PURDUE UNIVERSITY FORT WAYNE | Division of Continuing Studies

PFW Division of Continuing Studies

Best Practices for Course Development & Instruction

Guidance for prospective and current DCS instructors

Our goal: Create high-quality educational experiences that participants enjoy, learn from, and can apply to their personal interests or professional goals.

1. Start with Educational Value

- Be an expert in your field and know the subject you are teaching. DCS courses are offered in a higher education environment and should reflect that level of preparation and expertise.
- Build a curriculum, not simply a presentation or activity. Be able to explain what you are teaching, how the content is broken down, and why it has educational value.
- Give participants a clear skill, takeaway, or learning outcome. Personal enrichment courses should provide meaningful learning and enjoyment. Professional development courses should provide practical knowledge or skills participants can use in the workplace.

2. Build a Well-Planned Learning Experience

- Each class meeting should have a well-planned, instructor-guided lesson.
- A syllabus or course outline is encouraged for most offerings, especially multi-session courses.
- Courses should be interactive whenever appropriate. Build in discussion, demonstrations, hands-on practice, exercises, questions, or opportunities for participants to apply what they are learning.
- Plan enough content to use the scheduled class time effectively without trying to cover too much at once.

3. Choose a Schedule That Supports Enrollment

- Evening classes beginning at 6:00 p.m. are the preferred starting point for DCS offerings.
- Individual class meetings generally work best at 2-3 hours, depending on the topic and learning needs.
- Saturday morning offerings may be considered when the subject and intended audience make that schedule appropriate.
- If a course has multiple sessions, the series should generally meet once per week on the same day and at the same time until the course is complete.
- There is no standard limit on the total number of weeks or sessions. Course length should be determined based on the subject, curriculum, audience, and learning objectives.

4. Select the Right Modality

- DCS is flexible about delivery format. In-person, virtual, or other appropriate formats may be considered. The modality should support the subject matter, intended audience, learning objectives, interaction, and overall participant experience.

5. Plan Early

- A full semester of advance planning is preferred.
- As a general best practice, DCS should have approximately three months to promote a course before it begins.
- Course information should be finalized early enough for DCS to market the offering effectively. This includes the title, description, dates, times, format, materials, instructor information, pricing information, and other required details.

6. Materials & Supplies

- Course materials and supplies may be included in the course registration fee or may be purchased separately by participants online, depending on the course.
- Printed course materials are limited to no more than 10 sheets, printed front and back.
- Materials requiring DCS printing must be submitted at least one week before the course start date.

7. Pricing & Enrollment

Course pricing is evaluated on a course-by-course basis. Factors may include:

- Market competition and comparable offerings
- Course length and number of sessions
- Materials and supply costs
- Anticipated enrollment and course viability

Instructor compensation is based in part on the established course price. *DCS will work with instructors to develop a price that considers both the value of the course and the market.*

8. Help Promote Your Course

- DCS will support course promotion, but instructor involvement can make a significant difference.
- Instructors are strongly encouraged to share the course through their own professional contacts, community networks, organizations, colleagues, email lists, and social media when appropriate.

9. Partner With DCS

- DCS is flexible and will work with instructors throughout the development and delivery process. We want both the instructor and the course to be successful.
- Instructors are expected to remain actively engaged before and during the course, respond to communications, and provide requested information.
- Communicate room, technology, material, scheduling, or other instructional needs early so DCS can help address them.