Redesigning SPA 201 for Student Success

Course Overview

SPA 201
Intermediate Spanish III
Third-semester Spanish, taught online and asynchronously. Three one-on-one Zoom conversations give students opportunities to practice speaking and reflect on their progress.
Students work toward Intermediate Low proficiency goals (ACTFL) across all four language skills, sharing their ideas in Spanish and exploring cultural perspectives.

Textbook: Experiencias Intermediate Spanish, VHL (Vista Higher Learning), Chapters 2–5
Topics covered: Professional life, wellness, sustainability, and artistic expression

Design goals

After reviewing SPA 201 using the UKO Course Quality Rubric, I identified four student-centered questions to guide the redesign:

01 What am I working toward?
Explicit module objectives show what students should be able to do.

02 Why am I doing this?
Visible alignment connects practice with communication and assessment.

03 Where can I get help?
Academic and technical support appear where students can find them.

04 What do I do next?
Readable pages and consistent steps make the sequence easier to follow.

Design priorities: UKO Course Quality Rubric standards 2.2, 2.4, 7.3, and 8.2.

Highlights of course design activities

My aim is to make the steps clear so students can focus on using Spanish. As the discussion guide reminds them: “The goal is not perfection.”

01 Learn
Overviews, readings, and instructional media

02 Practice
VHL tutorials and guided activities

03 Communicate
Video discussions and conversations

04 Demonstrate
Projects, synthesis, and reflections

An improved Start Here module and a consistent routine

I expanded the Start Here module with a readiness checklist, roadmap, discussion guidance, and an orientation check. Each chapter follows a consistent sequence: overview, materials, activities, and wrap-up. The UK Online course template provided a valuable foundation for this structure.

More guidance throughout the course: Selected examples

COURSE ELEMENT	EARLIER DESIGN	REDESIGNED GUIDANCE
Chapter 2 written project	Task, length, language requirements, and rubric reference	Adds purpose and audience, a planning and revision process, success criteria, and a submission checklist.
Video discussion rubric	Two broad criteria: Effort and Completion	Five criteria distinguish the initial post, response to the prompt, Spanish communication, peer responses, and interaction quality.

Helping students understand the course structure

I added "Course at a Glance" and "Weekly Learning Pattern" tables to explain how the work fits together. The syllabus also clarifies when to expect feedback, how to find support, and what the late work policies are.

Strategies, tools, and resources used

UKO rubric and instructional design

I used the UKO Course Quality Rubric to identify areas where students needed clearer guidance, with ongoing support from Tia Williams, my UK Online instructional designer.

Canvas and DesignPLUS

DesignPLUS was instrumental in creating consistent Canvas page layouts and checklists. More detailed rubrics help students understand expectations and what successful work involves.

Canvas, VHL, and Zoom

Each tool has a clear role: Canvas for guidance and interaction, VHL for practice, and Zoom for individual conversations.

Early feedback and reflections

Informal Student Feedback

During our individual conversations, students in SPA 201 have told me that they appreciate the clarity of the instructions and the steps they need to follow. I have also noticed signs of increased student engagement.

Lessons learned

One thing I have learned is that what seems clear to me as an instructor may not always be clear to students. Their questions and feedback help me see the course from a different perspective.

For future iterations I plan to keep listening to students and making adjustments as the course progresses.

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