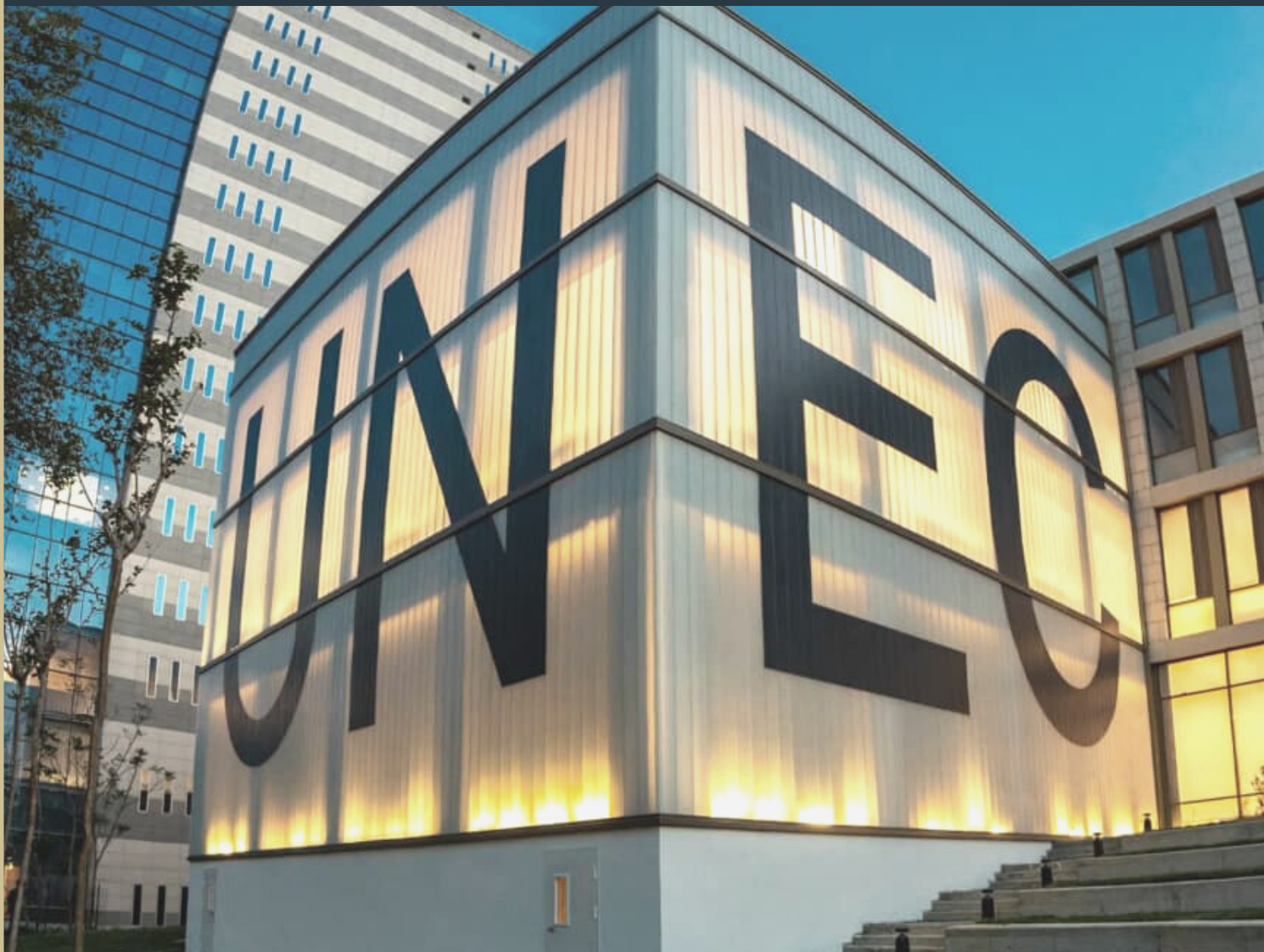


2022

Learning Engagement Project

Soft Skills Course Design



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About the project



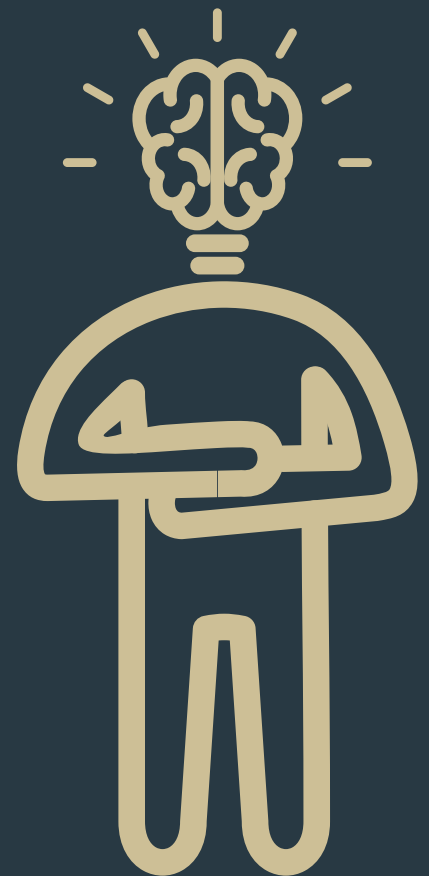
"Methods of Learning and Design course is about doing and creating rather than only reading and analyzing. The Learning Engagement Project gives you the chance to apply theories from the course to design a real-world learning engagement for a specific set of students.

The assignment is also designed to:

- Introduce you to instructional design methods and process (and give you the chance to critique them)
- Practice the interpersonal skills necessary for success as you design for real stakeholders
- Learn and test technologies, platforms, and spaces to find the ones that enable you to meet your goals
- Develop a project that can be shared with future employers as part of your portfolio"

Learners

The learners are students from Azerbaijan and studying at the Azerbaijan State University of Economics. They are 17-19 years old, and most of them are fresh undergraduate students. They are young, and generally they do not understand the importance of their emotions, feelings, and desires comprehensively. They grew up in Azerbaijani society, where the conservatism is dominant. For instance, they do not have freedom of choice in matters such as living alone or study what they want.



Design Question



- **How can the Soft Skills Course be adapted to the flipped educational model?**
- **How can we assess the learning outcomes of this subject?**

This semester, the Azerbaijan State University of Economics (UNEC) switched from traditional education to a flipped educational model. Therefore, they need to change some course syllabi and structure and integrate them into the new educational methodology. Career Planning and Development Department has requested redesigning and changing the Soft Skills subject course syllabus. This subject is in the list of core subjects and assists first-year students with bachelor's degrees in Economics and Management to boost their work-life balance. Moreover, this unit provides the professional knowledge required in the modern business environment and develops communication, leadership, teamwork, and other pivotal abilities. The current Soft Skills course syllabus and contents are ineffective in meeting the requirements of a flipped classroom model, and it should include active learning during class.



Client



Career Planning and Development Department of Azerbaijan State University of Economics (UNEC)

Brief information about the University:

"The Azerbaijan State University of Economics, founded in 1930, is one of the largest higher education institutions in the Southern Caucasus. Ten faculties are operating at UNEC, with more than 18,000 students studying 22 specialties. More than one thousand teachers, as well as 77 professors and 326 assistant professors, among whom figure actual members of the National Academy of Sciences, New York Academy of Sciences, laureates of State Awards, honored teachers and scientists work at the University. More than 850 students from 12 countries study for bachelor's and master's degrees at UNEC"

Source: <https://unec.edu.az/en/>



Learning Goal



- **Understand and expands awareness of their opinions, feelings, and actions and achieve harmony and conformity among them.**
- **Discover and analyze their role in the world, to study their vision, values, beliefs, mission, and identity and understand to their major desires**
- **Explore and evaluate new information regards to time management, stress management, body language, thinking skills, leadership, and public speaking**
- **Apply newly acquired knowledge of soft skills theories and practical models to solve-problem in a university environment, society, or even in the country.**



Agenda



DESCRIPTION OF WORK	START DATE	END DATE
<p>PHASE 1</p> <p>Research and Assessment</p> <p>October:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with the client• Analysis of the syllabus• Overview observation result• The survey among the students• Interview with students• Research about soft skills required for the work environment• Analysis of the relevance of the course topics• Choose new topics for the course• Analysis of the course delivery method• Research about the effectiveness of the delivery methods (lecture or seminar)• Analysis of the assessment methods in the current syllabus• Research about effective assessment methods• Add new assessment tools to the syllabus	19 October	30 October
<p>PHASE 2</p> <p>Design of Learning Engagement</p> <p>November:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interview with students• Analyze which skills add these learning engagement tools (critical reflection, synthesis, project)• Write per each class activity learning outcome• Find appropriate books and films for the critical reflection exercise• Read reviews about the books and films• Work on design for presentation	1 November	30 November
<p>PHASE 3</p> <p>Documentation and reporting</p> <p>December:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Work on report for the client</i>• <i>Work on final learning engagement document submission</i>	1 December	16 December



Meeting with client



I have met with Rashad Maharramov, head of the Career Planning and Development Department at Azerbaijan State University of Economics (UNEC). He emphasized that the department's primary aim is to remodel the course syllabus and add new contents to make this subject more attractive.

The Client's goals for the engagement are:

- *To add assessment guidelines and techniques to evaluate learning outcomes.*
- *To analyze the latest research results, tendencies, and requirements in the education field that can be implemented in a classroom environment.*
- *Apply inclusively and flipped education methodology in the same classroom environment*
- *To sort out recommendations and suggestions about the syllabus*
- *Survey students who took Soft Skills subjects in a previous semester and collect feedback.*
- *To present a business environmental analysis and tendencies and add them to the course syllabus.*



Analysis of Syllabus:

The following action steps are needed to change in the syllabus:



1

Course Delivery Method

Combine lecture and seminar classes

2

Learning Goal

Identify learning goals

3

Subject Topics

Save the subject topic order just add Emotional Intelligence

4

Assessment Breakdown

Make changes in assessment breakdown and add develop new tools

5

Add New Assessment Tools

Project

Synthesize role

Critical reflection

9

1

Course Delivery Method

CURRENT

VI. Course program

The program covers 45 hours of topics during the semester, including 15 hours of lectures and 30 hours of seminars.

The program includes lectures, discussions, assignments and exercises, group work, workshops, and workshop discussions, open and closed practical cases. The duration of the program is 7.5 weeks.



RECOMENDATION

Combine lecture and seminar classes

In general, the course consists of lectures and seminars, and the lecturer provides details about the topic during the lecture. In the seminars, students only repeat back the same information they received during the lectures and the lecturer marks them according to the information they memorize. The interview results indicate that the lecture is less effective in this subject, and students usually do not listen to the lecturer attentively. Poirier's research results (added in annotated bibliography), and students' interview outcomes demonstrate that the effectiveness of lecturing depends on the combining of the lecture and seminar class hours and creating just seminar classes with 90 minutes or more duration per university regulation.



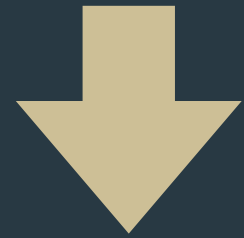
CURRENT

V. Learning Outcomes:

After completing the course and comprehending all the topics, the student **will know the following:**

- Creative, critical, and analytical thinking models
- Skills required for leadership
- Body language management skills
- Practical exercises for fluent speech
- Features needed to work in a team
- Models needed to manage time
- Stress management tools

When we look into the syllabus, we can notice that the learning outcomes are based on theoretical knowledge of the topic list of the Soft Skills subject. However, the syllabus must refer to drawing connections among ideas, using the information in a new situation, and including new and original details that can apply to all theoretical knowledge. To redesign the learning objective, I applied Bloom's Taxonomy framework (remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating), indicating that students first understand and expand awareness of their thoughts, feelings, and actions and achieve harmony in thoughts, feelings, and activities. Then they will explore and understand who they are, their vision, values, beliefs, mission, and identity, and clarify what they most desire by doing several group and individual activities. Therefore, they will discover and analyze new information about time management, stress management, body language, thinking skills, leadership, and public speaking. After learning this theoretical knowledge, they will apply newly learned soft skills theories and practical models to create a presentation where they will present their project to solve-problem around them.



RECOMENDATION

Identify learning goals



CURRENT

II. Subject's lecture topics

The following topics will be given lectures to the students in the process of teaching the subject

1. **Self-awareness skill**
2. **Leadership and teamwork skills**
3. **Thinking skills**
4. **Communication skills**
5. **Public speaking**
6. **Presentation skills**
7. **Time management skills**
8. **Stress management skills**

VII. Subject's lecture topics

The following topics will be given lectures to the students in the process of teaching the subject:

1. **Self-awareness skill**
2. **Emotional Intelligence**
3. **Communication skills**
4. **Leadership and teamwork skills**
5. **Time management skills**
6. **Thinking skills**
7. **Public speaking (Body language and Presentation skills)**
8. **Stress management skills**

RECOMENDATION



The principal recommendations can be the reordering the topics in a logical sequence and adding the Emotional Intelligence to the list of topics. So, after the Self-Awareness topics students should get information about Emotional Intelligence and then learn the Presentation Skills and the Public Speaking topics consecutively. All in all, it is recommended that the list of topics that will be included in the course syllabus be in the order mentioned below:

4

Assessment Breakdown

Make changes in assessment breakdown and add develop new tools

CURRENT

Direction	Points	Percentage
Final exam	50	50 %
According to the results of seminars	20	20 %
Mid-term exam	30	20%
Total:	100	100 %

RECOMENDATION

One of the most critical parts that stood out during the syllabus analysis was the distribution of scores. In general, the weight of the final exam is 50%, the result of the mid-term exam is 30%, and the other 20% is given for attending the class. It should also be noted that the evaluation is primarily based upon multiple-choice test questions. The outcomes of the latest studies and research indicate that this type of assessment technique is inappropriate. Therefore, utilizing multiple-choice test questions as the evaluation of the students' soft skills is unpractical. Furthermore, unequal score distribution, such as the high final and mid-term exam score percentages create pressure on students. According to as all these above-mentioned nuances, the recommendation for the assessment breakdown for this subject is provided below:

Direction	Points	Percentage
Final exam	25	25 %
Engagement&Collaboration	10	10 %
Mid-term exam	15	15%
Critical Reflection	20	20%
Syntesize/ PPT	10	10%
Project	20	20%
Total	100	100%

Overview Result



According to my observation as a former Soft Skills subject teacher, the lectures are not a motivational, engaging, or captivating at all. The students demand more flexible classroom environment and up-to dated knowledge to improve their skills. Also, the lectures needed to be more attractive, and lecturer must encourage student to be active during online classes. Outdated assessment tool cannot enhance students' knowledge and motivation. During the mid-term and final exams, students are assessed according to all the collective knowledge they obtain from the lecturer. One of the drawbacks and confusing aspects of these seminars is that the lecturers change oftenly which cause struggle for students to adapt to the teaching techniques of different lecturers due to the fact that their teaching styles are entirely dissimilar.



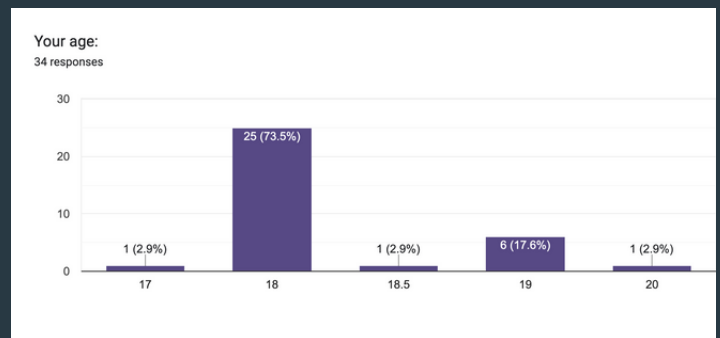
Survey result with student



Initially, a survey was conducted among the students who had previously passed the Soft Skill subject to understand the university environment climate. Thus, 34 students participated in the survey, all of whom were the Azerbaijan State University of Economics (UNEC) students. The survey asked the following questions, and the results are as follows:

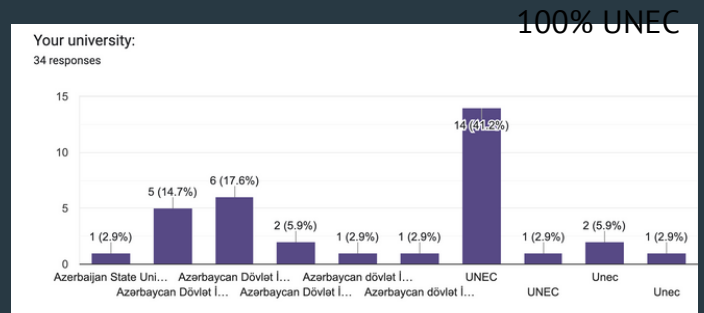
Your Age

According to the survey results, 73.5% (25 people) of the students who participated in the survey are 18 years old; among others, one person is 17 years old, one person is 20 years old, and the remaining seven people are 19 years old.



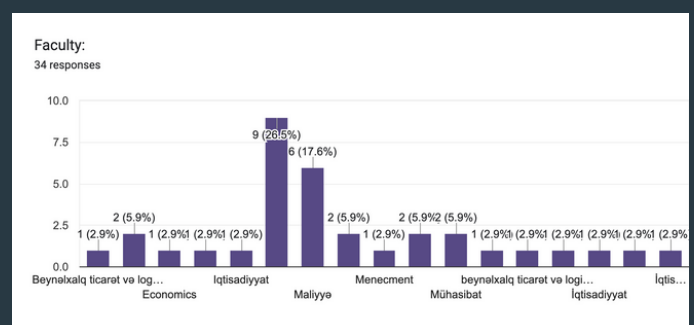
Your University

All survey participants (100%) were students of the Azerbaijan State University of Economics (UNEC).



Your Faculty

44% of survey participants are students of the Faculty of Finance, and the rest are students of the faculties of Accounting and the International School of Economics.

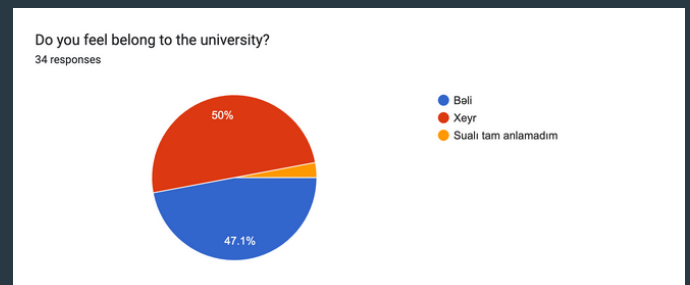


Survey result with student



Do you feel you belong to the university?

Half of the survey participants (50%) mentioned that they do not feel they belong to the university, the remaining 47% said that they do, and 3% did not understand the question.



What is the most significant problem/difficulty you face in your university/study life?

Since this survey question is open-ended, the answers vary, but the following solutions are on the list of repeated answers:

- Exams, foreign language
- The problematic language of the lectures
- The lectures are confusing and boring
- Cannot manage time/Inability to manage time
- Lack of resources in the library (books)
- Lack of information about available resources
- New exam rules (open-question test)
- Lack of time for additional social activities
- Due to the length of the lessons, lecturers can not find something to talk about for even 80 minutes
- The time of the classes (afternoon shift)

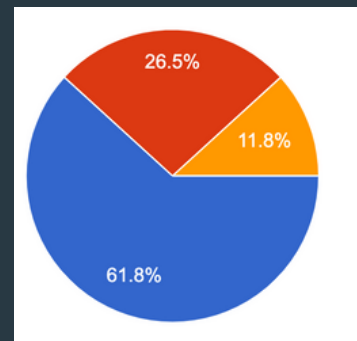
Survey result with student



Do you need a learning platform or any online course to overcome the above mentioned difficulty?

34 responses

A significant proportion of the participants (62%) answered "yes" to this survey question, while 27% said no; very few responded pessimistically to this issue and mentioned that "nothing can help to solve the current problem" at all.

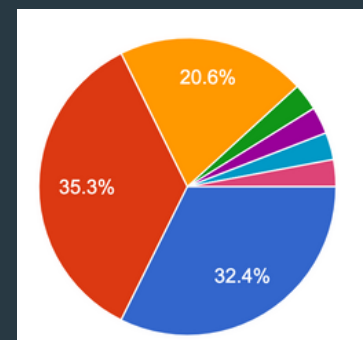


What would you like to have in this learning platform?

34 responses

In this survey questionnaire, we put multiple choice questions like would you like to have an online course, gamified learning, or website in this learning platform?

About thirty percent of survey participants chose "online course", 32,4 percent chose "website," and others selected "gamified learning" as an answer.



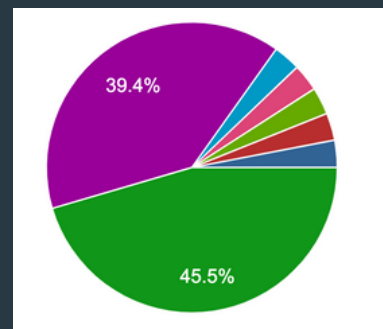
Survey result with student



Would you like a learning platform or an online course on any of the following topics?

33 responses

Regarding the question, "Would you like a learning platform or an online course on "personal budget management," "mental health" or "career wayfinding" topics?" approximately half of the survey participants chose the "mental health" topic, two-fifths chose "career wayfinding."

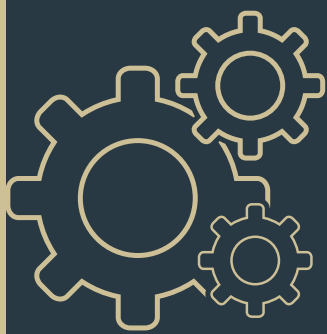


What kind of learning tool (platform, site, online course, training) would be more useful for you to overcome the difficulties and problems mentioned above?

The answers to the question mentioned above are different and striking. The vast majority of the participants emphasized that they need online courses and websites to handle their problems. There are also several answers which are entirely diverse. For example, they consider that:

- It is a problem of the university, and they should think about that
- Explaining the lesson with different methods
- Summary of the lectures in video format
- To get advice from experienced people
- Training on motivation topic
- Course and training about "Time Management."





Tools & Space



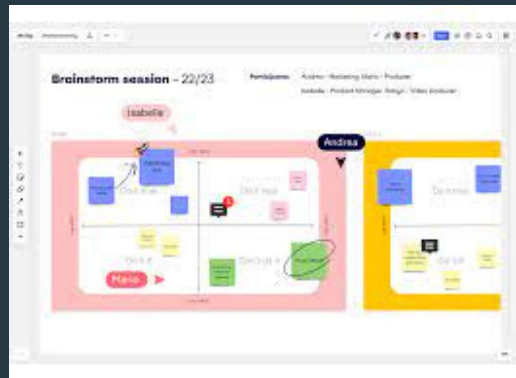
As the Soft Skills subject course is more about gaining new skills recommendation is to conduct this subject in an active learning classroom. To make this subject class more inclusive and flipped, there are several recommendations about tools and space to use during the seminars:

- Use the Virtual University platform for Critical Reflection assignment submission
- Use Gamified Learning platforms like Kahoot to do quizzes

- Create Active Learning Classroom where students can work in a group



- Use Miro Board to engage online joined students and make the class more interactive and inclusive



- Use Zoom to create an accessible and inclusive classroom for every student



Annotated Bibliography



Well-being

Yaden, D.B., Claydon, J., Bathgate, M., Platt, B., Santos, L.R (2021) Teaching well-being at scale: An intervention study. PLoS ONE 16(4): e0249193. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0249193>

Links to an external site.

The authors focus on how massive open online courses that teach evidence-based interventions can enhance the well-being of students. The author compared the well-being of six cohorts of adult students before and after the completion of these courses. According to the results, students who attended The Science of Well-Being course showed more remarkable improvement than those who completed either of these online psychology courses. The article's findings indicate that wellness is an area that can be taught and done on a large scale which may positively impact mental health.

Based on the survey and student interview results, students need support and knowledge about mental health, self-care, and self-awareness. Considering these factors, I recommend integrating the topic of well-being into this subject. Therefore, I have included exercises and activities related to this in the first two Self-Awareness and Emotional Intelligence subjects. By adding this research paper, I am showing the importance of including the topic of well-being in this subject.

Imad, Mays. "Pedagogy of Healing: Bearing Witness to Trauma and Resilience." Inside Higher Ed, 8 July 2021, <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2021/07/08/how-faculty-can-support-college-students%E2%80%99-mental-health-fall-opinion>.

The author suggests 13 actions to the people in the education system which they can use to support students' mental health during the fall semester. Furthermore, in the article, the author mentioned the importance of students' mental health in their progress in education. He gives recommendations about how to welcome students back to the classes and highlights the cruciality of being seen and heard instead of advised.

I included this article in my annotated bibliography list because the mentioned article also emphasizes adding a statement about mental health and personal development to the syllabus. Thus, the development of some skills of young people begins with self-analysis. First, they need to understand why specific skills are lacking and what is the underlying self-programming or trauma. The other reason is that in the suggestion list, "The Wisdom of Trauma" book is included as advice that I wanted to include in my designed course reading list.



Annotated Bibliography



Effectiveness of lecturing

Poirier, T. I. (2017). *Is lecturing obsolete? Advocating for high value transformative lecturing.* *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 81(5), 83–83. <https://doi.org/10.5688/ajpe81583>

The article questions whether lecturing as a teacher-centered model can be effective and valuable in today's educational climate. In the article, the author also briefly explained the advantages and disadvantages of lecturing and gave a lecturing explanation with an example of Freire's banking concept.

According to the survey and interview results the requirements, they were not interested in attending the lecture on Soft Skill subject. That is why I have researched in this direction to find an answer to my question is lecturing effective or ineffective in Soft Skill subjects? Accordingly, I have included this scientific article in the annotated bibliography list to convey that research results show that lecturing that is transformative an art form is still relevant for the 21st century in some subjects and encourages critical thinking. So, considering all these nuances, I recommend combining lecture and seminar hours and mini-lectures when needed.



Annotated Bibliography



Assessment and grading

Schinske, J., & Tanner, K. (2014). Teaching More by Grading Less (or Differently). *CBE life sciences education*, 13(2), 159–166. <https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.cbe-14-03-0054>

In this article, the author gives detailed information about when and for what purposes the grading system was established. The author emphasizes the importance of teaching than grading in education and gives suggestions for ways to make grading more supportive of learning.

The analysis of the current syllabus assessment section revealed that only final and mid-term exams are considered evaluation tools. By giving this research article, I would like to highlight that educational grading practices are ineffective and can not achieve educational goals such as motivation and measuring learning. Furthermore, time, expectations, and grading cause stress in students, which prevents them from learning more effectively. Considering this research paper's suggestions about several changes in approaching grading, I recommend adding more diverse assignments in order to grade less.



Annotated Bibliography



Active Learning Classroom

Park, E. L., & Choi, B. K. (2014). Transformation of classroom spaces: traditional versus active learning classroom in colleges. Higher Education, 68(5), 749–771. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43648751>

The paper aims to diagnose the effect of Active Learning Classrooms on students' engagement in education and compare these results with results conducted in the traditional learning environment. The author highlighted the importance of seating position in the classroom, which affects students' progress and involvement in the learning process. In the article, the author briefly gives information about the effectiveness of Active Learning Classrooms and explains why students find these classes more inspirational.

According to my previous observation, the subject of Soft Skills at UNEC is often implemented in a traditional classroom environment, which is not considered suitable for this subject. So, it is not convenient for both the student and the lecturer to make a presentation and do group work in the classroom during the lesson. The space where this subject will be taught is an Active Learning Classroom.

Talbert, R. (2022, March 23). What it's like to teach in an active learning classroom. Robert Talbert, Ph.D. Retrieved December 8, 2022, from <https://rtalbert.org/teaching-in-alc/>

In this article, the author explains how space impacts learning and shares his teaching experience in that space by mentioning that you can not feel the full effect by only doing research and training about ACL; you should teach there. He also emphasizes the importance and initially designed the purpose of these classroom spaces and puts an example picture of the classroom in the article.

I used this article because it gives detailed information:

- effectiveness of this space
- ways how it can impact learning
- how can it be created
- an example picture of this space

