

## What is Trauma Responsive Online and LMS Course Design?

“To think about online strategies that restore what trauma takes away, we can put on a *trauma lens* through which we can see what changes can be made.”

- UCI Division of Teaching Excellence and Innovation

## How Does Trauma Impact Learning?

“Trauma impairs our ability to make decisions, remember, and learn”

-Mays Imad (Professor of Genetics, Biotechnology, and Bioethics at Pima Community College)

As a result, students may have a hard time:

- Keeping track of changes in your class
- Making decisions about learning (e.g. overwhelm leads to feelings of “I can’t do it”)
- Prioritizing assignments
- Planning
- Engaging with classmates or the subject
- Managing their time
- Remembering details or content
- Resisting the urge to quit (the ability to stand in discomfort becomes difficult)
- Focusing on learning (concentration, memory/recall)
- Problem solving and understanding cause and effect relationships

## Strategies and Considerations:

The following suggestions are not exhaustive but rather a jumping-off point in which to begin to think about online course design, teaching practices, and approaches through a trauma lens.

### When Organizing the Learning Management System (LMS)

- **Practice:** Implement the [Blackboard Online Course Template](#)
- **Why:** The [design](#) offers a predictable and consistent format to aid in ease of navigation

### When Selecting and Adding Content

- **Practice:** Consider providing specific concepts/ page numbers to focus on for extensive readings
- **Practice:** Consider the amount of time of the video - emphasize what part of the video is critical
- **Why:** Trauma affects learning, memory and concentration. Highlighting important components of material can support learner success

### When Organizing the Learning Management System (LMS)

- **Practice:** Include instructions for the breakout room activity in a link in the chat box for easy access
- **Why:** Trauma can impact the ability for a student to concentrate, retain instruction, and recall activity details necessary to fully engage and participate

---

## How to Get Started:

For more information on how to adapt your practices for trauma awareness, please see the [Trauma-informed Checklist For Higher Education Instructors](#) (Gunderson et al., 2023).

Please [email](#) CTLS Learning Designers to further explore online course design considerations to support the learner experience.

## Additional Resource:

Explore [Trauma Informed Pedagogy](#) from Red Deer Polytechnic Centre of Teaching, Learning and Scholarship for additional information.

## Resources and Supports:

[Counselling Services](#) at Red Deer Polytechnic provides students with information, resources, and support regarding some of the most common issues college students may experience such as academic performance, addiction & substance use, mood & mental health, relationships, self-image, sexuality & identity, stress, coping, and overall wellness.

Individuals can call, text, or live chat [Alberta 211](#) if they are in need of mental health support, can't pay for pills, don't know who to talk to, can't afford food, or don't have a place to stay.

Individuals can call the toll-free 24/7 telephone service, **Alberta Mental Health Hotline** at 1-877-303-2642, which offers help for mental health concerns for Albertans. It is a confidential, anonymous service that includes crisis intervention, information about mental health programs and services, and referrals to other agencies if needed.

---

## References:

- Butler, J. (2021, July 21). *Trauma-informed teaching: How to be more intentional with course policies, LMS, and scaffolding feedback*. Faculty Focus | Higher Ed Teaching & Learning. <https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/effective-teaching-strategies/trauma-informed-teaching-how-to-be-more-intentional-with-course-policies-lms-and-scaffolding-feedback/>
- Counselling services. Counselling Services | Red Deer Polytechnic. (n.d.). <https://rdpolytech.ca/student-services/counselling-services/counselling-services>
- Gross, K. (2020, August 18). *Can online learning be trauma-responsive?*. New England Board of Higher Education. <https://nebhe.org/journal/can-online-learning-be-trauma-responsive/>
- Gunderson, R. L., Mrozla-Toscano, C. F., & Mao, D. M. (2023). An Instructor's Guide for Implementing Trauma-Informed Pedagogy in Higher Education. *The Journal of Faculty Development*, 37(2), 11-17. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KGfjSQI13UwAn39ASFJQbDbr5iMe3giO/view>
- JCALDWELL. (2021, July 28). *Preparing for Return to Campus – A Trauma-Informed Approach*. BCcampus. <https://bccampus.ca/2021/07/28/preparing-for-return-to-campus-a-trauma-informed-approach/>
- Joudrey, S. (Nov 23). *Trauma-informed Pedagogy: What It Is and How It Can Help Now*. Focus on University Teaching & Learning. <https://focus.clt.dal.ca/blog/trauma-informed-pedagogy-what-it-is-and-how-it-can-help-now>
- Mays Imad. (2020, April 13). *Trauma Informed Teaching & Learning (for teachers)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XqcTbipuFDQ&t=37s>
- Mental Health First Aid. (2020, May 20). *Five Ways to Protect Your Mental Health With MHFA*. Mental Health First Aid. <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/2020/05/five-ways-to-protect-your-mental-health-with-mhfa/>
- McMurtrie, B. (2020, June 4). *What Does Trauma-Informed Teaching Look Like?* The Chronicle of Higher Education. <https://www.chronicle.com/newsletter/teaching/2020-06-04>
- TRAUMA-INFORMED PEDAGOGY. (n.d.). UCI Division of Teaching Excellence and Innovation. Retrieved August 12, 2021, from <https://dtei.uci.edu/trauma-informed-pedagogy/>