

On Teaching Accelerated Courses

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Best Practices:

Students say that you are the most essential element to a high quality learning experience. You can also make learning tedious and painful (Scott, 2003). Here are suggestions for creating a meaningful learning experience for your accelerated learners.

- Be enthusiastic & passionate about your topic and teaching
- Demonstrate your expertise through knowledge and experience
- Communicate to draw interest without alienating learners
- Be authentic and relational, and show students that their learning matters to you
- Foster student-student and student-instructor relationships to increase level of trust and participation
- Establish a supportive, nonjudgmental environment – sit facing each other, class and group discussion, use humor, ask students to set ground rules
- Use variety in teaching methods to maintain motivation and interest
- Active learning for engagement and whole brain learning is essential
- Use experiential methods – such as problem solving, role-playing, simulation, field trips, skill-training practice, service learning, etc.
- Provide opportunities and assignments to apply what they learn to their own lives
- Allow students control and ownership of the course when possible
- Emphasize depth over breadth of content for deep learning and retention
- Be a fellow learner!

Time for Reflection?

It is difficult to find time to reflect, yet deep learning depends on it. How can you build it into an accelerated course?

Some suggestions:

- 1) *In class, require 1-3 minutes reflection before anyone responds to a question*
- 2) *Use small group breakouts during class that allow learners to reflect together*
- 3) *Use critical incident techniques requiring application of new knowledge*
- 4) *Assigned journals*
- 5) *Place assignments in the context of learners' current roles and past experiences*
- 6) *Post informal assignments that encourage learners to reflect on and apply most important concepts in a relevant context and share it in class (or on the discussion board.)*

Assessment

Assessing student's learning has to begin and end in 5-6 weeks! Expect to redesign your usual assignments or give "smaller" assignments to accomplish within a shorter period. You might even break up a larger assignment into smaller parts. Most importantly, be strategic! Begin with course objectives and build assignments around them.

- Incorporate more in-class and group assignments.
- Develop meaningful (authentic) assignments that require students to apply or experience the material personally.
- Give students options - present them with 2-3 choices requiring the same rigor that meet the same course objective, but different "deliverables."
- Objective exams encourage cramming. Better are essay exams to allow students to demonstrate their knowledge; take-home exams that allow them time to communicate what they have learned; or frequent quizzes.
- Better yet – consider papers, projects, presentations, and other creative and alternative ways for students to demonstrate what they have learned.

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