**July 2021**

*Please share with your faculty:*

**The importance of considering Maslow's hierarchy of needs when teaching and assessing students online**

Students’ motivation and academic achievement in online courses will suffer unless educators consider the importance of students’ physiological and psychological well-being when designing online courses. Abraham [Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory (1943)](https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html) is a motivational theory in psychology that depicts the importance of satisfying one’s basic physiological and psychological needs before being motivated to accomplish higher-order self-fulfillment needs. Physiological and psychological needs are referred to as deficiency needs, and once satisfied, the need to continue satisfying such needs diminishes. This in turn allows for a person to focus on achieving higher-order growth needs, such as the desire to continuously learn and grow as an individual (McCloud, 2020).

While it is important to consider Masolow’s theory in any educational context, it is especially important to keep his theory in mind when designing and implementing online lessons and assessments. Educators have specific learning objectives that they want students in their classes to accomplish at the end of a learning unit. Students, however, will not be motivated to achieve these learning objectives if their most basic physiological and psychological needs are not met first.

When learning online, students experience many physical challenges. For example, online learning requires long hours in front of a screen, which can lead to physical and mental fatigue. In addition, students may experience physical challenges of not being able to find a quiet place to work and concentrate, Internet connectivity issues, or having to balance other family needs with their schoolwork. In terms of psychological needs, online learning is usually a highly autonomous activity, which for some can cause feelings of loneliness, disconnectedness, and even lead to feelings of anxiety and depression.

When designing online courses, it is therefore important to consider the physical and psychological well-being of your students. For example, educators should consider the amount of time they are requiring students to spend listening to lectures on zoom vs. having more hands-on interactive activities. They should also periodically check in with their students to see how their students are feeling and doing in their coursework, and receptively listen to challenges they may be experiencing. They should also take into account physical and emotional factors that may be affecting performance on online assessments, and make sure that they are providing multiple and varied opportunities to demonstrate learning. In sum, so much of students’ success in a course depends on their motivation to achieve, and such motivation can be greatly impaired if their physical and psychological needs are not also considered.

Source: McCould (2020). Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. *Simply Psychology.* Retrieved May 28, 2017 from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>.

**Check out!** Institute of Education Sciences. *Supporting young children’s learning and well-being at home: A COVID-19 resource for teachers, parents, and caregivers*. Retrieved May 27, 2021 at [*https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/infographics/pdf/REL\_SW\_Supporting\_young\_childrens\_learning\_and\_wellbeing\_at\_home.pdf*](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/infographics/pdf/REL_SW_Supporting_young_childrens_learning_and_wellbeing_at_home.pdf)

**Please share examples** of how you are designing online courses with consideration to students learning and motivation needs, and I will feature those examples on YU’s Learning Assessment Website.

**Reminder:** If you have not already submitted you’re your Spring 2021 assessment report which was due June 1, please do so ASAP.