

Best Practices for Teaching Fast Track Classes

See www.chaffey.edu/fasttrack/about.shtml for more information and sample documents regarding Fast Track classes.

Syllabus Design

- Use the Fast Track syllabus statement template and/or include pertinent Fast Track information and expectations in your syllabus.
- Prepare ahead for the entire semester.
- Give students a tentative schedule of activities, assignment due dates, and tests/quizzes so that they can plan ahead.
- Carefully consider your make-up policy in regards to Fast Track and include it in your syllabus.
- Provide students with planning tools in your course.
- Email the syllabus to students prior to the start of class and/or provide it on the first day of class.

Attendance

- Emphasize the importance of regular attendance in a Fast Track class by explaining that one day equals almost a week's worth of work in full semester (if meeting twice a week).
- Instructor attendance is also vital to the success of a Fast Track class. If you need to be absent, consider ways to keep your students on track. For example, work with your coordinator to find a sub for your class, scout possible subs in advance, or prepare assignments for students to work on in case of absence, etc.
- Encourage attendance through graded participation in classroom activities or quizzes in class.
- Provide in-class feedback to students on assignments, tests, quizzes, etc. to motivate attendance.
- Promote student self-efficacy by encouraging them to connect with classmates when they are absent to get information and updates on assignments, notes, class activities, etc.

First Day Activities

- Try an ice breaker activity to start the process of helping students connect to one another and to you immediately.
- Introduce students to any unique requirements or expectations of your Fast Track course.
- Being available for students is vital for student success in a Fast Track class. Remind students often that you are available to help answer questions and address concerns.
- Create a 'buddy' system where students exchange contact information in case they are absent or have questions.

- Show videos or narratives of student stories about how they succeeded in your previous Fast Track class.
- Provide instruction and tools for how to read your textbook and study effectively in your discipline. Have students share their successful strategies with the class.

Lecture/Instruction/ Group Activities

- Write the agenda for the day on the board. Set specific learning goals with the students at the beginning of the class.
- Change activities/types of instruction after about 30 minutes for optimal learning.
- Break down large concepts for students. Give more frequent quizzes on material in smaller chunks.
- Give points for group participation and work.

Grading

- Return essays, assignments, tests, and quizzes promptly so that students use the feedback to improve their learning before the next essay, test, or quiz.
- Calculate grades before the final exam/project/essay so that determining the final grades takes less time.
- Consider splitting your final exam into two parts so that one part can be given earlier and make grading and student study time more efficient.
- Consider factoring 'effort/in-class participation' into a specific portion of the grade.