# **Course Modification Planning Guide**

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| The *overall structure and design of an online course* can influence student participation, satisfaction, and learning. To help instructors reflect on their online course proposals, this document was adapted from online course rubrics, evaluation tools, and research (see references/resources list at end of document). Each section prompts instructors to provide specific examples that demonstrate intentional planning and considerations for the proposed online course. It is highly recommended for the faculty to meet with [staff in the Teaching Commons](https://teach.ucmerced.edu/consultations) prior to submitting this proposal. |
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| **Section 1: Design & Planning** |

**This section addresses course structure, content organization, navigation, learning outcomes, and expectations.**

*Please provide specific examples of...*

* The pedagogical advantages of the proposed modality (percentage of synchronous and/or asynchronous; in-person).
* The [alignment](https://teach.ucmerced.edu/pedagogy-guides/backwards-design) across learning outcomes, [assessment](https://teach.ucmerced.edu/pedagogy-guide/assessment-feedback), and learning experiences.
* The plan to communicate the purpose, structure, and expectations of the course (e.g., response times, weekend expectations, online and in-class discussions, emails, etc.).
* The [management of cognitive load](https://teach.ucmerced.edu/pedagogy-guides/backwards-design#cognitive-load) through a student-friendly organization and navigation within CatCourses (e.g., learning units or modules are consistently structured and sequenced).

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| **Section 2: Content Presentation and Technology** |

**This section addresses materials, modalities, and UC Merced-supported instructional tools.**

*Please provide specific examples of...*

* The modalities, tools, and resources for content presentation throughout the semester (live/synchronous or pre-recorded/asynchronous lectures, video/audio, readings, Teaching Commons recording studios, Kaltura, CatCourses, etc.).
* The instructions to complete activities, assessments, how to use appropriate technologies, and expectations for required hardware and software.
* The distinction between required and optional materials/assignments.
* The information that points students towards [institutional services](https://www.ucmerced.edu/resources) (e.g., counseling and psychological services, library, tutoring centers, etc.).

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| **Section 3: Community and Engagement** |

**This section addresses elements pertaining to establishing a community for learning, including active learning, agreements for communications, and engagement with the content.**

*Please provide specific examples of...*

* Learning activities that support opportunities for varied formal interactions:
  + 1) student-to-faculty (e.g., office hours, email, temperature checks and instructor-initiated feedback)
  + 2) student-to-student (e.g., peer review, peer instructions, small group projects, discussion forums)
* Multiple ways for students to individually engage in the course (e.g., chat vs. discussion, etc.) and demonstrate understandings (e.g., podcast vs. paper, etc.).
* The plan to communicate [professional standards of behavior and communication](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/220426111_Etiquette_online_From_nice_to_necessary) and establish instructor presence ([Garrison et al. 2007](https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?p=PROF&u=iastu_main&id=GALE|A284325498&v=2.1&it=r&sid=PROF&asid=74a1227c)) in the course.

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| **Section 4: Assessment and Evaluation** |

**This section addresses monitoring student progress, intervention strategies, course improvement data, and evaluating the effectiveness of course modality.**

*Please provide specific examples of...*

* The grading policies and how student engagement is evaluated in the proposed modality
* [Formative and summative](https://teach.ucmerced.edu/pedagogy-guides/assessment-feedback/types#types-of-assessment) assessments and how their weights are balanced in the grading scheme across the semester.
* The instructor’s plan to provide frequent and timely student feedback, as well as identifying intervention strategies for students
* The instructor's plan to communicate what prior knowledge and preparation is necessary for success in the course and how to address insufficiencies or inappropriate prior knowledge ([Ambrose et al. 2010](https://firstliteracy.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/How-Learning-Works.pdf)).
* The instructor’s plan to evaluate the effectiveness of the modality and for continued course improvement (e.g., DWF rates, early-to-mid semester student survey, end of the semester course evaluation, etc.).
* The instructor’s plan to ensure academic integrity and minimize cheating in the course (e.g., stated academic integrity policy in the syllabus, sign a contract agreeing to maintain academic integrity, etc.).

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| **Section 5: Accessibility & Inclusion** |

**This section addresses elements pertaining to equal opportunity for all, diversity, equity and inclusion, accommodations, and assisted technologies (see** [**Section 504**](https://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasam/centers-offices/civil-rights-center/statutes/section-504-rehabilitation-act-of-1973) **and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973).**

*Please provide specific examples of...*

* The course supports [diversity, equity and inclusion](https://teach.ucmerced.edu/sites/crte.ucmerced.edu/files/page/documents/1._pdf_uc_course_design_dei_rubric_accessible_0.pdf) (e.g., fosters respect, sense of value and belonging, personal connections, identity development).
* The communication plan for explaining how students obtain an accommodation (see UC Merced’s Student Accessibility [Accommodation Request](https://access.ucmerced.edu/student-accommodation-request) form).
* How the instructor proactively provides equivalent alternatives to auditory/visual content, readability, and minimizes visual distractions ([transcription, captioning](https://www.ucop.edu/electronic-accessibility/web-developers/transcripts-and-captions/index.html), alternative text, color contrast, font size, etc.).
* The course design is formatted to accommodate the use of assistive technologies (screen reader and keyboard-only navigation).
* The instructor’s plan to ensure compliance with FERPA (e.g., privacy of students: no student faces in video lectures, etc.)

## **References and Resources**

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