

Best Practices: Self-Learning Modules

If you only do one thing to improve your SLMs: General Tips

- Limit the estimated time for completion to 15 minutes – the human attention span for didactic information is limited to 10-20 minutes
- Some repetition is good. Objectives and/or an outline give students an understanding of the information that will be presented as well as the flow of information (framework for understanding). High yield information could also be recapped at the end of the module.
- Only use interactivity if it enhances learning. Good examples:
 - Hot spots on a visual image (anatomy, histology, pathology) that allow the students to self-assess knowledge before clicking/hovering on a hotspot for more information
 - Grouping concepts/diagnoses (which may require clicking on tabs) to organize topics/information with similar characteristics
- Your SLM should tell a story. There should be a beginning, middle and end with hooks (could be a patient example) that are completely aligned to the topic at hand.
- Utilize mixed elements to facilitate the transmission of information while encouraging student engagement/self-assessment. Elements include: text, graphics/imagery, videos, questions, and interactive features.
- To the extent possible, always allow learner control. Some may want to repeat or skip a section.
- Always provide closure on the learning. This could be in the form of a self-assessment quiz at the end of a module or via discussion/questions in class.
- Determine whether paragraphs of text or narrated bullets are better for conveying information in the module.
- If narrated, the text and narration must follow the same “flow” to avoid student cognitive dissonance.
- To cut down on slides, verbally share context and supporting information.
 - Only write down essential definitions, characteristics.
 - Assume that learners will memorize your slides, therefore limit your text to only the information you would want a learner to memorize.
- Use pictures and charts to help learners visualize the information being communicated.
 - If you need pictures drawn up contact Ryan.Dickerson@ucf.edu
- If a script was created, make it available to students for review and reinforcement.

Tips to reduce faculty time on SLM development

- Consider what content and ways to present content in order to make each SLM re-usable in future iterations.
- If SLMs are formatted like recorded lectures, consider recording the lecture versus creating new SLM content.

Best practices related to active learning, integration, and learner independence

- Consider ways to create alternate paths for the continuum of learners (novice→advanced)
- Interactive elements and questions/quizzes should occur throughout (even at the beginning of) the module. Interactions at the beginning of a module could allow students to determine if they need to complete the module (or if they have prior knowledge) and/or prime critical thinking about the topic being presented before instruction.
- Utilize SLMs to deliver basic content/concepts/schema then class time for active learner engagement (cases, discussion, questions, and demonstration of expert thinking). Flipped classroom.
- Create templates for commonly occurring slides. Templates help learners understand where to pick up key information and navigate through the SLM independently.