Standards and Practices

For e-Learning Faculty

5ᵗʰ Edition November 2012

e-Learning Standards and Practices
for e-Learning Faculty

Standards that characterize effective teaching and learning are present in all course formats and delivery methods—on-campus or online. In planning for and delivering e-Learning instruction, e-Learning instructors should strive to maintain the same standards of performance as in traditional classes,

COURSES ARE STUDENT FOCUSED

e-Learning experiences will be designed and implemented with attention focused on student needs and expectations. e-Learning iterations of courses should take into consideration the asynchronous nature of online learning and use this to the benefit of their students.

COMMUNICATION IS EFFECTIVE, REGULAR, AND RELIABLE

In on-campus classes, faculty members interact with students at least once a week for several hours. This provides regular and effective communication between faculty and students. Due to the asynchronous nature of e-Learning, faculty members will need to maintain an equivalent standard of communication using the wide variety of tools available.

FACULTY ARE KNOWLEDGEABLE AND SKILLED IN E-LEARNING METHODS AND PRACTICES

All faculty members keep abreast of the changes in their areas of professional expertise and pedagogy, and e-Learning Instructors must develop and maintain skills that are particular to the ever-changing world of e-Learning. As such, they are expected to utilize the opportunities provided by the college to become knowledgeable regarding e-Learning delivery of instruction and will incorporate quality techniques associated with e-Learning into their teaching.

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING IS APPROPRIATE AND EFFECTIVE

Just as in traditional classroom sections, e-Learning faculty members will identify specific measurable learning objectives, communicate them to their students, carefully assess those objectives and, in response to that assessment, make appropriate changes to improve student learning

I. e-Learning at MCC

e-Learning at MCC is part of the shared governance structure of the college. The Distance Learning Advisory Subcommittee (DLAS) is a faculty-majority group which provides oversight of the "e-Learning" aspects of e-Learning courses, including certification and re-certification of instructors to teach e-Learning courses, approval and recommendation to CPSC of courses in e-Learning format, and formulation of e-Learning policy. Its authority is derived from its position as a subcommittee of the College Professional Studies Committee (CPSC), the main academic governing body of the College to which DLAS reports.

Each division is represented at DLAS by a faculty member elected by their colleagues. Instructors should direct questions and concerns about e-Learning policies and decisions to their representative, who will bring the matter to the DLAS committee at its monthly meeting. DLAS can offer valuable feedback on matters of delivery methods, modes, usability issues, and other aspects of online education, so Deans are welcome to attend meetings and ask questions of the committee members about these aspects. Committee members may not, however, engage in discussions related to faculty evaluation.

The e-Learning Office serves as a point-of-contact for e-Learning student questions and concerns about e-Learning at MCC. The office also provides support for faculty in developing the technical side of their e-Learning courses, providing professional development opportunities, and publicizing e-Learning courses. Instructors with any questions about e-Learning at Mott should contact the Manager of e-Learning for assistance.

Types of e-Learning course

There are three distinct varieties of e-Learning courses at MCC. The key difference lies in the proportion of student time spent on-campus as opposed to online.

1. **WWW**. The course is delivered completely online: every aspect of the course (startup materials, syllabus, learning materials, assessments, examinations, etc.) must be delivered and/or conducted online. No course component (including students' submission of required work) will require the students' physical presence on campus.

2. **WCA**. Course material is delivered online. In addition, the course includes required on-campus activities (e.g. exams, presentations, picking up specialized course material) that are minimal (less than the 25% threshold for a HYB course). Dates and times of required student activities must be published in the syllabus at the beginning of the semester. Exams that require on-campus attendance must be taken in the Testing Center and must be administered during a window of at least one week to accommodate students' schedules.

3. **HYB.** A hybrid course is a blend of online and face-to-face instructor-led and student-centered activities that fulfill course objectives by combining e-Learning and face-to-face methods and techniques. A minimum of 25% (maximum of 75%) of the learning activities must take place in a face-to-face (on-campus) setting. Dates and times of face-to-face activities must be published at the time the course schedule is built.

Appropriate Practices Implementing the Standards

Practices to implement the Standards for e-Learning faculty are presented in a chronological format – reflecting the order in time that a faculty member needs to address them.

II.   PREPARATION FOR e-Learning

A.   Training and Certification of e-Learning Faculty

The Faculty CBA authorizes DLAS to develop a process of certification (Article XIX.D.2) to confirm that e-Learning faculty members are aware of and comply with the Standards and Practices guidelines.
Required Initial Training - New e-Learning faculty training requires:

- Successful completion of an e-Learning approved Online Teaching Certification course, such as that offered by ETOM.
- Successful completion of an e-Learning approved Instructional Design Software training course, such as WIDS.
- Applicants will be asked to provide documentation of training and complete DLAS forms.

INSTRUCTORS MUST HAVE COMPLETED REQUIRED E-LEARNING CERTIFICATION TRAINING <u>BEFORE</u> SUBMITTING AN E-LEARNING COURSE FOR APPROVAL.

e-Learning Re-certification

- DLAS conducts an annual review of Faculty Certification to teach e-Learning courses.
- DLAS reviews e-Learning faculty individually every two years. The e-Learning office will manage re-certification records and documentation.
- Every two years e-Learning faculty must participate in a minimum of six hours of approved professional development relating to e-Learning, which may include workshops and training at MCC or at discipline-specific professional conferences with sessions related to e-Learning. Faculty will provide documentation of the participation.
- Demonstrated compliance with the e-Learning Standard and Practices.

- Required professional development must be completed prior to the re-certification deadline established by the Manager of e-Learning.
- Faculty who fail to complete re-certification requirements by the deadline may reapply for certification during the next scheduled re-certification review. At that time an instructor must show completion of the required professional development. Contact the Manager of e-Learning to find out the next re-certification deadline.
- Annually, DLAS forwards a list of faculty who fail to complete re-certification to Division Deans for their consideration when scheduling classes. Uncertified faculty will not be allowed to teach online courses.

B.   Procedure for developing new e-Learning Courses

IMPORTANT REMINDER: FACULTY MUST HAVE COMPLETED REQUIRED E-LEARNING CERTIFICATION TRAINING BEFORE SUBMITTING AN E-LEARNING COURSE FOR APPROVAL. COURSES BEING BROUGHT TO DLAS FOR APPROVAL IN AN E-LEARNING FORMAT (WWW, WCA, HYB) MUST ALREADY HAVE BEEN APPROVED AS A COLLEGE COURSE BY CPSC PRIOR TO PRESENTATION AT DLAS.

Interest - Interest in creating an e-Learning version of a course may come from several sources. If the Manager of e-Learning sees a need for an e-Learning course, the Manager will work with the division Dean to survey faculty interest. If a faculty member is interested in developing or teaching an e-Learning course, s/he should discuss that interest with the Manager of e-Learning and the Dean of the relevant division. The faculty member will obtain a copy of Standards and Practices for e-Learning faculty, read it, and confirm his or her understanding of the requirements for e-Learning instruction, as well as the required training to teach e-Learning courses at MCC.

Development - A faculty member developing a new e-Learning course, or desiring to teach an existing one, must be qualified to teach that course according to divisional requirements. If it does not already exist, the faculty member must develop a syllabus and the required summary of course outcomes and objectives document (i.e. WIDS). Faculty must adhere to the "Syllabus Standards for e-Learning Courses" section (III, A.) of the e-Learning Standards and Practices when preparing the course for approval. Courses being adapted to the e-Learning mode of instruction must utilize the same course outlines, criteria and standards as approved by CPSC.

The faculty member will then complete the standard DLAS form to propose a new e-Learning course and obtain the required approvals from their division Dean. These forms and the required course outcomes and objectives documents must be forwarded to the Manager of e-Learning at least one week prior to the DLAS meeting at which the instructor wishes to propose the course. DLAS expects the instructor to be present to discuss the course or, if necessary, to send a representative who is able to discuss the course and answer the committee's questions.

Upon approval, the e-Learning office will communicate with the faculty member regarding any required forms per CBA, Article XIX.

C. Procedure for Approval to teach existing e-Learning Courses

A faculty member wishing to teach an existing e-Learning course for the first time must contact the Manager of e-Learning to confirm that a summary of course outcomes and objectives (i.e. WIDS) exists for the course. The approved course objectives and CPSC approved course outcomes and standards must be the basis for any e-Learning version of the course, regardless of instructor. If the summary of course outcomes and objectives does not exist, the faculty member must complete the procedures outline in section B above for new e-Learning course development.

The Faculty member must develop his/her syllabus for the course and must forward the required DLAS forms to the Manager of e-Learning at least one week prior to the DLAS meeting at which the faculty member wishes to be approved to teach the existing course. DLAS expects the faculty member to be present to discuss the course or, if necessary, to send a representative who is able to discuss the course and answer the committee's questions. The syllabus must adhere to the "Syllabus Standards for e-Learning Courses" section of the e-Learning Standards and Practices.

D. **Assignment of Faculty to e-Learning Courses**

Assignment to e-Learning sections must be made in time for the instructor's name to be printed in the Class Schedule Booklet. Failure to accept e-Learning assignments when offered may result in the course being assigned to another qualified faculty member, in accordance with Article XIX of the Faculty CBA.

For the purposes of course scheduling by instructors certified to teach online, e-Learning courses approved by the Dean to be offered are 'time and place' designations, equivalent to a satellite campus course on a specific day and time. Part-time certified e-Learning course instructors may only be bumped from a class by full-time or adjunct instructors certified to teach that class in order to make regular course load, per the CBA.

III. FACULTY RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Syllabus Standards for e-Learning Courses

Each faculty member must create a course syllabus that clearly explains the requirements and accurately describes the features of the course.

Because of the differences between teaching in the e-Learning environment and teaching in a traditional classroom, the syllabus for an e-Learning section of a course should include the following elements:

- ☐ Course Title
- ☐ Course Prefix and Number
- ☐ Semester and Year of offering
- ☐ Credits/Contact Hours
- ☐ Course Pre-Requisites
- ☐ Instructor Contact Information

    - o Instructor Name
    - o E-mail Address
    - o Office Location
    - o Office Phone Number
    - o Office Hours
        - ▪ Any variation to established office hours should be communicated to students and division well in advance.
    - o Communication Policy: What is the instructor's preferred method of contact (email, phone, Skype, etc.)? What are the best times to contact the instructor? How quickly should a student expect a response? How will information be communicated to the class? How often should students check their email (is use of MCC's email system required?) or Blackboard for information?

- - - Faculty members are expected to maintain regular contact with students via e-mail, telephone, online announcements, etc. Every effort should be made to respond to student communications within 72 hours.
  - o Other recommended contacts include:
    - - Division office phone number
    - - E-Learning office phone number
    - - 2-HELP technical support information
    - - Testing Center

- ☐ CPSC Approved Course Description and Objectives
- ☐ Textbook information (including ISBN) and other required materials for the course
- ☐ Attendance Policy (including TItle IV funding information, see below)

  - o **For HYB courses, explain attendance policies for both on-campus and online course components.**
  - o Define "attendance" for the online course. Does it mean just logging in once per week or do students need to complete specific assignments?
  - o Title IV Funding eligibility: Guidelines require the college to keep attendance record in order for students to maintain eligibility for Title IV funds. Excessive absences may affect that eligibility.
- Grading Policy
  - o Explain the grading scale
  - o Explain how the students' work will be graded and what weight/percentage/points each assessment carries with regard to the final grade.
    - - Describe assignments, including what students are required to do, where to find detailed assignment guidelines, instructions, rubrics, due dates, required methods of submission, etc. in the online course. Note: US mail is not an approved required submission method. Students cannot be required to submit materials via mail.
    - - **For WCA & HYB methods, specify which activities are online and which require on-campus attendance.**
    - - Examination policies
      - • How long are examinations available for students to complete?
      - • Where are exams taken?
      - • What materials must students provide?
      - • What materials are students allowed to use on exams?
      - • If review sessions/materials are offered for the students, provide details.
  - o Explain the makeup/late policies with regard to specific assessment activities.
  - o Extra Credit policy
- Academic Integrity Policy
  - o Carefully and specifically define what actions violate the Academic Integrity policy for the course.
  - o Explain penalties for violations.
- Other Policies
  - o Explain the policy on the NS grade (How is "nonsufficient contact" defined for this class?)
  - o Explain the Incomplete policy (see the MCC Registrar's policy on incompletes for guidance).
  - o Provide withdrawal deadlines and direct student to Registrar's office for information on college withdrawal policies and procedures.
  - o Include the ADA Statement.

- Class Schedule that provides:
  - Topics to be covered and when
  - Due dates for assessments and exams
  - **For WCA & HYB, the syllabus must include dates, times, and locations of required on-campus attendance. Meeting dates and times must be submitted to the Dean for approval in time for publication in the course schedule.**
- Faculty members must update the syllabus and class schedule every semester, as needed, and must make the syllabus and class schedule available online for the duration of the course. These items should be easily accessible to students.

B. Learning Materials

- ☐ Preview and if necessary, update online course materials, including audio/videos, links to external websites, text, study guides and any other material posted for students. Make updates in advance of using them and as needed.
- ☐ The faculty member must secure permission to use copyrighted materials from the owners, as required by copyright laws and by Mott Community College policies.

C. Class Start-Up Sessions

- ☐ The faculty member must develop a Start-Up session to the course that is available to students on the first scheduled day of class. The format and timing of the class orientation must be shared with the e-Learning office staff prior to the deadline set by the Manager of e-Learning.
  - For WWW courses, this class orientation **must** include an audio-visual presentation and must be posted online.
  - For WCA courses, this class orientation **may** be posted online as an audio-visual presentation **and/or** may be presented on campus during two separate Start-Up sessions. On-campus class Start-Up session dates must be listed in the College's schedule of courses.
  - For HYB courses, this class Start-Up session **must** be the first on campus class meeting and must take place during the first week of class.
- ☐ The Start-Up session is the students' introduction to the course. As such, it should provide a basic overview of the syllabus, contact information, and any other information that will lead to success in the course. Such information could include:
  - Effective study techniques for the class
  - How to navigate the online course environment
  - Locations of assessments, syllabus, other key information
  - How students can check their grades
  - How to send email through Blackboard
  - Textbook information, such as useful pedagogical tools or features

Answers to "Frequently Asked Questions" (FAQs)

D. Using the Testing Center

- When using the Testing Center, test requests must be submitted electronically. Information that must be provided to the Testing Center includes:
  - testing dates,

- o materials students are allowed to use during the exam (books, notes, study guides, calculators, etc.),
- o whether students may write on the exam or not,
- o time limit (if any),
- o procedures regarding homework,
- o disposition of tests remaining in the Testing Center once any testing period is over,
- o late or make up test policy.

IV. Best Practices

Online education presents unique challenges and opportunities for instructors and students. As such, faculty members need to consider the impact the asynchronous environment has on student preparation, student learning, and student success. The following recommendations will assist instructors in the development of best practices for e-Learning courses.

A. Clarity of Course Requirements

Unlike a traditional classroom where students can ask a question as soon as they think of it, in an online atmosphere, student questions arise as they are working through the learning materials, reading the syllabus, or at other times. Be preemptive in considering what questions students might have and address those issues up front. The more time spent in making instructions and requirements clear, the less time will be spent answering student requests for clarification. Be specific and explicit in conveying expectations of students. For example:

1. How and where should they submit assignments? On Blackboard? Through e-mail?
2. What file formats are acceptable? (.docx, .rtf, .odt)
3. How are assignments graded? Are there rubrics for students to consult? How will students receive feedback on graded assignments?
4. How much time does a student have to take a test/quiz/complete an assignment once it is open (when does it close)? What is the time window for completion of the item once the student has begun work on it?
5. Are deadlines flexible or not?
6. What is the definition of "midnight"?
7. What is the student to be responsible for on his/her own initiative?
8. Is there a specific order in which students should approach the learning materials? If so, what is it?
9. How are discussion boards, blogs, wikis, or other collaborative assignments graded? What is the instructor's role (if any) in participation?
10. How should students deal with problems they have in accessing course content? (Should they e-mail or call the instructor or both? What technological requirements exist for the course? Are there specific browser requirements? Plugins? Programs? Access codes for publishers' online materials? Can a student be successful using only a mobile device (smartphone, tablet) or must they use a traditional computer?
11. What level of formality is required in discussion boards and class-related communications?
12. What reading and writing level recommendations does the course carry? If students who have been recommended for developmental courses would struggle to succeed in the class, make that clear to them.
13. What avenues for assistance should they utilize? Examples are the Writing Center, the Math Empowerment Center, the Learning Center, the Library, eSupport.mcc.edu and the ITS Computer Help Desk.

14. How often should a student need to log in to the class? Are there multiple due dates during a week?

Consider adding a "Frequently Asked Questions" list to the online learning environment.

B. The Online Learning Environment: Organization and User Experience

1. Organize for clarity and simplicity. For example, divide your course materials into categories that are intuitive to the student (e.g. "Week Lessons", "Tests", "Assignments", "Class Information", etc.). Consider using folders to organize items and course links to minimize the amount of clicking between folders and categories.
2. Check and (if necessary) update links at least every semester. Websites, online videos, and other resources routinely vanish or change URLs. If a student reports a non-working link, fix it as soon as possible.
3. Consider posting a weekly announcement (or sending a class-wide e-mail) updating students on course issues, upcoming deadlines, or changes in office hours, or highlighting expectations for them during that week. Doing so can remind students that there is someone at the other end of the course who is engaged and who is there to assist them in their learning.
4. Confirm that items intended to be visible actually are visible. It is very easy to forget to open a folder or make a test available. Consider using tools that allow you to set the date and time of availability. (To see the same view as the students see, turn off the "edit mode".) Regardless of how the class is set up, it is the instructor's responsibility to ensure things work, are visible, and that the online learning environment facilitates rather than hinders learning.

C. Supplemental Learning Materials and Opportunities

Unlike a traditional classroom where students have immediate access to instructors and classmates for self-assessment and improvement of knowledge and skills, an online learning environment places a much greater burden on the student to self-assess and to learn on his/her own. Online faculty members should consider providing additional learning and self-assessment tools for students to use in a risk-free, non-graded manner. Such materials may include:

1. Review sheets for aid in studying for exams
2. Open question discussion boards for student to post questions on course material
3. Additional resources from publishers (crossword puzzle generators, online flash cards, pronunciation guides, ungraded chapter quizzes, lists of terms, glossaries, etc.)
4. Review materials created by the instructor; course-specific information you provided that may not have been in their textbooks, such as review worksheets or a checklist of learning objectives for each week, chapter, or topic. There is no limit to the types of items you can create and no one knows the material you're teaching better than you.

D. Effective Communication

When teaching in a traditional classroom, the time between a student asking a question and receiving an answer is very brief. In the online world, the time between question and answer is often far longer. Students who are often acclimated to the instant response world of real-time communications may expect the

instructor to be tethered to e-mail at all times. To prevent misunderstandings, it is crucial that faculty members be clear on:

1. How students should communicate with them for quickest response.
2. How much time students should expect before a response is given. Whether students may contact you on weekends or in the evenings. (General recommendation: In general, a 72-hour response time is appropriate.) If circumstances will prevent a normal response time (illness, conference travel or other professional obligations, etc.) convey the adjusted response time to your students, not to exceed one week.
3. Communication and engagement goes both ways. Providing information about the class, updates, or any other necessary information shows students that the instructor is engaged in the teaching and learning process as much as they are.

V. Feedback and Evaluation

DLAS is committed to ensuring effectiveness in MCC's online education offerings. As such, there are a number of avenues through which faculty members may receive feedback on their e-Learning courses.

A. e-Learning Office

As the conduit connecting e-Learning faculty and students, the e-Learning office has the obligation to timely and directly convey to faculty issues of compliance with the e-Learning Standards and Practices. The e-Learning office is often an online student's main point of contact when questions or concerns arise about an e-Learning course. These could range from inability to access a class to an out-of date-syllabus to a student's inability to establish contact with an instructor, or other academic complaints. The e-Learning office will respond to student complaints by following the complaint process detailed in Article XVI.E of the CBA and communicating with the relevant parties as needed.

B. Student Instructor Evaluation Form (SIEF)

SIEFs are administered electronically in e-Learning courses. The e-Learning office will provide e-Learning faculty members with a link to the electronic SIEF. Faculty members will inform students of the SIEF's availability and will make this SIEF link available at a time of their choosing in accordance with the Faculty CBA (Article X.R). SIEFs will not be available for review by DLAS or any DLAS subcommittee. The Manager of e-Learning will receive a copy of the SIEF results for the purposes of student success statistical analysis.

C. Faculty Evaluation

The Faculty CBA (Articles X.R, X.S, and X.T) deals with faculty evaluation by their division Deans. As part of the evaluation procedures outlined in the CBA, a faculty member's e-Learning courses may be evaluated by the division Dean along-side the member's traditional courses. DLAS will not evaluate course content, discipline specific information, style or currency of learning materials or assessments. The DLAS subcommittee purview shall be limited to the technical usability aspects of an e-Learning course and compliance with these Standards and Practices.