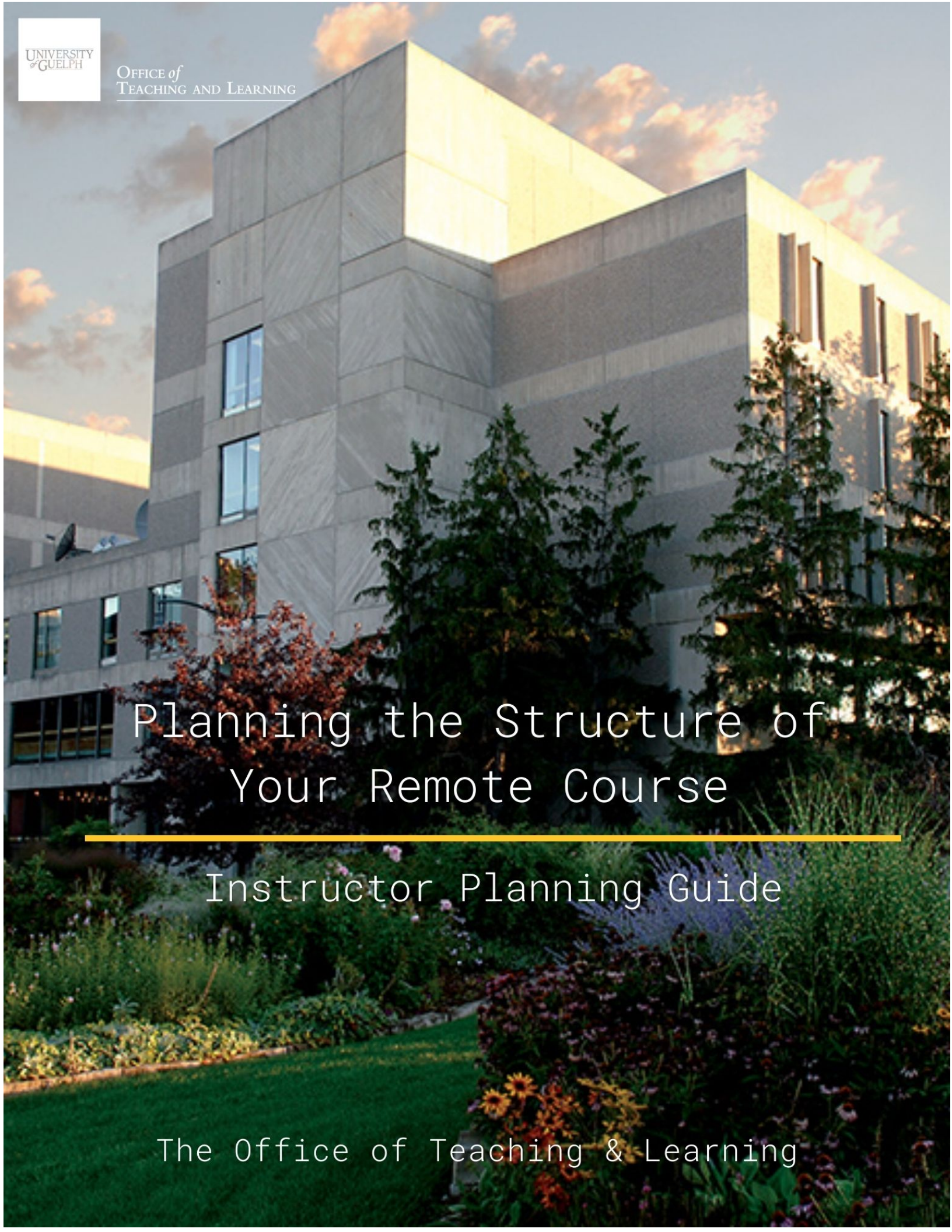

University of Guelph
Office of Teaching and Learning
Planning the Structure of Your Remote Course
Instructor Planning Guide
The Office of Teaching & Learning

Contents

I. Introduction to Module Structure 3
II. Sample Course Structures 5
III. How Will I Structure my Course? 8
Worksheet: Modules At-A-Glance 9
IV. Drafting a Complete Weekly Course Schedule 10
Worksheet: Weekly Course Schedule 11
V. Course Weekly Routine 14
Worksheet: Weekly Routine in Your Remote Course 15
VI. Create your Modules in CourseLink 16

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

I. Introduction to Module Structure

This planning guide provides guidance and templates to plan and sequence your remote course. Planning your remote course structure is the final step in the course redesign process for the remote environment. Before planning your course structure, you should already have finalized your course learning outcomes, adapted your assessments, and adapted your teaching and learning activities (download the planning guides for these steps on our Course Redesign website).

In this planning guide, you will bring together all elements of your course, including assessments, course materials, and teaching and learning activities, to build the path for student learning. In online or remote environments, this pathway is represented by modules. We will guide you through a series of worksheets to draft your complete course schedule, including:

- Draft of your modules, including learning outcomes, key assessments, and key teaching and learning activities
- Draft of your complete course schedule, organized by week, with a greater level of detail regarding all assessments and teaching and learning activities
- Draft of your weekly routine for yourself and your students

Goals for the "Plan Your Remote Course Structure" step:

- Consider how course elements align to create a clear path for students' learning
- Consider how learning outcomes, assessments, learning activities, and module structure fit together as a course plan
- Draft your complete course schedule and weekly routine

What is a module structure?

The structure of your course in the remote environment will help students navigate successfully through the learning experience of your course. Online courses are structured and sequenced into meaningful chunks, also known as "modules." Modules divide your course chronologically into multiple units, with each module containing all of the course materials, learning activities (e.g., discussions, surveys), and assessments (e.g., quizzes, projects) for that unit. Modules are typically organized and structured by week in the course or by major topic or unit.

Why have a clear and consistent module structure?

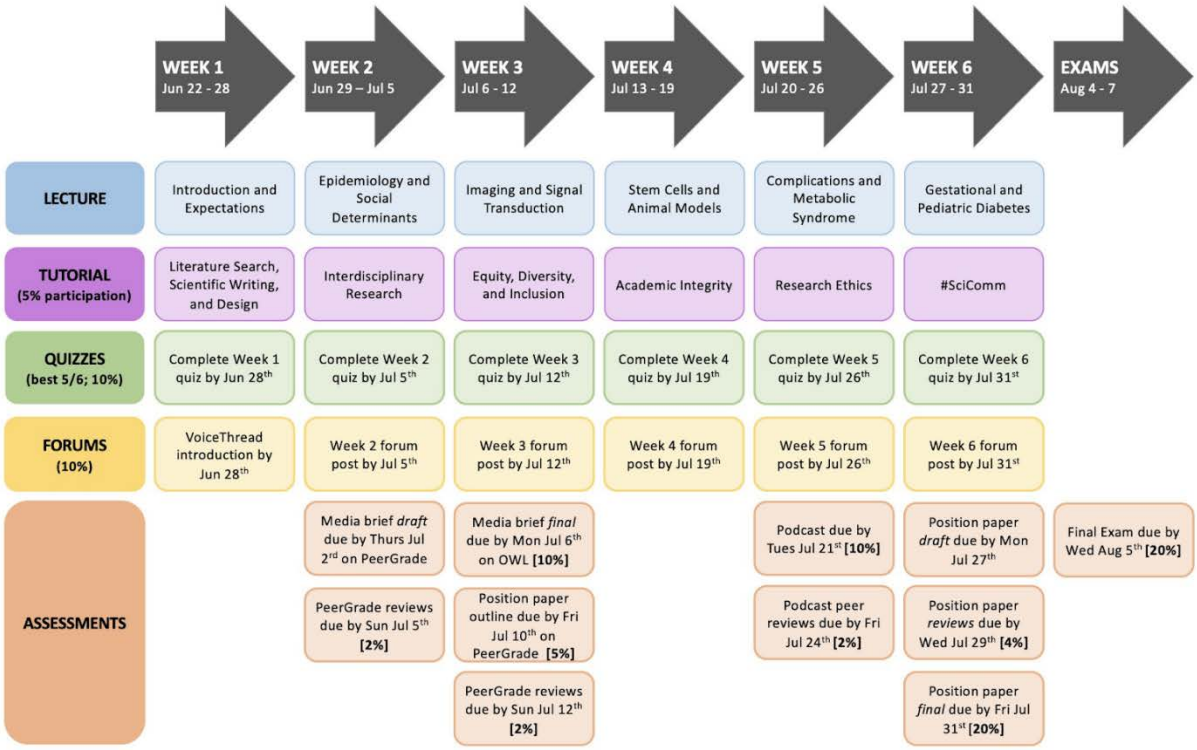
- Encourages students to move through the course as a cohort and engage with the learning materials and activities on the same timetable.
- Supports students' engagement and completion, as they know what is expected and how to continue progressing in the course.
- Help students to navigate the course and regulate their own learning. If students spend too much time or have difficulty finding the readings, materials, or any information they need, students tend to feel confused and frustrated, which hinders learning.

Resources:

- Riggs, S. A. & Linder, K. E. (2016). Actively Engaging Students in Asynchronous Online Classes. IDEA Paper 64, 1-10.
- Learning Module: Developing Online Courses - Structuring Course Content, Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning, University of Calgary
- Supporting Students' Self-Regulated and Self-Directed Learning in the Remote Environment

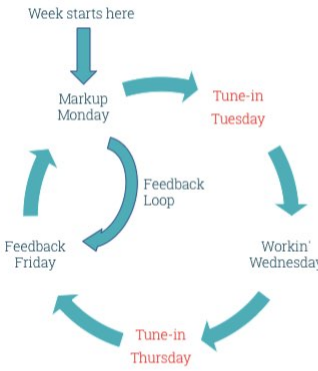
II. Sample Course Structures

The following images represent some examples of how instructors have structured their online courses and shared the structure with their students. Take note of how these instructors break down different activities (e.g., lectures, discussions, quizzes), provide consistency and predictability in the course structure, and emphasize important tasks and dates.



Nicole Campbell (@drsoup09), https://twitter.com/drsoup09/status/1274779078487400449

Our Weekly Routine…



Monday — Read & mark-up the "Excel Challenge" document left for you by one of your peers on Friday.

Tuesday — Log on to @ Moodle @ 2:30 PM for a BigBlueButton (BBB) session. Bring any questions to this "Tune-in" session. This will NOT be a synchronous online class; more like an optional drop-in office-hours kind of session. I'll record the BBB session & post.

Wednesday — all assessments* will be due on Wednesdays.
*except final exam

Thursday — same as Tuesday.

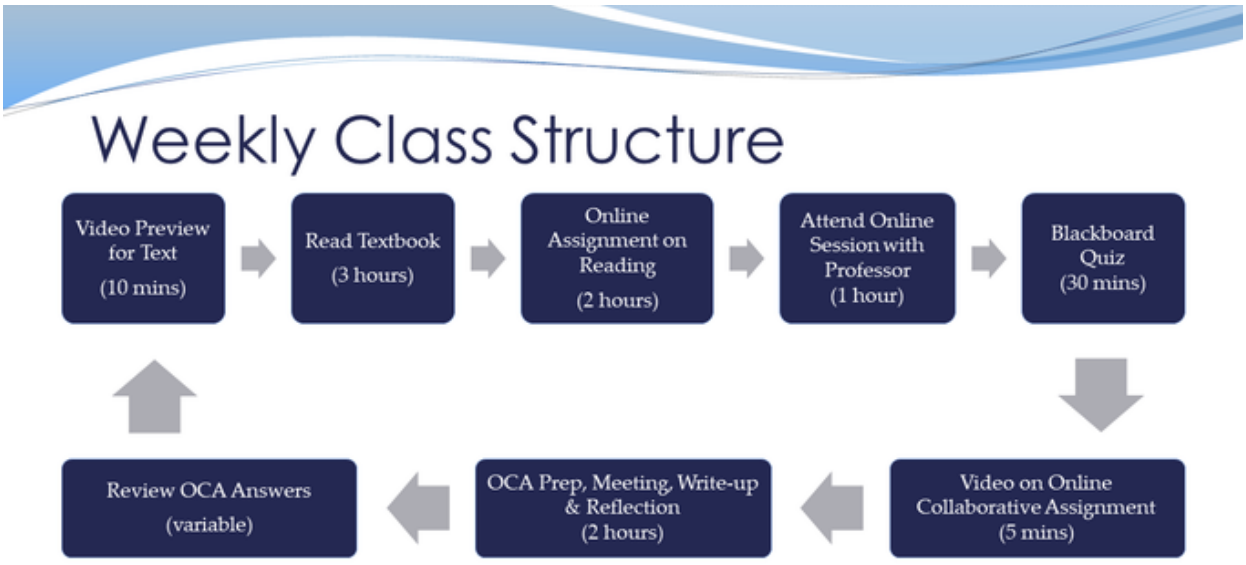
Friday — I call this "Feedback Friday". You will create a spreadsheet exercise for one of your peers. They will create one of their own for you. You will exchange these exercises and complete them and provide feedback come Monday.

…across seven weeks

Markup Monday	Tune-In Tuesday	Workin' Wednesday	Tune-In Thursday	Feedback Friday
❶ June 22nd	Tune In, say "Hi" 2:30 PM • MIS Ch.1	…sorry, nothing this week… 😕	MIS Ch.2 Intro to Excel	Excel Challenge #0 (formative) - out
❷ June 29th Excel #0 - in	MIS Ch.3	Happy Canada Day! 🇨🇦🎉	MIS Ch.4	Excel #1 - out Ad Campaign - out
❸ July 5th Excel #1 - in	MIS Ch.6	Midterm Exam #1	MIS Ch.7	Excel #2 - out
❹ July 12th Excel #2 - in	MIS Ch. 8	Ad Campaign - in	MIS Ch.5	Excel #3 - out DIY Materials - out
❺ July 19th Excel #3 - in	MIS Ch.9	Midterm Exam #2	MIS Ch.10	Excel #4 - out
❻ July 26th Excel #4 - in	MIS Ch.11	DIY Materials - in	MIS Ch.12	
❼ August 3rd BC Day			Aug. 6th (2:30-5:30) Moodle Final Exam	

Prof Tucker (@ProfTucker), https://twitter.com/ProfTucker/status/1274948027791204352

Rafael Chiuzi (@rafaelchiuzi), https://twitter.com/rafaelchiuzi/status/1275763758007226371?s=20



Based daily class structure reported in McCollum, B. (2016). Improving Academic Reading in Chemistry through Flipping with an Open Education Digital Textbook. In Schultz, M., Holme, T. (eds.) *Technology and Assessment Strategies for Improving Student Learning in Chemistry*. Washington, DC: American Chemical Society Symposium Series.

Brett McCollum (@McCollumBrett), https://twitter.com/McCollumBrett/status/1299073918469193728

III. How Will I Structure my Course?

As you think about the overall organizing structure for your course, consider the following questions:

- How is my course currently structured?
- What is the best way to sequence and organize the course? (e.g., by week, by major topic, by major assignments or activities in the course)

First, decide on an organizing scheme for your course. There is no right or wrong option, as long as it makes sense to you and is easy for students to navigate.

In this step, you will begin drafting each module using the **Worksheet: Modules At-A-Glance** on the next page. As you outline your modules, consider the following questions:

- What are the modules for your course?
- What will a typical module look like for your students? What activities provide a starting point or launching point for each module? What activities, assessments, or milestones mark the end point for each module?
- What will be included in each module?
    - What are the key milestones or checkpoints within each module?
    - What opportunities are there for students to encounter and engage with information, content, and ideas?
    - What opportunities will students have to interact with you? Interact with each other?
    - What assignments and assessment tasks will students complete?

Worksheet: Modules At-A-Glance

Module Topic/Title	**Module Learning Outcomes**	**Key Activities and Interactions – Asynchronous** (independent or with instructor/peers)	**Key Activities and Interactions – Synchronous/Scheduled** (independent or with instructor/peers)	**Key Assessments, Milestones, or Checkpoints**	**Module Start and End Dates**
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					

IV. Drafting a Complete Weekly Course Schedule

The next step is to translate your Module At-A-Glance worksheet into a weekly course schedule with all of the details for your course. A **Weekly Course Schedule** worksheet is available on the next page, which is quite similar to the Module At-A-Glance worksheet, but is now organized by week (instead of by module) and includes an additional section for Instructor Preparation and Actions. You can use this worksheet, or you may decide to set up your weekly course schedule similar to one of the samples from step II of this planning guide.

Whichever method you choose, **the key tasks in this step** are to:

1. Add detailed information about course readings, videos, etc. (the content/materials for each week)
2. List all activities and assessments (not just the "key" activities and assessments you identified in the Modules At-A-Glance step)
3. Add dates/times for all synchronous activities
4. Add dates/deadlines for all assessments
5. Make note of your tasks and actions for each week (e.g., set up discussion boards, release content, create orientation videos, grading, feedback, reviewing discussions, office hours, etc.)

Worksheet: Weekly Course Schedule

Week	**Module Topic/Title**	**Module Learning Outcomes**	**Activities and Interactions – Asynchronous** (independent or with instructor/peers)	**Activities and Interactions – Synchronous/Scheduled** (independent or with instructor/peers)	**Assessments, Milestones, or Checkpoints**	**Instructor Preparation and Actions**
1						
2						
3						
4						

Week	**Module Topic/Title**	**Module Learning Outcomes**	**Activities and Interactions – Asynchronous** (independent or with instructor/peers)	**Activities and Interactions – Synchronous/Scheduled** (independent or with instructor/peers)	**Assessments, Milestones, or Checkpoints**	**Instructor Preparation and Actions**
5						
6						
7						
8						

Week	**Module Topic/Title**	**Module Learning Outcomes**	**Activities and Interactions – Asynchronous** (independent or with instructor/peers)	**Activities and Interactions – Synchronous/Scheduled** (independent or with instructor/peers)	**Assessments, Milestones, or Checkpoints**	**Instructor Preparation and Actions**
9						
10						
11						
12						

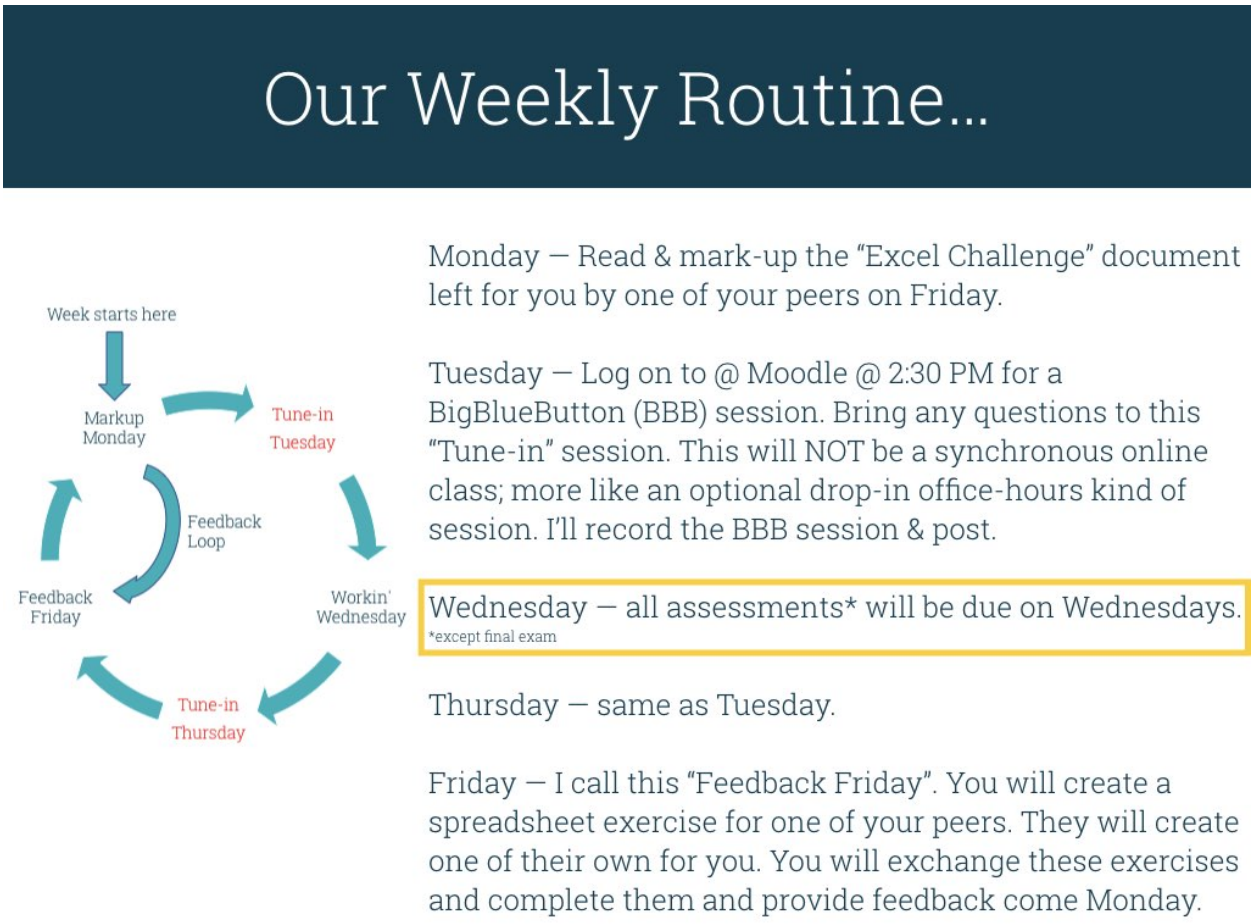
V. Course Weekly Routine

Next, it's important to think about how you will communicate this routine to your students. In addition to providing a full course overview in a visual form (see sample course structures from Step II), you may also want to share a weekly routine with your students. Students benefit from a weekly structure with consistent and predictable due dates/times, synchronous activities (e.g., virtual office hours, collaborative real-time activities), and course materials.

As you sketch out your weekly routine using the worksheet on the next page, consider the following questions:

- What will a typical week of learning look like for your students?
- What will be included in each week? (use your Weekly Course Structure Worksheet)
- What activities need to come before others (e.g., watching videos before engaging in a discussion forum)?
- What should students expect in terms of time commitment, workload, and time on asynchronous tasks?

Sample Weekly Routine:



Prof Tucker (@ProfTucker) on Twitter, https://twitter.com/ProfTucker/status/1274948027791204352

Worksheet: Weekly Routine in Your Remote Course

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Instructor actions					
Student actions - **independent** (asynchronous)					
Student actions - **with instructor or peers** (asynchronous)					
Student actions - **with instructor or peers** (synchronous)					

VI. Create your Modules in CourseLink

Once you have drafted your course plans, create your modules and course structure in CourseLink. For support, see OpenEd's websites on Course Organization tools and Creating Content in CourseLink.

Additional Resource:

Online Course Planning Template and Checklist, Taylor Institute for Teaching & Learning, University of Calgary