

Workshop Summary

Start at the Finish: lessons learned migrating courses on the fly.

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This was a hands-on workshop that took participants through all the steps of designing and developing a fully online course in a hurry. Based on lessons learned at the Royal Netherlands Naval College, I focused on six steps: 1. Setting course goals, 2. Platforms and app considerations, 3. Choosing appropriate work forms for delivery methods, 4. Avoiding cognitive overload, 5. Engaging the learner, 6. Process diagramming to enable quick implementation.

After a brief introduction to the lessons learned at the RNLNC, the participants were divided into small task groups to design a letter writing lesson series, utilizing synchronous and asynchronous fully online delivery. Each group would take one task and ultimately, all tasks would be plugged into a process diagram to come up with a complete, logical lesson series that could be quickly implemented.

Top tips from my workshop:

- Take some time to plan how you will phase the lessons and activities.
- What will be offered live, online, offline, synchronous, asynchronous? Choose the right form for the task and keep online synchronous sessions fairly short (1/2 hour). Give frequent breaks.
- Videos you use should be short (under 5 minutes) and cover one topic (microlessons).
- Custom make videos or voice-over powerpoints to zoom in on specific areas for your students that they can play again asynchronously if they need extra help understanding a complex idea. (Voice-over powerpoint is easier than making an actual video and doesn't need special software or tools.)
- Wrap the lessons in an interesting scenario to engage students curiosity. (As covid-19 was unfolding, I had my students follow the situation unfolding on the USS Roosevelt – it sparked great debates and position papers.)
- Engage in conversations with students – it doesn't just have to be about the course content to be valuable in developing communicatively-competent future leaders.
- Take it easy on yourself – not all problems can be solved. The bar is lower with a skills course where practical skills cannot be sufficiently simulated online.