



"Indeed, your class attendance does give new meaning to the term 'distance education.'"

Cabrillo College Guidelines for Quality Online Courses

(Adapted from California Virtual
Campus/Eduprise 2002)

Course Layout

- **Consistency** - Consistency of navigation, course structure, and layout throughout the course is very important. Otherwise students will become frustrated, lost, and may not continue with the course.
- **Hyperlinks** - Use hyperlinks sparingly and with reason; too many hyperlinks make it too easy for students to get lost or lose track of lesson objectives.
- **Limit Text** - Long text pieces or documents should be provided in print or in downloadable format for easy reading. Do not post pages and pages of text online. Students won't read it.
- **Text formatting** - Chunk online text and information into small pieces to aid readability.
- **Be careful** - If using animation, multimedia, and links make sure there is a reason for it. Students usually can see immediately when there is no purpose for something and this turns them off.

Content Considerations

- **Syllabus** - Clearly outline all requirements and activities. Set grading scheme and participation requirements.
- **Participation** - Often online courses require participation in discussion forums. Deciding how to assess such participation requires some forethought and will affect overall grading schemes, especially when online testing is not possible.
- **Copyright** - Be sure to check and clearly cite copyright.
- **Technical help** - Include technical requirements and provide support and help desk numbers.

Pedagogy

- Objectives in an online course provide important guidance to students who don't have the benefit of regular in-class discussions to focus their learning. Objectives should be made available for each lesson, module, or section of the course.
- Whether in the syllabus or course introduction, be sure to state clearly instructor responsibilities and roles (for example, how often instructor will answer email,

instructor role in the forum, etc.) Students need to know how the instructor will interact with them.

- Related to the above, make yourself known to the students either through a bio, picture, email message, or personal Web page. It will help students connect with you.
- Clearly state learner responsibilities.
- Provide guidance, protocols, and deadlines – this helps keep students on track. Within those bounds, allow students to be flexible and pace themselves.
- Make sure you are challenging students, especially if they are adult learners. If students are not challenged, they may not be motivated to continue an online course. One good way to do this is to draw on real life experiences or situations, challenging them to rethink things based on their new learning.
- **Feedback is crucial; make it substantive and prompt!**
- Allow students a means to self assess during the course so they know they are on track and how they are progressing.
- Provide opportunities for review and practice, as well as the opportunity to link to prerequisite material (if it will enhance learning the content).
- Keep lines of communication open and provide ongoing support; even in discussions where you as instructor are not participating, either you or a designated student should moderate.
- **Relevance** - Personalize learning as much as possible; include and encourage discussion and assignments relating to real life experiences.
- Allow students time to reflect on the online learning process and the course as a whole. A discussion forum provides a good avenue for this.
- Help students create a community online – if you are not using groups as part of the course work, provide a social group area where students can at least meet and get to know each other.
- **Peer tutoring** - encourage peer tutoring, peer feedback, and group learning as much as possible. This not only aids learning, but it can prevent student feelings of isolation.
- Have some way for students to introduce themselves as the course begins and make sure that you respond to each initial post. If students do not see any responses to their initial posts in the forum they will likely not post again.
- Learning at a distance can take more time than learning in a classroom environment. Be prepared to make changes based on student performance and feedback.



Key Questions to Ask yourself:

How Do I Keep Students Interested?

- Am I communicating what excites me about the topic?
- What can I add to make the students feel there is something of real value to them in this class or module?
- Have I made the inherent motivation clear? Will the student say, "Learning this is of direct benefit/interest to me?"
- Have I included external motivators and/or do I need them? Will the student say, "If I do Y I will get 100 points, my social status will increase, I receive extra privileges or notoriety." Humor, clear writing, and good graphic design can also be external motivators.
- Is there something I can do to make the module more interactive?
- Should I add collaborative assignments to create a greater sense of community so the student feels supported and engaged?
- How can I set uniform objectives but still honor the individual approaches of the students?
- How can I accommodate different learning styles: Hear, see, and do?
- Is this course culturally sensitive? Have I presented the information in a way that respects diverse opinions and beliefs?



What Are the Obstacles to Learning?

- Is the subject material presented in such a way that students might perceive it as "too hard" and beyond their capability?
- Does the class erode self-confidence?
- Are the course prerequisites clear?
- Is the graphic layout interfering with the content?
- Are the pages accessible according to the guidelines of the W3?

How Do I Give Feedback?

- How can I maximize the amount of feedback the student receives?
 - Is the feedback the student receives immediate, clear and constructive?
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- Does the feedback the student receives promote the students learning?
 - Does the feedback help students to complete the assignment?
 - How will I handle the students expectation for immediate feedback.

What Type of Media Do I Use?

- What type of Internet connections will the students have?
- Will they be able to see video, hear audio, and download graphics?
- Will rich media (sound, graphics, video) enhance this course? How?
- How will rich media (sound, graphics, video) detract from the course?
- Will rich media be too cumbersome for the user to download? Is it too expensive/difficult to develop?

How Do I Leverage Technology?

- How can I use communication tools, such as: email, listserv, chat rooms and bulletin boards, Web pages, graphics, streaming media (video/audio) and interactive multimedia tutorials- so the students will achieve the learning objectives?
 - What can I do on the Internet that I can't do in other mediums?
 - How do I utilize Internet to create a context for learning?
 - The Internet is a huge resource for data, but how can I help students transform data into knowledge?
 - What is the most difficult aspect of teaching online for me? How can I make that easier?
 - Is my course accessible?
 - How will I check my HTML pages to make sure they meet accessibility guidelines?
 - Will users with disabilities have access to video transcripts or audio files?
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Online Course Planner:

Task	✓ if done	Time Required
Create publicly available web pages for course description, syllabus, and course expectations		
Describe how the learners will review the syllabus and course expectations.		
Create or obtain access to a WebCT account		
Modify/customize course navigation appearance		
Test pages for accessibility		
Complete revisions of syllabus to reflect online components and add to course site		
Create introduction page including navigation/orientation information		
Create, organize, and add reading materials to course site		
Create, organize, and add instructional units (or topics) to course site		
Create, organize, and add appropriate interactive components to site		
Create, organize, and add assessment components to course site		
Link all course elements to syllabus and each as appropriate		
Plan how you are going to orient students to your class		
Compose and send letter to students about orientation meeting or process and how students will access your site		
Recommend/require students to take online orientation to WebCT (i.e. www.cvc2.org)		

Don't forget to ask for help from the TLC when you need it!



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