Course Introductions and Overviews

Presenter:

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Background

- According to Quality Matters, the course overview and introduction section:
  - Sets the tone for the course,
  - Lets learners know what to expect, and
  - Provides guidance to ensure learners get off to a good start
- I will provide you with basic Introductions/Overviews and exemplary Introductions/Overviews for online courses.

Today's presentation is on course Overviews and Introductions. This is important for developers to incorporate as the overview and introduction sections are expected to provide clear information, saves the students time and devoid frustration, connects the student with the instructor, and gives students a sense of the "big picture."

According to Quality Matters, the course overview and introduction section:
- Sets the tone for the course,
- Lets learners know what to expect, and
- Provides guidance to ensure learners get off to a good start

Therefore today, I will share with you basic versus exemplary course introduction and overviews, as well as provide you with a few examples you may want to incorporate when developing an exemplary Course Introduction and Overview section for your online course.

For the next few slides we will discuss a few basic and exemplary examples of how to achieve this goal. There will be 2 poll questions and a summary. This presentation will take approximately 25 minutes of your time today, with additional allotment at the end for questions/comments.

So, if you're ready, let's get started.

Basic	Exemplary
The instructor starts the course with a welcome message, review of the syllabus, course schedule and other important information for the course.	In addition to the basics, the instructor monitors and welcomes students as they start the course.
Example Record a video message from the instructor. Require/request students to read a course syllabus that includes a course outline and TUI Policy.	**Example** The instructor may also use an "Introductions" discussion board that is monitored by the instructor to help students feel welcome.

Here's an example of a basic course design practice

Basic practice: The instructor starts the course with a welcome and review. You can Use the syllabus to provide students a thorough outline of work that they will be doing and Include a welcome message to help students connect with you as a human being

In addition to the basics, An Exemplary practice is that of you actively welcoming students and making yourself available to them as the course launches. You can achieve this by Use of an "Introductions" discussion board that is monitored by you to help students feel welcome.

Basic	Exemplary
Students are informed of appropriate resources for technical support and how technology will be used in the course.	The introductory quiz measures student understands of the syllabus, course requirements, and required tools and technologies.
Example Specify necessary equipment in the beginning; provide clear instructions and FAQs for students.	**Example** This is set as the first quiz in the course, with multiple attempts, encouraging students to return to the syllabus multiple times, using it as a reference.

In a Basic practice you would provide students with clear information regarding how technology will be used in the course (especially important for hybrid courses).

An Exemplary practice would include Students being tasked to complete a syllabus quiz to have a better understanding of course policies and course structure. This is achieved by the first quiz in the course, having multiple attempts, encouraging students to return to the syllabus multiple times, using it as a reference.

Basic	Exemplary
In the course site, students are immediately presented with an obvious starting location and explanation on how to navigate the course.	Students are provided a detailed tour of the course features to show students how to access the materials and outline tasks that must be done each week.
Example A "Start Here" link or section provides a clear point of reference.	**Example** A "scavenger hunt", "syllabus quiz" guiding exploration. A table or diagram depicting relationships.

Basic practice include you providing A clear starting point meant to save student time and frustration.

Exemplary practice
Provide information on how to navigate through the course material to reduce the number of questions sent to you later. This can be achieved by incorporating A "scavenger hunt", "syllabus quiz" guiding exploration. A table or diagram depicting relationships is also acceptable.

Poll

Do you feel the exemplary examples I've presented so far are realistic and can be implemented during the course development phase?

Select Yes/No

Okay its now time for poll number 1

Do you feel the exemplary examples I've presented so far are realistic and can be implemented during the course development phase?

Basic	Exemplary
The syllabus, schedule and other important course documents are easily located.	Students are provided with a course map.
Example Place a list of the important documents, clearly named, on the course home page.	**Example** The course map has active links guiding student's to perspective areas.

As a Basic practice your students should be able to easily locate the syllabus, course calendar, and any other documents they use regularly.

An Exemplary practice is where you include a course map, as this reaches all types of learners by providing a visualization of the course layout. The course map might include active links guiding student's to perspective areas of the course.

Basic	Exemplary
The syllabus contains all the relevant elements from TUI's syllabus policy.	The syllabus contains all relevant elements from TUI's syllabus policy in addition to a short description.
Example Use of the suggested online course syllabus template as a guide.	**Example** Where links are present, a short description of the policy or link destination is available.

Basic practice involves you providing A complete syllabus with clear answers to questions about course policies and procedures. Clear information in the syllabus and accompanying documents can reduce questions sent to you at a later date.

Although links to each policy are acceptable, most often student handbooks are updated frequently, therefore, posing an increased risk of broken links. SO, an Exemplary practice is where you could also incorporate a short description of the policy on the policy page to ensure learners will receive the information without total reliance on a hyperlink.

Basic	Exemplary
Clearly outline synchronous and asynchronous requirements for participating in the course.	Provide students with a clear and complete description of the criteria providing and information to help them understand grades are calculate.
Example Clearly communicate expectations for participation and due dates in activities and Discussion Boards within the course.	**Example** Display exemplary and standard models of an assignment.

Basic practice is where you Clearly state expectations for how students should participate in course activities. You also state how students will receive credit for participation and whether or not makeup opportunities are available.

Exemplary practice is where you Display exemplary and standard models or examples of a particular assignment. You would also Utilize checklists, rubrics, or other instruments for identifying the various levels of student mastery.

Basic	Exemplary
All course deadlines are included in the course schedule. Advise of all assignment deadlines and when to expect feedback.	Provide concise information regarding instructor responses to emails, discussion postings, feedback on assignments, and grades.
Example Provide a spreadsheet or table that includes due dates for the entire semester.	**Example** The course introduction indicates the various forms of faculty and staff support available to the student and explains when students can expect to receive feedback.

In Basic practice you Provide a comprehensive listing of course deadlines to help students see the "big picture" allowing them to plan weekly work.

An exemplary practice is where, When possible, you are able to grade student work quickly. In large classes, use self-tests that include detailed feedback to provide a quick turnaround. Offer video office hours to provide students with the opportunity to connect with you on a more individual level.

Poll

A course introduction that clearly outline synchronous and asynchronous requirements for participating in the course is an exemplary course design practice.

Select True/False

Now we're at poll #2

A course introduction that clearly outline synchronous and asynchronous requirements for participating in the course is an exemplary course design practice.

ANSWER

False – that's a basic course design principle. ALL courses should clearly outline synchronous and asynchronous requirements for participation.

Basic	Exemplary
Space is provided for students and instructors to introduce themselves to each other.	At the beginning of the class, students must introduce themselves and the instructor provides guidance on where and how they should do so.
Example A thread tasks students to introduce themselves and post their major and what they hope to learn from the course.	**Example** Instructor requires students to respond by recording a video or voice response in the introduction thread, and respond to specific questions.

In Basic practice you Encourage interaction between students (and with yourself) to eliminate isolation in an online course.

Exemplary practice is where you provide a model of an exemplary and nonexemplary introduction.
As this will Help students get to know you with a welcome message. Students who "connect" with their instructor are more likely to log in and do the coursework.

Basic	Exemplary
Discuss online course netiquette early in the course.	Instructor facilitates student understanding of how to be a successful online student.
Example Provide links to resources on netiquette.	**Example** Prompt students to discuss netiquette and expectations for online behavior in a discussion board.

Basic practice is your understanding that Some students are completely new to learning online. Therefore netiquette is required to meet basic standards.

Exemplary practice is where you Provide resources and examples to educate them on the characteristics of a successful online student.

Basic	Exemplary
The course contains consistent terminology for tools referenced in the learning management system.	Distribute a formative student survey to evaluate students' ease of navigation.
Example The instructor always refer to "Discussion Boards" as just that. Calling them "Discussion Forums" or "Discussion Area" interchangeably can confuse students.	**Example** Assigning points (even bonus points) to the survey ensures they complete it.

Basic practice is where you would Use the default names for tools that are part of the LMS. Consistent naming gives students a frame of reference from course to course and raises their comfort level.

Exemplary practice includes you seeking student feedback about their experiences with the course site in time to make adjustments if needed. Ask students to complete a survey to get a better understanding of their experiences with the course. Assigning points (even bonus points) to the survey will ensure that they complete it.

This concludes our presentation on course introductions and overviews. Here I will provide a quick summary of what we discussed.

1. Provide students with a method for contacting you to reduce student anxiety and increase instructor presence.

2. Use the syllabus as a guide to provide students a thorough outline of work that they will be doing. Include a welcome message to help students connect with you as a human being.

3. A clear starting point saves time and frustration. Provide information on how to navigate through the course material to reduce the number of questions sent to you later during the duration of the course.

4. Important items should be easily accessible, such as course calendar, and any other documents they use regularly.

5. A complete syllabus provides clear answers to questions about course policies and procedures. Clear information in the syllabus and accompanying documents can reduce questions sent to you at a later date during the course session

6. Provide a comprehensive listing of course deadlines to help students see the "big picture" and allow them to plan weekly work.

7. Clearly state expectations for how students should participate in course activities. Additionally, let them know how they are expected to behave in an online course. Determine how students will receive credit for participation and whether or not makeup opportunities are available. Students are better able to manage their course participation if they know when faculty will provide grades and feedback for assignments and assessments. Provide this information to students early in the course to reduce unrealistic expectations.

8. Instructions that outline how to access tools used for the course can help to reduce the numbers of questions students may have. If the tool are located outside of the LMS, provide a link to the tool along with tutorials explaining how its used.

8. And last, but not least, Encourage interaction between students (and with yourself) to eliminate isolation in an online course and build a sense of community

Thank you for attending and feel free to provide any questions or comments.