

Teaching Key Elements of Decision Making Online for Homeland Security and Emergency Management

ABSTRACT

In order to design online teaching and learning activities that promote effective decision-making skills under conditions of uncertainty, we adopt key findings from the fields of cognitive psychology and public management and employ strategies from the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. The learning activities outlined in this article – readings, films, writing and research assignments, and interactive exercises – promote the ability to detect, recognize, and interpret risk while developing collaborative strategies for action to reduce that risk. Students develop those skills in three stages – first, developing individual skills, second integrating those skills, and finally by demonstrating all skills in the absence of an instructor’s guidance. We do not suggest that these learning activities replicate the precise conditions of stress and uncertainty experienced in the field. Rather, they lay a foundation for education and training that is rooted in both theory and practice, contributing a proof of concept for homeland security and emergency management curricula. We analyze two semesters of qualitative student evaluations and report that positive student response suggests the potential effectiveness of our strategy.

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