



Fairfax University
of America

Instructor Manual: Creating Engaging Online Courses



The Curriculum Development and Instructional Design Department
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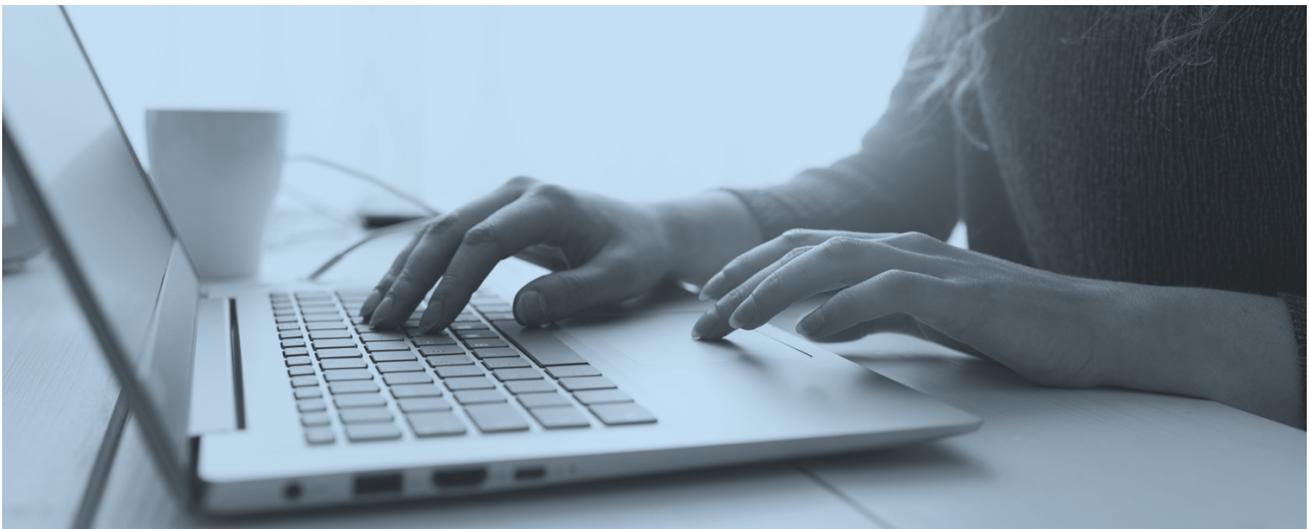
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Introduction and Definitions

Introduction

The goal of this manual is to provide the faculty members at Fairfax University of America (FXUA) with important information and best practices to design and facilitate effective and engaging online courses.

To achieve this goal, the manual is divided into three main sections: (1) Introduction and Definitions, (2) Constructivist Instructional Strategies, and (3) Asynchronous Online Tools. In addition, the manual provides sample course syllabi for asynchronous online courses that were developed by the Curriculum Development and Instructional Design department.



Definitions

Online Learning

Online learning, e-learning, or distance learning are synonyms describing the same educational method that is delivered using virtual learning environments. Higher education institutions facilitate online learning via a learning management system (LMS) to connect students from different geographical areas and enable them to learn in a formal setting. Instructors in online education facilitate online learning instructions and activities using synchronous or asynchronous delivery methods.

Synchronous Online Learning

Online learning education that employs a synchronous delivery method requires students to access the course and learning activities in the same specific times to interact with the instructor and peers.

Asynchronous Online Learning

Online learning education that employs an asynchronous delivery method does not require students to access the course and learning activities in the same specific times to interact with the instructor and peers. Rather, students utilize other forms of technologies that allow for virtual interactions in different times, such as online discussion forums and emails.

Instructional Strategies (Learning Activities)

Instructional strategies are pedagogical practices instructors adopt and apply in their courses to engage the students and ensure the delivery of learning such as using problem-solving and reflective activities. The selection of the instructional strategies depends on the pedagogical model applied for a particular course. At FXUA, we strongly encourage the adoption of a constructivist learning model - especially for online education, to promote engaging and effective learning. Below are examples of instructional strategies that employ the constructivist learning model:

“(a) promoting or supporting authentic learning activities; (b) facilitating problem-solving, exploration, and hypothesis generation; (c) promoting collaboration and social negotiation; (d) supporting or facilitating role-playing activities; (e) promoting articulation and reflection; (f) supporting multiple perspectives; (g) supporting modeling and explaining; and (h) providing scaffolding. Overall, the goal of these instructional strategies is to create a learning culture where collaboration, learning with self-awareness, multiple perspectives, and self-management are promoted” (Dabbashi, 2005, p.33).

Constructivist Learning Model

Constructivist learning model approaches learning as a product of the mind, in which learners construct their own reality and create useful meanings based on their experience and interaction with the world (Earther & Newby, 1993; Jonassen, 1991). In a constructivist learning environment, the instructor focuses on learners’ prior knowledge to engage them in learning activities that are relevant to their world.

Constructivist Instructional Strategies

Introduction

This section provides examples of instructional strategies that are grounded in the constructivist learning model to help faculty members design and facilitate engaging learning activities in both online and face-to-face learning environments. In many instances, faculty members can design a learning activity that applies the characteristics of two or three instructional strategies. Faculty members are encouraged to select one or more instructional strategies that support their course learning outcomes and maximize learning.

Authentic Learning

Authentic learning activities promote the use of scenarios, cases, or problems that are meaningful and realistic to the learners. Learners can use the knowledge gained from these activities in real-life applications. In authentic learning activities, learners engage in defining complex problems, identifying relevant and irrelevant information, finding solutions, and exchanging different perspectives (Dabbagh, 2005).

Problem-Solving

“Problem-solving activities place more emphasis on learning how to learn, rather than learning specific content” (Dabbagh, 2005, p. 33). Problem-solving activities promote the application of the problem-solving process that can be applied in real-life situations, which include forming a hypothesis, locating and organizing information, thinking critically about gathered data, asking questions, and reaching a solution or conclusion. Instructors can apply problem-solving activities within an authentic learning context to help learners form connections with the problem at hand and actively engage with it. As such, learners are more able to apply problem-solving techniques and retrieve information in similar contexts (Dabbagh, 2005).

Exploration

Exploration promotes “students to try out different strategies and hypotheses and observe their effects” (Collins, 1991, p. 135). Instructors play the role of facilitators instead of lecturers by encouraging students to search for information, set manageable goals, and monitor their progress. As such, instructors can apply both problem-solving and exploration activities to help students guide their learning (Dabbagh, 2005).

*“Give the pupils something to do,
not something to learn; and the
doing is of such a nature as to
demand thinking; learning
naturally results.” ~ John Dewey*



Role-Playing

“[R]ole-playing is an instructional strategy that allows learners to assume practitioner and professional roles such as scientists, physicians, historians, salesperson, and other roles, in order to act out situations that these professionals face in the real world” (Dabbagh, 2005, p. 34 – 35). To create a role-playing learning activity, the instructor designs a case that simulates a real-life situation based on the subject matter and encourages students to emulate professionals to achieve a mission or resolve a problem. As such, role-playing can be combined with other instructional strategies such as problem-solving and exploration to maximize the effectiveness of the learning environment. In order to succeed in their “role”, students should gain new knowledge and skills about that particular role. To act out the role, students apply their experiences and perspectives on that role and immediately observe the results of their actions. As such, role-playing promotes the acquisition of new knowledge and skills pertaining to a role as well as reflection, decision-making, communication, and interpersonal skills (Dabbagh, 2005).

Articulation

Wilson and Cole (1996) explained that articulation promotes learners to “think about their actions and give reasons for their decisions and strategies, thus making their tacit knowledge more explicit or overt” (p.606). The essence of articulation can be achieved by encouraging students to discuss ideas with groups, debate and defend their perspectives, and present or illustrate their findings. As such, students become more aware of their own views and capable of applying them into new situations (Dabbagh, 2005).

Reflection

“Promoting reflection or reflective thinking involves asking students to review what they have done, analyze their performance, and compare it to that of experts and peers” (Dabbagh, 2005, p. 35). Reflection encourages students to revisit their previous work to assess their performance and learning progress. As such, students gain new insights about their thinking as they practice metacognition. Reflection also helps students generate new meanings from other’s work and allows ownership of learning. Hence, reflection and articulation are very similar in perspective

except that reflection is targeted towards past experiences and learning activities (Dabbagh, 2005).

Collaboration and Social Negotiation

“[C]ollaborative learning can be defined as a collection of activities that emphasize (1) joint construction of knowledge; (2) joint negotiation of alternatives through argumentation, debate, and other means; and (3) student reliance on both fellow students as well as teachers as learning resources” (Dabbagh, 2005, p. 36). To build collaborative learning activities, the instructor generates groups to share different perspectives, inform each other points of view, divide the workload, and gain social communication skills (Dabbagh, 2005). In addition, collaborative learning activities promote time management, personnel management, and leadership skills. Students learn practical skills to plan projects, set achievable goals, organize priorities, and address any issues. It is essential to assess students’ knowledge and technical skills required to achieve the assigned project to create balanced groups. The instructor can also require peer-group feedback for peers to assess each other’s contributions as part of the instructor’s final evaluation.

Modeling and Explaining

Modeling and explaining are scaffolding techniques to help students understand the process of performing a particular task and the thoughts involved in each step of the process. As such, students do not only acquire information on how to apply a process, but also gain a deeper insight about the reasons that guided the instructor’s or expert’s decisions (Dabbagh, 2005).

Asynchronous Online Tools

Introduction

This section provides a list and explanation of the technologies available at FXUA that support the design and delivery of engaging, asynchronous online activities. The section also provides examples of asynchronous online learning activities that embody the previous constructivist instructional strategies under each of the online tools.

VoiceThread

VoiceThread (VT) is the newest technology added to FXUA Canvas to help faculty members deliver well organized and highly structured recorded presentations for asynchronous online courses. Faculty members can create creative presentations with different materials to deliver content. The tool allows students to use various commenting features such as text, video, and audio to provide feedback and ask or respond to questions. Students can provide timed comments on particular segments within a video and respond to peer's comments in a threaded format.

VoiceThread Important Features

- Integrated directly within Canvas for easy and quick setup in modules or assignments.
- Supports the recording and delivery of chunked content using video and/or audio.
- Allows the use of multiple materials to create a presentation such as PPT slides, PDF documents, images, ULRs, audio, and videos.
- Promotes active, asynchronous, and threaded discussions amongst students and between students and the instructor.
- Generates a balanced asynchronous recorded lecture that switches between instructor recordings, class discussion, and students' comments.
- Supports group activities and presentations.
- Provides quick and easy review and grading of students threaded comments directly from Canvas.
- Supports recorded annotations of videos and documents.

Supported Constructivist Instructional Strategies

VT can support the design and delivery of many of the previously mentioned constructivist instructional strategies in an asynchronous learning environment as follows:

- Use the multimedia features in VT presentations (e.g., videos and PDF documents) to create an authentic learning scenario, case, or problem.
- Create a VT group area to help students share resources, discuss ideas, and apply problem-solving techniques.
- Embed a link to a search engine within VT presentation to encourage exploration of topics and ideas.
- Immerse students in past or future scenarios by using videos and/or images in VT presentations and ask them to use the commenting features to emulate specific roles.
- Ask students to use VT presentations to showcase their projects and articulate their decision-making process.
- Create individualized areas in VT for students to reflect on their learning.

Faculty Resources

- [Understanding VoiceThread – Introduction](#)
- [Creating presentations with VoiceThread](#)
- [Creating VoiceThread Assignments](#)
 - [Setting up a VoiceThread Create Assignment](#)
 - [Setting up a VoiceThread Comment Assignment](#)
 - [Setting up a VoiceThread Watch Assignment](#)
- [Grading VT Assignments](#)
- [VT YouTube Channel for All Tutorial Videos](#)

Student Resources

- [Submitting a Create Assignment](#) – this video describes the process for students to create a new presentation in VT and submit it for instructor’s review.
- [Submitting a Comment Assignment](#) – this video describes the meaning of the comment assignment and the process for completing this assignment.
- [Submitting a Watch Assignment](#) – this video describes the meaning of a watch assignment and how to submit it in Canvas.
- [Working in a VT Group](#) – this video describes the process for sharing a VT with a group using three different methods.

Canvas Discussions

Canvas Discussions is an integrated tool that allows for and encourages an asynchronous avenue for communication and collaboration amongst students and between students and the course instructor. Faculty members can select between focused and threaded discussions to manage a learning activity based on desired outcomes. Focused discussions are more suitable for short participations that address a single question and only supports one reply to each post. On the other hand, threaded discussions allow for infinite number of posts and replies and are geared towards long participations seeking more reflective answers. For additional information about the difference between focused and threaded discussions, please visit [What Are Discussions?](#) article created by Canvas team.

Canvas Discussions Important Features

- Part of Canvas tools for easy and quick setup as graded assignments.
- Offers structured avenue for asynchronous discussion and collaboration.
- Supports the use of images, files, and YouTube videos as part of the posts.
- Allows for liking replies and subscribing to a discussion to receive instant updates.
- Allows the instructor to pin important discussions at the top of the list of discussions for students to capture their attention.
- Provides a filtering feature to view All or Unread discussions and numbering feature to review the number of read and unread comments.
- Provides a search function to search for a discussion by title or author.
- Promotes open discussions for all class or private discussions for group activities or individual use.
- Provides quick and easy review and grading of students threaded comments directly from Canvas.
- Allows the instructor to mark discussions as closed for further replies.
- Allows the instructor to require students to share initial posts before reading peers' posts.

Supported Constructivist Instructional Strategies

Canvas Discussions can support the design and delivery of many of the previously mentioned constructivist instructional strategies in an asynchronous learning environment as follows:

- Use graphics that can be embedded in the original post to illustrate facts about a learning scenario and make it authentic.
- Embed hyperlinks to provide definitions of key terms used in an authentic learning scenario.
- Create a group discussion area to help students collaborate on sharing resources, brainstorming ideas, exploring different hypothesis, and applying problem-solving techniques.
- Create an individualized discussion area for each student that can be used as a journal to reflect on their learning process and review earlier posts for a comparison.
- Require students to use video or audio to explain the rationale behind their argument.
- Require students to use threaded discussions to showcase their projects and articulate their thinking process to make their tacit knowledge more explicit.
- Encourage peer feedback and reflective thinking by asking students to use the commenting feature to assess each other's work/initial posts.

Faculty Resources

- [Discussions Overview for Faculty](#)
- [How do I use the Discussions Index Page?](#)
- [Creating Groups & Deploying for Group Discussions](#)

Student Resources

- [Discussions Overview for Students](#)

Canvas Groups

Creating groups in an asynchronous learning environment is critical to help faculty members build an active learning community in which students collaborate on assignments and projects. There are two types of groups within Canvas, group set and student group. Group set can be created by the course instructor only to generate groups manually or automatically for group projects or assignments. On the other hand, student groups can be created by both the course instructor and students for the purpose of collaboration or study groups if allowed by the instructor. Canvas group set can be accessed and created from under the People tab and is used with other Canvas tools such as Collaboration.

Canvas Groups Important Features

- Part of Canvas tools for easy and quick setup.
- Embedded within Canvas Assignment, Discussion, and Collaboration to generate graded group assignments.
- Provides an option for the instructor to assign a grade to each student individually or one grade to the whole group for group assignments.
- Allows instructors to create group sets and assign students to groups automatically or manually.
- Allows students to join or leave a group that was created by the course instructor if allowed by the instructor.
- Allows students to create student groups for group studies if allowed by the instructor.
- Provides an option for the instructor to assign a group leader automatically or manually.
- Generates a collaborative space “Group Homepage” for each group that can be accessed by the instructor and group members only.
- Provides multiple features for each Group Homepage that include announcements, pages, discussions, files, conferences, and collaborations.

Supported Constructivist Instructional Strategies

Canvas Groups can support the design and delivery of some of the previously mentioned constructivist instructional strategies in an asynchronous learning environment as follows:

- Create groups for students to collaborate on projects and apply social negotiation to expand their perspectives.

- Encourage students to share useful resources in their group's homepage to support their project.
- Allow students to select a preferred collaboration tool offered within their group's homepage, such as Collaboration, Discussion, and Conferences.
- Improve students' sense of autonomy by allowing them to join or leave groups and create their own student groups.

Faculty Resources

- [What Are Groups?](#)
- [Groups Overview for Faculty](#)

Student Resources

- [Groups Overview for Students](#)

Canvas Collaborations

At FXUA, Collaborations is integrated with Microsoft Office 365 to allow students to work on the same document simultaneously and their edits will be reflected to others in real time. Students can use any of the Microsoft Office 365 tools (i.e., Word, PowerPoint, and Excel) to collaborate on projects and create presentations, for instance. The course instructor can open Collaborations for the whole class to view or create groups to work on assigned projects.

Canvas Collaborations Important Features

- Part of Canvas tools for easy and quick access.
- Integrated with Groups for quick group creation.
- Integrated with Microsoft Office 365 for seamless access from OneDrive.
- Reflects students' edits in real time to support synchronous collaboration within an asynchronous setting.

Supported Constructivist Instructional Strategies

Canvas Collaborations can support the design and delivery of many of the previously mentioned constructivist instructional strategies in an asynchronous learning environment as follows:

- Create groups for students to collaborate on projects and apply social negotiation to expand their perspectives.
- Encourage students to use Microsoft Word to compile a list of useful resources (e.g., articles, images, and video) for their project.
- Prompt students to use Microsoft Word to articulate their understanding of readings within their group.
- Require students to use PowerPoint to illustrate and narrate an authentic problem and ask other groups to solve it.

Faculty Resources

- [Collaborations Overview for Faculty](#)

Student Resources

- [Collaborations Overview for Students](#)

Canvas Conferences

Canvas provides an embedded conferencing tool called BigBlueButton that allows course instructor and students to create real-time meeting sessions for lectures, collaborative work, or office hours. BigBlueButton provides faculty with the important features that are included in other conferencing tools such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams as well as other unique features that support facilitating and analyzing virtual meeting sessions. For instance, BigBlueButton provides the course instructor with a learning analytics data tool to review and assess students' participation types and duration. Although FXUA courses are going to be fully asynchronous online courses, some students might prefer real-time virtual collaboration on projects with students within the same time zone and this conferencing tool supports that preference.



BigBlueButton conferencing tool provides faculty with unique features to manage and facilitate engaging virtual meetings.

Canvas Conferences Important Features

- Integrated directly within Canvas for easy and quick setup.
- Embedded within student group homepage to support real-time collaboration.
- Easily viewed by the course instructor and students to distinguish New Conferences and Concluded Conferences that are grouped into two separate tabs.
- Concluded conferences are automatically deleted from the system after 7 days to avoid overloading the course space in Canvas.
- Shows the date and duration of each concluded conference.

- Supports slide and document annotation uploading presentation slides and documents to the BigBlueButton conferencing tool.
- Enables whiteboard for all student attendees to collaborate or invite one student only to write on the whiteboard.
- Provides a whiteboard feature with multiple formats (e.g., standard white paper, small grid paper, or large boxes paper) based on the nature of a learning activity.
- Allows students to collaborate on writing a session note in real-time that can be exported to a Word or PDF document for a later review by students.
- Provides a public and private chat function during the session that can be saved and downloaded for later access by the students.
- Provides breakout rooms with three options to assign students to rooms: randomly, manually by the course instructor, or allow students to select their preferred room.
- Joining a breakout rooms automatically opens a new window for a student to easily navigate back and forth between the breakout room and the main room.
- Students in the breakout room can claim to be a presenter and will have all presenter's options (sharing screen).
- Allows the course instructor to use two methods to communicate with students in a breakout room: join with an audio only or fully join a breakout room via a different window.
- Enables the course instructor to rename breakout rooms to distinguish them or indicate a project process.
- Allows the course instructor to select or call on a student randomly during a session for participation purposes.
- Provides a poll option to engage students by asking closed-ended (multiple-choice or true/false) or open-ended questions.
- Poll answers can be anonymous when participating in sensitive topics.
- Allows the course instructor to share the poll results in the chat and in the presentation area.
- Automatically detects questions within an uploaded presentation and converts them to polling questions.

- Concludes the recorded session with a learning analytics data that includes names of attendees, duration of attendance, talk time, webcam time, number of messages, number of emojis, number of raised hands, and total activity score.

Supported Constructivist Instructional Strategies

Canvas Conferences can support the design and delivery of some of the previously mentioned constructivist instructional strategies in an asynchronous learning environment as follows:

- Encourage students to use the features of synchronous conferencing if possible to collaborate on projects in real-time.
 - Use the whiteboard to conduct a brainstorming session.
 - Use the collaborative note taking to summarize required reading and outline important ideas for their project.
 - Use the presenter mode to practice their presentations and demo their slides.
- Invite a virtual guest speaker to articulate their thinking process when solving a problem or conducting a multi-step process. The session can be recorded for later access and review by the students.

Faculty Resources

- [What Are Conferences?](#)
- [Conferences Overview for Faculty](#)
- [BigBlueButton Conferencing Tool Overview for Faculty](#)
- [BigBlueButton's Breakout Rooms Tutorial](#)
- [BigBlueButton's Polling Tutorial](#)
- [BigBlueButton's Multi-User Whiteboard Tutorial](#)

Student Resources

- [BigBlueButton Conferencing Tool Overview for Students](#)

Canvas Chat

Chat is an excellent tool for instant interaction amongst the students and between students and the course instructor within an asynchronous learning environment. Students can chat with peers who appear to be active online to ask questions or organize a study group. Messages sent in the chat are available for all users to read and cannot be deleted by the students. Only the course instructor and admins are allowed to delete messages in the chat. This is a very important feature to ensure a safe and respectful learning environment.

Canvas Chat Important Features

- Integrated directly within Canvas for easy and quick access.
- Allows users to view others who are active online to start a chat with them.
- Helps students connect instantly with peers and the course instructor.
- Provides three types of messages: text, emojis, and hyperlinks.
- Saves all message history and prevents students from deleting messages to ensure a safe and secure learning environment.
- Allows all users to read sent chat messages.

Supported Constructivist Instructional Strategies

Canvas Chat supports collaborative learning activities by helping students communicate instantly with peers to organize group activities or study groups. Students can also use the chat function to communicate with the course instructor to set up a virtual office hour or ask a quick question.

Faculty Resources

- [What is Chat?](#)
- [Chat Overview for Faculty](#)

Student Resources

- [Chat Overview for Students](#)

Tips for Effective Asynchronous Online Learning

How to Start Building Asynchronous Learning Activities?

The first step for creating engaging asynchronous learning activities is to identify the targeted learning outcomes you would like students to develop as a result of the learning activity. It is important to note that asynchronous online learning outcomes and activities should foster higher order thinking (e.g., creating, analyzing, reflecting, and evaluating) instead of lower order thinking or rote memorization (e.g., listing, defining, describing) to be effective and engaging. You can learn more about higher order and lower order thinking (i.e., Bloom's taxonomy) by reading [Using Bloom's Taxonomy to Write Effective Learning Outcomes](#) web resource created by University of Arkansas.

Based on the learning outcome(s) identified for a particular week, select the instructional strategy(ies) and the tool(s) that will help you design and deliver the learning activity. It is ideal that the selection of the instructional strategy proceeds the selection of the delivery tool. However, some instructors flip the order and start with the technology to work with its affordances and limitations. Either way is acceptable and should provide instructors with a structured process to build their engaging asynchronous learning activities. Again, the key to success is aligning each of the learning activities with one or more learning outcomes.

After creating the learning activities, it is essential to explain the "what" and "why" to students to obtain their engagement and ensure deep learning. As such, you are not only informing students about "what" they need to do as part of the learning activity, you are also explaining "why" they need to participate in that learning activity by listing the knowledge, abilities, and skills they will develop as a result of their participation. Expanding the "why" by including the workplace readiness skills associated with the learning activity should also result in a greater buy-in from the students ([The Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning](#)).



It is essential to explain the "what" and "why" behind each learning activity to students to obtain their engagement and ensure deep learning.

Tips for Creating an Engaging and Effective Asynchronous Online Learning Environment

1. Gain students' engagement and buy-in to participate in learning activities by explaining "what" they need to do and "why" they should participate – provide a list of knowledge, abilities, and workplace skills supported in each of the learning activities.
2. Increase students' competence with using technologies by providing supportive resources and direct access to IT support.
3. Apply a routine structure to assignments to increase students' competence that could have the following sections:
 - a. Purpose of the assignment - knowledge, abilities, and work skills addressed in the assignment
 - b. Tasks required to complete the assignment successfully
 - c. Method of assessment (i.e., rubric)
 - d. Examples from previous classes
 - e. Submission guidelines (e.g., a video explaining the technology and how to submit assignments)
4. Help students focus their attention when engaging in a concrete learning experience (e.g., completing required readings and watching mini-recorded lectures) by using:
 - a. Anticipation Guide – ask students to review the main topic(s) of the week and some keywords from the list of required readings and then write two or three questions they anticipate answering after completing the readings. Students' questions and answers "Anticipation Guide" can be submitted an assignment for the week.
 - b. Lecture Guide – provide students with a lecture guide each week that includes an outline of the mini-recorded videos of the week, definition of key terms, and some thought provoking questions for the main components of the lecture. Ask students to pause the recording after the completion of each main component to review the outlines and definitions and answer the questions. Students will pay special attention to answering the questions if they are used in final exams or quizzes.
5. Require students to engage in discussion with peers throughout the week instead of one time at the end of the week by following the below suggested guidelines:
 - a. Share your initial post by Tuesday 11:59 PM US Eastern Time

- b. Reply to instructor's/peers' comments or questions as soon as possible or at least 24 hours after receiving the comment/question
 - c. Post comments and/or ask questions to two peers at minimum no later than Thursday 11:59 PM US Eastern Time
6. Remind students about online discussion etiquette to avoid conflicts. The reminder can be as simple as "Continue to treat your classmates with respect and realize that important social cues can be missing in online exchanges. Please take time to review your work before posting and ask clarifying questions when possible."
7. Maintain the instructor's presence in asynchronous online discussions by asking students to explain or elaborate on their initial posts
8. Help students connect with the course materials by asking them to write about a topic that was covered in previous weeks and how it resonates with their individualized goals and/or community
9. Increase students' sense of autonomy by allowing them to select a topic, tool, or an assignment from a suggested list of defined assignments whenever possible
10. Provide formative assessments and timely feedback to students as they work on their projects or papers instead of relying only on summative feedback that is usually associated with grading. Your formative feedback can focus on specific aspects of the project/paper to reduce time required to write the feedback and avoid overwhelming the students. Inform the students that your feedback does not address the whole work, but rather part of the required criteria (e.g., inclusion of evidence in an argumentative paper). For more information on formative feedback and peer feedback, review this excellent resource by [Eli Review](#).
11. Include peer feedback assignments to help students engage in the learning process and assessment. Provide clear guidelines in how to review other's work such as:
 - a. Describe the work and highlight its strengths
 - b. Recommend ways for improvements
 - c. Evaluate the inclusion of all required criteria

Examples of Asynchronous Course Syllabi

This section provides three examples of asynchronous online courses that were developed by the Curriculum Development and Instructional Design Department.

Example 1

HUMN 105: Principles of Learning Course

		COURSE SYLLABUS
General Education HUMN 105: Principles of Learning 3.0 Credits FALL 2022 Online Course		
COURSE DURATION	MMMMDD, YYYY – MMMMDD, YYYY	
		Because asynchronous courses do not have a “fixed” meeting day, course weeks start on Mondays at 12:01 AM US Eastern Time (ET) and end on Sundays at 11:59 PM US ET.
INSTRUCTOR	Instructor: Instructor Name Email: EmailAddress@fxua.edu Phone (if applicable): (703) 591-7042 Office Hours: If you would like to schedule a one-on-one virtual meeting, email me and I will respond within 24-48 hours.	
PREREQUISITE(S)	None	
COURSE DESCRIPTION	<p>The purpose of this course is to develop each student’s capacity to learn <i>in order</i>, to apply that capacity to <i>self-fulfillment</i> and <i>social performance</i> throughout life. Since life’s conditions are always changing and requiring new knowledge and skills, we often find ourselves in the role of beginner. As a beginner, we can allow ourselves to live with wonder, to give ourselves permission to make mistakes, and learn from those mistakes. We can learn to trust those who can teach us as we advance from beginner through competence, proficiency, and expertise to eventual mastery in those areas of life to which we dedicate ourselves. Students will explore learning models and strategies for learning to support learning and the capacity to learn. Students will explore the language of being through speech acts and practices of presence. Students will become observers of their own speaking and listening, and through language and learning, students will understand and develop new worldviews and possibilities in life.</p> <p>This course is a participatory seminar. We will discuss assigned readings, audiovisual materials, and discoveries gleaned from reflective exercises. Participants are expected to carefully review readings before participating in the online discussions and contribute actively to building the class learning community.</p>	
INSTITUTIONAL OUTCOMES	<p>The following institutional outcomes (IOs) are emphasized in this course:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employ critical thinking and evidence-based reasoning to design creative, strategic solutions to complex real-world issues. • Communicate effectively with diverse audiences and collaborate productively with multiple stakeholders to lead teams toward the realization of shared goals. • Demonstrate leadership skills and competencies to sustainably lead organizational change for social impact. 	

Asynchronous courses do not have a set timeframe for meetings. Rather, students are expected to divide their time throughout the week for required readings and assignments.

Although instructors do not meet virtually with students on regular bases, students appreciate a one-on-one virtual meeting as needed.



SKILLS DEVELOPED IN COURSE

- Contribute to the betterment of human society as global citizens and agents of change and empowerment, exemplifying the values of character, community, development, stewardship, and peace.

The following skills are covered in this course:

- Identity as a Learner/Knower
- Meta-Cognition
- Learning Models
- Strategies for Learning
- The Language of Being
- Self-Awareness
- Being in the Present
- Moods of Living and Learning
- Trusting and Being Trustworthy

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

The following learning outcomes are associated with this course:

- Describe self-identity as a learner/knower within one's worldview.
- Describe one's learning style and conditions that support learning.
- Implement strategies for developing one's capacity to learn.
- Identify one's barriers to learning and implement strategies to remove those barriers.
- Explain the basic moods of living and engage in conscious practices to design one's moods for living and being.
- Recognize the role that language plays in daily life.
- Practice the language of being and the assessment of trust through speech acts.
- Describe self-awareness of one's worldview.
- Describe the meaning and benefits of being in the present and demonstrate practices of presence.
- Describe language use as a representation of the mind.

COURSE DELIVERY METHOD

This course will be delivered 100% online using an asynchronous format in the FXUA Learning Management System (LMS) – Canvas. **The course site will be available on Month dd, 2020, at [xxxxxx](#).**

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

Pre-recorded lectures; discussion forum participation; self-assessments; readings; videos; quizzes; self-observation and reflective writing; peer feedback; and group assignments.

ACADEMIC WORKLOAD

Students should expect about 3 - 6 hours of course work and preparation per week, which is the approximate average for undergraduate-level students.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

Successful participation in this class requires student's possession of the following technical requirements:

- High-speed Internet access
- Personal computer device
- Consistent and reliable access to FXUA email account and the FXUA's LMS – Canvas

Again, the course delivery method is emphasized in page two of the syllabus to help students prepare for the asynchronous course method.



STUDENT HONOR CODE

through their own efforts and violations to the Code of Academic Excellence are not tolerated by the learning community."

All students are bound by FXUA's Student Honor Code in their academic activities as described in the Academic Catalog. As such, students promise...

"...that all of the assignments I submit in all of my courses will represent my own work.

Whenever I make use of resources to inspire, inform, or support my ideas, I will summarize, paraphrase, and/or quote those sources appropriately, citing them in APA style.

I will not submit the same work in more than one course unless I have received explicit and specific written permission from the professor to build on related work I have previously completed.

Further, I will help to ensure fairness for all students by avoiding improper assistance or collaboration (including, but not limited to, providing or obtaining answers to assignments or tests, whether in person or online).

I understand that it is better to submit incomplete work than to submit an assignment that contains plagiarism or another form of cheating, and I understand that I am responsible not only for following FXUA's Code of Academic Excellence, but also for seeking guidance if I am ever unsure whether my actions will reflect the standards of academic integrity espoused by the university."

ONLINE PARTICIPATION POLICY

Please be aware that this course is **NOT** self-paced. Students are expected to meet specific deadlines and due dates listed in Attachment A: Course Schedule. It is the students' responsibility to keep track of the weekly course schedule of topics, readings, videos, activities, and assignments.

Students must actively check the course Canvas site and their FXUA email for communications from the instructor, class discussions, and/or access to course materials **at least three times per week**.

Students are expected to actively engage in all course activities throughout the semester, which includes viewing all course materials and recorded instructor videos, completing course activities and assignments, and participating in course discussions.

ACCESSING YOUR COURSEWORK

You will have access to your coursework from the course start date until the last day of the session. After that time, you will no longer be able to access the course or related materials. We strongly recommend that you retain copies of your completed assignments and any documents you wish to keep, including the course syllabus. The university is not responsible for lost or missing coursework.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION (DEI) AND

FXUA is a diverse community that provides equal opportunity in employment, activities, and its academic programs. The University does not discriminate on the

Students need to be aware that asynchronous courses require participation throughout the week and NOT only once to maintain a vibrant and engaging learning environment.

Include a learning activity/assignment that requires course syllabus review to help students understand course requirements.

Start building students accountability and autonomy in an asynchronous course by applying the “Request, Offer, and Promises” activity.

**HUMN 105: Principles of Learning
Attachment A: Course Schedule**

DATE	TOPICS	READINGS & VIDEOS	ASSIGNMENTS
Week 1 DATE - DATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course Introduction Course Requests, Offers, and Promises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course Syllabus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion Forum Participation: Watch the introduction video by the course instructor and respond by recording your own video/audio or writing a text response. The response should include your requests, offers, and promises for this course. Assignment: Read the course syllabus and ask questions (via the discussion forum or email), if any.
Week 2 DATE - DATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Beginner’s Mindset 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading: Learning to Learn and the Navigation of Moods – Foreword, Second Foreword, Preface, Chapter 1, and Chapter 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion Forum Participation: Engage in discussion of the assigned reading with your classmates and instructor by responding to the prompts.
Week 3 DATE - DATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building Conditions of Learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading: Learning to Learn and the Navigation of Moods – Chapters 4 and 5 Video: Alex Edmans: What to Trust in a “Post-Truth” World 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written Assignment: Write a ½ to 1-page summary describing how you can contribute to building conditions of learning for this class. Peer Feedback Assignment: Read the written assignment response of your assigned partner and provide a constructive comment, suggestion, or feedback. Discussion Forum Participation: Engage in discussion of the assigned reading and video with your classmates and instructor by responding to the prompts.

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Help students actively participate in asynchronous online courses by offering a variety of learning activities that promote individual and group activities.

Example 2

HUMN 125: Foundations of Adult Development

Gamification is an excellent method to engage students in asynchronous courses.

COURSE SYLLABUS

HUMN 125: Foundations of Adult Development
Attachment A: Course Schedule

DATE	TOPICS	READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS
Week 1 DATE - DATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course Introduction Course Requests, Offers, and Promises What is a Worldview? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course Syllabus Reading: Spiral Dynamics in Action – Review Table of Contents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VT Participation: Watch the introduction video by the course instructor and respond by recording your own video/audio or writing a text response using VoiceThread (VT). The response should include your requests, offers, and promises for this course. Syllabus Scavenger Hunt: Read the course syllabus and identify the sentences that included names of the Marvel characters (Hint: there are five names total). If you have questions about the syllabus, post them in the Question Center.
Week 2 DATE - DATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview and Introduction to Spiral Dynamics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading: Spiral Dynamics in Action – Foreword, Preface, Figures and Graphs, and Chapter 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-Assessment: Attitudes towards Life Questionnaire [PDF] Discussion Forum Participation: Engage in discussion of the assigned reading with your classmates and instructor by responding to the prompts. VT Participation (Small Groups): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go through the PPT slides assigned to your team about Spiral Dynamics figures and graphs. Together, discuss initial ideas and/or questions you have about the figures and graphs with your team using the video, audio, and/or text features in VT.

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Switch between small group and large group activities to expose students to multiple perspectives while maintaining a structured format.

Use the technologies available to you at FXUA (e.g., VoiceThread and Collaborations) to create exciting learning activities.

 Fairfax University of America		COURSE SYLLABUS	
DATE	TOPICS	READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS
Week 3 DATE - DATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MEME: Organizing Principles for Human Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading: Spiral Dynamics in Action – Chapter 3 Reading (Optional): Overview of the Spiral Dynamics Model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VT Participation (Small Groups): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go through the PPT slides assigned to your team about an organizing principle for human development on VT; answer the questions presented by the instructor; and discuss the principle with your team using the video, audio, and/or text features in VT. Read/listen to comments made by other teams on their assigned principles for human development and contribute to the discussion by asking questions and/or sharing comments.
Week 4 DATE - DATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Pathway of MEME Change Spiral Dynamics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading: Spiral Dynamics in Action – Chapter 4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canvas Collaborations (Small Groups): Working in the small group created by the instructor on Canvas Collaborations, use Microsoft Word to summarize the section from Chapter 4 of Spiral Dynamics in Action assigned to your team. Prepare to share your team's summary in Week 4 discussion forum. Discussion Forum Participation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share your team's summary of the section assigned to you with the class and prepare to answer questions from other groups and the instructor. Read other groups' summaries and ask questions or share comments.

Expose students to different perspectives and encourage them to share and discuss ideas by creating collaborative, thought provoking activities.

**PARTICIPATION****(25%)**

Participation is 25% of the final grade. This category includes:

- 15% for VT Participation – Class (6)
- 10% for Discussion Forum Participation – Class (4)

Students are required to read and listen to the instructor presentations on VT and watch the mini recorded lectures on Canvas to engage in dialogue throughout the week by answering and asking relevant questions – those questions related to grasp of readings and to applications of worldviews on current or past situations. Students are expected to be prepared to engage in discussion for each of the 15 weeks of the course.

FORMAT:

Students should adhere to the participation grading rubric found in Attachment C: Course Grading Rubrics.

GRADING:

VT participation and discussion forum participation will be evaluated and graded based on criteria included in Attachment C: Course Grading Rubrics. In addition, participation should adhere to the following:

- Demonstrates a grasp of the course materials and their perceived value for personal growth.
- Shows respect and professional disposition while interacting and communicating with the instructor and classmates

PRESENTATIONS**(25%)**

Presentations are 25% of the final grade. This category includes:

- 10% for VT Team Presentation – Week 10
- 5% for Individual Presentation Outline – Week 12
- 10% for VT Individual Presentation – Week 13

Students are required to deliver a team presentation in Week 10 about a dominant culture of a selected country and its predominant ~~MEMES~~ **MEMES**. In addition, students are required to prepare an outline for their individual presentation to share with the class in Week 12 discussion forum. Students will deliver the individual presentation in Week 13 to summarize applications of Spiral Dynamics worldviews to a current situation pertaining to one of the below sets of issues:

1. Family, community, work, organizations
2. Trade, international relations, politics
3. Peace, human conditions, environment, sustainability

FORMAT AND LENGTH:

The presentations will be delivered via VT and should be 10 to 15 minutes for the team presentation and five minutes for the individual presentation. For the individual presentation outline, students should be prepared to share their selected current situation and proposed actions with the class in Week 12 discussion forum.

GRADING:

Team presentation will be evaluated and graded based on 360 feedback – instructor evaluation and peer evaluation. The instructor will evaluate and grade based on criteria included in the team presentation grading rubric found in

Divide class participation grades into different sections based on participation methods and time required to complete the learning activities.

Example 3

HUMN 150: Practices of Learning

Promote social learning in asynchronous courses by creating creative group activities.

 Fairfax University of America		COURSE SYLLABUS	
DATE	TOPICS	READINGS & MEDIA	ASSIGNMENTS
Week 7 DATE - DATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critical Thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading: Models for Critical Thinking – Chapters 1 and 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written Assignment (Reading Response): Write a ½ to 1-page summary of the assigned reading. VT Participation (Virtual Conference): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend the keynote session in VT and listen to the keynote speaker addressing the topic of critical thinking. Attend the second session presented by the course instructor and review the recorded presentation slides. Visit the virtual networking activity in VT and participate by indicating your country/state/city of origin. Learn and share one fact about three of your peers' countries. Confirm or correct the fact(s) shared by peers about your own country/state/city. Attend the debriefing session at the end of the virtual conference and share your thoughts and key takeaways from the conference.
Week 8 DATE - DATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critical Thinking in Practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading: The Art of Thinking Critically – Chapters 9 and 10 Reading: Models for Critical Thinking – Chapters 5 and 6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written Assignment (Self-Observation): Continue with your thoughts about self-observation focusing on your application of critical thinking skills. Quiz: Complete a 10-item multiple choice quiz in class pertaining to readings for Weeks 5-8. VT Participation (Small Groups): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working in the small group created by the instructor on VT, use the 8 elements of thought (reasoning) described in Chapter 9 of The Art of Thinking Critically book to assess the news event assigned to your team by the instructor. Provide voice or written comments for each element of thought pertaining to your assessment of the news event. Discussion Forum Participation: Engage in discussion of the assigned readings with your classmates and instructor by responding to the prompts.

Course Learning Outcomes

Aligning Course Learning Outcomes with Course Elements

The course syllabus is a contract between the course instructor and students explaining expectations, offers, and promises from both stakeholders. In the heart of the course syllabus is the course learning outcomes that outline course offerings with regard to the knowledge, skills, and abilities students will gain as a result of participating in the course. As such, providing clear course learning outcomes allows students to formulate logical expectations on the types and levels of knowledge, skills, and abilities they will gain and how to best prepare for that course.

In addition, writing clear course learning outcomes helps the course instructor with designing a coherent course in which all learning elements (e.g., readings, learning activities, and assessments) are aligned and well supported. Hence, we encourage faculty members to take their time when writing the course learning outcomes and follow the below best practices to ensure effective course design.

Step One:

Think about the following questions:

- What kind of knowledge, skills, and abilities students will gain at the end of the course?
- How can the course prepare students for the job market?
- What are the soft skills addressed in the course?
- How to best align the course readings, learning activities, and assessments with the learning outcomes?
- How can I write measurable learning outcomes?

Step Two:

Decide on the approach for designing the course – broad to narrow or narrow to board. Some faculty prefer to start with a general outline of the course and gradually identify more specific course items (i.e., Broad to Narrow Approach). As such, they use a flipped design model by starting with writing the overarching course learning outcomes and working their way towards more specific designs of course elements.

The Broad to Narrow Approach can look like this:

Review the course description and textbook(s) → write a draft of the course overarching learning outcomes → align each overarching learning outcome with a learning assessment → create the course schedule (i.e., weekly topics, required readings, and learning activities) → identify instructional method(s) for each week → write 2-3 weekly learning outcomes → align the weekly learning outcomes from multiple weeks with each of the course overarching learning outcomes → refine and finalize the course overarching learning outcomes → refine and finalize the course assessments

On the other hand, some faculty prefer to start with identifying weekly topics and activities to be able to formulate a bigger picture of the course. This Narrow to Broad Approach can look like this:

Review the course description and required textbook(s) → create the course schedule (i.e., weekly topics, required readings, and learning activities) → identify instructional method(s) for each week → write 2-3 weekly learning outcomes → combine the weekly learning outcomes from multiple weeks into the course overarching learning outcomes → align each overarching learning outcome with a learning assessment.

Both approaches should result in a cohesive schedule (Table 1) that illustrates and aligns weekly topics, required readings and videos, instructional methods, learning activities, and weekly learning outcomes, with the overarching learning outcomes and assessments. Faculty can use *Aligning Course Learning Elements with Weekly and Overarching Learning Outcomes* job aid (Appendix A) to help with applying the previously described approaches.

Step Three:

Review the Action Verbs section of this document to ensure writing measurable weekly and overarching learning outcomes.

Step Four:

Share your alignment table with the CDID department for additional feedback.

Table 1. Aligning Course Learning Outcomes with All Course Elements

Weeks	Topics	Readings & Videos	Instructional Methods	Learning Activities	Weekly Learning Outcomes	Overarching Learning Outcomes	Assessment
Week 1	Sample topic	Reading 1 Reading 2	Include the method(s) of instructions for teaching this week's topic (e.g., lecture, discussion, guest speaker, modeling etc.)	Include learning activities students will participate in during class to reinforce new knowledge (1-2 activities) (e.g., small group discussion, class discussion, role-playing, case analysis etc.)	Write 2-3 <i>measurable</i> learning outcomes describing the knowledge, skills, and abilities students will gain from this week	Write one <i>measurable</i> overarching course learning outcome that encompasses the learning outcomes for 2-4 weeks	Identify the method of assessment will be used to gauge students' acquisition of one overarching course learning outcome
Example from COMM 101: Oral Communication Course							
Week 3	Speech Acts: Essential Skills for Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading: Fundamentals of Oral Communication – Chapter 3 	Lecture, readings, video, reflective writing, self-assessment questionnaire, and	Participation (Small Groups): Working in small groups - with peers from different cultures,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain microaggressions and how to avoid them in communication 	Develop and apply effective oral communication strategies	Complete the below assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflective writing

	<p>Understanding Self, Others, and the Situation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading: What Exactly is a Microaggression? • Reading: How to Respond to Microaggressions • Video: Cross Cultural Communication 	<p>class and small group discussions</p>	<p>if possible, use role-play to communicate around a life situation assigned to your team (e.g., sharing condolence at a funeral, requesting money from a friend, and being stopped by police). What communication commonalities and differences have you noticed during the role-play?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify appropriate oral communication strategies based upon the circumstance or situation 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-assessment questionnaire
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Measurable, Action Verbs for Course Learning Outcomes

Faculty should use measurable, action verbs to describe the course learning outcomes students will gain as a result of participating in the course. Faculty are highly encouraged to refer to the list of action verbs (Table 2) that are based on Bloom's Taxonomy framework of the levels of learning complexity (i.e., remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create). Effective course learning outcomes should encompass a variety of levels to reflect factual, conceptual, procedural, and metacognitive knowledge. It is recommended that faculty focus on helping students develop higher order thinking skills (analyze, evaluate, and create) instead of only lower order thinking skills (remember and understand). Students also benefit from reviewing the course learning outcomes and understanding the meaning of the used action verbs to identify the required level(s) of knowledge and better prepare for the course.

Table 2. Action Verbs According to Bloom's Taxonomy

Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyze	Evaluate	Create
Define	Compare	Apply	Analyze	Argue	Compose
Identify	Describe	Change	Appraise	Assess	Construct
List	Discuss	Compute	Breakdown	Choose	Create
Match	Examine	Complete	Calculate	Conclude	Design
Memorize	Explain	Construct	Categorize	Estimate	Develop
Name	Express	Demonstrate	Compare	Evaluate	Invent
Recall	Extend	Dramatize	Contrast	Interpret	Plan
Record	Give examples	Employ	Criticize	Judge	Produce
Relate	Highlight	Illustrate	Debate	Measure	Write
Repeat	Identify	Interpret	Diagram	Rate	

State	Indicate	Manipulate	Differentiate	Revise	
Tell	Infer	Modify	Justify	Predict	
Outline	Locate	Operate	Examine	Score	
Underline	Paraphrase	Practice	Experiment	Select	
	Predict	Produce	Inspect	Support	
	Recognize	Schedule	Identify	Value	
	Rewrite	Show	Inventory		
	Review	Sketch	Infer		
	Select	Solve	Question		
	Summarize	Use	Model		
	Translate	Distinguish	Test		
		Write			

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