

MIGRAEDU E-LEARNING COURSE DESIGN

TOPLINE

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This stage of the MIGRAEDU project aimed to develop guidelines and a blueprint for e-learning courses focused on migrant and refugee research.

The project started in October of 2025 with an introductory Focus group, then continued in December with more in-depth individual interviews. The last phase was a design workshop with students conducted in February 2026.

BREAKDOWN OF THE PROJECT

PHASE 1- Focus Group

- Gathered insights for prototyping a new online course on migration;
- Discussed learning habits, online vs offline formats, engagement needs, and 3 proposed modules.

PHASE 2- Individual interviews

- Fine-tuned proposed materials;
- Created a blueprint for future courses;
- Confirmed findings about online course design.

PHASE 3- Workshop

- Test fine-tuned materials from previous iterations;
- Gain a deeper understanding of students' needs;
- Test previous conclusions.

During the course of the project, **the following learning materials have been tested:**

- The Quality of Life of Refugees
- Challenges of the integration of refugees with disabilities
- Listening to Understand: Narrative Interviews in the Study of Wartime Experiences
- Mapping Menstrual Poverty and Health Inequities
- Flammable society in practice: between solidarity and the system.
- Research methods and techniques in refugee research

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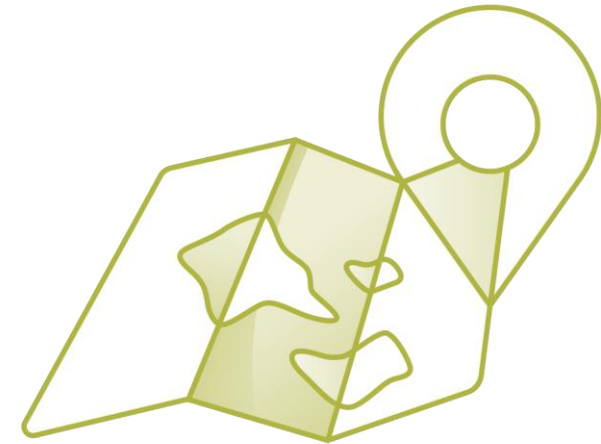
**Clicking the section number will take you to the corresponding slide.*

SUMMARY & MAIN TAKEAWAYS

Students want **practical, interactive online courses** that leverage the fact that they're not taught in class. **Students prefer the atmosphere of an in-person class- what online learning offers is flexibility and easy access to relevant knowledge.**

Students are willing to take a course more seriously and pay more attention to it, provided it **feels interesting and important**. This means that an **appropriate introduction** to the material- something intriguing, attention-grabbing but at the same time clear on the course's goals and outcomes- is the 'selling' moment of the course- it determines how much trust the student is willing to extend.

To stay engaged, students need to understand how a course is useful to them. That should be made clear to students at the earliest possible moment: what knowledge and skills they will gain from the course, and how to make use of them. To then actually achieve that, **real-life examples should be utilised to help students truly understand and immerse themselves** in the world they're learning about.

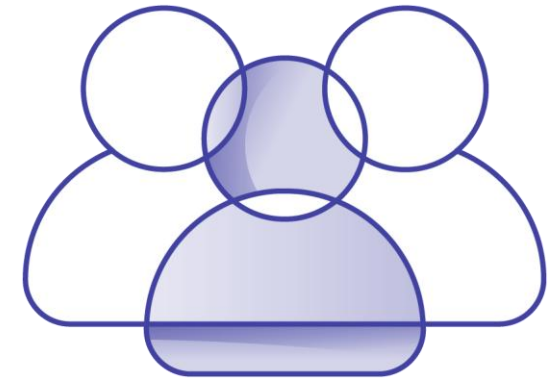


SUMMARY & MAIN TAKEAWAYS

There is also a **genuine need for practical, hands-on knowledge and experience accompanying theory**. Practical exercises and texts focused on the application of key concepts help students relate the material to themselves (*how will learning this help me in what I plan to do?*).

Students have mixed feelings about interacting with others in class forums or online discussions. Their main positive quality is **the ability to see what other students think** of the topic, although few wanted to contribute their own thoughts. Very well received, however, was the idea of **receiving feedback from the lecturer**, especially when turning in more labour-intensive assignments.

The primary reason students may be disinterested in the course is boredom. The cause of the boredom is two-fold: **visually understimulating, over-reliant on text layout and inappropriate difficulty and complexity level of the text**. The text should be broken up with interactive elements, also vital to the course's success, to think through: who the course considers its recipients, what knowledge and skills those recipients already possess and how best to reinforce and expand on those without talking down to them.



PHASE 1 FINDINGS

OFFLINE
first choice

- ✓ deliver stronger engagement and focus
- ✓ higher learning quality
- ✓ real interaction
- ✓ peer presence -> pressure to engage
- x less flexibility & time-consuming

ONLINE
second choice

- ✓ convenient for multitasking
- ✓ allows flexibility (e.g. when sick or schedules conflict)
- x no interactions with cameras usually off
- x passive & easy to burn out
- x monotonous & disengaging
- x Reduces motivation

The amount you learn as a student... is a lot lower than when you're actually physically in class.



You learn less online than in a physical classroom.

1

Online learning offers great convenience. However, students consistently associate **effective learning and engagement with in-person experiences**.

Convenience alone **should not drive design decisions** – learning quality and engagement strategies must.

2

Online learning should not mimic offline teaching. Trying to replicate lectures digitally leads to disengagement. Online environments need **new pedagogical structures: shorter segments, active elements, peer interactions** (possibly chatrooms).

3

Instructors matter more than format. The perceived “quality gap” between online and offline stems from poor facilitation, not the medium – online can work well if instructors actively use interactive tools and create presence. For this, **instructors need additional training** on using digital tools for academic teaching.



I generally like to learn through participation in class, and I feel that's very hard during online classes. Honestly, usually when we have online classes I was using the time to do some other tasks without thinking about the class. For example, folding laundry or something like that.

COURSE 1

The Quality of Life of Refugees

- ❑ sounds **too broad** & academic;
- ❑ reframe with the focus on refugee well-being and integration; key – **real-life case studies**;
- ❑ **comparisons of approaches** in different countries might work well;
- ❑ studying **paths of becoming a refugee** – good idea;
- ❑ supported suggestion: **merge** with the second course offer.

The main problem with courses 1 and 2 is they are too specific. You could make a subject about refugees, and put the quality of life and disabled refugees in it because it's too specific [for separate courses]. And also, last year most of my subjects already spoke about refugees. And I don't really need this.

COURSE 2

Challenges of the integration of refugees with disabilities

- ❑ **too niche** and should be **merged** into a broader refugee well-being course;
- ❑ focus on refugees is **not a novel prism anymore**;
- ❑ (if kept) needs a strong **human-centered narrative** and real-life cases discussion;
- ❑ include examining **access limitations and social barriers** as universal themes;
- ❑ focus on **systemic and structural levels of exclusion** (policy analysis).

The first two courses are just knowledge, theoretical knowledge. And in the third one you have a skill. So I think that a course that can teach you both knowledge and skill will always be better than the course that will only teach you theoretical knowledge.

COURSE 3

Listening to Understand: Narrative Interviews in the Study of Wartime Experiences

- ❑ strongest interest due to a more empirical approach;
- ❑ novelty and innovativeness are appreciated; good naming with a focus on skills might work with other course offers, too;
- ❑ focus on practical skill-building is desired;
- ❑ concern: the course might require prerequisite expertise and skillset (i.e. the course suits journalists but not other social sciences);
- ❑ -> mitigation strategy: highlight in course outline that methods are taught from scratch.

It feels like it's the most practical one. Yeah. It's where you learn some skills. (...) I feel like I could use this.

PHASE 2 FINDINGS

CONTENT

Staying mindful of the message. Some of the students felt that the content did not differentiate enough between what are the contrasting points of view described, and what is the expressed opinion of the university. This led to them feeling as if the university had been trying to make a point against migrants and migrant policy. **This is especially important given that many students are themselves migrants, which could make them feel personally attacked.**

Uncertainty about the recipient. According to the students, the materials seem to be aimed at people who are unfamiliar with migration at all. For them, the materials provide an exceptional theoretical basis. It is however important to consider, that many students who are themselves migrants **are already intimately familiar with the topic of migration** and parts of the course feel redundant to them. It could be helpful to tailor the materials with their first-hand knowledge in mind.

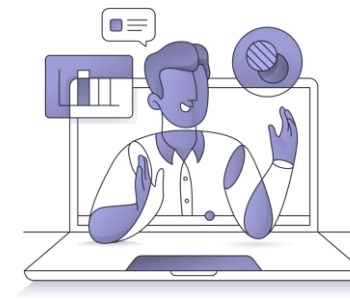


USER EXPERIENCE

Break up the text. While the language of the text is very good, its spacing could use fine-tuning. Students at times felt overwhelmed by a „wall of text” and wished for videos, photos or other stimulating elements to visually diversify what they’re seeing.

Layout of Mapping Menstrual Poverty... The course was judged as less professional and unfinished compared to the others. Students also said that it did not provide enough information to be considered a full lesson, feeling instead like a supplement to a lesson.

Unclear function of the audio clips. The audio snippets provided in the second course were unlabeled, which caused some confusion among the students. It was unclear to them whether listening to the audio would in any way improve their learning experience, so some of them simply skipped it.



COURSE 1

Mapping Menstrual Poverty and Health Inequities

Although the topic is interesting and parts of the material work, it needs expanding, fine-tuning and maybe moving to a different host site to make a better impression.

- ❑ The style of a presentation, though easy to read, comes across as less professional and complete, than some of the other materials;
- ❑ Seemingly random stock photography that does not convey the content well
- ❑ An excess of blank space on the slides brings to attention how little information there is on the page
- ❑ The data and insights from real reports and studies are very helpful and persuasive
- ❑ The Pink Box Foundation is not mentioned in the text, yet there is a question about it in the quiz section

COURSE 2

Challenges of the integration of refugees with disabilities

Overall, very solid and comprehensive. In places, the text should be re-worded and broken up with other formats.

- ❑ The course starts out with a lot of dense text, that includes a lot of numerical data and scientific terminology
- ❑ The progress bar is clear and helpful
- ❑ The wording on the first exercise should be adjusted, as to not seem like the author is suggesting migrants 'belong' in some places more than others.
- ❑ The explanation of the integration models should clearly state that the text is not the university's position.
- ❑ The excerpts from interviews are very useful and help the students visualise the issues better
- ❑ It would be helpful to break up the text with video or audio content to avoid making students rush through it.

COURSE 3

The Quality of Life of Refugees

Thorough and well-researched. The main issue is the lack of descriptions in various sections and the visual side needs cleaning up.

- ❑ The 'Starting point' section is helpful and frames the topic straight away
- ❑ The option to check additional sources is appreciated by students
- ❑ The 'Some tools' sectioned needs to be better explained, its purpose is unclear
- ❑ The visuals- charts and graphs- are very helpful, as they concisely sum up the main points of the section
- ❑ The discussion questions and class exercises are interesting and well-constructed; they should be utilised in the course
- ❑ The flashcards are a good way to break up the monotony and summarise the course
- ❑ The final, bibliography section could be more robust. The references provided are very good, there could simply be more of them.

PHASE 3 FINDINGS

CONTENT

Well prepared, thorough materials. Students value easy-to-understand, interesting texts that grab their attention right away and clearly explain the necessary concepts.

Multiple perspectives. The inclusion of more than one way of understanding a subject is very important to students and helps them gain a deeper understanding. Particularly in migrant research- including actual migrant voices is very valuable.

A cohesive whole. Topics in a course should feel like parts of a set- it's easier to form a well-rounded view if topics relate to and reference one-another.

Accounted for difficulty. When planning a course, keep in my mind what the person going through it already knows- adjust the information and level of detail with them in mind.

USER EXPERIENCE

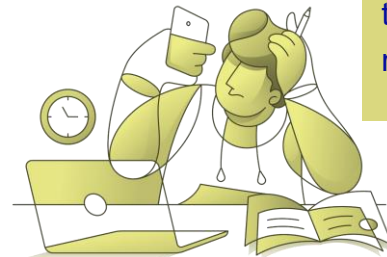
Interactive formats. Questions, puzzles, audio snippets, charts and videos. Anything to break up the montony. It helps students reinforce the information presented and keep their focus.

Real-life examples. Adding fragments from real studies and interviews helps them to understand and remember the content better.

Clean, easy to navigate web design. Using clear formatting, bullet points, visual cues in the text- all make the text easier to read and understand.

Engaging formats. Assignments, like presentations or essays are a good way to 'force' students to learn- as long as they're rewarded for it with extra points.

An option to look further in. Some students want more than they're getting- consider adding links to further research and resources for them.



CONTENT

Information without purpose. Students want to know *why* they're supposed to learn something. Presenting information and expecting them to memorize it without showing them how it's useful is a good way to lose their trust and interest.

Boring! Students lose interest quickly and once they do- they're unlikely to come back to something. It's good to 'hook them' quickly with something concise and introduce more difficult details later.

Only theory, no practice. Similarly to showing the purpose of learning information- allowing students to practice what they're learning- in short-form assignments or design challenges- can make them more confident of their new-found knowledge.

Obligatory participation. Being forced to participate in group assignments or present their work to a group full of strangers can be stressful and put students off the course.

USER EXPERIENCE

All text, no play. Getting through a 'wall of text' can be tiring and disinteresting if it's not broken up with other formats.

Pointless exercises. Adding quizzes and games just for them to exist is not enough to engage and interest students. They need to be thought out and strengthen their understanding- otherwise students feel that they're wasting their time.

Unclear formatting. Make it obvious when sections start and end. Having no idea how far through the course one is, is discouraging.



COURSE 1

Flammable society in practice: between solidarity and the system.

An intriguing text portion with various interactive elements. Different, some very interesting and engaging, some- overkill.

- The text is written in a persuasive and intriguing style.
- The source of the data cited is not clear- worth adding for interested students.
- The text on its own is a little overwhelming- could be broken up with photos or illustrations of data.
- The quiz' difficulty level is more appropriate- but it's important to check whether it's been correctly input into the system.
- The glossary is a very welcome addition- very useful for students.
- An obligatory forum is off-putting to students but an opportunity to share their thoughts on the course in a voluntary space is received more warmly.
- The essay is well-received as long as it's worth extra points and is not overly long.

COURSE 2

Research methods and techniques in refugee research.

Well-prepared, comprehensive and easy to understand. Great for beginners but could be made more complex and detailed for students already familiar with basic concepts.

- Simple, understandable language.
- The Articulate format is very clear and non-disruptive- it takes students through the entire course without interruption and with minimal friction.
- Thoroughly explained historical and societal context.
- The methodological aspects of the course were well-prepared and useful for people totally unfamiliar with social sciences' methodology, but basic for those more informed.
- Additional information could be made available via links to further research/videos.
- 'Check your knowledge' questions were very easy and did not motivate students to carefully read the text.
- Flashcards were a fun and useful tool for summarising information

RECOMMENDATIONS

Clarity about the recipient and goals. The recipient, purpose and utilisation of the course should be decided during the early stages of the design process. This helps avoid making the materials too basic or too difficult, and makes the whole course easier to map out.

Vigilance when it comes to the messaging. Keep in mind that, even if it is unintended, students may take factual information about migrant research personally and react negatively, as if the course author were trying to speak against migrants. Adding a relevant disclaimer could minimise this risk.

Attention-grabbing, but clear, language. Students value easy-to-understand texts that capture their focus right away and clearly explain the necessary concepts. This can be achieved both through more dramatised narrative descriptions and the use of bullet points and visual aids.

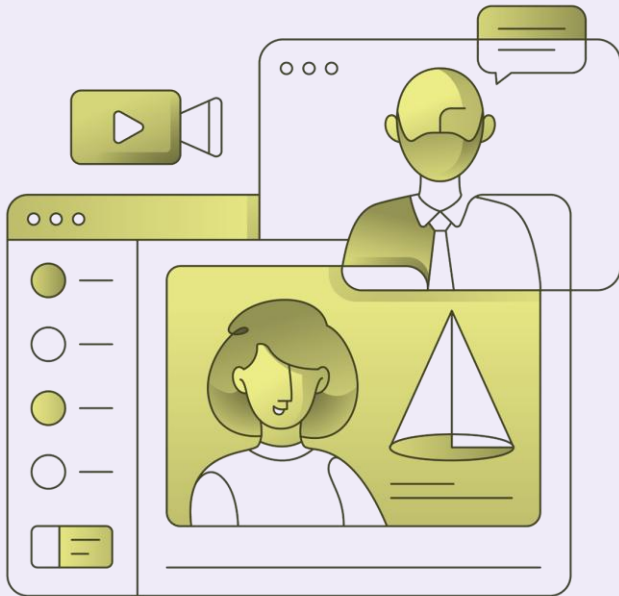
Practice over theory. Students want to know *why* they're supposed to learn something. Presenting information and expecting them to memorise it without showing them how it's useful is a good way to lose their trust and interest. Allowing students to practice what they're learning- in short-form assignments or design challenges- can make them more confident in their newfound knowledge.

Multiple perspectives. Including multiple ways of understanding a subject is very important to students and helps them gain a deeper understanding. Particularly in migrant research, including the voices of actual migrants, is very valuable.

A cohesive whole. Topics in a course should feel like parts of a set- it's easier to form a well-rounded view if topics relate to and reference one another.

Accounted for the difficulty. When planning a course, keep in mind what the person going through it already knows- adjust the information and level of detail with them in mind.





Interactive formats. Questions, puzzles, audio snippets, flashcards, charts and videos. It helps students reinforce the information presented and maintain focus, thereby increasing their engagement.

Anchoring theory in real research. Adding fragments from real studies and interviews helps to visually differentiate parts of the course. It also allows students to anchor the information learned to real-life scenarios and real people- thus engaging them more.

Flow of the module. Being led through the whole module without the need to click in and out of elements makes the experience easier and more seamless for students. The Articulate format is a very good example of this.

Clean, easy-to-navigate web design. Using clear formatting, bullet points, summaries and visual cues make the text easier to read and understand.

Allowing for time management. Having no idea how far through the course one is is discouraging. Make it obvious when sections start and end. A good idea is also to include a progress bar to cue the student in on their progress.

Engaging formats. Assignments, like presentations or essays, are a good way to 'force' students to learn- as long as they're considered extra credit.

An option to look further in. Some students want more than they're getting- consider adding links to further research and resources for them.

