages well, you can increase understanding and participation immediately.

Writing

John Bean (2011) suggests several ways to incorporate writing into a class. See the box at right for three recommendations.

Discussing

While the most common approach to encouraging active learning in a classroom is discussion, not all discussions are equal, and there are other methods by which to achieve the difficult task of drawing students into lectures, discussions and readings.

One method asks students to frame a discussion or determine the direction of the discussion. Ask students to identify one question from their readings that they would like to have answered in class. Ask them to share their question with three peers, and then have the group pick one of the four questions to present to the instructor. Allow each group to ask its question.
Problem-solving

Over the past decade it’s become more common for college teachers to punctuate their classes with opportunities for students to solve a problem related to the content of the day’s reading and presentation. The instructor will pose a problem or question that should be amenable to a solution, given what has been covered to that point; students are invited to work for just a minute or two with fellow students to come up with an answer.

In the pre-technology era this was often called Think-Pair-Share. Students teamed up with another person and then told the class what they decided. Many instructors now use classroom response systems (aka “clickers”) to allow everyone in the room to vote for an answer. Eric Mazur (1997) of Harvard University is well known for demonstrating that his students often were not getting a conceptual understanding of physics from his lectures; only when he initiated paired discussions and reporting answers did their work improve. Many practitioners believe that discussion between students produces the richest learning, and a lecture surrounding discussions serves more as a summary than a driver of learning. With or without clickers, this method shows improved learning over uninterrupted lecturing.

LECTURING

The appropriateness of using a lecture format depends on your course goals, and as an instructor you should evaluate course aims before determining whether lectures will most effectively achieve your goals.

The strengths of the lecture are that it “can communicate the intrinsic interest of the subject matter, and it can present the newest developments” (Cashin 1985). Another strength of lectures is their ability to restructure information into a unique manner, relevant to course directions. Lectures also provide a large amount of material to many students at the same time. Finally, they can be used as examples for how professionals approach an intellectual question.

Negative aspects of lecturing include lack of feedback to students, a presumption that all students learn material at the same pace, and the problem that poorly-designed lectures are not well suited for higher levels of thinking, such as synthesis and application. To overcome these hurdles, Cashin offers several recommendations for improving lectures (see the box on page 17).

Another way to enhance your lectures is by effectively using a
chalkboard, Elmo or overhead projector. Students’ notes are often an exact copy of what appeared on the chalkboard or overhead, with very few additional points or connections. Effective board work highlights and emphasizes the organization required in problem-solving or the evolution of an argument. Remember that even the best students will occasionally lose the thread of a lesson or forget the original objective of a discussion. The chalkboard is their major, and often their only, resource for reentering the lesson. Therefore, be organized, use headings, write clearly, and when solving problems on the board, show each step in a logical sequence. If at the end of a lecture, you can stand back, look at the board, and reconstruct the lecture using what is written, then you are developing good board skills.

Carefully designed lectures can serve as a mechanism for encouraging higher levels of thinking in your students. In *What’s the Use of Lectures?*, Bligh (2000) addresses how to promote thought using lectures. He recommends the following: Make sure your lectures encourage application and discovery, as opposed to only serving as a platform for the presentation of material. In this way, students learn how to use the information provided to analyze novel situations. Next, ask questions throughout the lecture, focusing on questions that promote critical thinking, not rote memorization (see Leading Discussions, on page 20). To assist student thought, provide a visual display of the presented material, include handouts so students can focus on thought rather than note taking, require students to pre-read material so that lecture isn’t their first exposure to it (see Facilitating Learning Outside of Class, page 30), and watch your lecture speed. Bligh found that students performed best with thought-provoking questions when lecture material was presented slowly, as compared to when the lecture was presented at a faster pace; a slower pace allows students time to think about material. For more information related to promoting critical thinking, see Active Learning, on page 15.

**FINDING A GOOD COMBINATION**

One interesting example of a well-balanced course comes from the work of history professor Lendol Calder at Augustana College. He was teaching a survey course in American history to beginning college students—exactly the kind of course typically taught in pure lecture format. His goal was to have students begin to think like an historian, to understand how history is constructed by historians, and to analyze historical artifacts using an historian’s tools. Calder’s solution is not for everyone, but it offers one example of how to combine the insights of people like Bransford (1998) and Mazur (1997) within the practicalities of teaching a course.

There were three class meetings each week. For the first class, students did some background reading, then watched a film or other
visual material that set the context for the week’s topic. In class on Monday, he gave each person a document, photograph or other historical artifact, and the assignment was to write an historical analysis of it for class on Wednesday. That writing was required; without it a student wasn’t admitted to class. Students spent Wednesday sharing their writing, arguing their analyses, and trying to reach conclusions about the meaning of the document. On Friday, Calder gave a lecture in which he offered his analysis of the artifact and reasons for his conclusions and observations. During the lecture, his students listened as he described his version of the very analysis the students had undertaken. It wasn’t first exposure, they knew a lot about what he was discussing, and they already had an opinion on the subject. For those students, lecture was highly interactive, as they privately questioned, challenged and appreciated what Calder was saying.

Calder found that his students did very well on exams and other assessments, much better than his students did when he lectured only. Lectures were of enormous value to his students, and they were eager to hear them since they were engaged in the same inquiry he was. Still, this is only one way of organizing a class. There are other forms of engaging students and mixing critical benefits of lecture with components of active learning and students’ engagement.

DEVELOPING POSITIVE CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS

Svinicki & McKeachie (2011) suggest several ways to encourage students to be active in the classroom. Create an expectation of participation early in the semester by defining various facets of the course and explaining why participation is valuable. Understand that boredom, lack of knowledge, passivity, cultural norms, and above all fear of being embarrassed may keep a student from talking in class. To reduce that fear, use small groups and help students get to know each other. Ask questions that have no wrong answers to help students get used to participating. Learn students’ names, and call on them by name. Ask students to write short answers to questions. A shy person will likely respond to being asked, “What did you write?” Get to know students who don’t participate, so you’ll find any special knowledge they may have; ask them to contribute it at appropriate times.

In some scenarios, students may assume negative roles. If we deal successfully with these situations, we can preserve a positive classroom environment. If a student feels trapped and assumes a Prisoner role, be clear about the course’s benefits. Ask the class to brainstorm 12 reasons why they shouldn’t be there. Review this list with them, and tell them you can see why they may not want to be there. Then, promise you’ll do your best to make the course
worthwhile and ask students to meet you halfway. Sometimes asking a student to help (e.g., passing out handouts), or talking one-on-one, will bring the student around.

If a student is terribly quiet and assumes the role of Introvert, use small group projects or group-generated questioning. This will give shy students a chance to succeed and may make them more willing to participate in a large group. Most importantly, allow students to participate at their comfort level; forcing introverted students into an uncomfortable situation will probably cause them to retreat further.

Finally, if a student is aggressive and assumes a Domineering role, establish ground rules that discourage this behavior. Use small groups, and rotate group membership and leadership in the groups. Be proactive; if you can tell early on that someone will be a monopolizer, speak privately with him or her. Say you’ve noticed that others aren’t participating much and ask for help drawing them out. This gives the student a positive role to play, rather than a negative one.

If a few students still refuse to participate, after you’ve tried to engage them, keep in mind that many of your students are engaged. “If some students opt out, don’t let it bother you—it’s their loss, not yours” (Felder & Brent 2003). Focus on the fact that most students are engaged, and move forward.

**ENGAGING STUDENTS IN LEARNING**

All of us hope that students will take advantage of the time they spend on our courses to acquire knowledge and skills that can be used broadly and flexibly. For our part, we create activities and organize resources to help students build understanding. However, these efforts will be successful only if students spend time doing the reading, thinking, writing, arguing and problem solving that we make available. In short, students learn only if they fully engage in these activities, without distraction and with sufficient time. Yet, many faculty members report low levels of student engagement, and there’s a growing frustration with the perceived inability to get students’ full attention to their studies.

As noted in the Introduction, there are mutual responsibilities for learning. Faculty members need to use well-crafted and up-to-date teaching methods, and students need to spend adequate time on preparation and study. Without presuming students have no interest in learning and without pandering to imagined youthful tastes, there are ways teachers can make it likely that students will give time and energy to studying that optimizes learning.

Generating meaningful discussions during class time is the tra-
Leading discussions requires us to maintain a balance between using our voices and encouraging students to use theirs. Consider these ideas for sparking discussions:

- Invite students to ask questions related to a reading assignment, then frame the discussion around those questions.
- Have students write their answers to a sentence completion exercise, then share their ideas: What most struck me about the reading was … A question I’d like to ask the author is … The idea I disagree with most strongly is … The part of the lecture or reading that made the most sense to me was …
- Ask students to respond to a contentious statement or an illustrative quote.
- Have students recall an experience in their lives that somehow connects with the topic.

To increase the number of responses you get, try this from John Woodcock (in Stocking 1998): Break up your presentation, giving students two or three minutes to discuss a question with the per-
son sitting next to him or her. Rather than reporting on their own ideas, ask students to report on their discussion partner’s good ideas. When he tried this, Woodcock found “Three times as many hands went up, and the reports had a consistently better energy.” This can work with any size group in almost any situation.

One strategy that several KU faculty members have found useful is called the fishbowl, a discussion format in which part of the class forms a discussion circle and remaining students form a listening circle around the discussion group. During the class, students rotate through the groups (see right).

In a large group discussion, once it’s moving, keep it going by asking for more evidence or clarification. Ask “How?” or “Why?” Pose questions that link or extend the discussion, address cause and effect, and ask for synthesis or summary of the material.

Other ways to encourage discussion are by affirming student comments and being silent when appropriate. McKeachie & Svinicki (2010) note many lecturers check student understanding by asking if there are any questions, waiting three to five seconds, and after receiving no response conclude everyone understands. But this is often not the case; students just haven’t had enough time to process material. Give students some “hang time” to think.

When it’s time to end a discussion, conclude with a summary so that students know what important points were covered. A summative statement also gives you the opportunity to fill in points that weren’t covered and to praise the class for their responses.

For more suggestions regarding leading discussions, see Active Learning, page 15.

**USING GROUP WORK**

Asking students to work in groups is common enough that everyone has an idea of what’s involved, but many people have strong reactions to the invitation to “get into groups.” It’s important to use this method of teaching only when there’s a specific purpose and only when you prepare a well structured activity. Students are wary of teachers who use group work as a way of dealing with being unprepared, and without clear direction conversations often move quickly away from course content.

Ruth Federman Stein and Sandra Hurd outline several justifications for the use of student teams and group work in Using Student Teams in the Classroom (2000). Besides increasing learning and preparing students for the environment of teamwork in industry and other organizations, teamwork and peer discussions help

**FISHBOWLS**

Devises three questions for discussion and order them. In a class on ecology, e.g., questions may be: How is the environment being endangered? What steps can the government and private industry take to deal with the problem? What can we do personally? Ideally, questions would be interrelated, but that’s not required.

Set up chairs in two concentric circles. Have students count off by 1, 2, and 3. Ask group 1 members to sit in the discussion-circle seats and groups 2 and 3 to sit in outer-circle seats.

Pose your first question. Allow up to ten minutes for discussion. Invite one student to facilitate or act as the facilitator yourself.

Invite group 2 to sit in the inner circle, replacing group 1, who now sits in the outer circle. Ask group 2 if they’d like to comment briefly about the first discussion, then ask the second question.

Follow the same procedure with group 3.

After the questions have been discussed, reconvene the class as a whole group. Ask for their reflections about the entire discussion.

If you can’t use circles, have a rotating panel discussion instead. One-third of the class becomes a panel for each question. Panelists can sit in front of the classroom facing the rest of the class.
students more easily construct knowledge that’s built upon their previous experiences (Fosnot 1996).

Group discussions also help students use and become familiar with the language of a profession or discipline. Evaluations of student understandings are usually structured to assess their ability to comprehend questions and provide convincing responses. These skills are more likely to develop if students are allowed to discuss these topics themselves, as opposed to only receiving passive exposure to this new language. At their best, group activities engage students in active use of terms and ideas in ways that complement hearing them used by a professor in a lecture.

Teamwork is also more useful than lectures when teaching practical knowledge or material that’s evaluated based on social context. Finally, Stein and Hurd argue that group work helps students absorb the behaviors and way of thinking needed for success in the classroom.

To make groups really work in your classroom, Dan Spencer of the KU School of Business recommends following the “Keys to Effective Group Work” he has developed, shown at left. In this model, the group has an ongoing structure and purpose, and there is some effort made to generate a product from the group work. Such projects can generate extremely high levels of engagement when the topic is of importance to students and there is a lot of interaction with and feedback from the instructor. If the group is generating a high-stakes product (with a significant grade attached), there will be important issues in managing the work distribution and providing fair individual feedback. There are many books in the CTE library that address those issues, but remember that the added benefit of serious engagement will require some cost in management of the group process itself. Many faculty members feel the return on investment is very high.

To initiate group work in the classroom that doesn’t involve an extended project, try using Listening Teams (see box on page 23).

ENGAGING DIVERSE LEARNERS

When we talk about diversity in education, often the point is to highlight the general benefits of a world with multiple points of view and many forms of culture; it’s a more interesting world when we have a richer palette of language, music, literature and traditions. At another level, cultural context is also an asset in teaching. The best learning takes place when students experience new ideas as they are connected to their existing understanding of the world. Learning becomes most flexible, most useful to students when they can see the same ideas, information or analysis applied across more than one context. A commonly used defini-
tion of “deep understanding” is that ideas can be used in a context that wasn’t explicitly taught. The best way to generate such an understanding is to teach the same ideas embedded within multiple specific settings.

As we talk about diverse context, then, we’re talking about both how to capture the attention and focus of students whose life experience is not typical of most KU students, and also about how to promote a general understanding of ideas in all students that isn’t bounded by particular circumstances. Embedding knowledge within realistic settings familiar to students will get understanding started, and asking students to recognize content in unfamiliar contexts will deepen that understanding.

As a first step, we need to make sure that the examples and settings we use in communicating knowledge include a wide range of the typical human experience. Students in KU classrooms are different in many ways: age, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, religion, sexual orientation, and physical or learning ability. Van Note Chism (2002) reports that studies have found that this type of diversity benefits individual students, institutions of higher learning, the economy and society. She also reports that several studies have documented ways in which student difference enlarges students’ perspectives, increases their critical thinking, and fosters higher intellectual engagement.

Van Note Chism states, “The weight of past research evidence suggests that faculty members are crucial to student educational attainment: positive in- and out-of-class relationships with their teachers can enable students to overcome constraints and achieve academic success” (p. 131). In light of disappointing retention rates for underrepresented students, teachers can play an important part in the lives of diverse learners. We can make knowledge accessible to students by using examples beyond our immediate lives and concerns. Drawing upon a range of experience isn’t just an exercise, it’s a good way to increase learning and retention.

One easy and valuable way to achieve these goals is to recognize students’ cultural contexts and build examples into your teaching that connect with their lives. That could include references to music, entertainment and art that are relevant with students, rather than using only references to the work you know. For example, frame hypothetical problems or situations in issues that are relevant to people in their 20’s in the early years of our century, along with the usual examples you’ve generated that connect to your interests and concerns. In doing this, you aren’t pandering to students’ tastes or family cultural backgrounds; you’re making their understanding deeper by using multiple settings for their/your knowledge. At the individual level, you’re also making it possible for each person to find an initial example that’s embedded within familiar places, people and topics.

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**LISTENING TEAMS**

Divide the class into four teams, then give the team members different role assignments:

- **Questioners**—This group will ask at least two questions about the material.
- **Agreers**—This group will tell which points they agreed with, or found helpful, and explain why.
- **Nay-sayers**—This group will comment on what points they disagreed with, or did not find helpful, and explain why.
- **Example givers**—This group will give specific examples or applications of the material.

Present your material. After you’re done, give the teams a few minutes to complete their assignments.

One reason listening teams are successful is because each student feels as though his or her contribution is important and sees that contributions are rewarded. Structuring group work with this in mind can increase the quality of student participation and the effectiveness of the group exercise.
Think about the classic word problem from math class that many of us know: Toonerville and Toytown are 500 miles apart, and a train leaves each town on a single track, headed for the other town. The Toonerville train is going 55 mph, and the Toytown train is going 65 mph; in how many minutes will the trains crash into each other and where will that take place? This problem is meant to be abstract, devoid of real meaning, so as not to distract us from the mathematical operations that would solve it. That’s a noble goal, but all the research we have on learning suggests that students would both embrace the problem more and remember more from doing it if the problem were framed in ways that engaged them. There are many possible ways to state an issue, and many possible frames you can use. If you engage your students by working to put your intellectual knowledge into multiple examples from their collective lives, it’s a winner all around. They’ll do the work you want more readily, they’ll remember what they learn longer, and they’re more likely to use what they learn in ways that expand on what you taught them.

Since we want students to become more aware of the rich variety of the planet’s people and human geography, it’s good to use context to engage people. We also want students from different cultural traditions who join our community to be engaged by our courses and benefit from our teaching. By building their experiences into our courses, we both communicate welcome and we make their learning more likely. When we rotate our teaching through multiple contexts for the ideas and information we want to share, we get the added benefit of greatly improving the depth of the learning that all our students get.

**MOTIVATING STUDENTS TO LEARN**

Generating learning among students is neither magical nor mysterious; students learn best when they spend time reading, thinking, solving problems, writing, discussing, and using ideas in concrete settings or to generate products. Despite lots of research in cognitive science, there are no shortcuts to learning, so somehow teachers and students need to find a way to make those learning activities happen. All of us, students and teachers alike, have many different ways that we can spend our time, so we have a shared interest in arranging the academic world so that we put enough energy and time into the courses we co-inhabit.

There’s a rich and interesting debate among academic psychologists about motivation, with ongoing dialogue about the relation between extrinsic motivators, like rewards, and activities that seem intrinsically motivated, i.e., they occur without external support or constraint. There’s one general idea about motivation that receives a lot of support, regardless of a researcher’s conceptual perspective. **People are most likely to engage in activities when**
they believe there’s a reasonable chance of having a good experience. Some argue that the probability of choosing an activity increases when there’s a higher perceived likelihood of good things happening, so raising or lowering expectations of success would raise or lower their willingness to spend time on an activity—thus increasing or decreasing motivation.

In education, success is defined differently by different participants. For us as teachers, students’ success includes a deep understanding of ideas, rich knowledge of the content of a field, and possibly an enhanced appreciation for and interest in the topic of our course. These are primarily intrinsically valuable results of a course, though there’s certainly practical value in being well prepared for further study. For many or most of our students, success will likely be defined primarily in terms of your feedback to them on the quality of their work, typically grades. This is an extrinsic reason for learning, especially from our perspective, though some students come to appreciate and enjoy our fields as a result of their course work. Whichever version of success we refer to, students will give more time to a course in which they believe success is likely than to a course with a lower probability of a good result, either intrinsic or extrinsic.

While it would be nice to imagine that everyone who studies at KU is intrinsically motivated to know the intellectual world deeply and richly, we need to think strategically about motivation. Courses should be planned, both in-class and out-of-class, to maximize students’ beliefs that good things result from their investment of time. If we want to capture their time from among many options, that’s the model to adopt.

SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING ASSIGNMENTS

Students will look for indications from you about their success in understanding course work, and perhaps in achieving good grades. To maintain their consistent participation in learning activities, you’ll want to give frequent feedback, especially early in a course. The best way to make that feedback positive is to begin with assignments that you believe most students can do well. A sure way to produce discouraged learners is to create an assignment that only the best students can do. Researchers in teaching talk about “optimal challenge” in assignments, and that refers to work that is not trivial or mere rote application of procedural rules, but not so difficult that students have no idea how to begin. This is a difficult matter of judgment for you, made more difficult when courses have students with a wide range of background skill, but it’s a very important part of your plan to motivate students, to capture their time and energy for your course.

The challenge of engaging students in learning often boils down to showing how course material matters to them. My favorite approach to connect class ideas to students’ lives is my Newsbyte assignment. Students find a news story that deals with an idea we’re discussing in class, from online or print news sources such as CNN, MSNBC, The New York Times, or The Wall Street Journal. They turn in a one-page paper connecting the story with the concept; then, in class they present the material and lead a discussion on it.

I find this is a wonderful way to spark engagement and discussion, as well as provide opportunities to reinforce or modify student understanding of key ideas.

—Tracy Russo
Linked to optimal challenge is the notion of repeatable assignments. If each intellectual challenge you offer is only available once, then students will either pass or fail but not have a reason to revisit the work to learn it better. When assignments can be repeated (with alternate versions of context and particulars), students have reason to work again to refine their understanding. You do want students whose work wasn’t acceptable to study again, and they’ll be more likely to do that if you provide another alternative to get what they want, namely positive feedback from you on their performance. Making assignments repeatable also allows you to keep your grading standards higher, as you aren’t forced to lower your criteria to allow students to pass.

Repeating work until it reaches a high criterion is how we function as researchers, and it’s a good model for producing intellectual success. If you wish to get students to spend more time on your course, then you need to convince them that extra work will result in a successful experience for them.

ATTENDING CLASS

Many faculty members think it’s very important for students to attend class, and they worry about low attendance, especially in larger classes. Typically faculty members attribute poor attendance to low student motivation, without asking about the reasons for that apparent disinterest among students. The Center for Teaching Excellence conducted a survey of KU students in Fall 1999, asking them about their decision to attend or to skip class meetings. The study examined the relationship between course characteristics, student characteristics, and the rationale of students for either attending class or not attending class on a daily basis. The study sought to answer these questions:

1. How do characteristics of students relate to their attendance behavior?
2. How do characteristics of the courses in which students are enrolled relate to their attendance behavior?
3. What reasons do students give for their day-to-day attendance decisions?
4. How do these reasons relate to the number of their absences?

The results of the study suggested that students were actually more rational than unmotivated. Overall they were more likely to attend class if they believed that it mattered to the professor that they were there, or if being present at the class gave them an advantage over simply getting notes from the lecture or doing assigned readings. The professor’s interest in their attendance was inferred from two basic observations: whether class time involved

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I cannot teach a student who is not present.

Attendance in my courses isn’t required, unless a student wishes to earn a grade that certifies they’ve learned something. I don’t have an attendance policy in my syllabus. However, I strongly encourage attendance, using assignments as the hook. They are 50% of the course grade.

I absolutely do NOT provide a calendar of assignment due dates. Try this yourself and watch attendance ebb and flow according to the calendar. It’s a way to become discouraged and a message to students that all that really matters is showing up to turn stuff in.

Students must be present to turn in work. I explain that the real learning for an assignment is during class discussion of it, not just doing it, so I can’t certify they’ve learned anything if they have someone drop off an assignment, send it via email or turn it in late.

I frequently modify assignments on the fly in class as a function of class discussion. Students must do the modified assignments.

To earn an A, students must do 80% of the homework and three of three research reports. I give every student one late assignment option; they can turn in one assignment late the last class day, no questions.

—Paul Atchley
any active participation by students, making the student’s presence essential to the class plan and/or to learning; and if course policy required attendance and placed concrete value to it (more detail below). Many students noted that there’s complete overlap between course readings and lectures, so they believe either one or the other is an adequate preparation for exams. While faculty members may believe they’re helping students through content redundancy, in practice they’re undermining students’ motivation to either do readings or attend class.

If a teacher really wants students to attend class, then the class needs to provide a successful experience. That could be something concrete like points for attendance or from an in-class assignment, or it could be a successful learning experience that prepares students for exams in ways that aren’t available elsewhere. There certainly are classes in which the lecture expands on readings and the teacher provides opportunities for discussion or questions, and students in those classes may not appreciate the importance of those opportunities. Pointing out the advantages of attendance to students will help, as will clear and frequent comments to students on the importance of attendance to you. In the end, the best way to motivate attendance is to make sure that active, engaging and unique experiences that aid course success are regularly part of class time.

The study itself assessed variables including gender, class standing, age, grade point average, employment, residence (either on campus or off), cost of tuition and who was paying it, and the number of credit hours the student was enrolled in. A total of 333 students participated in this study, and they had an average of 3.17 absences per class, with a range from 0 to 12.25 absences. Students’ reasons for attending or not attending class are shown in the box at right. Results indicate that students who had higher GPAs had fewer absences than students who had lower grades. Other student characteristics, such as gender, age, class, residence, method of funding education, or number of credits enrolled in, did not correlate with number of absences.

Students were more likely to attend classes taught by a GTA as opposed to those taught by a professor. The main reason cited for attending GTA-taught classes was “absences above the minimum affect my grade.” One of the main reasons cited for not attending professor-taught classes was “attendance is not taken or does not affect my grade.” Therefore, it appears that whether or not attendance is required significantly predicts whether students attend class. Students also said they were more likely to attend class if the class size was small due to the teacher noticing if they were present, if their presence affected their course grade, and if they had the opportunity to participate in discussion.

WHY STUDENTS DO OR DON’T ATTEND CLASS

In a study by the KU Center for Teaching Excellence, students reported the following reasons for attending class:

- Personal values
- Obtaining course content
- Fulfilling grade requirements
- Factors related to the teacher
- Peer influence

Students’ reasons for not attending class included:

- Being sick
- Participating in other school or non-school-related activities
- Participating in leisure activities
- Avoiding teacher- or class-related experiences
- Having no incentive to attend
Overall, a combination of teacher and student influences affect class attendance, with a large factor being whether or not a penalty exists for missing class. The study concludes, “If students believe they should attend class, are not sick, not tired from having fun the night before, and like the subject matter, and if teachers notice when students are there, take their attendance into account for the course grade, and provide information students must be in class to get, attendance will be optimal.”

THE TENSION BETWEEN MOTIVATION AND GRADING

One of the best strategies for motivating students is to allow (and even encourage) them to repeat assignments until they achieve their own learning/grade goals. This increases their willingness to do extra work, and it also increases the skill level of students who complete the course. Everyone benefits when more students have greater skill upon course completion; they’re better prepared for subsequent courses and they bring greater skill to their future work life.

The downside of repeatable assignments is that more students earn higher grades, resulting in less differentiation among students. Sometimes this is identified as grade inflation, but the general complaint is that it makes it harder to identify the very best students for many legitimate purposes.

It’s very important for each instructor to think about this question by looking at the function of her/his course in a program or curriculum. Sometimes it’s important to sort out the very best from the average students; in such a course it might not be advisable to compress achievement, even if it were at the high end. In other cases, however, especially in foundation courses in a field, the real goal is to have students learn basics so they can study advanced topics. It doesn’t help anyone, for example, if people leave college unable to do algebra. We’d be willing to differentiate among graduates in some other way if we could be certain that every KU student is highly skilled in algebra. In deciding whether to use repeatable assignments as a motivational tool, each instructor should weigh the relative importance of differentiation and preparation for further study. These decisions may be made well through discussion within a program or department.

It’s always useful to remember, however, that in our professional lives we never hear from a journal or from a granting agency that we have one try and one try only to get published or funded. The common experience we all have is one of a level of rejection, feedback, encouragement, and an invitation to work harder and do better. This seems to motivate us to extraordinary amounts of hard work to achieve our goals. Perhaps we should remember that as we ask why our students sometimes seem unmotivated.
USING TECHNOLOGY EFFECTIVELY

DURING CLASS

Using technology in the classroom can enhance student learning by increasing the exposure that students get to material, as well as diversifying the formats of this exposure. Technology provides a teacher with more ways in which to present material and aid student learning (e.g. aural, visual, demonstrations, applications). David Brown (2000) states, “The computer assists professors in their delivery of the picture that is worth a thousand words, of sound accompanying text, of attention-grabbing animation.” A PowerPoint presentation of a lecture’s outline can help students see where the class is going and how to organize their notes. Videotaped demonstrations can be used when in-class demonstrations are not feasible, or when presenting the information to a large class that would have difficulty seeing an in-person presentation. Images or videos can be presented to reinforce lectures.

Technology can also be used in class to not only vary formats of presented information, but also to encourage active learning (page 15) and initiate interactive exchanges between students and between the professor and the class. For example, an image or video clip can be used as a discussion starter. Classroom response systems (CRS; also referred to as “clickers”) can be used to initiate discussions: Present a thought-provoking question that corresponds with the day’s lecture material and several possible responses. Ask students to use their clickers to select their response. Use this information as the platform to start discussion.

Clickers can also be used to implement in-class quizzes, take a poll of student opinions or understanding, and record attendance. Another way to use them is to take a break in the middle of class to gauge student comprehension of the material covered so far. Ask a question that would require student understanding to correctly answer and have students respond using their clickers. In this way, teachers can gain immediate feedback on the current level of student comprehension of material and can shape the direction of the rest of the class accordingly. For more about clickers, see Maximizing Multimedia and Technology, page 48.

Instructors’ use of technology varies based on their expectations about student learning. If, for example, you give students a handout that allows them to fill in information from a PowerPoint lecture, you may find that students passively record the information and nothing more. The advantages of providing an outline need to be weighed against the disadvantage of inducing passiv—

Everything is on the Web, including a six-slide PowerPoint presentation of Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address. Of course, Lincoln didn’t actually use PowerPoint, but what if he did? Would his speech have had the same impact? We’ve all endured PowerPoints cluttered with over-stuffed slides of text or barely intelligible graphics. Yet when it comes to covering material in our own classes, it can be tempting to pack in as much information as possible and then get lost reading slides in front of a class. Similar risks are embedded in Blackboard or other course Web site formats. Striving to keep up with tech-savvy students, we may think that students would appreciate online course tools.

However, it may be that technologies actually hinder communication with students. Technologies themselves—PowerPoint, Blackboard, classroom “clickers,” even a blackboard and chalk—can’t enhance teaching or learning unless they’re accompanied by thoughtful consideration of what we want students to understand and achieve. Maybe less is more, but less may also be … well, less. The type, level, amount or volume of technology we use isn’t as important as the thinking and reflection that we devote to students’ learning. That, by the way, is not on the Web!

―Shannon O’Lear
Many times, instructors find that the balance will favor use of the outline, but that may not always be the case. However you use technology in the classroom, ensure that students understand how they’ll be graded for their responses.

OUTSIDE OF CLASS

There are several ways to use technology outside of class to help you achieve course goals. One way to expand on information discussed in class is the use of Blackboard discussion groups. Teachers can use these groups to disseminate class information or to establish an arena in which students interact with one another about various topics or class activities. See the box at left for ways to facilitate online discussions.

Another way to deepen and assess student learning outside of class is to use online quizzes. These can be created on Blackboard, and questions could address in-class material or outside reading assignments. Making the completion of online quizzes worth points in the class will likely increase class participation, and requiring completion of online quizzes over reading assignments before class will increase the number of students who do the readings prior to class. Moreover, online quizzes can be set up in such a way that students can take them multiple times, thus gaining practice working with material and increasing understanding.

For information on how to create online discussions and quizzes, contact Information Technology Services (864-8080).

FACILITATING LEARNING OUTSIDE OF CLASS

There are two issues regarding reading in a course that faculty members frequently mention. One is helping students understand what they read for a course, and the other is the difficulty of getting students to even attempt the reading assigned for a given day. As noted earlier, class time is best spent when students are already familiar with material being presented or discussed, and active participation during class requires that students have undertaken the reading and gotten something from it. For various reasons, many educators see consistent course reading as one of the central issues in assuring quality higher education.

READING COLLEGE TEXTS

Many students believe that they already have a firm grasp on how to read when they get to college. Why then, are students often discouraged by their attempts to read college texts? Ann Cudd (2003) proposes that much of this frustration stems from the fact that they do not understand that the type of reading approach used should vary based on the type of text that’s being read. “You
don’t read a novel the same way you read a philosophical essay or a mathematical proof or a poem. Students have to be helped to realize this and then to develop the new eyes they need to see the kinds of texts you assign them,” she states.

Many instructors despair at students’ reading skills upon entering their class, and they spend valuable energy complaining about prior education and standards for admission to college. Other faculty members recognize that achieving their own goals will require that they share with students what it means to read in their field, and these faculty members take some time to demonstrate close reading of work typically found in the course. This could be done during class by having the teacher talk aloud while reading a passage that everyone is looking at. Consider the questions at right when you talk about reading with your class.

There can also be homework assignments early in a course that have these meta-questions included in the task; students are not only answering important questions related to a topic, but they’re also asked to identify how they read. That aspect of the assignment would also be given feedback, in a manner like the content portions. In general, when working with undergraduates, it’s not safe to assume that they’re all fully prepared to read professional text with the same eyes as you do; it’s likely worth your time to make your way of reading an explicit part of what you teach.

Other ways to help students learn to read difficult texts come from Bean (2011); he suggests the strategies shown in the table on page 33.

Robert Magnan (1990) is among many who believe that it’s best to help students achieve critical reading skills to aid their analysis and evaluation of texts. It’s better to help students benefit from the reading you assign than to grade them down when they don’t succeed. In the box on the next page, he suggests ways to support students’ critical thinking skills through reading.

READING ACCOUNTABILITY

Given that students are helped in knowing how to read difficult texts, there’s still the question of ensuring that they actually carry out the assignment. To be fair, students often point out that in many classes they take, it makes little apparent difference to them whether they’ve done the reading or not. The instructor doesn’t make them accountable for knowing what was in the reading, and class time is often spent listening to a lecture without interruption. Many professors, they also claim, simply repeat the content of the reading in their lectures, making it seem even less important to take time to read. Since there are few occasions that provide uses

QUESTIONS FOR CLOSE READING OF TEXTS

When you talk to your students about reading texts in your discipline, consider these questions:

What terms do I need to recognize?

What analytic tools am I using?

How do I recognize what parts of the text are statements of fact or observation, what parts are professional analysis, and what parts are statements of value or opinion?

How do I recognize what the main points of the reading are?

How do I decide what I need to remember closely and what is provided only as temporary context?
for reading, students presume that it can be done later at a time closer to an exam to obtain relevant information. The typical student is not sophisticated enough to recognize that even listening to a lecture would be a much improved experience if the general topic were already a familiar one, so they typically read before class only when the instructor makes it important.

The key to having prepared students in class is to make sure that doing the reading before class is directly relevant to the student’s experience in class. One common way to make reading relevant is to ask students to use what they read in a low-stakes but accountable fashion. Many faculty members use brief quizzes on reading, sometimes for every class period, asking students mostly to report on facts or information found in a reading. This approach has a modest goal, to assure that students have located and looked at the reading. Such a quiz can be given online or in the first moments of class, and it can be graded as participation or for correct content. A slightly more productive version is related to one of the suggestions attributed earlier to Robert Magnan: Provide an open-ended prompt to students, asking them to discuss an idea, phenomenon or analysis from the reading, often in the context of something that students care about. If they can use something from the reading to relate to an issue or topic in their own lives, there’s evidence that the reading was understood at some level, and was done in the first place. People often use Blackboard’s threaded discussion feature for these assignments, leaving a record and allowing students to learn from each other.

Responding to open-ended writing in a low-stakes context can be important, as students will stop making entries in discussion boards when they discover that no one is reading them. To keep up a meaningful dialogue requires time, so that option raises issues related to resources; for a brief discussion of time resources, consider the material in the box on page 34.

Another way to make pre-class reading important is to connect information from readings to class activities. During those portions of the class time that include active learning, make sure that the discussions required and/or the problems to be solved are connected with the reading material. It may be that students need to use something from their reading and something from the class time presentation to address a problem; only by being prepared will they be able to participate fully in the conversation that you’ve arranged. Unlike the quiz options which can have points or other accountability attached to them, this approach presumes that students will prefer to be ready for in-class activities. Such a method will work well with students who claim they would read if it mattered to the professor, while it may be less effective with students who are indifferent to any outcome other than course points. For teachers who do not want to be constantly grading or

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DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS THROUGH READING

Use a review as a preview: Review facts your students already know that relate to the reading. By connecting new information with already-learned concepts, students will be in a better position to understand and remember what they read.

Give them a bird’s eye view: Discuss the topic covered in the reading in general terms, but avoid specifics. Students will think the reading is essential, not repetitive.

Work with the words: Explain essential vocabulary used in the readings.

Put questions in their heads: Ask a mix of general and specific questions that require students to find facts as well as analyze and interpret. Don’t put questions in the order of the text, or students may just skim for words rather than read for meaning.

Put questions in their hands: Give them a guide to follow as they read. Make it explicit how you expect students to use what they’re reading in ways that go beyond what’s presented. Use open ended questions that ask for implications or applications of ideas found in the reading (Magnan 1990).
Table I. Strategies to address reading problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students’ problem</th>
<th>Helping strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor reading process</td>
<td>• Give tests or writing assignments on readings you don’t cover in class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Have students write in response to texts (reading logs, summary notebooks).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Require students to write and turn in for credit marginal notes on readings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Failure to reconstruct arguments as they read</td>
<td>• Assign summaries of readings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Have students make outlines, flowcharts or diagrams of articles.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Help students write “gist statements” on main points as reading progresses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Go through a sample text with students, writing “what it says” and “what it does” statements for each paragraph.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure to assimilate the unfamiliar; resistance to</td>
<td>• Explain this phenomenon to students so that they can watch out for it; draw analogies to other times when students have had to assimilate unfamiliar views.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uncomfortable or disorienting views</td>
<td>• Contrast ordinary ways of looking at a subject and the author’s surprising way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teach students to play the “believing and doubting game,” so they can see a reader’s double role of being simultaneously open to texts and skeptical of them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited understanding of rhetorical context</td>
<td>• Create reading guides that include information about the author and context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• In lectures or reading guides, set the stage for readings, especially primary materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Train students to ask: Who is this author? To whom is he or she writing? What prompted this writing? What is the author’s purpose?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure to interact with the text</td>
<td>• Use a response strategy—reading log, summary notebook, guided journal, marginal notes, reading guide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfamiliarity with historical events, cultural codes</td>
<td>• Create reading guides explaining cultural codes, allusions, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Show students the function of cultural codes by discussing background knowledge needed to understand cartoons or jokes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfamiliar vocabulary</td>
<td>• Create reading guides defining technical terms or words used in unusual ways.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty with complex syntax</td>
<td>• Have students “translate” complex passages into their own words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Have students rewrite very long sentences into several shorter ones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure to adapt to different kinds of discourse</td>
<td>• Explain your own reading process: when you skim, when you read carefully.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Explain how your reading process varies with different genres of text: how to read a textbook versus a primary source, how to read a poem or scientific paper, etc.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
giving out points, this is a good way to invite students to read regularly, and it does not take away time in class for giving quizzes. Evidence suggests that you want to make some portion of your class time interactive for students anyway, so making a connection with reading in those activities fits naturally with that plan.

In general, you should presume that most students are like the rest of the adult world; they have more things they want to do than there is time for. Students will make priority decisions about what activities get first attention, and you should think about how you move regular reading in your course toward the top of that list. Low-stakes requirements and/or direct use during class time are good ways to communicate that regular reading is essential in your class. Because effective use of lecture as a presentation method will remain a goal for many instructors, it would be a mistake to believe that simply listing reading assignments in your syllabus will be sufficient to generate a room of prepared learners.

MAKING MATERIAL CLEAR AND ACCESSIBLE

CONTEXTUALIZING MATERIAL

Using existing knowledge to learn something new helps make material clear and accessible. As Svinicki & McKeachie (201) state, relevant knowledge strengthens new learning by generating meaningful connections to new information. Learners typically use prior knowledge by creating either direct relations, in which they relate what’s known to what they’re trying to learn, such as comparing and contrasting the causes of two wars; or analogical relations, in which they use analogies to help relate familiar and new concepts that share some key characteristics but are different in other ways, such as using a post office to explain aspects of computer storage.

Davis (2009) shares additional strategies for helping students contextualize new information:

- Allow for the fact that different students learn, think and process information in different ways. Students vary in how they learn and how long they take to learn, and they don’t make uniform progress.
- Let students know what they are expected to learn. Emphasize key course concepts and important points in class sessions.
- Give students a framework within which to fit new facts. Use outlines, study questions or study guides to provide a conceptual framework or structure for concepts.
- Present material in ways meaningful to students. Students are
more likely to understand and remember new material if it’s already relevant, meaningful or important to them.

Limit the amount of information you present. Students can absorb only three or four new points in a single presentation.

Stress concepts, not facts. Too many details overwhelm students; broad concepts are more meaningful and more easily understood and remembered.

QUESTIONS

Question types

Different questions have different purposes. Understanding the different types and their uses can be a big help in structuring and leading discussions and lessons.

*Discussion starters* get students talking. Examples: Why do you think the AB Company filed for bankruptcy? What’s the issue this case poses?

*Probing and challenging questions* ask students to examine specific areas of a problem or situation: “What did the data and statistical report suggest?” “Did the president respond appropriately to the situation?”

*Connecting questions* ask students to make links between old and new information: “What similarities does this case share with a previous one?” “How does this outcome support the theory found in the textbook?”

*Predictive and hypothetical questions* help students apply what they learn to other situations: “What will happen if we boil the solution?” “Imagine that a primary value for this society was competition—how would that change things in the life of the village?”

*Analytical and evaluative questions* help students make informed judgments about the subject matter: “Can you rank the designs based on how aesthetically appealing they are?” “Which decision by the president was most effective?”

*Summary questions* help students articulate key points of a discussion or lesson: “What are the main points of this case so far?” “Can you summarize decisions the committee made their first year?” (adapted from Meyers and Jones 1993).
Questioning techniques

Bob Powers (1992) identifies ways instructors can ask and respond to questions effectively:

- Use open questions to solicit responses (see left).
- Use closed questions (see left) to end discussions.
- Provide correct, clear answers to students’ questions.
- If you are unable to answer a question, find the answer and report it back to students.
- Answer questions nondefensively.
- Occasionally refer questions back to students.
- Sometimes guide students to reach answers themselves.

Remember: Don’t ask a question, then answer it yourself.

**OBTAINING STUDENT FEEDBACK**

**DURING THE SEMESTER**

Teachers need continuous, accurate information about student learning. Asking students for their input and responding to it can reduce gaps between teaching and learning. Here are two techniques to help you assess and get feedback from your students during the semester (see also the box on the next page).

The one-minute paper is a brief, anonymous feedback instrument you can use up to three or four times a semester at the end of a class. Ask these two questions: “What is the most important thing you learned today in this class?” and “What important question remains unanswered?” At the beginning of the following class, discuss the results with students. Let them know that you’ve read the papers, and respond to their feedback.

In each of your classes, establish a signal for students to use if they want to call a time-out. At that point, you stop talking. Why? Because they can’t take notes fast enough. Because they have questions. Because they need a moment to consider a point. Maybe the best reason is to give them ownership in the class.

Think about it: When we read, we stop to read something a second time, to weigh a thought or to verify a detail. Time-outs encourage students and teachers to think about material, to interact, to integrate and to assimilate.
MIDTERM FEEDBACK

Many instructors find it useful to get feedback from students at mid-semester, rather than only at the end. This allows you to make mid-course corrections that can benefit both you and your students. For example, if your PowerPoint slides have too much text for students to read, finding this out by midterm gives you an opportunity to change your slide format.

If you decide to get midterm feedback, follow these principles:

1. Don’t ask if you don’t want to know. If you don’t intend to make changes to a course or modify an assignment that students are having difficulty with, it’s best to not ask for their input.

2. Let students know that you’ve read their comments and will respond to them as appropriate. Follow through and make changes that are feasible for that course. If students suggest changes that you can’t make, explain why not.

CTE has several feedback forms that can be used as is or adapted to your specific situation. Contact us at cte@ku.edu or 864-4199.

IMPLEMENTING UNIVERSAL DESIGN

There’s a great deal of interest within higher education in general, and KU in particular, that we offer our full range of programs to all capable students. Further, it’s not enough that we offer them, but we want very much to see that students succeed in those programs, regardless of background or identified needs.

Most faculty members are familiar with letters provided by identified students that specify accommodations for their special needs. An emerging understanding about these accommodations is that many of them are valuable enhancements in the way we teach that would benefit all learners. Instead of seeing them as disruptions or details to be worried about, some faculty members have added these ways of teaching into their courses for all students, resulting in greater success all around. This observation is the central idea in what’s known as Universal Design.

Universal design (UD) is a concept embraced by various groups: architects, special educators, AARP, and technologists, to name a few. Ron Mace, who coined the term, defined it as “the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design” (www.design.ncsu.edu). The intent of UD is to simplify life for everyone. Making products, communications and the built environment usable at little or no extra cost benefits people of all ages and abilities. Some of the impetus for UD was to

MUDDIEST POINT

The muddiest point is a simple technique that’s remarkably efficient; it provides a high return of information for a very low investment of time and energy.

Ask students to jot down a quick response to one question: What was the muddiest point in _____? In the blank, ask students to respond to a lecture, discussion, homework assignment or instructional method.

This technique helps you know what students find least clear or most confusing about a topic. You can use that feedback to discover which points are most difficult for students to learn and to guide them about which topics to focus on. At the same time, this technique requires students to quickly identify what they don’t understand and articulate muddy points, which engages them in higher-order thinking.
avoid unsightly add-on architectural fixes for inaccessible buildings, but in the long run people have come to see that enhanced access built into any activity makes life better for us all.

AN INSTRUCTIVE EXAMPLE

We all know the expression “It’s not rocket science,” which suggests that rocket science is really hard to understand. Physics teachers have been engaged in decades of research to make it possible for more people to succeed in studying their field. Some of that concern came because certain categories of students were failing physics at much higher rates than other students. The idea was to see if there were different ways to teach physics, while still holding the same rigorous standards of achievement, that would bring all students up to comparable levels of success. For example, women and students of color had historically higher rates of failure in introductory physics (as much as six times higher) than the overall average for college students. Is there a way to teach physics that eliminates those differences?

Many methods have been tried successfully, but one example is especially interesting. It’s called Studio Physics, pioneered by Robert Beichner of North Carolina State University, and it’s a very hands-on, inductive approach to teaching. Instead of sitting in lecture halls taking notes, students work in groups at round tables solving problems with materials right in front of them. It is VERY carefully constructed, not just random hanging out, and the professor and TAs are available for questions, consultation, and mini-lectures. They use the SAME exams as the traditional lecture courses, not a substitute criterion for knowledge, and students in studio classes do as well as or better than students in conventional courses. Most importantly, failure rates among women and students of color were lowered such that they were now indistinguishable from the overall student population.

It’s a classic example of universal design; there was an access problem for some students, the whole course was redesigned, and everyone benefitted. This method is used in many places, ranging from highly selective MIT to community colleges. Beichner examined lots of evidence to see who benefitted the most from having this “accommodation” form of teaching designed to help students who could not do rocket science. Overall the group whose understanding of physics was improved the most were the top third of physics students at MIT. Their gains were the largest.

SUMMARY

No one expects most KU teachers to undertake massive research or redesign projects like the one at NCSU. We do hope that you’ll take advantage of the diverse learners you encounter to keep your...
methods as accessible as possible. This will include accommodating special needs for individual students, and perhaps asking yourself whether all students might learn better if you taught them as you teach/measure accommodated students.

Your first responsibility is to make accommodations requested for individual students in your classes; that’s federal law and common courtesy. Beyond that, however, each new student gives you an opportunity to ask about your own practices. Are there ways that you could enhance the learning for your students? We often most enjoy teaching honors students or other students who are most like we were during our education years; these are people who learn easily and quickly from abstract texts, who are prepared to learn from conceptual lectures, and whose intrinsic interest in learning requires little motivation. However, students who are more challenging to teach can motivate us to extend our teaching practices so that we can have a broader impact upon the entire student population.

Take time to consider the examples found in these guidelines. The Studio Physics example highlights the importance of inductive, hands-on learning, and it revealed that students who were thought to be unteachable were actually quite capable of high levels of performance. In the section on Engagement we pointed out the importance of embedding work into meaningful contexts. As academics we value the most abstract version of our understanding, but there’s evidence that ideas embedded in familiar contexts are more understandable and approachable than those offered in the most abstract symbols or without context. You can reach all your students better by putting your ideas into settings that connect with their lives and understanding. In the section on Motivation we suggested that there is a place in higher education for offering repeatable assignments; there are times when it is better to have everyone learn than to make differentiations among learners. Research indicates that more students can succeed at higher levels of learning when they are allowed or required to truly master the foundational skills and content in a field. Everyone benefits when ideas and skills are learned thoroughly and deeply, even if the method was originally intended to help those whose background or preparation left them less ready for academic performance.

Universal Design is not the product of misguided government policy or special favors for those who are disadvantaged. It’s an opportunity to see new ways to increase the success of all students and to build them into the fabric of our profession. We’ll design successful new courses rather than put obvious add-on procedures to alleviate barriers in our old ways of teaching.

**UD STRATEGIES**

**Class climate.** Reflect high values with respect to diversity and inclusiveness. Invite students to discuss accommodations or other learning needs.

**Access, usability and safety.** Ensure that activities, materials and equipment are usable by all students and that all student characteristics are addressed regarding safety. Develop safety procedures for all students; label equipment simply, in large print; repeat printed directions orally.

**Delivery.** Vary methods of instruction. Use multiple modes to deliver content and engage students—lectures, collaborative learning, hands-on activities, etc.

**Information resources.** Ensure that course materials are accessible. Choose printed materials and prepare a syllabus early to allow students to start readings and assignments before class begins and to allow time to arrange alternate formats.

**Interaction.** Encourage interactions between students and instructor and among students; ensure that communication methods are accessible. Assign group work for which learners support each other and that values different skills and roles.

**Feedback.** Provide feedback regularly. Allow students to get feedback on parts of big projects before the final is due.

**Assessment.** Regularly assess progress with multiple methods; adjust instruction accordingly.

**Accommodation.** Know how to get materials in alternate formats, reschedule classrooms and arrange other accommodations for students with disabilities (Burgstahler 2007).
Representing Teaching

In some ways, representing teaching is like creating a sculpture: both have many dimensions and take form over time. Your representation will be both a product and a process, so it’s important to document how your teaching evolves over time, including how students’ learning has improved.

As a graduate student, you are most likely frequently caught up in the many activities involved in balancing your work as both student and teacher. Putting together a representation of your teaching for others to read may fall low on your priority list as you juggle writing papers and grading papers or conducting experiments and grading lab reports. However, if you build a record of your teaching as you go along, then representing the teaching portion of your professional life may become the easiest part of putting together such documentation for those who may need or want to read it, such as colleagues, supervisors or potential employers. The natural rhythm and occasions of each semester require you to create teaching materials, give and read assignments, and provide evaluation to students. If you spend only a few hours each semester capturing a small portion of that work as an archive, you’ll have this representation mostly complete.

This portion of the guide lays out a simple plan that will allow you to create your teaching record in a straightforward way, while also getting useful feedback that will help you accomplish with your teaching what you care about. You can both enjoy your teaching more by taking these small steps and create the materials you’ll need to present when you are asked about your teaching. You’re already doing 95% of what’s needed just in the act of delivering your courses; the marginal effort to learn from your teaching and share it with others is very small in comparison.

THREE PERSPECTIVES

At a very basic level the components of quality teaching include:

- identifying appropriate content and goals for a course
- designing good opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning
- creating and carrying out an instructional plan of teaching and learning activities
- creating a social environment in which students are able and willing to engage those activities to good effect.

The previous portions of this guide have addressed those components so you can think about how to achieve your own goals as a
When representing teaching, you’ll want to make those components visible to the people who would care about them, receiving from those audiences the feedback you need to develop your teaching. Faculty members in your department are the appropriate audience for your construction of the goals and content of your courses; they have knowledge and experience in the field and can offer useful observations about your decisions in developing a course. Students are the appropriate audience for some portions of course delivery; they engage in the listening, writing, reading and thinking that you arrange, and they can give you feedback on how well they think those activities are delivered. Finally, your perspective is also essential to the representation.

Readers of your work will want to see how your teaching is evolving, both in terms of your practices and your students’ achievements. When you reflect on how well students’ learning is matching your goals, you give an important view into your professional work as a teacher. No one starts out an expert at teaching or research; we get better at both as we learn by looking at products of our work and listening to our audiences’ comments.

**PREPARING TO REPRESENT YOUR TEACHING**

**AVOID “PEDAGOGIC AMNESIA”**

Keeping a record of what you have done, along with notes about why you did what you did, is the best way to avoid what Lee Shulman has described as “pedagogic amnesia.” It’s easy to forget which assignments clearly showed whether or not students understood a key concept. Did grading essay exams take that much time? At the end of a semester, what gaps were evident in students’ learning, calling for a restructuring of part of a course?

To keep a record of a course, you may wish to compile the following items.

1. Syllabus
2. List of course goals (may be included in the syllabus)
3. Brief description of how assignments relate to course goals (may be included in the syllabus)
4. Samples of student work at various levels (high, mid, low)
5. Notes on student performance:
   - Were the course goals appropriate?
   - How many students/what percentage achieved course goals?
   - What gaps in student learning are evident?
   - What material needs more time or a new approach?
What gaps in student learning are evident?  
What material needs more time or a new approach?

If you gather these kinds of materials for each course you teach, you’ll have a complete record of your teaching. From it, you’ll be able to illustrate the trajectory of your teaching accomplishments for your reviews.

**MAKE LEARNING VISIBLE TO YOUR TEACHING COMMUNITY**

After a course, a successful teacher takes evidence of learning found in student work and reflects upon what it says about the course. It’s challenging to identify weaknesses in an instructional design and plan changes that might benefit future students. In many cases, this involves making the results of our teaching public and seeking comment from others, much as we do in other parts of our creative lives.

In the process of offering a typical course you’ll likely spend about 50 hours in contact with students (in class, labs, studios or consultations), and probably the same amount of time outside class in preparation, reading student work, and general course management. Rather than discard the products of that substantial amount of time, it’s very useful to set aside half a day at the end of the semester to write down your impressions of a course. You could comment on which topics or issues you would emphasize more or de-emphasize in your next offering. You could discuss how well you felt the assignments, projects and exams represented the skills and knowledge you hoped to see in your students. Making notes about such changes is best accomplished right after the course is over, while the ideas and experiences are still fresh in your mind.

You also can save a random but representative sample of student work as an archive of what you and they accomplished together (see Student Consent Form, page 72). It’s disheartening to a teacher to think that after years of teaching there has been no progress in advancing students’ understanding of our field. If you have a small but accessible record of some key performances from several offerings of a course, you can review them for any trends. Maybe you see some consistent problems that you can address with more time, different materials or additional practice. Maybe you see some improvement over time that was not apparent to you in the midst of delivering courses. Ultimately this is why we teach, to help students appreciate and understand our fields as we do, and having a small archive allows you to see how you are doing in a longer perspective.

Whatever your field of research or creative activity, you keep archives of your work. You have tapes of performances, examples
of studio work, lab data, notes from library visits or interviews; in many ways you capture the important products of your inquiry into your field. Given the amount of time you likely spend each semester on teaching, it would be a shame to lose all the benefits of that work by not developing some record of what was accomplished. The syllabus, assignments and student work are done anyway, so you should not simply throw them away. Adding a half-day of reflection and writing, to capture your insights at the moment of greatest understanding, is a wise investment. It will help you grow as a teacher and achieve your goals, and ultimately those reflections can document your intellectual work as a teacher.

On page 73 you’ll find a document titled “Course Notes,” which is a page of prompts you could use to guide that consolidation of your teaching experience at the end of a course. You likely would not do this for every course, every semester, but picking a single course you teach frequently would give you an opportunity to learn from your teaching and to show your colleagues the intellectual skill you bring to your teaching.

EVALUATION OF TEACHING

Reflecting on your teaching as a GTA at KU will prepare you for two things: department review and evaluation and finding a full-time position after earning your degree. The following sections outline how to utilize the three perspectives mentioned above—self-reflection, faculty review and student evaluation—to document your own growth as a teacher. Documenting this growth effectively will make it easy to represent yourself to those who request that kind of information, whether it is a department chair assigning classes or a search committee at another university.

SELF-REFLECTION

KU has established guidelines for faculty members’ reflections on their teaching. The prompts for such reflection are applicable to GTA reflection as well. The guidelines ask:

- Describe the topics you teach and give one or two examples of the intellectual goals you have for students.
- How do you help students achieve course goals?
- How do you know that students are achieving these goals?
- How have your teaching experiences shaped your ongoing goals and practices as a teacher?

Your answers to these questions will form the basis of the self-reflection portion of your teaching representation. You can see that this set of questions asks about the kind of consideration of your teaching that’s been highlighted in this teaching guide. If you’ve
QUESTIONS FOR PEER REVIEWS OF PORTFOLIOS

Is the material in this course appropriate for the topic, for the curriculum, and for the institution?

Are the intellectual goals for students well articulated and congruent with course content and mission?

Are there opportunities (in or out of class) for students to practice the skills embedded in the course goals?

Do students receive useful and relevant feedback on their performance in the course?

Does performance requested of students include challenging levels of conceptual understanding and critical evaluation of material appropriate to the level of the course and of the students?

Are the forms of evaluation and assessment appropriate to the stated goals of the course?

Has this instructor made a sincere effort to ensure that students achieve the goals for the course?

Is there evidence the instructor has tried to improve teaching practices based on consideration of students’ performance?

been taking time each semester (half a day) to think back on a course, you’ll have this part already done. It’s most important to show the growth of a course, rather than document every aspect of every course. By capturing the essence of how a course has changed over multiple offerings, you provide your reviewers with a good representation of your thinking, planning and growing as a teacher.

REVIEW OF TEACHING

The Memorandum of Agreement includes the following statement about GTAs’ evaluation:

“Each department or school shall evaluate its GTAs each semester using a method to be determined by the school or department. The method may be as informal as one-on-one meetings with the appropriate supervisor or reviews of student course evaluation results, or may be more formal and structured, as deemed appropriate by the department.”

If your department has structured, formal reviews of GTAs’ teaching, those reviews could include an analysis of the course material you selected, your targeted goals for students, methods of measuring learning, indicators of success in learning, and use of time with students during scheduled classes, studios or labs. See the box at left for questions a colleague could ask when looking through your teaching materials and talking with you.

It’s very important that you make these materials available to colleagues early in your time at KU, so you can get constructive feedback as your courses evolve. Obviously, this helps you become more skilled as a teacher, but it also helps you learn how to represent your teaching.

STUDENT VOICE

Student evaluations of teaching are an important part of the feedback that faculty members and GTAs receive. The Kansas Board of Regents requires that student evaluations include questions about students’ perception of delivery of instruction, assessment of learning, availability of faculty members to students, and whether course goals and objectives were met. At KU, departments use various forms to obtain this feedback. Check with your unit chair for a copy of the form used in your department.

It’s crucial that we learn to read student feedback. KU has moved away from asking students to give an overall rating of a teacher, and instead asking students to answer questions about specific features of a teacher’s performance. Whether or not they’re learning will be examined by looking at their work, not their impres-
sions. Students are a good audience to tell us if we’re clear, accessible, respectful or timely. They may also be able to tell us if the activities we give them are well aligned with the ways we evaluate their learning. These and similar questions can help us see ourselves through the eyes of others, and these are important others. We’re asking them to do a lot of work, and it’s useful to have a cooperative relationship with our students.

A new student survey of teaching form became available for departments in Fall 2008, along with a corresponding report form. See page 74 for copies of these forms.

**COURSE PORTFOLIOS**

A course portfolio represents a teacher’s most effective practices. The course portfolio can allow you to explore how effectively the goals of student learning are being achieved, from your point of view and from the perspective of student work. In this way, student and teacher practices inform and serve each other; this bi-directional relationship is captured in the course portfolio.

The structure of a course portfolio explains course goals, how goals were implemented, how student performance was achieved, and the teacher’s reflection on what was achieved and what can be bettered in future offerings. A richer portfolio tracks a course’s evolution, showing what was learned and improved over time. In contrast to other reviews, students’ voice and performance is evident through student work, not through student ratings. Also, instead of a generalized teaching statement, the reflections of the teacher are encompassed in an in-depth analysis of his or her teaching and future teaching goals (Bernstein 2006).

When putting together a portfolio of your teaching in a particular course, ask yourself a few key questions to help you refine your focus.

- What course (or particular subcomponent) would you like to represent? Why have you chosen this course? How does it reflect your approach to teaching?
- What are your key goals or types of understanding that you are trying to encourage in your students?
- Where in your course will you look for student understanding? What assignments provide “data” about how well students are achieving your goals?
- How well do you think the assignments address/measure those goals? Could they be improved to better tap this understanding? How?

Once you’re chosen a course or subcomponent to analyze, you should think about how you want to measure student learning,
such as examining test scores, projects or papers. Some possibilities for analysis might be shifts in overall grades compared to past courses, shifts in grades based on a consistent rubric (See page 76 for examples of rubrics) or increases in pre- and post-test understanding of material. Once you decide what material you want to examine, plan on keeping some representative samples of student work to demonstrate understanding (i.e., two A’s, two B’s, two C’s, etc.). Before saving this work, make sure to obtain consent forms from your students, which can be found on page 72. Once you have collected this information, you should be ready to reflect on it at the end of the semester, decide how you want to change your course in the future and finally put everything together in a portfolio. KU provides an online tool to help with portfolio-building for those who would like to do it online. The KEEP Toolkit is an online portfolio tool that members of the KU community can access with their online ID. It can be found at http://portfolio.ku.edu.

COURSE PORTFOLIOS ON CTE’S WEBSITE

Below are a few of the course portfolios posted on the CTE web site as of Spring 2009 (www.cte.ku.edu/portfolios):

Creating Teachable Moments in a Large Research Methods Class

From Recitation to Group Dynamics: Transforming a Civil Engineering Course

Making Biomaterial Development Real to Students

The Evolution of a Term Project

Inspiring Meaningful Reflection in Preservice Teachers

Facilitating Participation and Relevancy in a Content Literacy Course

Transitioning from Lecture to Group Problem-Solving Activities

Developing Evaluation Criteria for Quality Student Work

Engaging Students in Research Methods

Thinking About the Process of Scientific Inquiry

Re-envisioning Teaching Graduate Seminars

Creating a Virtual Museum of African Art

Using Evidence-Based Principles in Clinical Practice

Improving Students’ Understanding and Appreciation of Spanish Culture

Using an Online Tool to Better Prepare Students for Class

In addition, the CTE site includes course portfolios on assessment, community-engaged learning, engaging students, re-envisioning a course, teaching and technology and writing to learn.
HELPING STUDENTS THINK LIKE A SCHOLAR IN YOUR FIELD

Using your discipline as a framework for learning engages students and enables them to develop practical and cognitive skills integral to your field. To provide a disciplinary context for learning, first identify concepts, perspectives and problem-solving skills necessary for success in the field. Because these may be skills and thought processes that you’ve long since internalized, you may find it useful to observe the approach beginning students take toward material and compare it to your own expert approach to identify the skills new students lack. Next, develop lessons and assignments that engage students in the practice of the discipline. Finally, plan assessments to measure students’ thinking processes and approaches to problem-solving within the field, as opposed to focusing on course content alone.

Additional considerations when planning your course:

- Model the ways scholars work by posing questions at the beginning of lecture, allowing students to pose possible answers, then using lecture material to discriminate among correct and incorrect answers.

- Challenge students to apply the ways of thinking you are teaching to other aspects of their lives; this will close the gap between students’ lived experience and academic disciplines.

- Pay attention to learning as a developmental process as you plan lessons. What differences exist between the kind of thinking we might expect of students who are just beginning study in your discipline versus those who are ready to graduate?

- Design your course to help students think in their disciplines, but also challenge them to question those ways of thinking.

COGNITIVE APPRENTICESHIP

Brown, Collins and Duguid (1989) explain that knowledge of any kind can never be separated from the activity in which it is deployed, and, as such, learning is always situated within authentic activity (activities that are the ordinary practices of a culture). Classroom instruction, then, should be a process of enculturation, by which students learn the tools they need for a certain activity within a context that allows them to see how members of that community—that is, scholars in the field—use those tools. Learn-
Group learning is particularly important for any sort of situated learning, as group work is necessary for enculturation to take place. In fact, most work outside of school takes place collaboratively, not in the isolated situations often created within the classroom setting. Students benefit from group work by finding multiple solutions to problems, discovering the many roles needed to solve certain problems, and confronting ineffective strategies and misconceptions. (See page 21 for Using Group Work.)

**MAXIMIZING MULTIMEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY**

**MULTIMEDIA OPTIONS**

Multimedia can enhance your teaching experience and students’ learning. Classroom multimedia could include Powerpoint, Camtasia screen and audio recording, digital recording, animations, student voting machines, document projection systems, transparencies, film, filmstrips and whiteboards.

Digital multimedia can be stored in Blackboard, a student/instructor Web-based interface for e-mail, asynchronous discussion groups, digital whiteboard, file exchange and storage, scores and grades, blogging, and online testing with secure exam.

**CLICKERS**

Classroom responses systems (CRS; also referred to as “clickers”) can be an effective tool for instruction, particularly in large classes. Clickers are individual, hand-held units that use infrared or radio frequencies to transmit responses to a receiver. After an instructor poses a question, students use clickers to answer it. Computer software then generates a histogram for displaying the responses to the class. CRS primarily improve learning outcomes by increasing active participation via individual student responses or peer interaction, by allowing students to answer anonymous questions that help jumpstart discussions on difficult topics, by providing feedback to teachers about how much material students are retaining so that lectures and class activities can be adjusted, and by giving students an idea of how their understanding of the material compares to their classmates. Teachers can also use clickers for mid-semester evaluations of the class as a whole.

However, technology alone doesn’t enhance learning: Instructors...
need to plan how CRS can help meet learning goals, create carefully worded questions, and have flexible teaching plans so student feedback can influence a lecture’s rate and direction.

When used wisely and creatively, CRS provide many benefits to instructors and students, including engaging students, catalyzing class discussion, monitoring attendance, evaluating student mastery of concepts, adapting lectures in response to student understanding, increasing peer interaction and instruction, assessing student learning from assigned homework, and test preparation. Common challenges are these: Students may resist paying for their individual clickers; instructors must manage technical difficulties; guidelines for lost, broken or forgotten clickers must be established; both students and instructors will experience a steep learning curve for using clicker software; instructors must help students change expectations (they’re no longer anonymous in a large class!); less material will be covered in class; and clicker efficacy depends on the quality of questions instructors ask. Most challenges can be minimized by planning ahead. If you plan to use CRS, contact IDS (864-2600). Another great resource for information and advice on using clickers can be found in the “Clicker Resource Guide,” which can be found at the following address: http://cwsei.ubc.ca/resources/clickers.htm.

TEACHING ONLINE

In many ways, teaching online courses requires the same sort of preparation as teaching face-to-face courses, but this increasingly popular method for students to fulfill degree requirements can also pose great challenges for students and instructors who are not used to a learning environment that can come across as impersonal and overwhelming.

According to Dr. Judith V. Boettcher, faculty who are new to teaching online courses may find these ten best practices helpful:

Best Practice 1: Be present at the course site

Liberally using communication tools such as announcements, discussion board postings, and forums communicates to students that the faculty member cares about who they are, cares about their questions and concerns, and is generally “present” to teach. The best online faculty, according to students, are faculty who show their presence multiple times a week, and at best, daily. Setting clear expectations, as to when you will be present and when you will not, at the beginning of a course is very helpful, and it can reduce the need for daily presence if that is not your particular style. Setting regular times when you can meet in a virtual classroom or be available by email or texting, and thus be available—almost in real time similar to office hours, can be invaluable.
Best Practice 2: Create a supportive online course community

To develop a supportive online community, design the course with a balanced set of dialogues. This means designing a course so that the three dialogues of faculty to student, student to student and student to resource are about equal. In most online courses, the dialogue of faculty to student is provided with mini-lectures in text or video or audio podcasts, weekly coaching and reminder announcements, and explanations/interactions with students.

Best Practice 3: Be clear about how you will communicate and how much time students should be working on the course each week

This best practice cannot be overemphasized. Include on your course site a set of expectations for how students communicate and dialogue online and how they communicate with you. For example, many faculty tell students that they can expect a response within 24 hours during the week. Often before a major test or assignment, faculty will agree to hold special office hours by computer, being available either by chat/live classroom or email, or phone. In the interests of time and community, it is best to use a tool where responses and content can be shared with everyone and archived for flexibility in access and review.

Best Practice 4: Use a variety of large group, small group, and individual work experiences

A community works well when there are various activities and experiences. Online courses can be more enjoyable and effective when students have the opportunity to brainstorm and work through concepts and assignments with either one or two or more fellow students. At the same time some students work and learn best on their own. So, building in options and opportunities for students to work together and individually is recommended.

Best Practice 5: Use both synchronous and asynchronous activities

When online courses were first introduced, they were almost totally asynchronous—an updated version of correspondence courses. Now we have tools that make it possible to do almost everything we do in campus classrooms. Plus we can often engage learners in collaborative activities, and what happens is recorded and archived and there for review and occasionally revision.

Sometimes there is nothing better than a real-time interactive discussion; other times the requirement to think, plan, write, and summarize is what makes learning most effective for an individual. The variety of activities that are now possible online makes it possible to create many types of effective learning environments.
Best Practice 6: Early in the term (about week 3), ask for informal feedback on “How is the course going?” and “Do you have any suggestions?”

Course evaluations have been called “post mortem” evaluations as they are done after the fact, and nothing can be changed to increase satisfaction or facilitate learning. Early feedback surveys or informal discussions ask students to provide feedback on what is working well in a course and what might help them have a better experience. This early feedback is done early in the course so corrections and modifications can be made. It is an easy opening for students who might have comments or suggestions or questions.

Best Practice 7: Prepare discussion posts that invite questions, discussions, reflections, and responses

Discussions in an online course are the equivalent of class discussions in a face-to-face class. A key difference, of course, is that these discussions are asynchronous, providing time for thought and reflection and requiring written and or audio responses that become part of a course archive.

Best Practice 8: Focus on content resources and applications and links to current events and examples that are easily accessed

Students want to learn anywhere, anytime, and often while they are doing other things. Carrying around large, heavy textbooks and even laptops sometimes feels like an anachronism. Many students welcome content that is mobile and can be accessed via smartphones, iPads, or iPods. For many courses and disciplines, however, textbooks are not yet available in digital form, so this best practice applies mostly to supplementary material and library resources. A reference document with detailed instructions on accessing library resources is included in most courses. Additionally, a key member of the instructional team is the library reference person assigned to supporting online learners.

Best Practice 9: Combine core concept learning with customized and personalized learning

This best practice combines a number of basic learning principles. Very briefly, it means that faculty identify the core concepts to be learned in a course—the performance goals—and then mentor learners through a set of increasingly complex and even customized projects applying these core concepts. Many online learners within professional certificate programs are working professionals. Supporting learners with their professional goals that are closely linked to the performance goals of a course and even beyond the course parameters is a win-win for the learners individually and as a class. How does one do this? Building in options and choices in assignments and special projects is a way to do this.

ONLINE DISCUSSION BOARDS

From looking other people’s rubrics and my experience in using discussion boards, I learned to be very clear about my expectations of how I wanted students to use discussion boards. I used discussion posts to count for participation, check for understanding, and encourage peer learning. I would design several open ended questions about the topic we were studying that week and would assign students to answer one of the questions by Friday night at midnight. This gave them time to read the material before answering. I gave very specific instructions on their answer. They had to make a strong argument for their answer and had to back it up with references to resources they used for their argument. I then expected them to respond to a classmate’s post. Again they had to back up their response with resources. The response had to be completed by Sunday night. I checked daily for their discussion (you can also set up Blackboard to e-mail you when there is a new post). I also set up a discussion board for Q&A, so that when a student had a question he or she could post it and everyone could benefit from the answer. It is good to subscribe all students to this discussion board so that they automatically get an e-mail note when something is posted.

—Kim Glover
Best Practice 10: Plan a good closing and wrap activity for the course

As courses conclude, it is easy to forget the value of a good closing experience. By the end of a semester, students are likely to be harried and not take time to do the planning that can reduce stress. In *Getting Things Done*, David Allen notes that making a list helps us clear the “psychic ram” of our brains, and we feel more relaxed and in control. Once we make a list and schedule, we don’t have to continually remind ourselves of what needs to be done and when. Consider providing a wrap-up list for your online students.

A list of references and more helpful information is available on Boettcher’s website, Designing for Learning, which can be found at: http://www.designingforlearning.info/

**TEACHING LARGE CLASSES**

Paul Atchley asks an important question regarding teaching a large class: How does a teacher offer meaningful instruction in a large lecture class? Faculty members who teach large classes face other issues, as well, such as:

- Are there ways to reduce student anonymity?
- How can I make a large class interactive, so that it’s more than just lecture?
- How can I encourage student writing in large classes?
- What types of tests are feasible in large classes?

Instructors of large classes have found ways to meet some of the challenges this particular teaching situation presents.

Val Smith, KU ecology and evolutionary biology/environmental studies, offers these ideas:

> “Large classes present a special teaching challenge. Making consistent eye contact while lecturing is much more difficult, except with students in the first few rows, and the likelihood of students using their laptops for instant messaging and Web surfing (rather than taking notes) is greatly enhanced. How do you keep a large classroom audience engaged and actively interested in material? My solution to this dilemma in Biology 152 reflects two key goals derived from my own early classroom experiences with Clark Bricker, who for decades excelled at teaching large sections of introductory Chemistry at KU.

> My first and most important goal is to personalize the lecture delivery: I learn the names of several key students, try to learn
something about them, and then actively refer to them periodically in class. In Spring 2007, I team taught a course with Chris Haufler. I consistently sat in the same seat throughout most of the first half of the course, which was taught by my colleague. I struck up pre-class dialogs with students on either side of me and got to know them. Later, when I began my portion of the course, I often walked up to and called them by name during my lectures. For example, ‘Mike is sitting just in front of me right now taking notes. Is he thinking about breathing while he is writing? No! He doesn’t need to, because his central nervous system takes care of that automatically.’ In doing so, I tried to make the students feel like they were in a smaller, more intimate classroom setting; that each of them was not an anonymous, faceless member of a large crowd; and that I cared about them as individuals.

My second goal is to demand active participation. Here’s an example: There’s a strong difference between the behavior of non-myelinated neurons (along which nerve impulses are conducted smoothly and without interruption, akin to an electrical current flowing through a strand of wire) versus myelinated neurons (in which nerve impulses hop from one node to another, more like a frog hopping along a rope). I first asked all the students on the ground floor of the classroom to start a continuous “wave,” beginning with students along the left-most aisle, sweeping across the classroom, and ending at the right-most aisle. I likened this smooth flow of movement to nerve impulses in non-myelinated neurons. Then, I requested that the students in the central section of the classroom remain unmoving, and requested that the students on the right-hand side of the auditorium begin their portion of the wave at the very instant that the left-hand section’s wave ended: The flow of movement jumped over the central section of students, just like a nerve impulse jumps and speeds past the sections of myelinated neurons that are covered by Schwann cells. No one leaving the classroom that day forgot the difference!”

Smith’s suggestion to personalize lecture delivery is a good starting point for reducing students’ feelings of anonymity in large classes. As Svinicki & McKeachie (2011) report, social psychological research has shown that people who are anonymous feel less personal responsibility, which damages morale and order. Also, the distance students feel from an instructor and a loss of interpersonal bonds with a teacher and with other students diminishes motivation for learning. To combat these problems, see the box at right.

In a large class, it’s possible to have students work in pairs or small groups to discuss a topic or solve a problem. Tim Shaftel, KU School of Business, demonstrates using small group discus-
sion in a large class in CTE’s video, “Opening the Classroom Door.” Other ways to involve students include in-class debates or interviews, or out-of-class study groups and online discussions.

Many faculty members hesitate to use writing assignments as part of a large lecture course. For formal papers, using rubrics is an effective way to ease the grading load; see Designing Writing Assignments, page 9. Not all assignments must be formal, graded papers, however. Bean (2011) suggests that teachers shouldn’t feel “compelled to read everything students write, which is equivalent, I would argue, to a piano teacher who listens to tapes of students’ home practice sessions … The trick is to read some of it, not all of it” (p. 99). Using short, informal writing activities such as reading logs or journals, practice essay exams, or elaborated thesis statements, will benefit students. For other ideas, contact the KU Writing Center (864-2399).

In large classes, giving exams presents unique challenges. In a class of 30 students, it takes just a few minutes to hand out exam sheets. In a class of 1,000 students, passing out exams can reduce testing time by ten minutes or more. See the box at left for suggestions regarding exam logistics.

When you’re handing back graded papers, Lowman (1987) recommends asking student volunteers to take stacks of alphabetized papers to different sections of the room. You can direct students to the section where their paper will be (e.g., last name A-F in the right front corner of the room).

**TEACHING STUDIO OR ONE-ON-ONE CLASSES**

Teaching individual students occurs in various settings: architecture, music, art, physical education, as well as independent study in any discipline. Svinicki & McKeachie (2011) note there’s relatively little research on one-on-one teaching, but several principles apply:

Allow students maximum freedom to experience successful completion of a task or part of a task, but give enough guidance so that they won’t get bogged down by errors. Learning experiences should move from simple to complex, with steps ordered so that each new problem can be solved.

Students need practice, followed by feedback.

Too much feedback may be more than the student can assimilate. Don’t try to correct everything on the first try.

Feedback can discourage students. Provide some encouragement, as well as identification of errors.
Feedback about mistakes won’t help if the learner doesn’t know what to do to avoid errors. Suggest what to try next.

High-level skills are developed through much practice. One successful performance doesn’t signify the automatization that’s necessary for consistent success.

Practice with varied examples is often motivating and more likely to transfer to later performances than is simple drill and repetition.

Students need opportunities for self-evaluation with feedback about the evaluation, as well as the work being evaluated.

Cynthia Colwell Dunn, KU music and dance, shares these observations about teaching one-on-one:

“Individualized instruction requires a special set of teaching skills, whether analyzing students’ work in studios, mentoring a graduate student through a research project, or evaluating behaviors in off-campus practica. There are a variety of issues to think about prior to, as well as during, one-on-one experiences that are different from the typical classroom experience.

When teaching one-on-one, it’s important to determine guidelines for availability, as well as setting boundaries for the relationship. In the area of availability, will you establish set office hours or be available by appointment or on a drop-in basis? What parameters will you set for contacting … at your office, by email, or on your office, home or cell phone? In the area of setting boundaries, will students call you by your first name or your professional salutation? What kind of contact will you have with students outside the arranged time? Will you establish a personal relationship? Will this be impacted by gender or by age? How will you balance professional versus personal ‘sharing’ (i.e., teacher versus therapist role identification)? Both of these areas are impacted by your philosophy and the situation but are imperative to consider prior to and/or during the establishment of the teacher/student interaction.

Approaching your teaching preparation is markedly different in the one-on-one setting. When formatting the lesson, you as the teacher have to determine what kind of balance of teaching strategies and student engagement is going to be appropriate. Will you lecture or do more exploratory or seminar type teaching? How much will students be responsible for presenting content information? How will you provide feedback—oral, written or both? What types of prompts will you use to facilitate discussion when it is just the two of you? Will you create a learning agreement that functions much like a con-
Although there aren’t easy, right answers to these questions, thinking about them as you embark on one-on-one teaching can mark the difference between success and frustration.”

**TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

Current best practices in foreign language teaching recognize the roles of input and interaction in the acquisition of a second language. Input can be defined as the language that a student hears (or reads) that contains a message to which she or he is expected to attend, and interaction can be described as any conversational (or written) exchange in which the student must communicate with one or more partners. Providing ample opportunities for exposure to input and encouraging student interaction in the target language are at the core of successful learning in the foreign language classroom.

Another consideration for the foreign language teacher is the mission statement of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, which states: “At the core of a liberal arts education are research and informed engagement with global issues, multiculturalism, and diverse experiences; these goals represent our greatest hope for a better understanding of differences in the human condition and the potential for enhanced tolerance.” The foreign language classroom is uniquely positioned to engage KU students in the endeavor to become informed citizens of our global community by fostering exploration of the cultural realities of the peoples who speak the language being studied and encouraging students to reflect on their own cultural experiences and practices.

Successful foreign language teaching and learning can make use of a wide variety of approaches and practices while keeping these fundamental goals in focus. Based on the experience of foreign language faculty members, several factors can improve the experience for teachers and students:

1. Consider using the target language as much as possible, if not exclusively, during class time. Students have such limited contact with the language that maximizing every opportunity to provide input and foster interaction is crucial. A natural tendency is to switch back to English to take care of classroom and course management, but resisting this instinct will lead to authentic opportunities for communication. Students will attend to the message in the input and interact in order to indicate what they have not understood in the target language, especially when teachers talk about what will be on the next exam!
2. Encourage students to work collaboratively in groups for a period of time during each class meeting to provide opportunities for interaction. When one instructor attempts to interact with each individual student, no matter how engaging the instructor and active the participation, the occasion for target language use by students will be necessarily limited. In contrast, when students are accustomed to communicating and working collaboratively with each other, the opportunities for negotiating meaning increase significantly.

3. Make use of the wide variety of resources available at KU. The Blackboard course management system provides a suite of tools that can be exploited by the foreign language teacher, such as Wikis for collaborative writing and group projects, blogs for journal writing, and Wimba (a tool for synchronous and/or asynchronous verbal communication) for oral interaction outside of class or creating listening comprehension assignments or oral testing from personal computers. The Ermal Garinger Academic Resource Center, an invaluable resource for foreign language teachers, has a knowledgeable and accessible staff that is always willing to collaborate on projects to foster cultural learning and help teachers with using technology in the classroom. Other resources on campus, such as the International Student Association, work collaboratively with foreign language teachers to facilitate interaction with native speakers at KU.

**TEACHING QUANTITATIVE COURSES**

In a broad sense, a “quantitative course” is one in which mathematical or statistical analysis of quantitative data is a main component of the syllabus or the prerequisites for such a course. The three main issues are placement, technology and active learning.

**PLACEMENT—STUDENT PREPARATION**

When teaching such a course, it is essential to understand students’ preparation. High school students enroll at a public state university, like KU, with a wide range of quantitative backgrounds. The first step is to have clearly defined prerequisites for the course and enforce them. Even with enforced prerequisites, students will enter the course with a broad range of skills. The current teaching of mathematics in high schools varies from one school district to another and is different than what most instructors experienced (see NCTM standards reference in the sidebar on page 57). It is not enough to require a passing grade in a high school college algebra course; scores on a national examination, e.g., math ACT, are a better determination of the required skills.

**REFERENCES FOR TEACHING QUANTITATIVE CLASSES**

Principles and standards for school mathematics from the National Council of Teachers in Mathematics: [http://standards.nctm.org/](http://standards.nctm.org/)


Mathematics technology tools at Math Forum: [http://mathforum.org/mathtools](http://mathforum.org/mathtools)
Students should be held accountable for the necessary skills required for the course. Additional on-line supplementary material or handouts can be used to help students review the necessary skills without consuming class time.

TECHNOLOGY

Technology should be integrated in a quantitative course. From graphing calculators to Google spreadsheets, there are endless possibilities for using technology. Students use technology daily in many sophisticated venues. Incorporating technology in the course makes the content real and applicable and extends exploration in and outside the classroom. Additional resources (technical support and release time to develop or implement new material) need to be considered in those courses where technology has not been used before. If not carefully planned and tested, the technology component could result in a big loss of time and learning opportunities.

ACTIVE LEARNING

As in with any other subject, students learn better when they are engaged with the subject matter. Learning a new concept or methodology can be developed as a creative process. The students will learn to appreciate the possibilities and constraints of the discipline. Solving problems in small groups is still one of the most effective methods. Different approaches to the same problem should be encouraged and motivated. Students must learn the logical foundations of the subject to insure that they understand the critical certainty of their solutions.

TEACHING IN SCIENCE LABORATORIES

Laboratories set science apart from many subjects. At their worst, labs are viewed as costly, time-consuming, “cookbook” approaches to experimentation. When taught well, however, laboratories can provide a unique experience for students to think like professional scientists, develop skills and techniques important to their discipline, and collaborate with peers.

During laboratories, instructors get to teach with concrete props. While props engage and involve students, they can also distract from the conceptual goals of the class. Clarify expectations early (e.g., “At the end of class the student should know how to set up and operate a …”) and provide adequate opportunities for students to practice using equipment. Ensuring that students possess necessary technical skills will better allow instructors and students to focus on learning the process of science.

Effective laboratories simulate the process of scientific inquiry.
One way to achieve this goal is to allow students to design and conduct individual experimental investigations as part of the course. Students can then experience the excitement that often accompanies scientific discovery, as well as practice critical thinking skills necessary for planning, executing, analyzing and interpreting a scientific study. Prepare students to interpret unexpected results by coordinating practical exercises with material taught in the lecture. If students have a solid foundation in the scientific principles that drive the experimental questions, they’ll have a context in which to interpret results, thereby linking and reinforcing concepts covered in both lab and lecture.

Laboratories provide an opportunity for—and necessitate—teacher involvement. Effective supervision will facilitate inquiry, allow instructors to recognize students having difficulties with fundamental concepts, and provide students with crucial links between data and scientific concepts as they analyze their data.

Helen Alexander and Cathy Collins, KU ecology and evolutionary biology, suggest the following:

“Laboratory courses are typically designed to give students hands-on experience in science. Students often like the interaction and small group activities. However, they can get frustrated by long class periods and a sense of chaos if laboratory exercises are poorly designed. Teachers, in turn, enjoy the opportunity to get to know students and teach experientially, but find that planning the course, carrying out the exercises, and grading the reports take much more time than the typical lecture course. Based on our experience, several factors can improve the experience for teachers and students:

1. Clarify the link between laboratory exercises and big picture course concepts. During the planning phase, identifying links will help instructors choose exercises that truly accomplish learning goals; while teaching, such links provide students a context in which to connect isolated laboratory lessons to broader course topics.

2. Time spent on logistics and advance planning are key to successful laboratory exercises. Laboratory classes can be derailed if procedures or equipment don’t work or supplies are missing. Because students will often have different backgrounds in the course content and other skills (e.g. use of statistics software, microcentrifuge, etc.), preparation of ‘how to’ handouts saves time for students and reduces frustration.

3. Ideally, laboratory classes should teach students to think like scientists by allowing them to pose questions, formulate hypotheses, and design and conduct studies that
address their hypotheses. Too often students look for a correct answer because laboratories are structured to obtain specific results. Allow for some portion of the lab course to be devoted to studies that are not cookbook in nature, then take advantage of the small group format to facilitate discussion of unexpected results.

4. Students need rapid feedback, both in terms of answers to questions on laboratory procedures and on laboratory write-ups. Teachers, however, can be overwhelmed by the workload of reading many papers. We can reduce frustration on both sides by breaking assignments into parts that are due on different dates and providing examples of the type of products we expect.”
KU Policies and Procedures

COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES

THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

In any vigorous intellectual community, people sometimes disagree. Disagreements are part of university life and shouldn’t be avoided. We should, in fact, expect to find different opinions, on both matters of fact and matters of value. But everybody has an obligation to disagree respectfully, regardless of their position in the community.

At the same time, it’s important for everyone to recognize the difference between understanding and agreement. Instructors may ask students to demonstrate their understanding of ideas the students may not like. Students aren’t required to agree with the ideas, but they are obligated to demonstrate an understanding of what’s taught. In the same way, faculty members can ask for understanding of ideas and facts from their disciplines, but shouldn’t require students to agree with values connected with that knowledge.

One of KU’s main purposes is to sustain intellectual life in its many forms, including:

Study in and out of class by all students;

Discovery, creativity and research by students and faculty members;

Engagement with local and global communities; and

Open discussion of ideas and issues.

To support this intellectual life, students and faculty members need to talk about what they expect from each other as we all pursue the goals of learning and discovery.

Within the University community, faculty members and students will encounter diversity in age, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, religion, sexual orientation, and physical or learning ability. As former KU Provost Richard Lariviere stated, the University values and support openness, pluralism and mutual respect:

Diversity matters at the University of Kansas. It matters because diversity enriches our ability to solve problems and create new knowledge. It is our goal to have the richest possible

MUTUAL RESPONSIBILITIES

At the beginning of a course, students and faculty members should talk about and agree upon:

1. How they’ll work together
2. How they want to be addressed
3. How they want to communicate in and out of class
4. What their community standards for conduct are
5. What consequences would result if standards aren’t followed
mix of perspectives, life-experiences, interests, world-views and cultures in our campus community.

KU is committed to encouraging intellectual freedom, personal integrity and inclusion that fosters an environment that is welcoming to all faculty, staff and students.

The KU community reveres individual worth and dignity, and believes that advocacy for diversity and inclusion is a major responsibility entrusted to all campus community members.

This means that we will recruit and retain a diverse community of faculty, staff and students, as well as develop policies and programs to support a culture of openness, pluralism and mutual respect throughout the University community (Lariviere 2007).

RESPONSIBILITIES FOR LEARNING

Mutual responsibilities

When a semester starts, students and faculty members should discuss how they will work together. Respectful interaction is a foundation for teaching and learning. Disagreements should focus on ideas or facts. Verbal assaults on fellow students or an instructor are never appropriate.

Class attendance is a privilege. Both instructors and students should follow community standards for conduct, in and out of class. Social boundaries vary from person to person; students should have a chance to discuss their expectations with an instructor and with each other. Students should express their preferences for classroom interactions that support their learning. They should know how their fellow students will react if they don’t meet standards for behavior. Instructors should be very clear about consequences of not following the group’s standards. Students should support standards if consequences occur.

Instructors and students should talk about how they want to be addressed (e.g., “Professor Smith,” not “Mr. Smith” or “George” or “Hey, teacher”). They should also be clear about how they want to communicate in and out of class (e.g., some students prefer e-mail, some phone calls; some professors answer e-mail until late at night, some won’t answer after 5 PM).

Student responsibilities

Whether they’re asking for information or commenting on ideas during discussions, students should respect peers and respect an instructor as the classroom leader. One way to demonstrate re-

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ESTABLISHING POSITIVE ENVIRONMENTS

To establish a positive classroom environment, instructors should:

- Explain how class time will be used
- Describe their need for students to be quiet and pay attention
- Identify opportunities for student-to-student interaction
spect for an instructor is to come to class prepared and on time.

Students should know an instructor’s preferences for communication and follow them. For example, they should find out if it’s okay to call an instructor at home. They should understand how often—and how late at night—an instructor reads e-mail, and shouldn’t expect a reply too quickly.

Students should be formal and polite when they’re communicating with instructors, both verbally and by e-mail. Students can be casual only if an instructor explicitly welcomes it. Learning to differentiate among individuals’ communication preferences is a useful social and professional skill, and it should be developed.

There are many priorities in a full life; academic work should be very high among them. Students should have enough time to go to classes and complete assignments. Other activities, for money or other reasons, aren’t grounds to expect reduced time on coursework. KU’s policy is that students should allow up to two hours of study for every hour in class. While some instructors don’t follow that policy, others reasonably expect full preparation. Learning takes time, and students are expected to reserve enough time to complete the learning called for in their classes.

Faculty responsibilities

Faculty members should be very clear about how they expect students to perform and participate in courses. During the first week of classes, instructors should discuss their expectations, including acceptable conduct during class meetings (e.g., no cell phones, sudoku, etc.). The discussion could also include specifics about attendance and whether late assignments are accepted.

Instructors should be clear about communication, including forms of address, timing and amount of phone or e-mail contact, and the appropriate degree of formality. Students should be asked how they would like to be addressed in class or in phone and e-mail communication (e.g. “Miss Smith” or “Ms. Smith” or “Jenny”). Instructors should also be clear about how quickly they’ll provide feedback on student work. Ideally, faculty members should return graded work to students by the date promised.

As part of an open class discussion, instructors should explain how they’ll respond if students ignore the guidelines for class conduct. At all times, instructors should respect a student’s right to offer alternate opinions and to ask questions.

Some things must remain areas of instructor discretion, not subject to negotiation with students. These include course content, criteria for measuring understanding/performance, nature and timing of

KEYS TO FACILITATING CIVILITY

To facilitate civility, the Office of the Vice Provost for Student Success and the Center for Teaching Excellence suggest that faculty members and students:

- Talk about and be clear about expectations—how to address each other, communicate in and out of class, and meet community standards for conduct.
- Recognize that disagreements are part of university life, and there’s a difference between understanding and agreement.
- If you disagree with someone, be respectful.
- Support the KU community as we all pursue learning and discovery.
assignments (in and out of class), and use of class time. As with other areas, these expectations should be made explicit at the beginning of the course.

**CLASSROOM CIVILITY**

KU classrooms should be:

- Focused on learning and communication
- Respectful of diverse understandings
- Committed to supporting learning
- Respectful of all people

The [Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities](https://documents.ku.edu/policies/Student_Affairs/Code_Student_Rights_Responsibilities.htm) outlines the rights of students and many of the standards of conduct (responsibilities) expected within the KU community. Within the classroom, according to the [University Senate Rules and Regulations](https://documents.ku.edu/policies/governance/USRR.htm#art2sect6), “An instructor has the authority to set reasonable rules for classroom conduct. When an instructor judges that a student’s behavior is disruptive or obstructive to learning, the instructor can request that the student leave the classroom. Refusal to comply with a request to leave a classroom can itself be grounds for a charge of academic misconduct.”

Faculty members are encouraged to talk with students early each semester to clarify mutual expectations. In most cases, this will help circumvent serious civility problems.

**COURSE ENROLLMENT**

**ENROLL & PAY**

Enroll & Pay is the name of KU’s student information computer system. It’s also known as SAKU. Go to [https://sa.ku.edu](https://sa.ku.edu) and use your Outlook sign on to find the Faculty Center on Enroll & Pay. If you have questions about the system, contact the Information Technology help desk at 864-0200.

**CLASS ROSTERS**

There are two types of class rosters available to faculty at KU:

- Class rosters on Enroll & Pay, Faculty Center (see above), and
- Class rosters on Blackboard, supported by Blackboard Support (864-2600 or blackboardsupport@ku.edu).

**REFERRING STUDENTS FOR SPECIAL SERVICES**

Setting boundaries with your students is a way to avoid devoting too much time and energy to problems outside of the normal classroom activities. Part of this includes knowing when to refer your students to other campus resources.

Sometimes things occur that are outside your area of expertise. There are people on campus who have a great deal of experience and expertise, ranging from housing disputes to mental illness.

Departments within the Office of Student Success provide a variety of services and programs that are designed to enable students to excel academically, such as the Writing Center and the University Advising Center:

The Office of Multicultural Affairs and the Academic Achievement and Access Center help students make a smooth transition to college life.

In addition, students can receive assistance and support through the Counseling and Psychological Services Center; Legal Services for Students, and Disability Resources.

For more information about these resources, see [http://www.studentaffairs.ku.edu/](http://www.studentaffairs.ku.edu/).
CREDIT/NO CREDIT

Undergraduates seeking the credit/no credit grading option for semester-long courses must register their choice in their Dean’s Office during the 21st through the 30th instructional days of the semester. A student may select this option only once during the semester, and the selected class cannot be in his or her declared major. The grade of CR (credit) will be received for grades of A, B, or C. The grade of NC (no credit) will be received for grades D or F. The instructor will not be informed when a student has chosen this option and will assign a conventional letter grade, which will then be converted by the Office of the University Registrar to CR or NC as appropriate. Courses graded CR or NC will not count in computing the grade point average but will be included in the total hours counted toward graduation (see University Senate Rules and Regulations 2.2.8).

ATTENDANCE AT EXAMS

University Senate Rules and Regulations 1.3 (see https://documents.ku.edu/policies/governance/USRR.htm#art1sect4) state the following regarding attendance and exams:

Examinations and tests other than final examinations should not be scheduled in conflict with mandated religious observances. In order to ascertain in a given class if a scheduled examination conflicts with a mandated religious observance, at the beginning of the semester the instructor shall ask students who may be affected to identify themselves privately so that a make-up examination may be scheduled at a mutually acceptable time.

Students with a verifiable medical crisis of a relative or friend may be excused from being present for scheduled examinations and tests. It is the responsibility of the student to initiate discussion with the instructor, prior to the examination/test if possible. The instructor and student shall come to a mutually agreeable method of making up the missed work.

PRIVACY OF STUDENT INFORMATION

Academic, financial and non-directory information about students is confidential and protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). FERPA is also known as the Buckley Amendment. Academic information about students cannot be released to another person, including parents or guardians, without students’ written authorization. If a student wishes to authorize release of information, see the link under FERPA at http://www.registrar.ku.edu/personal-information.

PRIVACY DO’S AND DON’TS

DO:
- Do return tests and papers individually.
- Do use Blackboard to post grades or truly anonymous identifiers, randomly assigned.
- Do get a written release to use a student’s paper or photo when it’s identifiable.
- Do use a secure server to store all student information.
- Do consult the Privacy Office, Office of General Counsel, or University Registrar if you have student records questions.

DON’T:
- Don’t tell a parent or spouse of a student any information—the student controls his/her record.
- Don’t return tests or papers in a stack or box; names and grades aren’t public information.
- Don’t post grades on a door or Web site with name, SSN or KUID number.
- Don’t post class photos, with or without names, since they contain personally identifiable information; get a signed release first.
- Don’t post a class roster or share it with anyone outside of the class.
- Don’t use excerpts from a student exam or paper that can link it to a student; e.g., name, KUID, SSN, student in a small class, etc.
WITHDRAWING FROM COURSES

WITHDRAWALS

The withdrawal period is divided into three segments. During Period 1 (first 15 instructional days of a semester, or first seven instructional days of a summer session), students may withdraw from a course by canceling enrollment in it. The course won’t appear on the student’s official record.

During Period 2 (beginning the 16th instructional day through the 60th instructional day of a semester or the eighth instructional day through the 30th instructional day of summer session), a student seeking to withdraw from a course must follow the withdrawal procedures of the College or School in which the student is enrolled. Neither the instructor nor the College or School is entitled to withhold approval of the withdrawal. A student who withdraws during Period 2 shall receive a grade of W, which will appear on the student’s academic record but will not be included in computing the grade point average. Neither the instructor nor the College or School is entitled to withhold approval of the withdrawal. The University Registrar shall maintain and make available information regarding withdrawal procedures of each school and the College.

During Period 3 (beginning the 61st instructional day through the last day of classes for the semester or the 31st instructional day through last day of class for summer session), a student cannot withdraw from a course. The course grade will be determined by the student’s overall academic performance.

After a student completes a course and a grade has been assigned, including an Incomplete if appropriate, retroactive withdrawal from the class isn’t allowed, except in accordance with USSR 2.3.3.

For complete information about the withdrawal policy, see USSR 2.2.5 (https://documents.ku.edu/policies/governance/USRR.htm#art2sect2).

ADMINISTRATIVE DROPS

In general, students are required to drop class(es) themselves. However, the Office of the University Registrar can process administrative drops when departments publish conditions and circumstances under which an administrative drop will be pursued in the Schedule of Classes for each semester, or departments request an administrative drop when a student hasn’t met published requirements for a particular class or course of study.
Only one faculty/staff person per department should be delegated to submit administrative drop requests. Departments are responsible for attempting to contact students for notification of administrative drops. Refunds may be awarded if the administrative drop is requested during a refund period. The amount of the refund is determined by the date of the request to the Registrar.

**ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT**

Academic misconduct at KU is defined in the *University Senate Rules and Regulations*, as are sanctions that may be imposed upon a student or instructor (see [https://documents.ku.edu/policies/governance/USRR.htm#art2sect6](https://documents.ku.edu/policies/governance/USRR.htm#art2sect6)). The Senate Rules and Regulations also specify that “Every instructor shall make clear, at the beginning of each course, his or her rules for the preparation of classroom assignments, collateral reading, notebooks, or other outside work, in order that his or her students may not, through ignorance, subject themselves to the charge of academic misconduct.”

**PROMOTING ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Svinicki & McKeachie (2011) suggest several ways that teachers can promote academic honesty. See the box at right for these ideas.

**STUDENT WRITING**

To reduce plagiarism, Walvoord and Anderson (2010) suggest intervening early: If you see a proposal, outline or draft of a paper, it’s much harder for a student to purchase or copy someone else’s work at the last minute. This is also recommended so that students receive early direction, as opposed to finding out that they’ve spent many hours on a flawed work. This forces students not to procrastinate until the last moment, as well. Finally, taking time to check a draft helps you reach students during a teachable moment—when they can still do something to improve their work—rather than doing an autopsy on a final paper. It will also save you time at the end of the semester; because students have already received feedback on previous drafts, you won’t need to make extensive comments on the final draft.

Two of the best ways to be prepared for an occurrence of plagiarism is to have a clear policy in the syllabus and to know your department’s plagiarism rules and regulations. For more general information, see the Writing Centers Academic Integrity guidelines ([www.writing.ku.edu](http://www.writing.ku.edu)) or its list of plagiarism resources ([http://www.writing.ku.edu/writing-guides](http://www.writing.ku.edu/writing-guides)) and the Ombud’s Web site ([www2.ku.edu/~ombuds](http://www2.ku.edu/~ombuds)).

WAYS TO PROMOTE ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Svinicki & McKeachie (2011) suggest the following as ways to promote academic integrity:

- Reduce the pressure, by providing several opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning, rather than giving only one or two exams. Keep students informed of their progress throughout the semester.
- Make reasonable demands and write reasonable and interesting tests. If students are frustrated and become desperate with an assignment that’s too long or a test that focuses on the trivial, they may be more tempted to cheat.
- Develop group norms that support honesty. Even discussing academic honesty in class helps students recognize its value. Preserve each student’s sense that he or she is an individual with a personal relationship with the instructor and other students. Dishonesty is less likely to occur if students feel that teachers and other students know them, as opposed to if they feel alienated and anonymous.
- When you’re giving a test, if a student has wandering eyes, ask the student to move to a different seat where he or she will be less crowded. McKeachie writes, “If he says he’s not crowded, I simply whisper that I’d prefer that he move. So far no one’s refused” (2011).
GRADE ROSTERS

Grade rosters are available to faculty by 6 PM on the last day of the semester for 15-week courses. For short courses, grade rosters are available the next business day after the last day of the class.

To access rosters, go to https://sa.ku.edu and use your Outlook sign on to Enroll & Pay. Once you’re signed in, select the Faculty Center to see your grade rosters by term. You must be the Instructor of Record to see a roster. If you’re not listed as the Instructor of Record, contact the scheduling officer in your department, and he or she will contact the University Registrar to make the update. The deadline for submitting final grades is five business days after the last day of finals by midnight.

EVALUATING STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Developing Assignments and Evaluating Learning, pages 7-13, provide a useful frame of reference for evaluating student performance. Note the section on repeated testing, page 12.

University Senate Rules and Regulations 2.1 (see https://documents.ku.edu/policies/governance/USRR.htm#art2sect1) provide the following guidelines about evaluating student performance in a course:

The evaluation of student performance shall be based upon examinations, written papers, class participation and such other requirements as the instructor may determine.

Information about the basis for evaluating students’ performance and about the requirements that students must fulfill should be made available to students, preferably in writing, within the first two weeks of class. Students who are not in class when such information is provided are responsible for knowing it. Students are also responsible for subsequent announcements about course content and grading policies. This information should not be considered a contract; the information may be revised as the course progresses, provided students are given timely notice of such revisions.

The faculty of the College or a school may prescribe conditions under which individual students may be exempted from final examinations, provided that such exemption is based on grades received prior to the time of the final examination.

In cases where part of a class grade is based on attendance, a student shall not be penalized for absence from regularly
scheduled class activities which conflict with mandated religious observances. In cases of conflicts between regularly scheduled class activities and mandated religious observances, the student is responsible for initiating discussion with the instructor to reach a mutually acceptable solution.

The evaluation of student performance is the responsibility and privilege of the faculty. If this responsibility is delegated to a Teaching Assistant or an Assistant Instructor, the faculty member or members in charge of the course retain the right to assign the final course grade.

**USRR 2.2.1** also specifies the following regarding the grading system at KU (see https://documents.ku.edu/policies/governance/USRR.htm#art2sect2):

The letters A, B, C, D, S (satisfactory), CR (credit), and + shall be used to indicate passing work.

The grade of A will be reported for achieving outstanding quality.

The grade of B will be reported for achieving high quality.

The grade of C will be reported for achieving acceptable quality.

The grade of D will be reported for achievement that is minimally passing, but at less than acceptable quality.

The letters F, U (unsatisfactory), and NC (no credit) shall indicate that the quality of work was such that, to obtain credit, the student must repeat the regular work of the course, or that the student’s work was not of passing quality at the time of disenrollment from the course.

The letters W and I may be given. The letter I shall indicate incomplete work, such as may be completed without re-enrollment in the course. The letter W shall indicate withdrawal for which no credit or grade point is assigned.

The letter I should not be used if a definite grade can be assigned for the work done. It shall not be given for work of a student in any course except to indicate that some part of the work has, for good reason, not been done, while the rest has been satisfactorily completed. When an I is reported, the character and amount of work needed to remove it should be indicated on the Explanation of Incomplete card for the student’s dean.

**MAXIMIZING STUDENTS’ ACCEPTANCE OF GRADES**

Davis (2009) suggests these strategies for maximizing students’ acceptance of grades:

- Clearly state grading procedures in your course syllabus, and go over this information in class.
- Set policies about late work.
- Avoid modifying grading policies during the semester.
- Provide many opportunities for students to show you what they know.
- Consider allowing students to choose among alternative assignments.
- Stress to students that grades reflect class work and aren’t judgments about people.
- Encourage students who are performing poorly.
- Deal directly and privately with students who are angry or upset about their grade.
- Keep accurate records of students’ grades.
An I must be made up in the next semester of enrollment, except when the removal of the I involves the repetition of a portion of the classroom work, in which case it shall be removed in the first semester of residence in which the course is offered. An I not removed according to this rule shall be regarded as a grade of F, U, or NC on request of the student’s dean, with the consent of the instructor, if possible, or the department chairperson if the instructor is not available, and so indicated on the permanent record.

The College or any school may use the letter P to represent satisfactory progress during one semester of work for which a grade will be given only upon the completion of the course or project in a subsequent semester.

**EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

**INCLEMENT WEATHER**

Kansas weather varies widely from season to season and may result in class cancellation, particularly during the winter and spring months. In the event of inclement weather that could create hazardous traveling conditions for students or employees, the Provost will make a decision on canceling classes by 5:30 AM and alert the regional news media and the Information Center, and a message will be placed on the inclement weather line (864-SNOW) and the KU Information Center line (864-3506).

**VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE**

In order to ensure the safety of all its employees and students, the University of Kansas adheres to the State of Kansas Violence in the Workplace Policy, which states that any threatening or violent actions committed on state property against state employees or members of the public will not be tolerated, and could result in dismissal, arrest or prosecution. The policy says that state employees are responsible for alerting their institutions about “any threats which they have witnessed, received, or have been told that another person has witnessed or received.” At KU, employees should contact the director of Human Resources and Equal Opportunity, Ola Faucher, at ofaucher@ku.edu or 864-4946.

Although the chances of a school shooting occurring at KU are statistically slim, it is still important to be aware of the warning signs for potentially violent students or employees. The KU Human Resources web site ([http://www.humanresources.ku.edu/](http://www.humanresources.ku.edu/)) has a link to a report by the Virginia Tech Review Panel that lists warning signs for potentially dangerous individuals. Knowing how to identify these signs, such as violent content in writings and art or a fascination with weapons or previous shootings, could lead to early intervention and saved lives.
STUDENT CONSENT FORM—SHARING COURSE WORK

I will randomly select several students whose work will be copied and included in an archive of student work that I keep for this course. That archive is important to my continued reflection on how well students are learning in my courses. There are also two additional ways that I sometimes use a small portion of the archive of student work. First, I often use prior students’ work as a point of comment for later students who are preparing for examinations. I post various questions and answers on a Web site and invite students to comment on how well the answers address the questions. Second, I maintain a course portfolio in which I write about the quality of student performance that is generated in the course. These examples are a very important piece of my work that I show to other professors to indicate how much and how deeply students are learning. Once the course portfolio is completed, it will also be made available to a wider audience of professors on a public Web site on teaching and learning in higher education (http://www.cte.ku.edu/portfolios).

This form requests your consent to have your work possibly included in discussions of understanding for future students and in any versions of my writing about teaching in a portfolio. There is only a small chance your work would be randomly included in my private archive for any assignment, but I ask all students for their permission should that be the case. Note that you have the choice to have your work be anonymous or have your name be part of the work.

Please check the following designated purposes (if any) to which you give your consent:

_____ I am willing to have copies of my coursework available so later students can use it for preparation.

_____ I am willing to have copies of my coursework included in my professor’s course portfolio.

_____ I am willing to have copies of my coursework included in the public Web site.

Please check one of the following:

_____ I wish to have my name remain on any work that is used.

_____ I wish to have my name removed on any work that is used.

Additional restrictions on the use of my texts (please specify):

Print name__________________________________________ Date____________________________

Phone number (        )________________________________     Email____________________________

Course title__________________________________________ Professor_________________________

By signing below you give your permission that work you produce for this course may be used with the restrictions and for the purposes you indicated above. You understand that your grade is NOT connected in any way to your participation in this project, and I will not receive the list of students who have given permission to have their work shared until after I have turned in the grades for the course. Your anonymity will be maintained unless you designate otherwise. Finally, you understand that you are free to withdraw consent at any time, now or in the future, without being penalized.

Signature________________________________________

Please address questions to: (name of faculty member, department, phone number, email.)
As you prepare to represent your teaching for professional review, each offering of a course is an occasion for learning and development. Consider using these prompts at the end of each semester to remember what you thought about a course and what you learned about teaching it. The accumulation of several of these sheets for a course will provide an excellent core of a narrative on teaching that could be reviewed by a colleague. The archive of student examples (and the distribution of grades for each) will provide a rich picture of your accomplishments.

1. Of all the material you taught, what were the three or four most important goals you had for student understanding and performance?

2. Where in the students’ work for the semester did they have the best opportunity to show you their understanding and their skills? Be sure to retain copies of a small representative sample of that work (two As, two Bs, two Cs of each).

3. What made you most pleased about students’ work on those central intellectual topics? What features of their work indicated real success in students’ performance? How broad was that success? Did it reach beyond a few top students?

4. What class activities, lectures, assignments or materials worked extremely well this semester? Can you replicate them, continue them, or expand them in useful ways? Do you have an idea about why they worked well or how you made them successful?

5. What left you most disappointed about students’ work on those central intellectual topics? What features of their work would you hope to see improve the next time you teach the class? How many students succeeded in this challenging area? Are these goals worth keeping or should you put your energy elsewhere?

6. What class activities, lectures, assignments or materials did not go well this semester? How might you replace them or modify them to achieve your goals better? Are there new ways you could achieve the same goals?

7. What ideas have you had for something new you want to add to this course the next time you teach it? Will the topics or goals evolve in some way? Are there particular forms of measuring learning you want to add? Are there additional ways of engaging students you want to try?

8. Overall, what have you learned about teaching in general from this course? Are there lessons you would carry forward to teaching any class at this general level and size? What ideas, reactions or feelings do you have about teaching right now, about this course or in general?
PREPARING FOR REVIEW
Below is the standard survey students may be given at the end of each semester’s course. Check with your department to see which form it uses.

STUDENT SURVEY OF TEACHING: THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS

Student evaluations of teaching play an important role in enhancing the quality of instruction at the University of Kansas. The evaluations are made available to the faculty member (after grades are turned in) and to the chairperson/Dean of the School. These evaluations are considered in the processes for merit salary, promotion and tenure, and sabbatical leave decisions. Please give your responses careful attention.

Marking Instructions
• Use a No. 2 pencil only: no ink, ballpoint or felt tip pens
• Erase cleanly any marks you wish to change
• Fill in the class number accurately and completely

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Number</th>
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<tbody>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department and Course Number</th>
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<td>3 3 3 3 3</td>
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<td>4 4 4 4 4</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Instructor</th>
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<tr>
<th>Semester and Year</th>
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<td>7 7 7 7 7</td>
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<td>8 8 8 8 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 9 9 9 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please mark only one response per item.
1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

1. This instructor provided content and materials that were useful and organized. 1 2 3 4 5
2. This instructor set and met clear goals and objectives for the course. 1 2 3 4 5
3. What this instructor expected of me was well defined and fair. 1 2 3 4 5
4. What this instructor expected of me was appropriately challenging. 1 2 3 4 5
5. This instructor’s teaching was clear, understandable, and engaging. 1 2 3 4 5
6. This instructor was encouraging, supportive, and involved in my learning the course material. 1 2 3 4 5
7. This instructor was available, responsive, and helpful. 1 2 3 4 5
8. This instructor demonstrated respect for students and their points of view. 1 2 3 4 5
9. Compared with courses at a similar level, I would rate how much I learned as:
   much less          less          the same          more          much more
   O                   O                   O                   O                   O

Responses:
1 = unimportant, 2 = somewhat important, 3 = important, 4 = very important.

How important were the following reasons for taking this course?

1. Course fulfills a requirement. 1 2 3 4
2. Course was not full (open). 1 2 3 4
3. Course was at a convenient time. 1 2 3 4
4. Course topic interests me. 1 2 3 4

My student status is:
○ Undergraduate
○ Graduate
○ Other (non-degree, faculty or staff)

What year of study are you in?
○ 1st
○ 2nd
○ 3rd
○ 4th
○ 5th
○ 6th or more

Over the course of the semester, how many class meetings did you miss?

What grade do you expect in the class?
○ A  ○ B  ○ C  ○ D  ○ E  ○ F
○ A-  ○ B-  ○ C-  ○ D-  ○ E-  ○ F-
PREPARING FOR REVIEW

This report shows how the results of the student survey of teaching are recorded.

Student Survey of Teaching: University of Kansas
Spring 2007

Course: PSYC 104 / Class #: 58859
Instructor: Jayhawk, iam

Class results:  mean and 95% C.I.
Department results for courses in the 100-299 range:  mean and 95% C.I.
The ultimate goal of Assignment 2 is to evaluate the accuracy of information provided in a website about parenting issues using psychological research. You are to write a letter to a hypothetical friend who has been relying on the website for parenting advice, telling him or her whether or not to believe the information provided on the site. Justify your comments about the accuracy of the site by describing the research presented in your selected article. You should feel free to be creative in your approach to this assignment, but it is critical that you discuss the accuracy of some of the information provided on the site (you do not have to evaluate every piece of information on the site) and that you use the research presented in your article to explain your position. Specifically, your “letter” should:

- **Make the “problem” clear.** In other words, introduce the issue at hand (the issue for which the friend is seeking parenting advice) and the information provided on the website.

- **Describe the relevant research (your article).** Discuss whether you think the advice presented in the website should be followed, using the research presented in your article as support for your comments. Thus, your letter should include the kind of the information you were asked to provide about your article in assignment 2b. Be sure to mention reasons why this study is persuasive (e.g., it controlled for lots of possible confounds), or whether there are any important caveats (e.g., even though this study showed this… there are limitations to their method that we should keep in mind…).

- **Apply the research to the problem.** Discuss the implications of this research for the particular real-world parenting issue that is the focus of the website, and based on this research application offer some advice to your friend. Note that it is ok to conclude that experts disagree, or that more research needs to be done, if you have good reasons to make that argument and you make those reasons clear (e.g., if there are conflicting findings or if you have good reasons to question the conclusions of the study you reviewed).

Your letter should be approximately two pages typed and double-spaced. In addition, be sure to include:

- Your name, ID, and color group
- Your topic
- The reference for your article (this should indicate the authors’ names, year of publication, name of article, name of journal, journal volume number and page numbers)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Clarity and Organization</th>
<th>Description of Research</th>
<th>Application of Research</th>
<th>Writing Mechanics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2 points</strong></td>
<td><strong>8 points</strong></td>
<td><strong>8 points</strong></td>
<td><strong>2 points</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus of “Letter” is clear at outset; Message is communicated clearly; Well-organized and persuasive</td>
<td>Accurate, clear, and appropriate level of detail</td>
<td>Accurate and insightful application to material presented in website</td>
<td>Well-written. Grammatical errors and errors in sentence structure (fragments, run-ons) are minimal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 point</strong></td>
<td><strong>6 points</strong></td>
<td><strong>6 points</strong></td>
<td><strong>1 point</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message is reasonably clear, but some difficulty following arguments</td>
<td>Partly inaccurate, incomplete or unclear</td>
<td>Some inaccuracy in application to site; or does not offer much insight</td>
<td>A few grammatical errors or errors in sentence structure, or repetitious sentence structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>0 points</strong></td>
<td><strong>4 points</strong></td>
<td><strong>4 points</strong></td>
<td><strong>0 points</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message is not communicated clearly</td>
<td>Inaccurate, very limited or missing</td>
<td>Substantial inaccuracy, very limited or missing</td>
<td>Frequent grammatical or sentence structure errors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SAMPLE WRITING ASSIGNMENT AND CORRESPONDING RUBRIC
PSYC 333: Child Psychology
Andrea Greenhoot

Read Chapter 2 on Prenatal Development. Write a 1-2 page response (typed and double-spaced) to the following vignette, applying the material on low birth weight and multiple risks. Turn in a hard copy of your response during class the day it is due (or in the event of last-minute printer or transportation failures, leave in Dr. Greenhoot’s mailbox in 425 Fraser by 4 pm)—please do not email your paper to us.

You return after class one day to find a message in your voice mail from your cousin’s husband, who is obviously upset. He has called to tell you that your cousin Karen has just given birth more than two months early to a little boy who weighs slightly less than four pounds. Karen’s pregnancy had been planned and completely normal and she had followed her doctor’s advice to the letter, so this outcome comes as a complete shock. The baby has been moved to the neonatal intensive care unit. You’re very close to Karen and know that she will want to see you as soon as possible. When you visit her in the hospital, Karen tells you that the baby is in stable condition but that she’s deeply worried about what the future holds for him and for the family. She shares her fear that he will never have a normal life. From what you’ve learned in your child development class, what can you honestly tell Karen about her new son’s chances for normal development? If she asks for your advice, what would you tell her?

The grading rubric for this assignment is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment Dimension</th>
<th>Content and Application</th>
<th>Clarity and Organization</th>
<th>Writing Mechanics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>15 points</strong></td>
<td>Response indicates comprehension of assignment and course material; Insightful application</td>
<td>3 points</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12 points</strong></td>
<td>Response indicates some inaccuracy in applying course material or does not offer much insight into major issues</td>
<td>2 points</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10 points</strong></td>
<td>Response indicates substantial inaccuracy in applying course material or is incomplete</td>
<td>1 point</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clarity and Organization</th>
<th>Writing Mechanics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 points Message is communicated clearly; Well-organized and persuasive</td>
<td>2 points Well-written. Grammatical errors and errors in sentence structure (fragments, run-ons) are minimal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 points Message is reasonably clear, but some difficulty following arguments</td>
<td>1 point A few grammatical errors or errors in sentence structure, or repetitious sentence structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 point Message is not communicated clearly</td>
<td>0 points Frequent grammatical or sentence structure errors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### RUBRIC FOR FILM PRESENTATION
Instructor circles the applicable portion of the description.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Exemplary</strong></th>
<th><strong>Competent</strong></th>
<th><strong>Developing</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual</strong></td>
<td>The presenter spoke clearly and intelligibly, modulating voice tone and</td>
<td>The presenter was intelligible but mumbled or droned, spoke too fast or too</td>
<td>The presenter mumbled or droned, spoke too fast or too slow, whispered or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presentation Skills</strong></td>
<td>quality, maintaining eye contact, and using appropriate body language. The</td>
<td>slow, whispered or shouted, used inappropriate body language, or failed to</td>
<td>shouted, used inappropriate body language, or failed to maintain eye contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>use of humor and competent handling of technology also contributed to the</td>
<td>maintain eye contact, inappropriate, excessive, or too little humor or</td>
<td>to the point where intelligibility was compromised. Too much or too little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>excellence of the presentation. The presenter used all the time available but</td>
<td>technical problems detracted from the presentation. The presentation ran</td>
<td>humor or technological problems seriously detracted from the presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>did not go over the time limit.</td>
<td>over or under the time limit but not dramatically.</td>
<td>The presentation ran seriously over or under the time limit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Presentation</strong></td>
<td>The presentations followed a logical progression and allowed each member to</td>
<td>The presentations followed a logical progression but were unbalanced in the</td>
<td>The presentations followed no logical progression, seriously overlapped one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skills 20%</strong></td>
<td>shine. Group members treated each other with courtesy and respect and assisted</td>
<td>way time or content was assigned to members, or the division of labor was</td>
<td>another or allowed one or a few people to dominate. Group members showed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>each other as needed.</td>
<td>fair but impeded the logical progression of the argument. Group members</td>
<td>little respect or courtesy toward one another and did not assist one another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>were mostly respectful and helpful toward one another, but there were lapses.</td>
<td>even when it was clear that a group member was in trouble.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Organization</strong></td>
<td>The group thesis, topics to be covered and the direction of the individual</td>
<td>The thesis, topics to be covered, and the direction of the individual</td>
<td>The thesis, topics and direction were unclear, unstated or not evident in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>20%</strong></td>
<td>presentations were clearly stated at the beginning and carried through in the</td>
<td>presentations were clearly stated at the beginning but not carried through</td>
<td>the body of the presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>rest of the presentation.</td>
<td>in the rest of the presentation, or the thesis, topics to be covered, and</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>direction emerge in the presentation but were not clearly stated in the</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>introduction.</td>
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</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Organization 20%</th>
<th>Exemplary</th>
<th>Competent</th>
<th>Developing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The individual presentation was well organized in itself with an introduction, body and conclusion. That organization was emphasized and made clear to the audience through the use of appropriately captioned PowerPoints, overheads or handouts.</td>
<td>The individual presentation was mostly well organized but there were problems with the introduction, body or conclusion. The presenter used PowerPoints, or handouts, but these were too wordy or too vague to help the audience follow the organization.</td>
<td>The presentation rambled with little evidence or an introduction, body or conclusion. PowerPoints, overheads or handouts were either not used or did not assist the audience in following the organization in any significant way.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Individual Content 20% | Facts and examples were detailed, accurate, and appropriate. Theories referenced were accurately described and appropriately used. Analyses, discussions, and conclusions were explicitly linked to examples, facts, and theories. | Facts and examples were mostly detailed, accurate and appropriate, but there were lapses. Theories were referenced, but they were either not accurately described or not appropriately used. The connection between analyses, discussions and conclusions was evident or implied, but not explicitly linked to examples, facts and theories. | Facts and examples were seriously lacking in detail, inaccurate, or inappropriate. Theories referenced were inaccurately described and inappropriately used or not referenced or used at all. There was no clear connection between analyses, discussion, and examples, facts and theories. |

RUBRIC FOR CREATIVE RESPONSE PROJECT
Instructor checks each applicable box, makes comments and assigns points.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Topic and Outline 3 pts. | - Paragraph description of project turned in on time.  
- Details of project, type of project  
- Link to class topic clear |         |        |
| Content 8 pts.    | - Clear focus of project—what lecture, reading, movie inspired the idea  
- Grabs attention right from the beginning  
- Identifies a significant cultural difference  
- Describes values of that difference to the culture  
- Describes how you viewed previous assumptions of the culture  
- Includes brief summary of the movie, book  
- Describes clear purpose behind this choice  
- Clear connection to adding/affirming diversity |         |        |
| Organization 5 pts. | - Clear beginning, middle, end  
- Understandable to others, not confusing  
- Clear directions and wrap up  
- Easy to see connections to adding/affirming diversity  
- Clear link to class topics |         |        |
| Creativity 11 pts. | - Puts together a presentation that is “out of your comfort zone”  
- Expresses emotional response  
- Open/honest  
- Attractive  
- Visually pleasing  
- Creates at least half of the images  
- Obvious extra effort (not copied pages)  
- Authenticity and uniqueness of effort  
- Though provoking  
- Original  
- Strong expressions of “otherness” |         |        |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflection 2 pts.</td>
<td>o Indicates how your perceptions and assumptions have changed</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Indicates how this might affect your future teaching and adding/affirming diversity in your life</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conventions 3 pts.</td>
<td>o All grammar, spelling, punctuation correct</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Neatly presented</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o If typed, double-spaced and pages numbered</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

REFERENCES


Universal design. (Online). Available [http://www.design.ncsu.edu/cud/about_ud/about_ud.htm](http://www.design.ncsu.edu/cud/about_ud/about_ud.htm)


