

Expectations Regarding the use of Online Technology KVCC Instructional Technology Committee

Purpose

The purpose and spirit of this document is to provide current and future faculty with guidelines to inform their decisions regarding the use of online technologies in the classroom.

These guidelines are based upon the body of research germane to online instructional design, pedagogy, and best practice. As such they are subject to modification concurrent with the development of new technologies and research data.

Finally, these guidelines are considered “voluntary” to the point that participating faculty deem them worthy of serious consideration and self-discipline despite being apart and separate from contractual obligations. To commit to these guidelines is to subject yourself to peer and administrative supervision in light of compliance to these guidelines. Peer and administrative supervisors understand the limits inherent in this type of agreement and will aspire to remain true to its collaborative and collegial intent.

Scope

This document attempts to provide guidance to instructors and instructional design personnel regarding the minimal expectations and best practices for the use of specific technologies, online tools, and software. This document also attempts to provide guidance as to the minimal expectations and best practices regarding the teaching and social interactive behavior of instructors in the online environment.

To this end the various “types” of courses that utilize online technologies are delineated in order to provide unique expectations relevant to those types of classes. These “types” of classes are defined as follows:

- Web Enhanced
 - These classes utilize online technologies to enhance the face-to-face classroom experience. They utilize the standard Learning Management System (LMS, current Blackboard) for the delivery of these online enhancements. Otherwise the class meets on a regular face-to-face schedule
- Hybrid
 - These classes have a face-to-face schedule that is “significantly” reduced from a regular face-to-face class and present a “significantly” large amount of class material for independent use online.

- All course which meet online but have face-to-face lab class meetings would be considered hybrid
- Online
 - Strictly speaking, online courses entail absolutely no required face-to-face contact between the students and the instructor. This does not preclude the schedule of optional meetings, orientations, and/or synchronous video conferencing.
 - The spirit of the truly online class is that anyone in the world would be able to “attend” the class

Definitions

Minimal Requirements

The guidelines presented as “minimal requirements” are those aspects of the class that are expected to be a part of the class

Best Practice

The guidelines presented as “best practice” represent empirically supported practices in the use of online technologies and are highly suggested attributes to the respective classes. These do require additional preparation and technical skill on the part of the instructor but they also represent the best methods for encouraging student engagement and retention

Web Enhanced Classes

Minimal Expectations

- Basic Expectations
 - Utilization of the accepted college LMS system (Blackboard) as the primary system of content and interaction tool delivery
 - Course syllabus must outline the expectations for the use of the online technologies
 - Class time should be committed for the explanation of the use of these technologies in regard to the structure of the class
- LMS Content Expectations
 - Online Course Syllabus tool (additional copies of the Syllabus can be placed elsewhere within the online environment)
 - Email
 - Links to Tutorial Documents explaining the use of any and all LMS tools that will be required in the class
 - Explanations of any software, downloads, plug-ins or other materials related to the course are provided
 - “Start Here” document
 - Each class should prominently display the “Start Here” document on the main page of the course.
 - The content of the Start Here document should include, but is not limited, to the following information:
 - Welcome message from the Instructor
 - Start and End dates of the course
 - Description of the Use of LMS tools to complete course work
 - Online Etiquette expectations
 - Expectations for online email, assignment, and quiz turn around times

Best Practice

Best practice within a web-enhanced class depends on the degree to which the online tools will be utilized to enhance the live classroom experience. They are inclusive of structures up to and including those expected in fully online classes!

Here are some examples:

- Posting lectures and/or slideshows/audio lectures
- Posting handouts
- Conducting online tests and assessments
- Utilization of discussion boards for additional out-of-class discussions
- Web links to important websites and documents

Hybrid Classes

Minimal Expectations

- Basic Expectations
 - All the expectations required of Web Enhanced Classes
- LMS Content Expectations
 - All the LMS expectations required of Web Enhanced Classes
 - Explicit instructions on aspects of the course that will be delivered online and those aspects delivered in the face-to-face classroom
 - Explicit outline of the Course Schedule (this can be accomplished with either the Calendar tool or by publishing a “Course Calendar” document). This document should contain the following:
 - Course content outline with delineations between face-to-face and online content
 - Due dates of all assignments (both face-to-face and online)
 - Content folders or pages organized and labeled clearly related to the course content
 - Utilization of the online grade book to provide feedback to students on a timely basis
 - Discussion boards should be posted regarding the following topics and should remain open for the duration of the semester:
 - Class Questions-Regarding student questions about class content, expectations, assignments, due dates, etc.
 - Technical Questions-Regarding student questions about access to class materials and the use of LMS tools...although referral to the Help Desk is always an option, many times students help each other in these tasks
 - Student Lounge-this board provides students with a place for social conversation and idea exchange outside the graded discussions (side conversations can often be sidelined to this discussion board so that the graded discussions can remain focused)
- Communication Expectations
 - Discussion postings and emails related to ONLINE assignments and expectations should be addressed within 48 hours
 - Emails regarding face-to-face class information can be deferred until class time

Best Practice

- LMS Content Expectations
 - Clear organization of class content by subject matter, module, unit, or weeks organized on the main page of the course

- Content organizer pages contain ALL material relevant to the specific content being covered. These can include:
 - Notes and presentations
 - Resources (links, documents, etc.)
 - Descriptions of class activities such as quizzes, discussions, and papers
 - Grading rubrics for all graded assignments
- Communication Expectations
 - Restriction of all email communication regarding the class to the email client within the LMS
 - All email and discussions are addressed within 48 hours
 - All assignments, quizzes, and tests are designed to be graded and returned to the student within 7 days
 - Grade book reflects “up to date” feedback on how the student is doing in the class (eliminating the “How am I doing so far?” question).
 - When discussions are used, the instructor is an active participant in the discussion

Online Classes

Due to the nature of purely online classes, it is essential that practices be put in place to encourage social interaction between students and between students and instructors. These practices not only replace the “missing” classroom experience but also often surpass the face-to-face experience by presenting an opportunity for ongoing, rich dialogue and the ability for ALL students to participate.

Minimal Expectations

- Basic Expectations
 - All the expectations required of Web Enhanced Classes
 - All the expectations required of Hybrid Classes
- LMS Content Expectations
 - All the LMS expectations required of Web Enhanced Classes
 - All the LMS expectations required of Hybrid Classes
 - Clear organization of class content by subject matter, module, unit, or weeks...organized on the main page of the course
 - Content organizer pages contain ALL material relevant to the specific content being covered. These can include:
 - Notes and presentations (required...cannot simply be assigned reading)
 - Resources (links, documents, etc.)
 - Descriptions of class activities such as quizzes, discussions, and papers
 - Grading rubrics for all graded assignments
- Communication Expectations
 - Restriction of all email communication regarding the class to the email client within the LMS
 - All email and discussions are addressed within 48 hours
 - All assignments, quizzes, and tests are designed to be graded and returned to the student within 7 days
 - Grade book reflects “up to date” feedback on how the student is doing in the class (eliminating the “How am I doing so far?” question).
 - Online asynchronous discussions must be a part of at least 80% of the total content of the course.
 - Within the discussions, the instructor is an active participant
 - Instructors sign into the course a minimum of three times per week

Best Practice

- Online Pedagogy
 - Lesson Plans are developed the delineate the following elements for each unit of instruction:
 - Outline of measureable learning outcomes

- Presentation of relevant content that takes into consideration, if applicable, previously learned material
 - Outline of any and all forms of assessment with a clear link to each and every identified learning outcome
 - Clear delineation of how each assessment will be graded
 - Use of discussion boards is extensive and a major component of class participation
 - Questions and discussions are designed to provide for higher order thinking rather than just rote reporting. (i.e. discussions should be about topics that are worthy of DISCUSSION rather than simply having students report out the same information)
 - Participation requirements are clearly outlined and graded accordingly. This usually entails requiring students to both post original thoughts to the board and reply to other students with a “substantive post”.
 - Policies regarding side conversations and statements such as “I agree” or “great job on this post” are addressed in course policies
 - All assessments, assignments, and testing/quizzing are designed for students to complete independently and without supervision.
 - Weekly Structure
 - It is advisable to have content and expectations be organized in “weeks” such that each week there are activities that students must complete
 - Attendance grades are reflected as a record of participation in these weekly activities
- Communication Expectations
 - Instructors log in every day to clear email and discussions
 - Instructors provide detailed feedback regarding student performance through LMS features (such as the comments box when grading a quiz) or through direct one-to-one email
 - Instructors provide open “office hours” when they are going to be online and can participate in a synchronous conversation with students (the chat room tool is a good one for this)
 - Instructors are open to online “appointments” in the chat room