

Faculty Evaluation for Distance Education Courses

How does one visit an online class when the class exists only in cyberspace? This resource is intended for use by evaluators of distance and hybrid courses.

OVERVIEW

The faculty evaluation process is one opportunity for faculty teaching distance and hybrid courses to get feedback. As you consider the evaluation process of an instructor in an online environment, please review the items suggested in each area.

The evaluation period is flexible and should be determined between the evaluator and the instructor being evaluated. For example, an evaluator could choose a week to observe, and, over the course of the week, examine how the instructor delivers course content and interacts with the students. An evaluator accessing courses using the Blackboard Learning Management System will be assigned a *Student Role* to log in.

Evaluation Standards for Online and Hybrid Courses

Category 1: Usability and Accessibility

This section includes standards referenced in Section 508 (Federal Law) for web accessibility and the evaluator will be provided additional guidelines.

- Course is easy to navigate.
- Course provides access to plug-ins or other applications supporting course content.
- Course provides instructor contact information.
- Course materials provide link to campus resources, including support for the learning management system (e.g. Blackboard).
- Course complies with Section 508 standards for accessibility.

Category 2: Communication

Effective communication provides multiple opportunities for student interaction, response and collaboration. Effective student/teacher contact is required by Title 5. In an online environment evaluators may find evidence of effective communication opportunities in the following: the online discussion board, use of a grade form, web conferencing, in-person office hours, scheduled chat times, and phone communication. The evaluator should review the instructor's policies on communication. Information may typically be found in a syllabus or at other key spots throughout the course materials.

- Course uses a variety of media to communicate course materials (for example, text, graphics, audio, video, etc.).
- Course uses standard online communication tools. (Examples may include email, discussion boards, chat, announcements, etc.)
- There is evidence of provision for regular effective contact between instructor and students. (Examples may include expectations of availability of and turnaround time for contact with instructor.)
- Netiquette expectations are clearly stated.

CCFT Contract

Appendix N, Academic Employee
Final Written Evaluation Criteria

All distance education courses, whether hybrid or fully online, include demonstration of regular effective contact. The instructor (a) regularly initiates interaction with students to determine that they are accessing and comprehending course materials, (b) is available at least the same number of instructor contact hours per week that would be available for face-to-face students, and (c) establishes and publishes, in the course syllabus or other course documents, an expectation for frequency and timeliness of instructor initiated contact and instructor feedback. The instructor uses one or more of the following resources to initiate and maintain contact with students: threaded discussions, email, announcements in the learning management system, timely feedback for student work, instructor prepared online lectures or introductions in the form of online lectures to any publisher created materials, that combined with other course materials, creates the "virtual equivalent" of the face-to-face class.

Category 3: Instructional Methods and Assessment

The evaluator should determine whether the instructor uses a variety of instructional methods and assessment to accommodate different learning styles.

- Start-up or welcome instructions are provided. (Once the term begins, the orientation information may have been relocated; consult the instructor.)
- Student learning outcomes are clearly identified; course objectives and completion requirements are present. Expectation of student's participation, honesty, etc. is clear.
- Assignments and grading standards are clearly stated. (Examples may include sample assignments, clear directions, criteria used to evaluate discussion board participation or peer review.)
- Feedback is provided throughout the course: self-tests written feedback, discussion board, email, etc.
- Student knowledge, attitudes, and/or skills are assessed in multiple ways.

Category 4: Design/Presentation

The evaluator should determine whether the course is well-designed and presented.

- Course content is organized in a logical format.
- Syllabus or orientation (online and/or in person) provides course navigation guidance.
- Course is visually and functionally consistent.
- Pages are designed to be readable.
- Language of written material is friendly and supportive.

Content adopted from spring 2008 Academic Senate Paper "Ensuring the Appropriate Use of Educational Technology: An Update for Local Academic Senates" and the spring 2005 Academic Senate Rostrum, "Observing Online Classes."