

# What are the Key Ingredients for an Effective and Engaging Online Course?

P. Roberto Garcia, Ph.D.  
Distinguished Clinical Professor  
of International Business

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## Overview

- The Online Instruction Challenge
- A Quick Poll to Gauge our Online Experiences
- The Context & “Finding the Sweet Spot” Study
- The Key Ingredients
- Tips and Recommendations
- Lessons Learned Over Time
- Some Useful Resources
- Q&A Session



## The Key Issues

- More and more business schools are offering **more classes online** (Ryle and Cumming 2007)
- Growing number of students **motivated to take online courses** (Dykman & Davis 2008)
- Instructors worry that traditional materials online are **not very rich** (Hannon & D'Netto 2007)
- Online teaching **effectiveness** goes way beyond just putting content online (Lindquist & Long 2011)
- Online students are also **motivated extrinsically by interaction with peers and with instructor** (Gatlin & Alexander 2010; Ryle and Cumming, 2008; McAllister, Metzler, & Wisneski 2012)
- Covid-19 has forced universities worldwide to **switch from face-to-face to online teaching in mid-session**



## Student Online Course Advantages

- Can **stay at home** and keep working full time
- **Reduced** lodging and travel **costs** to and from school
- **Can study wherever** have access to computer and internet
- Asynchronous approach allows students to **work at own pace**
- Web apps like **Zoom** can make learning very **accessible**
- Use of computer and internet skills allows for **transfer of skills to work life**



## Student Online Course Disadvantages

- One-way delivery of information may be perceived as **stale** and **boring**
- Students may feel **isolated** and may **crave** social **interaction**
- Unmotivated learners and those with less discipline or poor study habits may **fall behind**
- Lack of an intuitive structure and routine may cause **extra work** and **frustration**
- The online **instructor** may **not be available** or readily accessible, causing **irritation**



## Let's try a few quick Polls now

1. How **long** have you been teaching online?
2. How would you compare **learning outcomes** online with face-to-face?
3. **How do you feel** about the prospect of teaching online compared with face-to-face?
4. What is the **most important ingredient** for effective online teaching?



## The Kelley Direct Program Overview

- **Established:** 1999, first online MBA offered in USA by an accredited (AACSB) business school
- **Online Programs Ranking:** #1 US News & WR, #3 Financial Times, #2 Poets & Quants
- **Students Enrolled:** 1,014
- **Student Locations:** 50 US States, 24 non-US countries
- **Degrees offered:** MBA, MS Degrees in: Business Analytics, Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Finance, Global Supply Chain Management, IT Management, Marketing, & Strategic Management
- **Student Demographics:** Average age 32, 9 years of professional experience, 11% military



## Online MBA Student Focus Group Study



- Focus on "What makes a good online course?"
- Conducted by 2 faculty and 1 Instructional Support Specialist
- 3 student focus groups (2 face-to-face and 1 via web conference)
- Follow-up surveys with online students and faculty
- Results were used to guide a KD Program improvement effort

## “What Makes a Good Online Course?” Themes: Student Likes and Dislikes

1. Instructor Characteristics
2. Peer Engagement and Interaction
3. Course Organization
4. Learning Management System (LMS) Use
  - Blackboard, Brightspace, Canvas, Moodle, Oncourse, etc.

## 1. Instructor Characteristics

- **Expertise** and personal experience with the content
  - **Passion** for the topic and interest in the course
  - Able to connect the course **relevance** to the “real world”
  - Willing to form a **relationship** with the class and to work with each student individually
    - “take the content seriously but don’t take themselves too seriously”
  - Willingness to **keep the course “fresh”**
    - **Updating** texts, topics, readings, cases, lectures
    - Interested in **learning** and using **technology** and **LMS** features
    - **Opposite** of putting the course on “Autopilot” or “Set It and Forget It” approach
- **In Short:** An Instructor who is highly **engaged** with the Class

## 2. Peer Engagement and Interaction

- Students want to be **challenged** and motivated to improve
  - Want to have meaningful, real-time **interaction** with the instructor and each other
  - Want to **share** what they are learning with each other and to receive **feedback**
  - Want to **network** with each other and with the instructor
  - Want **group work** and **team deliverables** as part of the assessment
- **In short:** Students want the **flexibility** of online education but they crave the experience of “face-to-face” **interaction**

## 3. Course Organization

- Course is well **organized**, complete from the start, and **will not change**
    - Syllabus, Reading Materials, Assignments, Deadlines
  - Week by week **schedule** and work **expectations** are apparent
  - **Relevance** and **clarity** in Assignments
    - Materials, requirements, directions, and deadlines should be clear
    - Assignments tie to learning objective and not busy work
  - Assignment **deadlines** are set and **do not change**
- **In short:** Students want all course information from the **start** and **do not** want to **get lost**

## 4. Learning Management System Use

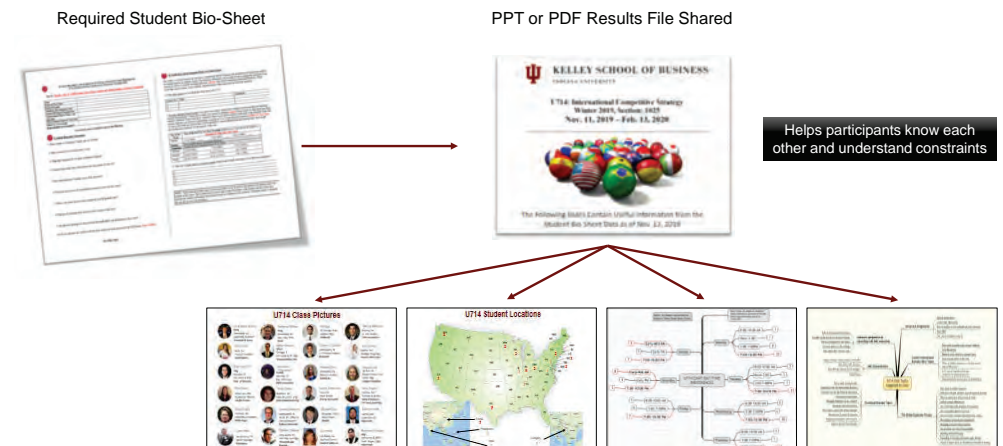
- **Syllabus** should be easy to find
  - Modules and Assignments should be **logically organized** (week by week)
  - LMS **Calendar** should be used for Assignments for easy deadline **tracking**
  - Course E-mail, Announcements, **Notifications** should come via the **LMS**
  - Lecture slides and required **materials** should be **posted** from the start of the course
  - Superfluous **LMS buttons** and features should be **hidden** to avoid confusion and distraction
  - Instructor should take time to **learn and use** the most practical **LMS features**
- **In short:** LMS should make it easy to **stay on track** in the course

## Recommendations

## 1. Instructor Characteristics

- Communicate interest in the course and in the topic
  - Record and post introductory videos
- Create a sense of community with class
  - Create and share a student demographics file
- Add teaching presence with a personal touch
  - Responsiveness, music, brain teasers, sports, travel pictures, etc.
- Incorporate current events and news within the course
- Provide more flexibility and show more interest than face-to-face
- Take time to gain competence with LMS features and technologies

## Example to Help Create Sense of Community

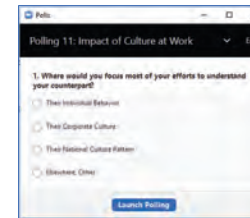


## Example of Polls to Create Engagement

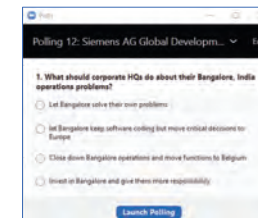
### Suggested Steps:

- Select an interesting, valuable learning situation
- Create an assignment to have students prepare
- Create a poll in advance
- Launch poll during a synchronous class session
- Manage participation using the chat pod
- Stimulate sharing and debate
- Summarize the lessons learned

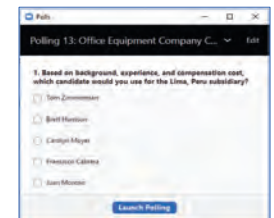
What would you do?



What is the best case decision?



Which is the best candidate?



Makes participants feel as if they are in class, but can be more honest

## 2. Peer Engagement and Interaction

- Take time to learn student backgrounds and understand their goals
- Encourage students to share their experience and perspective
- Assign team deliverables
- Invite guest speakers but allow student Q&A sessions
- Add synchronous sessions for active discussion (Zoom)
- Send preparation topics and questions in advance synchronous sessions
- Provide the feeling of the face-to-face experience as much as possible

## 3. Course Organization

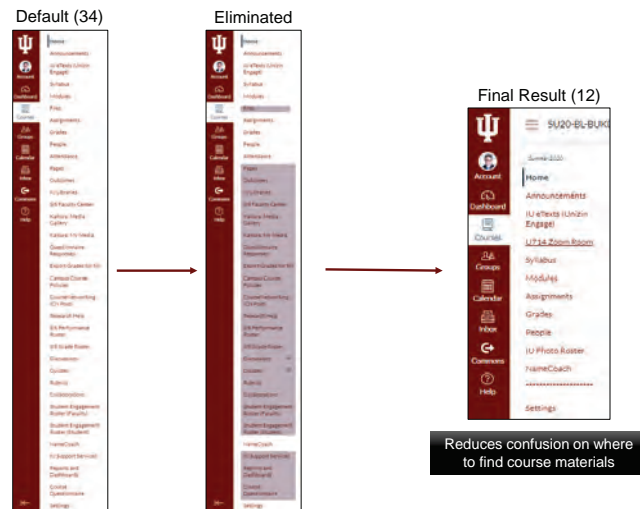
- Finalize syllabus and course materials before start of the class
- Insert week by week schedule and due dates to syllabus
- Do not change syllabus without a good reason and without sufficient notice
- Choose relevant and interesting materials
- Freshen up cases and assignments
- Provide opportunities to work ahead to avoid conflicts
- Provide a consistent and repeating structure for assignments
  - Types of questions, length, rubrics, due dates, etc.

## 4. Learning Management System Use

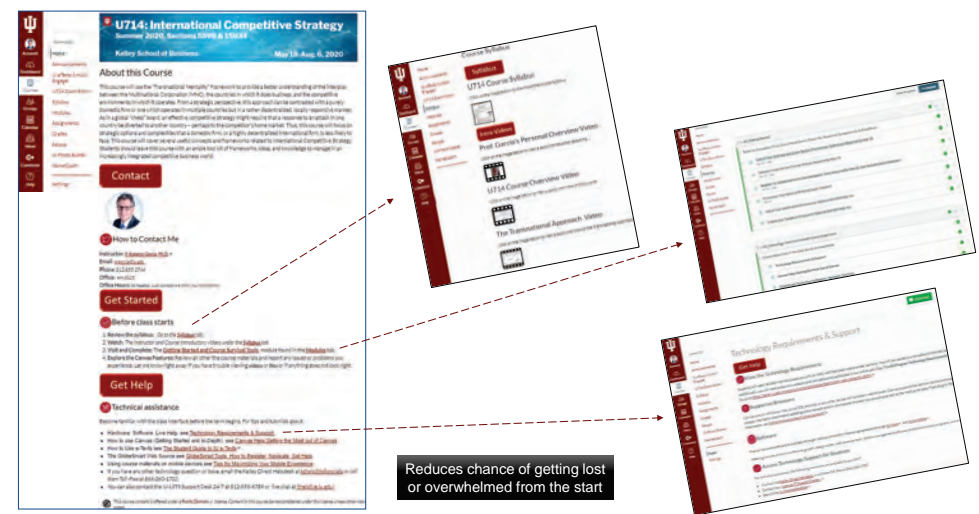
- Post syllabus, materials, and assignments 1-2 weeks in advance of start
- Eliminate any buttons and features not in use
- Place Syllabus at the top and easy to find
- Create an inviting Home Page with contact and navigation tips
- Create logical, clear Module and Assignment structure
- Use Calendar tool to post Assignment due dates
- Provide lecture notes and materials in a logical place
- Take time to explore and use advanced LMS features
  - Grading Rubrics, Grade Comments, Page Links, External Apps, etc.
- Test, Test, Test



## Example to Reduce Unnecessary LMS Buttons



## Create an Inviting Home Page with Navigation Help



## Web Conferencing Tips



## Zoom Tool Highlights

- Video and voice web conferencing tool
- Flexible delivery of course content
  - PowerPoint, videos, PDFs, and other types of files
  - Including Screen Views for demonstrations
- Conducting real-time meetings
- Allowing participants to present and share their work
- Conducting case discussions
- Voting on a specific course of action
- Stimulating peer-to-peer interaction
- Guest lectures from anywhere
- Open Q & A sessions and Virtual Office Hours
- Recording entire meetings for posting
- Outcome: Powerful for creating a sense of connection and community

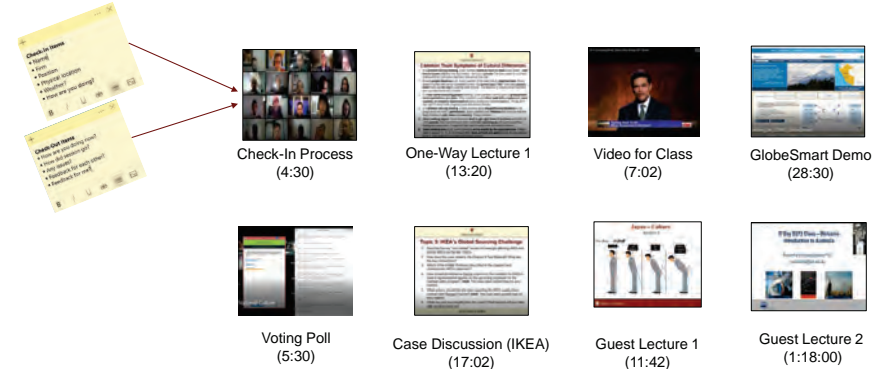


## Zoom Techniques and Features I Use

- Choreograph session and send out preparation topics/questions
- Add “check-in” and “check-out” process (to warmup and recap)
- Require everyone to use their video and to use first and last name
- Manage interaction and process throughout (establish Presence)
  - Post smooth chatting tips
  - Direct the flow of interaction
  - Call on individual students to participate and to respond to outlying behaviors
- Use Chat pod and involve everyone in the interaction, limit one-way lecture
- Use Poll feature to create debates, elaboration, sharing, etc.
- Introduce difficult cases and make students be decision-makers
- Take class temperature throughout
- Hold students accountable for quantity and quality of participation
  - Download Zoom Chat Transcript

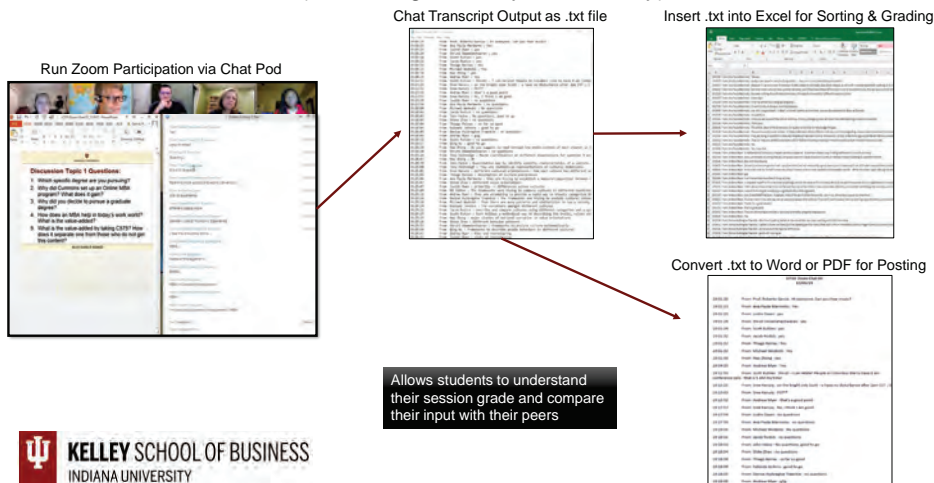


## Examples of Zoom Content Sessions



Zoom allows for a large variety of interactive content sharing

## Example of Accountability for Zoom Participation: (Assessing Quantity and Quality)



## What I Have Learned Over Time

- Teaching online is not less work than face-to-face courses – just different
- Tools, assignments, resources and activities must be planned, choreographed, and made available much earlier
- There is a real cost in time and effort to keep up with changing technologies
- It is wise to take a gradual approach to innovation – test, make small changes, test, then test again
- Students also have to adjust to the online environment and some may not be well suited or may need more help
- One may discover different teaching strengths and may welcome the change from face-to-face teaching

## The Good News

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- Covid-19 forced faculty and students to experience online instruction all at once
- Zoom use increased, vulnerabilities were identified, improvements were prioritized, the tool is now better
- We have seen an explosion of teaching resources and lighting fast sharing of teaching techniques
  - Keep Teaching Tools, IT Support, Department Level Workshops, LMS Templates
- This crisis was not wasted!
- Let's keep trying online teaching and sharing for the benefit of our students



## Some Useful Resources

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- Canvas Instructor Guide  
<https://community.canvaslms.com/groups/instructors/pages/home>
- Zoom Help Center  
<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/categories/200101697-Getting-Started>
- Online Course Templates  
<https://canvas.pasadena.edu/courses/982220>
- Keep Teaching Sites  
<https://kepteaching.iu.edu/get-started/index.html>
- Curt Bonk's Open Learning World  
<http://curtbonk.com/>



## Additional Q&A

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