

Less, but More Germane

Consistency and Predictability as Principles for Course Design

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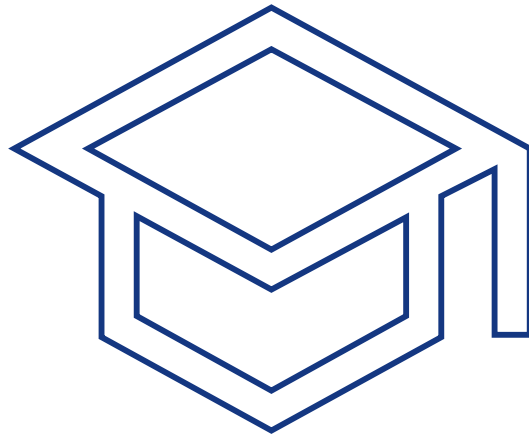
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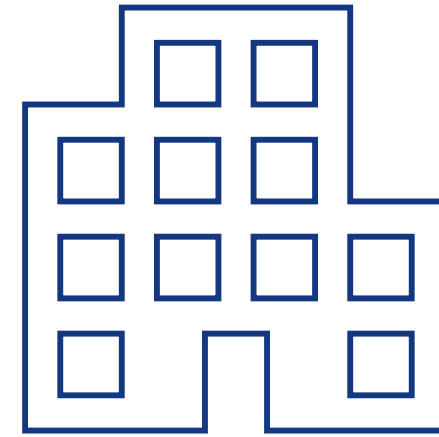
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Penn Medical Ethics and Health Policy's Online Education courses and programs are designed for professionals seeking expertise in health care innovation and ethics to inform their own work.



Master of Health Care Innovation



Professional Development Certificate



Penn Medical Ethics and Health Policy's Online Education has a team-delivered approach to design and delivery, with everyone working at top of license.

Faculty

Supply content expertise, student / learner interaction

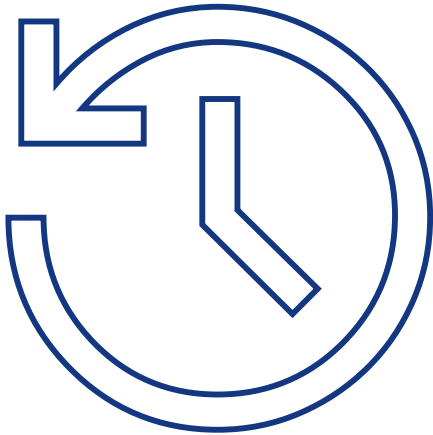
Instructional staff

High ratio of instructional designers to faculty; instructional designers are very hands-on in the development of course components



Creating Consistency and Predictability

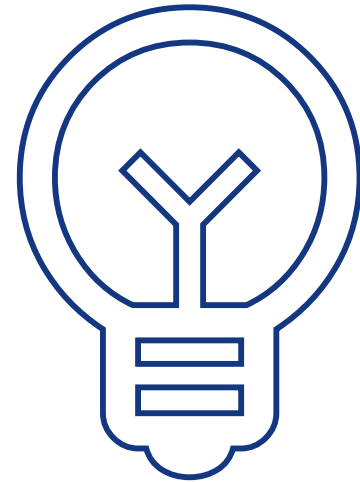
Students who are full-time professionals are frequently time constrained



**Reduce time and energy
needed to navigate courses**



**Help students focus
on relevant learning**



**Create space for innovative
thinking and learning**



This means creating a **consistent, predictable structure** in and across courses.

Prioritizing consistency and predictability is not novel.

Pandemic advice

Emphasized consistency as a way of smoothing the transition to remote teaching

Surveys of students and instructor reflections

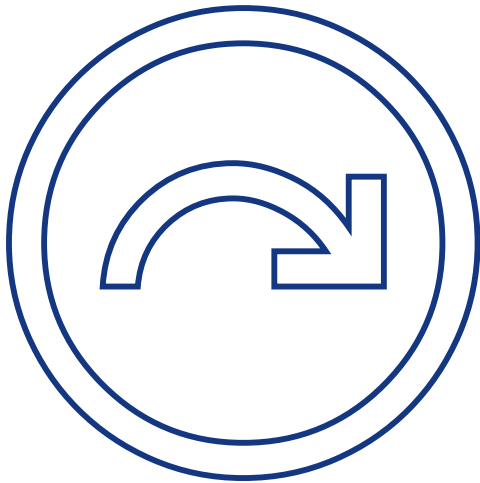
Confirm that the experience of online learning benefits from a consistent, predictable pattern to work

In the chat: What is one thing you are doing in your classes to create a consistent, predictable learning environment?



Consistency and Predictability by Design

We have tried to systematically foster consistency and predictability by making it easy for students to:



Plan ahead



**Stay oriented in the
course and program**



**Understand tasks
at a glance**



Help Students Plan Ahead

Tasks can be divided among faculty and staff.

	Department / Program Staff	Instructional Support	Instructors / Faculty
Announce dates for synchronous meetings early	X		X
Configure assignments to allow students to use the course calendar effectively		X	
Keep due dates consistent across courses	X	X	X
Set clear expectations for the types of assignments students will encounter in the program	X	X	X



Help Students Stay Oriented

	Department / Program Staff	Instructional Support	Instructors / Faculty
Include weekly overviews that preview content topics, interactions, and assignments		X	X
Send weekly announcements			X
Send timely reminders about upcoming due dates			X
Broadcast contact information for faculty, TAs, and staff	X	X	
Include an easy-to-find, centralized list of due dates		X	X
Organize modules into clear course weeks		X	X



Help Students Understand Tasks

	Department / Program Staff	Instructional Support	Instructors / Faculty
Connect assignments to specific course materials		X	X
Implement a consistent structure for assignment directions		X	X
Provide assignment help as part of directions		X	X
Specify expected time spent and submission length		X	X
Establish consistent assignment types that appear in and across courses	X	X	



Where to Start: Low Effort, High Impact

Course calendar

Make sure students can see assignment and interaction due dates on the course calendar

Overviews and announcements

Use weekly overview pages and announcements to preview content and assignments

Centralized due dates

Keep a centralized list of key dates students who prefer them in that format

Weekly modules

Organize modules by week and indicate unit breaks with subheadings



Where to Start: Low Effort, High Impact

Context for assignments

Connect assignments to specific course content in the directions, so students know what they are practicing

Submission time and length

Help students plan their time by indicating how long they should spend on assignments



Framework: Consistency and Predictability

Strategies for a more predictable, consistent learning experience. Starred items are low effort and high impact, making them a good place to start.

	Help Students Plan Ahead	Help Students Stay Oriented	Help Students Understand Their Work
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Announce dates for synchronous meetings early	<ul style="list-style-type: none">★ Include weekly overviews that preview topics, interactions, and assignments★ Send weekly announcements that preview topics, interactions, and assignments<ul style="list-style-type: none">Send timely reminders about upcoming due datesBroadcast contact information for instructors, teaching assistants, and technical support	
Course Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none">★ Configure assignments to allow students to use the course calendar effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none">★ Include an easy-to-find, centralized list of due dates★ Organize modules into clear course weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">★ Connect assignments to specific course materials<ul style="list-style-type: none">Implement a consistent structure for assignment directionsProvide assignment help as part of directions
Setting Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Keep due dates consistent across coursesSet clear expectations for the types of assignments students will encounter in the program		<ul style="list-style-type: none">★ Specify expected time spent and submission length<ul style="list-style-type: none">Establish consistent assignment types that appear across courses

Answer in the Google Doc, and we will discuss together.

- What are you already doing to create a consistent experience in your courses and programs?
- How could you incorporate this framework into your process?
- What are the barriers to implementation?
- How can we overcome those barriers?



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