

Online Class* Development Guidelines
Middlesex Community College
March 11, 2015

I. Online Class Proposal: Submission and Review**

The proposal to develop a new online course should start six months before the first day of class. Proposals are due to the Distance Learning department by August 15th for the upcoming spring semester, January 15th for the fall semester, or 90 days before the first day of a summer or winter course. Extension will be granted if the proposal needs to go through an approval process in an academic program or an academic school. Distance Learning department will review the course proposal within one week before sending it to the Dean of Academic Affairs for final approval.

If an instructor is assigned to a rerun online course, and he or she will be first time teaching online at MxCC, the instructor will complete the Part II of the new online course proposal (Appendix A) and receive all signatures by the aforementioned due dates.

The proposal will be reviewed by the following individuals: Program Coordinator, Academic Director, 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 the guidelines.

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 when the course is being offered)

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. A new online professor is required to have successfully completed the iTeach course, an intensive online training course, via Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium prior to teaching the online course.

Course instructor is responsible for designing and developing 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 transformed to the online environment. The final evaluation of an online course will be 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 is recommended to arrange an initial appointment with the distance learning staff to discuss the development process of the class.

No later than three 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 below:

- 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) used to support the teaching methods.
- The process of seeking permission when copyrighted materials are used.
- Timeline to complete course development.
- 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.

Two months prior to the start of class

Instructor may contact Distance Learning staff in assisting course development. 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 should be ready in Blackboard for Distance Learning staff to review.

Three weeks prior to the start of class

Feedback for revision from Distance Learning staff should be provided within one week. Any revisions should be completed by the course instructor within a week.

Two weeks prior to the start of class

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

One week prior to the start of class

Registered students will be able to see Blackboard course site 7 days before the first day of the course. During this time, instructor should release content that helps students to get ready and well prepared for online learning. The content may include syllabus and all other learning tools used in class such as a learning module, a discussion board, an assignment dropbox, or a sample exam.

First week of the class

In the beginning of first day of the class, course syllabus and the content for the first week of the course should be finalized and made available for students. Campus orientation starts either in the morning or the afternoon of the first day of a course. To allow students practice in orientation, the instructor is expected to release course syllabus and other tools used in the course for students to go through orientation.

Evaluation of the online course should be an ongoing process during the course development as well as when the course is being offered. 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 Rerun 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.

Two months prior to the start of class

For revision of an online class (e.g. change of dates, assignments, or exam questions), the course files and other tools should be updated by course instructor. Distance Learning staff may provide assistance in course revision.

One month prior to the start of class

One month prior to the first day of class, the course should be ready in Blackboard for Distance Learning staff to review.

Three weeks prior to the start of class

Feedbacks from Distance Learning staff should be provided within a week.

Two weeks prior to the start of class

The revision is expected to be completed within a week.

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

One week prior to the start of class

Registered students will be able to see Blackboard course site 7 days before the first day of the course. During this time, instructor should release content that helps students to get ready and well prepared for online learning. The content may include syllabus and all other learning tools used in class such as a learning module, a discussion board, an assignment dropbox, or a sample exam.

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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 is expected to be competent in effective online course development 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 is expected 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 Distance Learning Consortium is required for a new online instructor.

2. Technology Training

The technology training for effective use of Blackboard can be accomplished by attending workshops offered at MxCC or other colleges as well as via Webinar or online.

The skills covered from technical training workshops are as follows:

- Logging on to an online class.
- Using Messages or Email to communicate with students.
- Using Announcement or Calendar 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 Content Manager to upload, download, or modify files.
- Using Learning Module to organize course files and learning activities such as class notes, assignments, discussions, web sites, etc.
- Using Course Report to generate summary of student online records.

- Using Adaptive Release to release class components such as a tool, a module, or a file.
- Using Grade Center to record student grades for all assignments and conduct final grade calculation.
- Backing up a course as well exporting, downloading, and saving the Grade Center for record keeping.
- If assignment dropboxes and online tests are used, the instructor is expected to know how to:
 - Create an assignment dropbox, set up the availability of an assignment, grade the assignment, and release feedbacks to students.
 - Build online tests, import or add questions, link tests to a content page, set availability of the test, grade tests, as well as release the test grades, correct answers, and comments to students.

The technology training workshop schedule can be found at
<http://mxcc.edu/ett>

** 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.*

**** Course Description should be the same as stated in the official course outline.*