

BEST PRACTICES FOR TEACHING ACCELERATED COURSES

ACCELERATED COURSES HAVE BEEN AROUND FOR OVER 30 YEARS!

(1) Recognize the Need for Long-Term Planning

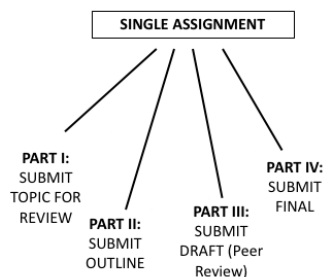
Accelerated classes call for a longer planning horizon, and teaching plans should be developed for the entire course *before* it begins.

CONTENT

How much and what content should I include?

(2) Prioritize Student Learning Outcomes

When designing a course, it is critical to ask yourself what student learning outcomes are most important and what do students need to know in preparation for their next step. An outcomes-based approach helps instructors make decisions about “must” content versus “should” content. Incorporate “must” topics earlier in the course rather than at the end when time pressures tend to increase. Select depth over breadth.



(3) Reconfigure Assignments

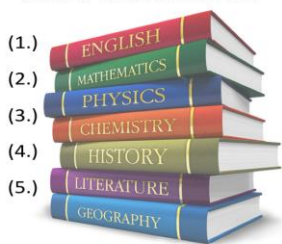
Divide single longer assignments into more frequent shorter assignments, scheduling the first assignment early in the course in order to have students start immediately. Require an assignment outline early in the course that is counted as part of the grade. Experienced instructors have reported that a reduction in the number or length of assignments did not jeopardize the academic integrity of the course or limit their ability to perform.



(4) Design A Relaxed Learning Environment

Create a community of learners through discussions, group work, guided reflection, and other activities that encourage student interaction with the content and each other.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT AS YOU READ AND STUDY



(5) Provide Reading and Study Guides to Support Student Learning

Guides could include an outline of the textbook chapters and readings that students must read (primary importance) versus those that students should read (secondary importance), plus a list of discussion questions/reflection questions to help students focus on key issues. Another option is to arrange shared reading where not every student is responsible for all readings, but rather each student is assigned selected reading with a responsibility to report to the class.

(6) Set Expectations for Work to Be Completed Outside of Class Time

If students do not fulfill these requirements, do not lower expectations.

(7) Establish A Clear and Strict Attendance Policy

Remind students that missing even one class can be the equivalent to missing several classes in a regular semester.



(8) Prepare Handouts of Main Points of Slides or Lectures

These handouts help to ensure that students have the basic information in lectures and presentations. This can also help to shift class time away from information giving to facilitating more interaction with students.

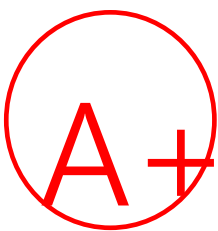


(9) Create Active Learning Exercises

The key to getting students engaged and keeping them motivated is to design numerous opportunities for students to interact with you and their classmates. Working on problems together, conducting research together, designing approaches to case studies, debates, role play, and teaching each other are examples of in-class active learning. Out-of-class activities could include field trips and service work. You may attract a more diverse group of students in the summer that will have a wealth of experiences to share.

(10) Design More Frequent Assessments

Adding more frequent, graded low-stakes assessments has been shown to improve learning outcomes without increasing student anxiety (Brown, Roediger, & McDaniel, 2014).



(11) Provide Regular, Frequent, and Personalized Feedback

Research has shown that feedback leads to more engaged students and increases in intrinsic motivation, enjoyment of their work, and a sense of self-efficacy. Offer both whole class and individual feedback (Apter, Arnold, & Swinson, 2010; Cameron & Pierce, 1994).



(12) Coach Students

Talk to students about time management and stress the importance of beginning course work early, alerting them to the intensity and faster pace, and warning them not to overextend themselves with too many outside activities.



(13) Be More Available to Students

Schedule more frequent office hours and plan to arrive to class early and stay after class for questions and discussions.

WHAT ABOUT THE FORMAT OF AN ACCELERATED CLASS?

(1) OVERVIEW OF THE DAY

(2) SHORT LECTURE - 20 MINUTES MAXIMUM

(3) ACTIVITY

- Topics could be given the day before.
- Tip: Don't Over Plan - work can emerge as students become deeply engaged in the content. Let the students lead the inquiry.
- Group Activity: Could be preparation for a presentation, working on a problem, writing on board. Group exams can also be a good learning tool. Student may begin with individual work and then discuss and compile into a group project or the entire project could be created by the group.
- Individual Activity: Could be working in the library, conducting research, writing.

(4) PRESENTATION OF WORK TO ENTIRE CLASS

***Can repeat cycle above.**

The key is to make the class very active, interspersed with short lectures (20 minutes maximum). A lunch break can be combined with group or individual work. You could have them break for lunch and give them a project to work on and then return several hours later.

Other activities: Guest Speakers, Field Trips, Case Studies, Debates

Build in time for reflection and discussion.

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