



**Teaching Essentials Course**  
AU TEACHING & LEARNING CENTER

## Course Directive



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## COURSE OVERVIEW

### **Course Description**

The Teaching Essentials Course (TEC) is a core program of the Air University Teaching & Learning Center. Through various learning tracks, the TEC provides opportunities to explore evidence-informed teaching and learning strategies that promote student-centered learning in inclusive, multi-modal military educational environments. The TEC encourages student-centered learning by promoting flexible instruction to serve a diverse community of adult learners.

The TEC's design offers various delivery options, including hybrid (a combination of online, self-paced, and face-to-face work), synchronous face-to-face, and asynchronous (self-paced, online) lessons. TEC content is made available for use by any Air University school or program and may be adapted to meet faculty needs.

This course is designed for newly assigned and beginning instructors. Established, long-standing instructors and faculty are also welcome. The curriculum and learning experience emphasize current teaching techniques and promote professional learning communities with instructors across the campus.

### **Terminal Learning Objectives**

The following terminal objectives are supported by the TEC lessons. Upon completion of the full course, participants will be able to:

1. Design and facilitate evidence-informed instruction that is framed by theory and models relevant for adult learners in multi-modal environments.
2. Promote an inclusive, engaging educational environment that supports a culture of lifelong learning.
3. Engage in reflective practice to improve teaching performance and build relationships throughout the military learning communities.

### **Instructor Competencies**

Learners in the TEC will develop the following instructor competencies, which are informed by the Air University Strategic Plan, Air University faculty needs assessments, the Air Education and Training Command 2020 Instructor Evaluation Checklist, the International Board of Standards for Training, Performance, & instruction (IBSTPI), the Process for Accrediting Joint Education (PAJE) Standards, and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSOC) regional accreditation standards.

1. Explain the relationship between adult learning theories and a student-centered instructional model.
2. Adopt the ethos of an educator.
3. Apply a systematic, outcomes-based approach to instructional design that aligns learning outcomes with curricula and assessments.

4. Plan for instruction across multiple modalities.
5. Foster an inclusive learning environment that is conducive to diverse learners.
6. Plan for purposeful use of educational technology to enhance learning.
7. Effectively facilitate periods of instruction according to adult learning and student-centered learning principles.
8. Apply active learning strategies to engage learners.
9. Model effective communication skills in the learning environment.
10. Assess learners' attainment of learning objectives.
11. Provide feedback on learners' advancement toward attaining learning objectives.
12. Evaluate and reflect on the quality of teaching.
13. Modify instruction based on data and feedback.
14. Value teaching as profession and engage in opportunities for professional development.

## LESSON DESCRIPTIONS

### **The Adult Learner**

**Description:** This lesson introduces adult learning theories and their relationship to a student-centered approach to instruction. Theory-to-practice implications for classroom instruction will be explored.

#### **Enabling Learning Objectives:**

- (Applying) Discuss how core concepts of the adult learning theories of andragogy, self-directed learning, and experiential learning relate to student-centered learning environments and active learning strategies.
- (Evaluating) Evaluate effective and ineffective applications of facilitation of instruction for adult learners in a student-centered learning environment.

### **Role of the Instructor**

**Description:** This lesson provides an overview of roles, responsibilities, and expectations of an instructor in a professional military education learning environment.

#### **Enabling Learning Objectives:**

- (Remembering) Define the roles of an instructor.
- (Affective/Internalizing Values) Describe the values, beliefs, and actions that inform your approach to teaching.
- (Remembering) Identify the characteristics of effective instructors.
- (Affective/Valuing) Recognize the importance of networking for professional growth.
- (Understanding) Summarize the organizational flow and purposes of each component of a teaching plan.
- (Understanding) Compare and contrast best practices for facilitating instruction in both face-to-face and virtual delivery modalities.

### **Learning Environment**

**Description:** This lesson reviews how to create an inclusive learning environment for adult leaders and offers tips for managing classroom behaviors to best facilitate learning.

#### **Enabling Learning Objectives:**

- (Remembering) Define a student-centered learning model.
- (Understanding) Describe best practices for developing a successful learning environment for diverse adult learners.
- (Understanding) Select appropriate behavior management techniques to minimize the adverse impact of student behaviors during the facilitation of instruction.

### **Communication in the Classroom**

**Description:** The lesson supports instructors as they develop their communication skills to reflect their ethos as an educator and the importance of an inclusive learning environment.

#### **Enabling Learning Objectives:**

- (Understanding) Describe the communication skills an instructor needs within

- the classroom.
- (Understanding) Describe how an instructor's communication style connects to their ethos.
- (Applying) Apply communication practices to create an inclusive learning experience.

### **Learning Objectives**

**Description:** This lesson includes discussion on learning objectives and emphasizes terminal and enabling objectives, as well as attributes of an effective learning objective. Students will identify observable and measurable student behaviors that could verify attainment of a learning objective.

#### **Enabling Learning Objectives:**

- (Understanding) Distinguish between Terminal and Enabling Learning Objectives.
- (Understanding) Describe the attributes of an effective learning objective.
- (Applying) Identify observable and measurable student behaviors that could verify attainment of a learning objective.

### **Assessments**

**Description:** This lesson provides foundational information about assessments, including main types and purposes of assessments and criteria to determine the effectiveness of assessments used in the classroom. Activities include practicing using a rubric to assess student learning.

#### **Enabling Learning Objectives:**

- (Understanding) Explain the purpose of student assessment.
- (Understanding) Distinguish between formative and summative assessments.
- (Understanding) Distinguish between direct and indirect assessments.
- (Understanding) Explain criteria of an effective assessment.
- (Understanding) Describe components of an effective rubric.
- (Applying) Practice using rubric to assess student learning.

### **Effective Feedback**

**Description:** This lesson focuses on characteristics of effective feedback and explains how effective feedback supports the teaching and learning process. Students will practice providing feedback using samples of student work.

#### **Enabling Learning Objectives:**

- (Applying) Provide effective feedback using samples of student work.
- (Applying) Identify ways to modify instruction based on data and feedback.

### **Teaching Strategies Overview**

**Description:** This lesson provides an overview of teaching strategies. Students will purposefully select appropriate teaching strategies and broaden their repertoire and application in the classroom.

#### **Enabling Learning Objectives:**

- (Applying) Identify factors to consider in selecting teaching strategies.
- (Understanding) Explain where various teaching strategies fall on the teaching continuum.
- (Evaluating) Select various teaching strategies that align with learning objectives and assessments.

## **Lecture**

**Description:** This lesson provides an overview of using engaging, student-centered lectures within the classroom.

### **Enabling Learning Objectives:**

- (Understanding) Describe the types of lectures used in the classroom.
- (Understanding) Explain how lecture teaching strategies impact learning.
- (Analyzing) Analyze the use of lecture within different learning modalities.

## **Guided Discussion**

**Description:** This lesson outlines the purposes, best practices, and procedures for conducting guided discussions via various delivery modalities. The role of purposeful use of questioning for facilitating guided discussions will be explored. A practice activity is included.

### **Enabling Learning Objectives:**

- (Remembering) Define the guided discussion teaching strategy.
- (Understanding) Explain how to prepare a guided discussion through the purposeful use of questioning.
- (Applying) Apply best practices for facilitating a guided discussion in both asynchronous (discussion board) and synchronous (Teams/Zoom) delivery modalities.

## **Case Method**

**Description:** This lesson outlines the purposes, best practices, and procedures for using case studies while teaching in different modalities. Learners will analyze the usability of a case study. A practice activity is included.

### **Enabling Learning Objectives:**

- (Remembering) Describe the case method teaching strategy.
- (Remembering) Explain how to use a short case study while teaching in different modalities.
- (Analyzing) Analyze the usability of a case study example in a lesson.

## **Peer Learning**

**Description:** This lesson outlines the purposes, best practices, and procedures for conducting peer learning activities. The various types of peer learning strategies and how to adapt a lesson to include peer learning will be explored. A practice activity is included.

### **Enabling Learning Objectives:**

- (Understanding) Explain the peer learning strategy.
- (Understanding) Describe the different types of peer learning strategies.
- (Applying) Adapt a lesson to include a peer learning strategy.

## EVALUATION

Assessments and the criteria for student performance are based on a mastery-learning (i.e., pass/fail) alignment with enabling and terminal learning objectives. To successfully complete the course, students must complete every lesson and its associated activities and pass a final assessment (scoring 85% or higher) and a 20-minute teaching demonstration.

There are three options for the teaching demonstration, which is evaluated via the rubric found in the Appendix. Students may either (1) schedule a live teaching demonstration based on mutual availability with the TEC team, (2) submit a recording of themselves teaching in front of a live audience, or (3) grant the TEC access to an online course where they facilitate some element of instruction and assessment (e.g., a module on Air Power with a discussion board, requiring feedback to discussants that can be observed).

Students who earn a Certificate of Completion will also have the option to receive a digital credential.

## DELIVERY OPTIONS

The TEC curriculum is designed to emphasize the student-centered learning environment regardless of whether it is offered via face-to-face lessons, in hybrid format, or self-paced lessons online. Students will engage in discussions and collegial inquiry and reflect on their professional growth. Students are expected to actively participate by asking questions, contributing to discussions, and engaging in learning activities. The following delivery methods are offered to provide scheduling flexibility and meet organizational needs. Some options require advance registration.

- **Online, Self-Paced (Asynchronous).** The asynchronous self-paced option is conducted entirely online via Canvas. This option does not require real-time interaction and gives students the opportunity to access the course when it best fits their schedules. Self-guided modules, pre-recorded video content, lecture notes, and discussion boards allow students to complete assignments at their own pace without set deadlines. Instructors will monitor progress and be available for assistance throughout the course. This course is open for continuous enrollment. There is no required course completion timeline.
- **Combination Online, Self-Paced, and Face-to-Face (Hybrid).** The 5-day hybrid TEC option includes synchronous morning sessions (either online via video teleconference or in-person/face-to-face) followed by a 2-hour asynchronous online learning component conducted via Canvas. This option is scheduled as a cohort-based class to emphasize the development of professional learning communities and encourage collaboration with other instructors. Hybrid courses may be offered to pre-existing cohorts (i.e., an incoming group of Senior Non-Commissioned Officer Academy instructors) of 5-20 participants upon request.
- **Micro-sessions:** Micro-sessions 30-minute webinar presentations with a Q&A session held via video teleconference. Topics change monthly and reflect the interests of the Air

University faculty community and educational mission priorities. No registration is required and connection links are shared in announcement emails and other marketing materials.

- **Workshops:** Customized workshops are available upon request. Delivery modalities, duration, and topic are variable depending on identified requirements. Coordination requires significant advance notice; please contact [autlc@us.af.mil](mailto:autlc@us.af.mil) with your request.
- **Consultations:** One-on-one and small group consultation services are available in person or online on such topics as designing curriculum, implementing active learning strategies, teaching in multiple modalities, and implementing learning technology into instruction, among others. You may book a consultation appointment online at <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/TLC/Services/#faculty-consultations> or via email at [autlc@us.af.mil](mailto:autlc@us.af.mil).

## COURSE ENROLLMENT

Course information is provided via AU email, social media, and AUTLC newsletters. Begin the enrollment process by emailing: [autlc@us.af.mil](mailto:autlc@us.af.mil) or calling (334) 953-5454.

## APPENDIX

| <b>Teaching Observation Form</b>                                                                                                                                            |                          |                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Observation Date                                                                                                                                                            | Instructor's Name        | Start Time                                                                             |
| Modality<br><input type="checkbox"/> Face-to-face<br><input type="checkbox"/> Online (Synch)<br><input type="checkbox"/> Online (Asynch)<br><input type="checkbox"/> Hybrid | Observer's Name          | Stop Time                                                                              |
|                                                                                                                                                                             | Lesson Title             | Total Time                                                                             |
| Observer Conducted Pre-Brief with Instructor: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No<br>Comments from Pre-Brief (e.g., identified areas to focus on):     |                          |                                                                                        |
| Overall Strengths                                                                                                                                                           |                          |                                                                                        |
|                                                                                                                                                                             |                          |                                                                                        |
| Overall Areas for Improvement                                                                                                                                               |                          |                                                                                        |
|                                                                                                                                                                             |                          |                                                                                        |
| [ASSESSMENT BELOW IS FOR TEACHING ESSENTIALS COURSE PURPOSES ONLY]                                                                                                          |                          |                                                                                        |
| <b>PASS</b>                                                                                                                                                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | Instructor demonstrates majority ( $\geq 6/11$ ) of the behaviors listed below.        |
| <b>DID NOT PASS</b>                                                                                                                                                         | <input type="checkbox"/> | Instructor did not demonstrate majority ( $\leq 5/11$ ) of the behaviors listed below. |

