

Suggested Guidelines for Online Courses
Off-Campus, Mediated, and Distance Learning Subcommittee of the
University Educational Policies Committee
December, 2005

The Purpose of the Guidelines

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide CSU Stanislaus faculty with recommendations to consider when developing online courses and to provide information that will assist faculty in authoring good courses. These guidelines are suggested as good or exceptional practice but are not to be considered prescriptive or even advisory and it is unlikely that all guidelines will be appropriate for all courses. The quality of all instruction, regardless of delivery method or format, is the responsibility of the department or college. These guidelines are a work in progress. Suggestions for edits or additions to these guidelines are welcome. Guidelines from CSU Chico and San Diego State University, in addition to input from present and past OCMDL Subcommittee members, have been used in the creation of this document.

Definition of an Online Course

An online course is one in which all the content, materials, and instructions that would be made available to students during class in face-to-face (F2F) instruction is available online at one location. In addition to the content, materials, and instructions, an exemplary online course site provides opportunities for student/faculty, student/student, and most likely student/content interaction.

An online course need not be conducted entirely online. Students may be required to attend examinations, presentations, discussion sections, or labs on campus or at other locations designated by the instructor.

Online courses differ from hybrid, also known as blended, courses in the degree to which attendance is required in order to satisfy the requirements of the course. Generally, hybrid courses are F2F courses for which a portion of the class time is replaced by online instruction.

General Guidelines

- Distance education programs and courses will be consistent with the educational mission of the college and the University.
- Distance education will be an optional but not a preferred or required mode of instruction.
- The method of delivery for courses and programs will be part of each curriculum proposal, to be reviewed under the normal curricular process.
- The technology used should suit the nature and objectives of the courses and program.

- The content of the course should follow Carnegie Unit guidelines and should carry the same academic rigor and expectations of a regularly offered university course.
- Online courses should be clearly announced in the course schedule and program literature so that students have an opportunity for self-selection. Students will be informed of the modes of delivery and technological requirements of each course, program, and degree offered by the University before enrolling in a course or program.
- There should be clear and consistent criteria and rubrics for the evaluation of online and partially online coursework.
- Software for use in the course should be currently available and accessible to students in order to assure equitable access to content for all students.
- Web pages should be checked regularly to ensure materials are current and links are functional.
- The University will offer training and support services to faculty who teach distance education courses and programs.

Specific Guidelines

I. Learner Support and Resources

Course contains information about being an online learner and links to campus resources.

Course provides a variety of course-specific resources, contact information for instructor, department, and program.

Course offers access to a range of resources supporting course content.

II. Online Organization & Design

Course is well-organized and easy to navigate. Students can understand all components and structure of the course.

Course syllabus identifies and delineates the role the online environment will play in the total course.

Aesthetic design presents and communicates course information clearly throughout the course.

Web pages are visually and functionally consistent throughout the course.

Web pages are checked regularly to ensure materials and links are current.

Accessibility issues are addressed throughout the course.

III. Instructional Design & Delivery

Course offers ample opportunities for interaction and communication as follows: student to student, student to instructor, and student to content.

Course goals are clearly defined and aligned to learning objectives.

Learning objectives are identified and learning activities are clearly integrated with the objectives.

Course provides multiple visual, textual, kinesthetic and/or auditory activities as possible, reasonable, or necessary to enhance student learning.

Course provides multiple activities that help students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

IV. Innovative Teaching with Technology

Course uses a variety of technology tools as appropriate to facilitate communication and learning.

New teaching methods are applied where possible to enhance student learning and engage students.

A variety of multimedia elements and/or learning objects are used and are relevant to student learning throughout the course.

Course optimizes Internet access and effectively engages students in the learning process in a variety of ways throughout the course.

V. Faculty Use of Student Feedback

Instructor offers opportunities for students to give feedback on course content.

Instructor offers opportunities for students to give feedback on ease of online technology in course.

Instructor uses formal and informal student feedback in an ongoing basis to help plan instruction and assessment of student learning throughout the semester.

VI. Assessment & Evaluation of Student Learning

Learning objectives, instructional, and assessment activities are closely aligned.

Multiple assessment strategies are used to measure content knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

Regular feedback about student performance is provided in a timely manner throughout the course.

Opportunities for student self-assessments and peer feedback exist throughout the course.