

# **Online Class\* Development Guidelines**

## **Middlesex Community College**

*November 1, 2010*

### **I. Online Class Proposal: Submission and Review\*\***

The proposal to develop a new online course should start nine months before the first day of class. Proposals are due to the Distance Learning Office on August 15th for the upcoming spring semester and January 15th for the fall semester. No new online courses should be offered first time during summer term. Extension will be granted if the proposal needs to go through an approval process within the program or department. After the Distance Learning office receives the proposal, the course proposal review and approval process should be completed within one week.

If a different instructor is to teach an existing online course, and he or she has not taught an online course at MxCC, the instructor must complete the Part II of the new online course proposal (Appendix A) and receive all signatures by the aforementioned due dates.

The proposal is reviewed by the following individuals: Program Coordinator, Department Chair, Director of Distance Learning, and Dean of Academic Affairs.

The Dean of Academic Affairs will not authorize the posting of a new online course to the course schedule and/or will not authorize the assignment of a new online instructor to an existing online course unless a proposal has been submitted and approved with all signatures.

If an online course was offered less than three years before, and it will be offered again by the same instructor, it does not need a proposal. However, the instructor needs to follow the course revision procedure specified in Section III of these guidelines.

All 3-credit or 4-credit online courses **MUST** be offered during minimum of 6-week time period. For a summer term, all online classes **MUST** have been offered in a regular semester and taught by the same instructor previously.

The online class proposal (Appendix A) includes the following information:

#### **Part I - Course Information**

1. Course title
2. Targeted students
3. Course descriptions\*\*\*
4. Transferability
5. Projected enrollment
6. Course syllabus

#### **Part II – Course Design and Teaching**

7. Teaching methods
8. Assessment methods
9. Technology tools to be used
10. Copyright permission
11. Instructor's contact information
12. Instructor's online teaching background
13. Instructor's training background of using technology
14. Instructor's availability (during course development and the semester)

The review of the proposal is based on the Online Course Proposal Evaluation Criteria (See Appendix B).

## **II. Development of a New Course**

Development of a new online course is a collaborative effort between the course instructor and the distance learning support staff. Starting Fall of 2010, a new online professor needs to have successfully completed the iTeach course, an intensive online training course, via Connecticut community college system center prior to teaching the online course.

Through course content development, the instructor is responsible for designing effective learning activities and providing course content to ensure high-quality learning. The distance learning support staff is responsible for providing instructional design guidance and technical assistance to ensure that the learning activities designed by the instructor are effectively translated into the online environment. The final evaluation of an online course is conducted by the review of the instructor and the distance learning support staff based on the Online Course Evaluation Criteria (see Appendix C).

After a new online class proposal is approved, the instructor should arrange an initial appointment with the distance learning staff to discuss the development process of the class.

No later than five months prior to the first day of class, a discussion between the instructor and a distance learning support person should occur. This discussion should focus on the information specified:

- Learning objectives for the class.
- Teaching methods used to accomplish the learning objectives.
- Assessment methods used to evaluate student learning.
- Technology tools in the course management system (Blackboard Vista) used to support the teaching methods.
- The process of seeking permission when copyrighted materials are used.
- Timeline to complete the development process.
- Tasks to be completed by the instructor.

- Tasks to be completed by the distance learning staff.

After the discussion objectives have been met, guidelines of best practices in designing an effective online course are provided to the instructor (Appendix D).

### **Timeline for Course Development**

#### *Three months prior to the start of class*

Between three months and two months prior to the first day of class, all class files such as syllabus, notes, assignments, exams, images, audio, video, etc. should be ready and be provided to the distance learning staff by the instructor. All course files are due no later than two months prior to the first day of class.

#### *Two months prior to the start of class*

Once the instructor has provided the course files, the distance learning staff will begin developing the course. This includes uploading and linking content files, creating assignments, building exams, etc.

#### *One month prior to the start of class*

One month prior to the first day of class, the course is ready in Blackboard Vista for instructor to review.

#### *Three weeks prior to the start of class*

Feedback for revision from the instructor should be provided within one week. Any revisions will be completed by the distance learning staff within a week.

#### *Two weeks prior to the start of class*

The completed class should be ready in Blackboard Vista two weeks prior to the first day of class.

Evaluation of the online course should be an ongoing process that occurs during the course development as well as when the course is being taught. The evaluation includes three aspects, course interface, course content, and course communication based on the Online Course Evaluation Criteria (See Appendix C).

### **III. Revision of a Continuing Course**

#### *Three months prior to the start of class*

For significant revision of a continued online class (e.g. change of textbook or instructor), between three months and two months prior to the first day of class, all course files should be ready and provided by the instructor to the distance learning staff.

When a discontinued online class is offered again by the same instructor, the course files should be provided to the distance learning support staff no later than two months prior to the first day of class.

*Two months prior to the start of class*

For minor revision of an online class (e.g. change of dates, assignments, or exam questions), the course files should be provided to the distance learning staff between two months to five weeks prior to the first day of class. The distance learning staff will update the course after the course files have been provided.

*One month prior to the start of class*

One month prior to the first day of class, the course should be ready in Blackboard Vista for instructor to review.

*Three weeks prior to the start of class*

Feedbacks from the instructor should be provided within a week.

*Two weeks prior to the start of class*

The revision will be completed within a week.

The completed class should be ready in Blackboard Vista two weeks prior to the first day of class.

Evaluation of the course site should be an ongoing process during the course revision and when the course is being taught. The evaluation includes three aspects, course interface, course content, and course communication based on the Online Course Evaluation Criteria (See Appendix C).

#### **IV. Training of Online Teaching**

To ensure high-quality online learning, an online instructor needs to be competent in effective online course design and possess pedagogical knowledge and technology skills needed to teach online. Two training components are needed for an online instructor to ensure that competency is achieved in the areas of pedagogy and technology use.

##### **1. Pedagogy Training**

The following knowledge need to be learned throughout pedagogical training:

- a. Best practices in designing an online course.
  - Content chunking
  - Redundancy
  - Interaction
  - Content interactivity
  - Multimodal learning
  - Instructional multimedia
  - Portfolio assessment
- b. Best practices in teaching an online course.
  - Seven Principles of Teaching with Technology

- Encourages contact between students and faculty
- Develops reciprocity and cooperation among students
- Uses active learning techniques
- Gives prompt feedback
- Emphasizes time on task
- Communicates high expectations
- Respects diverse talents and ways of learning

Successful completion of the extensive training course, iTeach, offered by the Connecticut community college system is required for a new online professor. The pedagogical training in designing an online class can be also done by the Distance Learning staff following the Guideline of Effective Teaching for Online and Hybrid Courses.

## **2. Technology Training**

The technology training for effective use of Blackboard Vista can be accomplished by attending workshops offered on the MxCC campus or other colleges as well as via Webinar or online such as iTeach.

The skills covered from technical training workshops are as follows:

- Logging on to an online class.
- Using E-mail to communicate with students.
- Using Announcement or Calendar tools to make class announcements or post class information
- Using Discussion Board to engage student active learning activities.
- Adding the class syllabus to the course and revising the syllabus.
- Using File Manager to upload, download, or modify files.
- Using Learning Module to display course files and learning activities such as class notes, assignments, discussions, web sites, etc.
- Using Track and Report to generate summary of student online records.
- Using Selective Release to release class components such as a tool, a module, or a file.
- Backing up a course as record keeping.
- If the gradebook, assignment, and quiz tools are used, the instructor needs to know how to:
  - Use gradebook to add grade breakdown columns, enter student grades, and release grades to students.
  - Operate an assignment module by setting up the availability of an assignment, grading the assignment, entering the grade, and releasing the assignment feedbacks to students.
  - Operate online exams by setting availability of the exam, grading the exam as well as releasing the exam grades, correct answers, and comments to students.

The technology training workshop schedule can be found at [www.mxcc.commnet.edu/workshops](http://www.mxcc.commnet.edu/workshops).

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*\* Online courses include the complete distance learning courses and hybrid courses that have online distance learning components with on-campus sessions.*

*\*\* New courses should follow the normal submission requirements of the Curriculum Committee.*

*\*\*\* Should be the same as stated in the official course outline.*