



IKONOS *Creating new Cultural
Heritage Horizons through distance
learning nodes in the Mediterranean*

A Guidebook – Teaching using Videoconferencing



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“Learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much just by sitting in class listening to teachers, memorizing pre-packaged assignments, and spitting out answers. They must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences, apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves.”

Arthur W. Chickering and Zelda F. Gamson, "Seven Principles for Good Practice," AAHE Bulletin 39: 3-7, March 1987

Class time is brief and precious, and the information we want to communicate to our students is important. Since they are novices--or pre-novices--in our fields and we are experts, it makes sense to tell them what they need to know. With this in mind, we lecture.

While lecturing is an important aspect of university instruction, it is not necessarily the only or best way of engaging students in the ideas and information we're presenting. It's not just that a listener's attention often slips from high to low (then, we hope, rebounds) during the course of an hour. Lecturing induces passivity of thought, even in the best of students. They hurriedly take notes, but have little time to reflect on or question the material being jotted down. If instructors must lecture, they might consider ways of ensuring that students understand the major topics and concepts.

The Course - preparation

There are three very important questions to think about when coming to prepare a course:

- ✓ What are you going to teach?
- ✓ How is this content going to be taught?
- ✓ How to make sure that the students are actually learning what is being taught?

Principles of Course Design

A course should:

- Challenge students to higher learning: lectures go beyond recall and comprehension level only and move towards more problem solving, decision making, critical thinking and creative thinking.
- Use Active Learning: this comes with higher-level learning, solving problems to acquire problem-solving skills.
- Give frequent and immediate feedback to the students: Higher form of learning requires frequent feedback enabling students to know where they stand with respect to their learning. Frequent feedback normally is given on a daily or weekly basis whereas immediate feedback is given during the classroom session.
- Use a structured sequence during classes, which progresses from lower level basic concepts to more a complex abstract form of learning.
- Assesses students fairly according to their progress in learning: grades should normally reflect the students' perception of their own learning achievements.

(Adapted from Fink¹, 1999 University of Oklahoma Instructional Development)

¹Fink, L. Instructional Development Program, University of Oklahoma.
<http://www.ou.edu/idp/tips/index.htm> Online. Available 2005

General strategies:

- If you are new to the course, and the course has been done before, speak to the lecturers who had previously taught to be able to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the course.
- If you are new to the course and it has never been taught before, review textbooks on the topics and try to find contacts with partners who might have already done some work on the subject.
- If you have already taught previously in the course, assemble everything associated with the course, syllabus, textbooks, readings, papers, notes and past evaluations. Modify the course according to the students' past response.

Identify the constraints in teaching the course. A few questions to ask are:

- ✓ How many hours are available for instruction?
- ✓ How many students will be enrolled?
- ✓ At what level will the students be enrolled?
- ✓ What assumptions of previous knowledge by the students can be made?
- ✓ What sort of resources will be available throughout class?
- ✓ Will undergraduates or readers be available for additional help required during class?
- ✓ Think about how the course you are teaching relates to other courses offered by the institute. Try to relate to them as much as possible.

The Syllabus - purpose

The syllabus is a written agreement between the lecturer and the students taking the course. Each syllabus has to have objectives which have been clearly laid out. When a student looks at the course, few of the questions, which come his/her mind, are:

- ✓ Why do I need this course?
- ✓ What will this course enable me to do that I can't do without it?
- ✓ What are the course requirements and how do I meet them?
- ✓ How will I be evaluated?

✓ How will the final grade be determined and what is the grading scale?

The syllabus should provide answers to these questions in such a way that the students feel that they know exactly what they are going in for. The syllabus should also specify policies such as attendance, unexcused absence, late work, academic dishonesty, grading, participation, etc. which would avoid unnecessary problems later.

Syllabus Development Checklist

- Identifying information: (Name of the Institution, Course title, semester and year, Course ID with section number and number of credit hours, Time of class meetings)
- Professor information: (Name and title, Office location, Office hours, Phone, Fax, Email)
- Institution Mission statement
- Primary audience and prerequisites
- Course description and overview of content
- Class format (lectures/practical sessions/groups/other teaching methods)
- Texts, readings, materials of instruction (tools) needed for the course and course supplements/resources available to students
- Student performance competences criteria
- Evaluation methods
- Grading standards and requirements for major projects and papers
- Course policy on attendance, academic dishonesty, late work, etc.
- Course outline and calendar
- Content and activities for class meetings (by week or by day)
- Assignments and due dates for all items to be graded
- Exam dates

Establishing objectives

Objectives play a vital role when planning a course. They have four main functions:

- They help clarify what you want the students to accomplish at the end.
- They help in the selection of appropriate teaching methods and resources.
- Students will be aware of the lecturers' expectations of their accomplishments.
- They will be useful guidelines for new comers to the teaching experience.

Objectives can be divided into two:

Non-Content Objectives – a general overview of the behavioural skills, which would be acquired by the students for example: become team members and collaborate in groups of two or three, or preparing a joint report or presentation.

Content Objectives – more specific to the content itself and to what the lecturer hopes for the students to accomplish at the end of the course.

Although at first it is important that the lecturer lists down all the topics which he/she feel important that the students should learn, the next step would be to cut down the material to the basic needs of the course. Research has shown that too much content and material might hinder the students' learning.

Tips:



- ❑ **Differentiate between essential and optional material to be learnt. Essential refers to the material which is needed by all students, whilst optional material is only given in the cases where students show an additional interest.**
- ❑ **Emphasise the core concepts**
- ❑ **Give students a conceptual framework on which to build major ideas for example the students are given a basic theory, a theme, a typology, or a controversial issue from which to branch out more complex notions.**

Developing Goals

Objectives/goals can be developed in terms of lecturer (what the lecturer wants to be taught) content (what needs to be taught) and learner (what students will be able to do after the course). Therefore the questions one has to ask before putting down the syllabus in writing have to reflect these three types.

One asks first what will the students get out of the course.

- What will they be able to do at the end of the course that they cannot do without taking the course?
- What will students do to demonstrate that they have reached that objective?

One should also check for concreteness. Phrases like "develop appreciation" and "become aware," refer to the internal state of the learner and are to be replaced with more concrete verbs indicating achievement for example *to classify, demonstrate, apply, explain, report, compare, criticise, etc.*

Instructional Strategies

Benjamin Bloom² (1913-1999) who was an educator formed a team of educational psychologists in order to create taxonomies reflecting the hierarchical levels of learning (1956).

These taxonomies categorise the level of questions that commonly occur in educational settings and are particularly useful for the design of test questions. Learning activities are categorised into three domains, cognitive (mental skills), affective (attitude), psychomotor (physical skills).

The cognitive domain includes the development of intellectual skills and is split into categories ranging from the simplest to the most abstract. Each category tests particular skills and the questions asked will therefore provide feedback accordingly.

Instructional Strategy	Cognitive	Affective	Psychomotor
Lecture, reading, audio/visual, demonstration, or guided observations, question and answer period	1. Knowledge	1. Receiving phenomena	1. Perception 2. Set
Discussions, multimedia reflection. Activities such as surveys, role playing, case studies, etc.	2. Comprehension 3. Application	2. Responding to phenomena	3. Guided response 4. Mechanism
On-the-Job-Training (OJT), practice by doing simulated job settings (to include CBT simulations)	4. Analysis	3. Valuing	5. Complex response
Use in real situations.	5. Synthesis	4. Organize values into priorities	6. Adaptation
High interest normally developed on own through self-study.	6. Evaluation	5. Internalizing values	7. Origination

Table 1 - Instructional Strategies

² Learning Skills Program <http://www.coun.uvic.ca/learn/program/hndouts/bloom.html> Online. Available 2005

What is Active Learning?

Active learning is engages students in some activity that forces them to think about and comment on the information presented. Students won't simply be listening, but will be developing skills in handling concepts in our disciplines. They will analyse, synthesise, and evaluate information in discussion with other students, through asking questions, or through writing. Though conventional lectures may be relied upon to communicate information and concepts from one's own perspective, breaking up the conventional 1 hour lecture with questions and discussion, will be the first step towards change in lecturing.



Tips:

- ❑ **have students brainstorm problems that remained unresolved from the previous lecture,**
- ❑ **raise questions from the previous lecture or their reading assignment,**
- ❑ **pause for a few minutes two or three times during an hour lecture to allow students to consolidate notes and develop questions about the material being presented,**
- ❑ **ask students to work in pairs to organize their notes and discuss the key points of the lecture developing questions based on what they feel is still unclear, which questions can be used as the starting point for the next lecture**
- ❑ **have students close their notebooks a few minutes before the end of class and ask them to reconstruct, on a blank sheet of paper point form or diagrammatically, as much of the lecture as possible.**

Questioning Techniques:

- Begin a distance learning class by establishing some ground rules as to when questions can be asked: At the beginning of class, at any time, at the end of a class, or questions must be submitted in writing.
- Begin a distance learning class by asking questions that you know most of the students can answer. Use positive feedback.
- Respect all student responses. Always acknowledge a response and find something good in it, even if the answer is wrong. Remember that students at field sites are concerned about who is listening and don't want to be embarrassed.
- Know the characteristics of your questions. Are they intellectual or attitudinal? Do they require recall of specific facts or are they probing? Will one answer suffice or are there many possible answers?
- Plan questions in advance. Write them down and identify which cognitive level they are intended to elicit: Recall; comprehension; application of a specific principle, formulae, or skill; or critical thinking?
- Give students 3-5 seconds to think about a question before you ask for a response.
- Repeat all questions so that everyone at each field site can hear the question.
- Ask the students to form small teams of 2-3 people to answer questions. If you are unsure of a student question, paraphrase it and ask the student if that is what they meant.
- Record important student responses on a flip chart, whiteboard, or under a document camera.
- If a student asks a question, redirect it to other students for a response.
- Never use put downs or provide negative feedback of any type. It will devastate a student.

Discussion Techniques

- lecture for thirty minutes or so, and spend the final time asking questions that require students to apply what they've heard, or analyse it, or relate it to their reading assignments
- punctuate lectures with brief questions that require students to explain major concepts with examples or analogies
- use one class solely for discussion, so that students come prepared to participate
- use peer discussion to help students understand and retain material
- break up a lecture by having students divide themselves into groups of three or four and answer specific questions, or solve specific problems. It's not necessary to call on every group for a response
- groups can be told to research a complex issue and in class be asked to represent a specific position in an impromptu debate.
- use case studies as stories, often based on real world examples, which place students in the role of decision maker. Case studies thus test students' analytic and problem solving approaches while making them conscious of how to use the skills they've been developing in the class.

Although discussion can be mistaken as an easy to do lesson, there is much work involved in the planning and review of subject matter.

Tips:



- ❑ **Decide how much time you want to spend**
- ❑ **Develop a clear objective for the discussion. [Knowing the content to be covered is not enough. Naming the chapter your students will read is not enough. What counts is what the students will be able to do with the information or ideas.]**
- ❑ **Problematise the topic – give an open-ended problem to solve, a task to complete, a judgment to reach, a decision to make, or a list to create—something that begs for closure.**
- ❑ **Select an activity to frame the problem. [using a specific instructional strategy]**
- ❑ **Choose a grouping method**
- ❑ **Debrief the discussion (use approximately one third of the discussion time for debriefing. Debriefing can be used to correct incorrect notions or slip in any points that students might have neglected but that are important. When groups start repeating ideas, it's time to stop.)**

Some difficulties which might be encountered during discussion:

If you habitually can't get discussion started, pay more attention to the topics you're picking; they may not be broad enough. Or you may not be using good questioning skills.

If your students are unwilling or unable to discuss as a whole group, try putting them into pairs or small groups with a question to answer. Then have at least several groups report their conclusions to the class. You might also have your students write for a minute or two, and then discuss. This gives them a chance to start to think through the issue in private before they have to go public.

If one or two students consistently monopolize the floor, you may want to take one of two approaches. Either use their comments to throw the discussion back to the class (You've raised an important point. Maybe others would like to comment.), or acknowledge the comments and offer another outlet. ("Those ideas deserve a lot more time. Maybe we can discuss them after class.")

If there is a lull in the discussion, relax. This doesn't mean you've failed. Every conversation needs a chance to catch its breath. It may mean that your topic is

exhausted or it may be a pause for people to digest what they've heard. If the lull comes too frequently, though, you may need to give more attention to the types of topics you're picking. It is often not enough just to have a topic; you should come to class with several specific but open-ended questions prepared.

Most teachers tend not to wait long enough between questions or before answering their own questions because a silent classroom induces too much anxiety in the instructor; research actually shows an average wait time of 0.9 seconds. Try counting to 10 slowly after asking a provocative question to which you are just dying to respond yourself. Students don't like a silent classroom either. Once they have confidence that you will give them time to think their responses through, they will participate more freely.

If students are talking only to you instead of to each other, you are probably focusing too intently on the speaker. You can help students talk to each other by leading with your eyes, looking occasionally at others in the room. This will lead the speaker to do likewise.

If there are students who seldom or never talk, see if you can find out whether they are shy, confused, or simply turned off. Watch for clues that indicate that they might want to speak up ("X, you seem disturbed by Y's idea. What do you think?").

If you run out of material before the end of class, ask your students if there are other topics they might be interested in discussing. If not, let them go early. Don't keep them the whole hour just for form's sake.

If a fight breaks out over an issue, then you've got a hot topic on your hands! Facilitate! Your major task here is to keep the argument focused on the issues. Don't let it turn personal, under any circumstances. Remember to demand evidence and reasons, not name-calling.

Practical Session Techniques

- Know exactly what the students are supposed to learn and why they have to learn these things. This will come in handy when your students start to wonder why they're doing what they're doing.
- Read and study the theory on which the practical sessions are based. Your understanding of the theoretical aspect of the lab should be useful to you in handling most student questions which don't deal with concrete parts of the session.
- Research the relevance of the experiment, both the technique being taught and the applications of the theory being demonstrated.
- Decide how to introduce the session most effectively. Before students start their work, will they need you to demonstrate the procedures that they'll be following?
- Is a handout with written instructions in order?
- Will a 15-minute lecture about the theory suffice?
- What safety information do they need?
- If during the practical sessions students ask, "Why can't we get this to come out right?" try asking them a series of questions which leads them to discover the reasons for themselves rather than simply explaining why their work has failed.

Use of Case Studies

There are various formats of case studies, which can be used during class:

- ✓ Factual case studies – for analysis only. Cases would have already been tackled and a solution or recommendation provided.
- ✓ Open ended factual case studies – students would have to predict solution.
- ✓ Fictional cases put forward by instructor – these can be closed or open ended to provide an open-ended setting.
- ✓ Cases from original documents or articles – ideal to encourage both analysis and synthesis.

When managing case study assignments it is best to:

- Design discussions for small groups (3-6 students)
- Design the narrative or situation such that it requires participants to reach a judgment, decision, recommendation, prediction or other concrete outcome.
- Structure the discussion. The instructor should provide a series of written questions to guide small group discussion. Early questions might ask participants to make observations about the facts of the case. Later questions could ask for comparisons, contrasts, and analyses of competing observations or hypotheses. Final questions might ask students to take a position on the matter.
- Debrief the discussion to compare group responses.
- Allow groups to work without instructor interference. The instructor must be comfortable with ambiguity and with adopting the non-traditional roles of witness and resource, rather than authority.

Tips (questions which can be used during case study assignments):

- ❑ What is the situation—what do you actually know about it from reading the case?
- ❑ What issues are at stake?
- ❑ What questions do you have—what information do you still need? Where/how could you find it?
- ❑ What problem(s) need to be solved?
- ❑ What are all the possible options? What are the pros/cons of each option?
- ❑ What criteria should you use when choosing an option?



Use of Technology

Most of the technology involved into a videoconferencing class involves:

- ✓ Video/Films
- ✓ Overhead Projector
- ✓ Slides
- ✓ Flip Chart
- ✓ Presentation with a computer



Tips:

- ❑ **When using video, make the most of the time by using discussion prior to viewing, and after viewing.**
- ❑ **For the overhead projector keep the visuals simple, using flow diagrams where possible and easy to read keywords.**
- ❑ **When using slides remember that less is more, meaning that with fewer slides students have more time to analyse them and interpret them**
- ❑ **Watch out for small handwriting if you're using the flip chart and check for legibility. Also use darker shades of markers avoiding red or green markers.**
- ❑ **Because computers can make a series of slides appear visually slick, with seamless transitions, it's easy to rush through material too fast and to forget to keep students active and attentive. Developing a presentation sequence and rhythm that includes frequent interaction with students, writing exercises, problem solving, or other events will help keep students from being mesmerized by the march of slides.**

Group Work/Practical Sessions

Although the practical session is one of the most enriching aspects of the course taught by videoconferencing, students might have difficulty in perceiving its relevance. In this way it is important that the students are informed of the purpose of such a practical session, why it is worth doing and why it serves as a better understanding of higher concepts and processes.



Tips (questions which can be used during practical sessions):

- ❑ **Know exactly what the students are expected to achieve at the end of the session and why they are expected to achieve it.**
- ❑ **Perform the practical beforehand.**
- ❑ **Know the theory on which it is based.**
- ❑ **Plan on how to guide the students through the introduction of the practical session.**
- ❑ **Try to introduce the concept of drawing up a report after the session to clarify the steps used in such a session.**

When using group work it is important to keep three things in mind:

- Size
- Selection
- Duration

Group numbers will affect the level of interaction within the group. It is important to keep in mind that during videoconferencing classrooms, many students might be shy of interacting with the cameras. However it might be a good idea of starting the discussion time by having small groups interacting amongst themselves before interacting with the lecturer and with the camera.

Student-Lecturer Communication

Communication is a very important aspect of teaching and learning. Communication helps the students understand and achieve what you have in mind. Enhanced communication may be achieved with:

- More student time allocation on task (study questions posted on website, mock quizzes or short answer questions)
- Improved collaboration between students; one of the main aims of IKONOS is to enhance cross cultural exchanges. The website is a means where students can meet and work together without actually meeting face to face.
- Improved communication between students and lecturer by e-mail
- Improved access to course materials and assignments.

Student Assessment

Assessment serves to substantiate the claims that students and their foreign counterparts are actually following what the lecturer is trying to convey minimising as many misconceptions as possible. There are various assessment strategies which can be used during a distance learning class.

- Essays/paper review
- Presentations
- Group projects
- Portfolios
- Bulletin board discussions

It is important to keep in mind that such means of assessment are directed towards enhanced self-direction, autonomy and initiative. Therefore the assessment method has to reflect the strategies employed within the classroom. On the other had, an evaluation of student progress involves other means of testing excluding formal assessment. Such evaluations serve the purpose of giving feedback to the lecturer for future improvements to the course content for

implementation. Such evaluations are called formative evaluations and can be carried out by means of questionnaires or surveys distributed before, during or after a course. Such monitoring gives the lecturer an approximate idea of how useful the students are finding the course in itself as well as the level of understanding between students and the lecturer himself/herself.

Assessment Methods

Formal end of year assessment can be carried out in a number of ways amongst which:

- Closed answer tests (including multiple choice, fill in the blanks, etc)
- Essays
- Writing Assignments



Tips (what to include in essay type questions):

- ❑ Know the processes which you want to measure e.g. analysis, synthesis, etc.
- ❑ It is best to start the essay question with 'compare', 'contrast', 'explain' rather than 'what', 'when', 'list'.
- ❑ Each item should reflect the parameters of expected answer as clearly as possible.
- ❑ Each question should be written in a manner that specifies the exact detail you want the student to go into.
- ❑ Do not include too many questions if the time is quite limited. Normally a lecturer should be able to tackle the questions in half the time allocated.

Feedback is very important throughout the course. Feedback can be immediate during lectures, asynchronously by means of e-mail or through grades. The feedback establishes a bond between the lecturer and the students that eliminates the barriers induced by the videoconferencing class. Remember that just as the lecturer might feel ill at ease with the cameras focused on him/her, even the students might have the same feeling. Talking back to the students gives the lecture a more humane dimension.

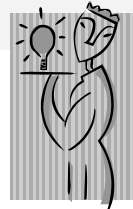
Most Important Things That I Have Learned About Teaching and Learning at a Distance

1. Talking is not teaching.
2. Enthusiasm generates enthusiasm.
3. Be available before and after class in real and delayed time.
4. Never assume what a student knows or can do without verification.
5. Be clear and concise in your expectations of what is to be learned. Share the class and course learning performance objectives.
6. Have contingency plans when you are teaching with technology. Be prepared for the worst.
7. Technology can never replace the value of a live instructor.
8. Making students remember unconnected facts is irrelevant. Showing them where to find the facts is a skill that will be used for a lifetime.
9. Students don't care unless they share.
10. Use lots of humour but don't tell jokes.
11. Create curiosity in your teaching content.
12. Use lots of attention-focusing strategies.
13. Startle students occasionally with a provocative statement or question.
14. Lecture only 8-12 minutes before you involve students in their learning in some way.
15. Top quality teaching doesn't just happen. It takes planning.
16. When you ask a question on television, wait at least 8-10 seconds for a response.
17. A course syllabus for distance learning is the most important communication device that an instructor can use to provide useful information. It is a legal covenant with students.
18. Teaching is not talking at. It is talking with.
19. Traditional courses cannot be transported to a television through videoconferencing or the World Wide Web environment without significant modification.

20. The first seven seconds of a television class are the most important. This is when the student forms a visual impression.
21. Active learning involves students in their own learning both alone and in small groups.
22. Active learning is the ability to get students to do something with what they have learned and then to think about what they have done.
23. Stories and anecdotes reinforce key teaching points and establish a personal rapport with students.

To summarise...

**Tell me, I'll listen. Show me, I'll understand.
Involve me and I'll learn.**



Further Reading:

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Final Note

Dear friends,

This guidebook has been produced to help you during your teaching experience. However teaching in itself is an enlightening experience which will provide you with all the tools. Teaching and learning is all about human interactivity and each human is different and behaves differently. Each educator has to find his/her own methods of teaching adapting himself/herself to each classroom situation. Being an educator is tough and takes up a lot of dedication and understanding for each individual student who is in front of you. Being a distance educator although having its satisfactions is twice as difficult as each relationship has to be established either through a video camera or through the computer. The rewards are also doubled as the teaching done has reached not only students at a local level but also people who are at a remote site and who may be at a disadvantage educationally with respect to others.

Whilst wishing you luck, we hope that teaching and learning will be as fulfilling and satisfactory to you as it is to your students.

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