

# QUICK GUIDE TO TEACHING COMPRESSED COURSES

Courses taught in less than 15 weeks can be successful and highly rewarding! Advance planning is the key. Consider these factors and how you can best address them before beginning your next compressed course:

<b>There is less time or more compressed time for. . .</b>	<b>Which I can address if I . . .</b>	<b>I need to rethink and redesign this aspect of the course</b>
Students to read	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remove some readings</li> <li>Give individual students choice of readings and have them share (e.g., jigsaw, discussion forum)</li> <li>Provide reflection or guided reading questions</li> </ul>	
Students to process new information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce new information</li> <li>Simplify presentation of new information</li> <li>Provide advanced organizers, diagrams</li> <li>Provide notes</li> </ul>	
Student to reflect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide reflection questions</li> <li>Make this an assignment where it supports learning objectives</li> </ul>	
Students to study for exams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Place less emphasis on remembering, and on more application, and synthesis in exams</li> <li>Replace some exams with other types of assessments (quizzes, essay, multimedia)</li> </ul>	
Students to redo work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be very clear in my expectations</li> <li>Allow them to drop a lowest score (in syllabus)</li> </ul>	
Students to discover they don't understand something and ask for help	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be very clear in communicating expectations (e.g., length, format, grading criteria)</li> <li>Anticipate student questions/confusion based on my past experience and address them up front</li> <li>Provide models (e.g. good and poor work)</li> </ul>	
Students to get help (e.g., tutoring)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talk about the importance of their seeking assistance promptly</li> </ul>	
Students to catch up on or refresh foundational knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide these resources at the outset</li> <li>Make it an assignment for students to choose and review the most relevant resources and explain what they discovered</li> </ul>	
Students to obtain new resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide more resources up front, such as a curated set of articles or websites they can use</li> </ul>	

Students to complete long, multi-stage research projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replace it with several smaller assessments that are not dependent on each other</li> <li>• Merge 2 things into one to speed a process up (such as student introductions and their topic of greatest interest in the course, which they can later use as basis for a research assignment)</li> <li>• Reduce length expectations</li> </ul>	
Students to complete group assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide time-saving aids, such as templates</li> <li>• Make the groupwork process more public: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Urge/initiate their use of effective collaboration tools existing in MyCourses and OneDrive</li> <li>○ Assign them to complete plans for how/when they will accomplish work</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
Instructors to give feedback on student work before the next assignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use rubrics and comment palettes</li> <li>• Give some initial feedback to the whole class while preparing individual feedback</li> <li>• Have fewer assignments dependent on each other</li> </ul>	
Instructors to receive and address student inquiries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check email frequently</li> <li>• Check email, notification, and forum subscription settings in MyCourses</li> <li>• Encourage students to post questions to me in a discussion forum so all can see my answer</li> </ul>	

## Key steps

1. Analyze the instructional context, especially your students, the environment they are in, and their other activities during the compressed course. Be prepared to adjust your course to new challenges and opportunities.
2. Identify and prioritize what the students “must know” and “need to know” based on your learning objectives.
3. Cut clutter, fluff, filler, extras, and “nice to knows,” based on your learning objectives.
4. Conceive your role as managing learning rather than simply transmitting information.
5. Find appropriate ways to cut breadth and/or depth that you would cover in a traditional semester while still meeting essential learning objectives.
6. Redesign major assessments from a traditional semester that won’t work in a compressed format.
7. Make your absolute best effort at organization when preparing and uploading materials before the course begins.

## References

- Kops, William J. (2014). Teaching compressed-format courses: Teacher-Based Best Practices. *Canadian Journal of University Continuing Education*, 40 (1): 1-18.
- Swenson, C. (2003). Accelerated and traditional formats: Using learning as a criterion for quality. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 97, 83–92.