

Course Tune-Up Calendar

1. Started Getting

Book a consultation with the CIEL by emailing learnsupport@viu.ca to get some ideas and insights to move your planning forward.

2. Weekend: [Rest is Essential for Learning & Productivity](#)

3. Weekend: [7 types of Rest](#)

4. Setting Expectations for the Course

Today's task is to reflect on the desired outcomes of your course. Ask yourself:

- What should students be able to do after completing this course?
- What is the core purpose of the course?
- What do you want students to know?

Your goal today is to craft a concise, one-sentence mission statement for your course.

To guide you in this process, consider the 'Backward Design' approach by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe. This approach recommends starting course design by defining learning outcomes rather than beginning with course content and subsequent activities. For a deeper understanding, explore '[Backward Design](#)' on the CIEL Blog.

5. Setting Expectations for the Course

The initial interactions with students set the tone for the course. This applies regardless of the modality – whether it's in-person, via Zoom, or asynchronously through VIULearn. Use this time to foster connections among students, engage them with the course content, and establish clear course expectations.

Today's action is to design a fun and thought-provoking activity that meaningfully introduces the course content for the first day of your class.

Consider the following:

1. What specific problems will students be equipped to solve after completing the course?
2. Reflect on the complexities of your field and what personally attracted you to it.
3. Motivate students to actively participate and immerse themselves in the learning process from the start.

For examples of promoting student engagement at the start of the course, explore '[Starting Your Semester Off Right](#)' on The CIEL Blog.

Course Tune-Up Calendar

6. Sharing Course Information

It's time to make or refresh the course syllabus or outline.

Think about how the syllabus will bring the subject matter to life for students.

- Are the course expectations articulated with clarity?
- Have you ensured that key information is readily available in multiple formats and across different platforms?
- Verify if the learning outcomes are prominently featured.
- Assess whether the syllabus conveys a clear vision of the student experience within the course.
- Determine if the methods and timings for contacting the faculty are clear.
- And lastly, ensure there is a clear and well-organized calendar highlighting all due dates to facilitate effective time management for the students.

Addressing these questions will help create a syllabus that serves as an effective roadmap for both instructor and student alike.

The CIEL blog '[Course Outlines and Syllabi](#)' explains the roles and purposes of a course outline. Download VIU's course outline template from the [Curriculum Committee Templates and Approval Processes](#) web page.

7. Sharing Course Information

Setup and/or review your VIULearn course shell. Ask yourself these critical questions:

- How are you using VIULearn features to enhance the learning experience?
- What does the layout of your course shell look like, and does it facilitate smooth progression through the material?
- Is the navigation intuitive enough for students to find resources and assignments with ease? Have you configured the gradebook in a way that is transparent and easy for students to track their performance?

The CIEL offers support in a variety of ways, including VIULearn support to help you. The CIEL website provides step-by-step guides for using [VIULearn](#). The following is a list of some of the things you can do in VIULearn.

- Post learning activities and assignments
- Gather student work
- Share links to resources and media
- Run quizzes or surveys
- Give students feedback and grades
- Have asynchronous online discussions
- Email your students

Course Tune-Up Calendar

- Post Announcements
- Create groups

8. Sharing Course Information

Today's task is to thoroughly evaluate your course materials.

- Begin by examining the textbook requirements: Is there a textbook, and if so, to what extent is it utilized throughout the course, and what is its cost to the students?
- Consider the number and cost of materials that students are required to purchase. Are there cost-effective alternatives to these resources, such as open educational resources or library reserves?
- Investigate the accessibility of online resources: Are they straightforward for students to access and use?
- Lastly, when distributing resources as files, reflect on the file formats—are they widely accessible and compatible with students' devices?
- Ensure that the sharing of these materials adheres strictly to copyright laws.

A thorough review of course materials can not only enhance the learning experience but also address equity and access issues for your students.

9. Weekend

10. Weekend

11. Measuring Student Success

For today's focus, turn your attention towards measuring student success through assessments:

1. Review the quantity of assessments you have planned. Reflect on whether the number seems overwhelming or insufficient for the duration of the course.
2. Scrutinize the clarity of the assessment instructions. Are they precise and easily understood?
3. Consider the structure of your assessments. Are they scaffolded appropriately to support student learning as the course progresses?
4. Evaluate the alignment of each assessment with your learning outcomes. Are they directly contributing to the intended knowledge or skills?
5. Finally, assess the practicality of your assessments. Are you incorporating real-world examples and applications to enhance relevance and engagement?

Course Tune-Up Calendar

Your objective today is to ensure that your assessments are balanced, clear, constructive, outcome-focused, and connected to real-world contexts, fostering a robust and meaningful evaluation of student success.

Assessment is a core component of any course. See the [Assess](#) section of the CIEL website for resources to help you plan and create meaningful assessments for your course.

12. Measuring Student Success

How could flexible assessment improve student success? Consider what flexible assessment might look like in your course.

Adopting flexible assessment methods boosts student engagement by empowering them to choose how they are assessed, fostering a deeper personal connection to their learning. The CIEL's '[Flexible Assessment](#)' blog introduces flexible assessment with tips for getting started.

13. Measuring Student Success

Today, focus on building or refining the rubrics for the course assignment and ensure they are added to VIULearn.

Rubrics are tools for clarifying expectations for students and significantly reducing marking time. To understand the different types of rubrics and best practices in rubric design, refer to the CIEL blog post '[What Are Rubrics and Why Use Them?](#)' Consult the CIEL website page, [Rubrics](#), for a stepwise guide on creating and using rubrics in VIULearn.

14. Community in the Classroom and Student Engagement

Instructors and students often experience an unspoken power imbalance, which can diminish students' control over their learning, leading to reduced engagement, autonomy, and ownership.

Today, make a plan for how you will actively involve students in creating expectations for the class.

The CIEL blog '[Starting Your Semester Off Right](#)' offers strategies to counter this, including involving students in setting class expectations. Refer to the *Setting vs. Co-Creating Expectations* section for an approach.

15. Community in the Classroom and Student Engagement

How could you integrate strategies to work towards the creation of inclusive and healthy classrooms?

Course Tune-Up Calendar

The CIEL has curated resources that offer accessible strategies to begin the journey towards creating inclusive and healthy classrooms. These resources have been added to a VIULearn course. Some of the topics covered are:

- Creating an Inclusive Course Syllabus
- Acknowledging Territory
- Biophilia
- Universal Design for Learning
- Alternative Assessments

If you would like to be added to the course to access all the resources, please email learnsupport@viu.ca.

16. Weekend

17. Weekend

18. Community in the Classroom and Student Engagement

How can you implement Universal Design for Learning (UDL)? Today, explore the CIEL blog [‘Universal Design for Learning’](#).

The blog provides examples of how VIU tools can be used to implement UDL guidelines. UDL provides guidelines to design teaching and learning to address the needs of all learners. There are three main guidelines: ways to provide multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression.

19. Community in the Classroom and Student Engagement

How will you respond to tricky situations in your learning environment?

Difficult conversations can happen in any classroom. Early steps towards addressing difficult conversations involve preparing yourself and your students by thinking about potential challenging situations before they occur. The CIEL blog [‘Difficult conversation in the Classroom’](#) suggests ways to navigate tricky interactions and perhaps turn them into teachable moments.

20. Community in the Classroom and Student Engagement

How can you build community in your classroom?

The CIEL [‘Building Community’](#) blog explores practical steps for fostering a classroom community. Research highlights that a welcoming, supportive classroom environment, where students feel a sense of belonging, not only increases learning and persistence but also enhances overall satisfaction with their education. Key strategies include connecting to

Course Tune-Up Calendar

place, getting to know your students, and allowing them to know you. Refer to the blog for questions to invite your students to share who they are, and avenues for communication.

21. Community in the Classroom and Student Engagement

Today's tasks focus on enhancing student engagement and ensuring a smooth start to your course. Here's what's on the agenda:

1. Write a welcome email or make a short video welcome for students. This will help create a warm and inviting first impression for your course.
2. Manage VIULearn to select when you choose to make the course active. This ensures that your course is available to your students at the right time.
3. Review VIULearn links and course resources to make sure they are working and accessible. This step is crucial to provide a seamless learning experience and prevent any technical issues from hindering your students' progress.

22. Adapting throughout the semester/Adapting to Student Needs

As a final step, plan for gathering feedback from your students.

The Early Feedback Service is a mechanism for gathering feedback from your students around midterm—before it is too late to make changes that might improve your students' learning experience this semester. It allows VIU faculty members to conveniently capture anonymous information on how students are responding to an ongoing course.

For more information about CIEL's early feedback service, refer to [Early Feedback Service](#).

23. VIU is closed

Congratulations on completing the Course Tune-Up – it's time to enjoy some well-deserved time off!

24. VIU is closed

Congratulations on completing the Course Tune-Up – it's time to enjoy some well-deserved time off!