

Proposed Designations for Distance Education Courses

To reduce student confusion and tailor minimum requirements for online courses, the following changes to course designation are proposed:

- Hybrid (course designation HY rather than OL)
They HY designation will be used for an “online” course that requires any face to face meetings. Instruction is less than 100% online.
- Online (Course designation OL)
The OL designation will indicate an online course taught without any face to face requirements. Instruction is 100% online.

Proposed Minimum Requirements for Online Courses (OL Only)

The spirit of these proposed policies and procedures is to ensure that online courses are as rigorous and as similar in format as possible to any corresponding traditional course. The Goal is to limit attrition and improve success rates by following these proposed guidelines and procedures. As long as they follow the approved curriculum, Academic Affairs is not interested in dictating course content or imposing a standardized course template. **These guidelines do NOT apply to hybrid courses.**

A. Course Parity

Any online course will follow the approved syllabus and be comparable to any traditional courses in:

Prerequisites	Textbook Selection
Assignments	Assessments
Lecture/Instructional Delivery	Grading Scheme
Learning Objectives	Course Topics

B. Course Design and Instructional Process

1. “No-Show” Drops

As with traditional courses, faculty are required to drop students who never attend as early as possible. “No show” students need to be dropped prior to the end of the “add/drop period.”

2. Clear Communication of Course Requirements/Procedures

Syllabi should be available to students under the Syllabus function or prominently displayed on the home page of the course. Online faculty are asked to explicitly outline the expected requirements and procedures for each online course. This should include any assignments,

assessments, readings, discussion postings and/or other course requirements. Additionally, faculty are encouraged to ask students to verify that they have read and understand the syllabus requirements. One possible mechanism is via the use of an online quiz.

3. Attendance

Students are considered “in attendance” if they have accessed Blackboard at any point during a particular week. Faculty are asked to record absences each week in Jenzibar. More stringent attendance requirements can be imposed by faculty; yet, these need to be clearly stated in the syllabus.

4. Email

As a general rule, online instructors are encouraged to ask students to communicate with them via the Blackboard-based email system. This will provide documentation in case of student complaints or problems. Faculty are asked to return student emails within 48 hours of the date and time the email was received (weekends excluded).

5. Faculty- Student/Student-Student Interaction

To facilitate class interaction, online faculty are asked to use the Discussion Board function or some other direct communication process within Blackboard. Minimum requirements include clear evidence that students regularly interact with each other and faculty. In courses where student to student contact is not typical, a general discussion board that offers students a place to ask each other assistance with assignments, study tips, etc. is acceptable.

6. Assignment Grading and Feedback

Online instructors should clearly state the length of time students can expect to wait for returned assignments (in the syllabus, emails, announcements, assignment posting or some other manner). It is expected that students will receive feedback on the quality of their work within that time frame. In most cases, assignments should be graded within two weeks from the due date. If the level of success on the following assignment is impacted by feedback on the previous work, feedback should be provided in such a manner as to allow the student the ability to incorporate such in the next assignment. Online faculty will take this into account when establishing assignment due dates.

7. Academic Integrity

We are required by NEASC to put in place some form of student verification system by our next accreditation. While we are not ready to implement any such system at this point, we require that online faculty consider how to best verify that assessments/assignments are indeed the work of the registered student. This may include on-campus testing or semester culminating projects which may be turned in by the student in person. As there is no “fool proof” way in

which to stop academic fraud/cheating, it is expected that faculty will put thought into this issue and take all possible precautions.

8. Grade Book

So students have immediate access to progress in the course, online faculty are asked to keep all grades within the grade book function in Blackboard. If another online system is available to all students in a particular course, this may be used in lieu of Blackboard.

9. Last Day to Drop and End of Semester Grades

Please clearly state the last day to drop on your syllabus and/or calendar function within Blackboard. As with traditional courses, online instructors are asked to submit final grades within the timeframe requested by the Registrar. Faculty are encouraged to do so via the online portal in Jenzibar.

C. Online Student Screening

It has been suggested that we develop some screening requirements for students who take online courses. Current suggestions are:

1. Successful completion of an online survey that assesses characteristics of successful online students (see handout for one suggestion)
2. Strongly suggest that any students who are new to online learning take one of the informational seminars offered by IT or Academic Affairs.

D. Online faculty requirements?

It has been suggested that we develop some requirements for faculty who teach online (for anyone teaching online AFTER the new policies and procedures are approved). Existing faculty will be "grandfathered" in.

1. Completion of basic online/face to face training in online course development within Blackboard. (Waived if they have taught online at another institution.)
2. All faculty who wish to utilize any new software online (i.e. lecture delivery) are asked to attend a professional development training course (online or face to face). If they have demonstrated ability to utilize Blackboard effectively, this will be waived.