Teaching for Success®
Faculty Success Center

QuickTool 9.11

TFS QuickTool 9.11: Class Start-up Checklist

by Jack H. Shrawder, Executive Director,, Teaching For Success, Faculty Success Center

*N*o matter whether this is your first class or your hundredth, you will be more successful when you ensure that you have completed a specific list of course startup tasks. At Teaching For Success, we depend on lists and checklists to keep us on track with our projects.

The checklists that follow are only suggestions, and you should modify them to fit your specific situation—or better yet, create your own checklists. Here are three sample checklists designed to help you plan and meet your class start up goals.

Syllabus Ready?

First check your syllabus, whether it has been provided to you or whether you have developed it from years of teaching experience. Check your syllabus for the following:

❏ An accurate course description, section, meeting times, and dates of holidays and the final exam.

❏ Your current contact information (phone, email, fax, etc.) and office hours.

❏ A list of required textbook(s), lab supplies, special tools, safety supplies, etc.

❏ A synopsis of major learning goals in terms of knowledge and skills students will gain.

❏ A class meeting and activity calendar showing the projected dates for assignments, quizzes, exams, portfolios, surveys, lab projects, etc.

❏ A statement of your right to change the course schedule and learning activities as needed.

❏ A description of student behaviors that are considered inappropriate at your institution, or referral to the institutional document covering student behaviors and processes for dealing with infractions.

❏ A detailed list of your expected and prohibited classroom behaviors and expectations of students. (Make particularly explicit details regarding attendance issues.)

❏ A course grading system description, along with your personal, institutional, or departmental polices for making up exams, in-class work, or late assignments. (This is a very, very important part of any syllabus.)

❏ A section contrasting acceptable with unacceptable academic behaviors regarding homework, term papers, lab reports, small group participation, team tests, etc.

First Class Meeting Preparation Complete?

To reduce the chances of something going wrong during the first class, meeting check off these items:

❑ My syllabus has been carefully checked for accuracy and completeness.

❑ I have posted the syllabus file online and printed hard copies
if that is in the tradition of the class I teach.

❑ I have a student syllabus-acceptance form that students will
sign and date upon acceptance of the syllabus.

❑ I have checked the classroom and labs for seating arrangement, equipment, and negative
environmental situations such as noise, poor lighting, inadequate ventilation, etc.

❑ I have obtained samples of required supplies, tools, and safety equipment,
as well as copies of textbooks, lab manuals, handouts, etc.

❑ I have created a class calendar or timeline and denoted all learning activities, exams, .etc.

❑ I have read my institution's catalog sections on required student
behaviors and grading system options and deadlines.

First-Day Plan Complete?

The first class meeting is extremely important for retaining students and making sure they understand exactly what the course will be like in terms of prerequisite knowledge and skills, content to be learned, and anticipated speed and depth of learning. They must understand your grading system and what the term projects will be, and, finally, how you plan to teach. For example, do you lecture, promote group learning, demand class participation, etc? Make sure you:

❑ Come early to class and welcome students or log on and welcome students to your online course.

❑ Introduce yourself; start to learn names.

❑ Use an icebreaker introduction to acquaint learners with each other.

❑ Post, distribute or project your course syllabus for discussion

❑ Explain contents of each syllabus section as needed.

❑ Have students sign a statement of understanding and compliance
with course grading policies, class behavior standards, etc.

❑ Survey and assess students to determine their beginning knowledge level and the extent of
their practical and academic experience with your class content and college in general.