DISTANCE EDUCATION POLICY AND PRACTICES

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WHAT IS DISTANCE EDUCATION?

- Learner and teacher separated by distance, time, or both.
- Less synchronous interaction.
- Why teach this way?
- CCRI Distance education mission:
  Increase access to education, to provide flexibility in scheduling to accommodate
diverse needs, and to expose students to many different ways to pursue lifelong
learning.
- Effective learning can and does take place at a distance.
- Distance courses provide the same quality education and meet the same learning outcomes
  as on-campus courses.

DISTANCE EDUCATION FORMATS

- Two distance formats defined in the Distance Education Policy:
  Online Courses - courses that have 80 to 100% of the class instruction delivered
  using a course management system, and have a maximum of three (3) required on-
campus class meetings a semester. These courses may have on-campus proctored
tests required in addition to the on-campus class meetings.

  Hybrid/Blended Courses – courses that combine online and on-campus instruction
  with reduced in-class seat time for students that deliver less than 80% of the course
  instruction online and have more than three required on-campus classes in a
  semester.
  - Online courses may have three on-campus meetings.
    o Used for orientation, technological training, discussion, group work, or hands-on
      activities that are difficult to accomplish at a distance.
    o Students do not expect on-campus meetings in their distance courses.

HOW DO YOU PREPARE TO TEACH AT A DISTANCE?

- Teach for one semester (at least) using a Learning Management System (LMS), preferably
  Blackboard.
- If you haven’t used Blackboard yet, attend a training session offered through IT or make an
  appointment with CIT staff to be trained.
- Familiarize yourself with distance pedagogy by enrolling in the five-week Distance
  Pedagogy course.
- Borrow the book *Teaching Online: A Practical Guide* by Susan Ko and Steve Rossen from
  Donna Mesolella in Academic Affairs or from CITLA.
- Plan and build your distance course.
LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (LMS)

- Learning Management System (LMS) software "provides an integrated suite of online resources and communications capabilities in support of traditional courses and can also serve as a platform for fully online courses." Typically you'll see support for content sharing, interaction with and among students, and assessment and grade management.
- CCRI offers the Blackboard LMS.
- Publishers quite often also provide learning management systems that are integrated with other tools and content.
- Publishers often have cartridges of content that can be loaded into our Blackboard LMS.
- With Blackboard you have support here from IT and colleagues.
- Use an LMS on campus first to obtain experience. There's a learning curve.
- A related good practice is to provide a discussion forum for your online students to ask technical questions about the course as it is in progress.

PEDAGOGY

- The LMS is what your students see.
- Course design and practices need to substitute for the social environment of a traditional classroom.
- You will need to examine your practice, decompose it a bit, and reconstruct it with the new tools.
- Other faculty have done this (probably within your discipline).
- The pedagogy course will give you the opportunity to learn from that body of experience and practice building your course using distance tools.

SETTING UP YOUR COURSE

- The two most important qualities of an online course:
  - Organization
  - Instructor responsiveness
- Distance courses here at CCRI that are highly structured have:
  - Easy-to-navigate top-level organization
  - Consistent weekly structure
  - Getting started / orientation page; course tour video
  - Clearly stated expectations

TEMPLATE

- The Distance Learning Advisory Committee has prepared a course template for new Distance Learning instructors.
- This is a course shell that you may use if you wish.
- It contains a content structure, communications tools, and an orientation page.
LEARNERS / SUPPORT

- Our students do not all possess the same degree of technological savvy, even within the generational category referred to as the "Digital Natives" or "Millenials" (those who have grown up in the era of widely available digital technology).
- Access to technology is more likely to correlate with socio-economic status than generation.
- Even students with access to technology frequently use it only passively and most have not used it to support their learning.
- They do not know how to evaluate the information they find on the Internet.
- Their passive knowledge will not transfer. They need to learn how to use computers to learn.
- Expect to give them practice with tools that you plan to use in your course.
- Use the minimum number of tools that will give you the maximum value, as you will need to devote some course time to training students on tool use.
- We are required to open our courses to our students one week in advance of the semester to ensure they're prepared.
- You can require them to participate in practice activities for verification of attendance.
- Be sure to clearly communicate your attendance verification criteria to your students.

ACTIVITIES AND COMMUNICATIONS

- You aren’t limited to the tools available in Blackboard.
- There are Web 2.0 tools you might use as well as online simulations and other programs.
- Issues with tools not built for education:
  - Privacy
  - Access
  - Permanence and stability
  - Intellectual property, copyright, and ownership
  - Pedagogical value
  - Exposing our students to advertising and the corporate or public pedagogy

TOOLS IN BLACKBOARD

- Content sharing among students and between student and faculty member (shared content includes word-processed files, PowerPoint presentations, narrated presentations, video, multimedia, and specialized formats that relate to the subject matter).
- Chat: synchronous text-based conversation among participants in the entire course or a group. A chat transcript can be saved.
- Asynchronous discussion tools: CCRI email, Blackboard messaging (similar to email, but contained in Blackboard), discussion board, blog, and journal.
- Blackboard also has a wiki tool, which allows students to collaboratively build a document together.
- Tests that include questions in a number of different formats including multiple choice, fill in the blank, essay, short answer, and file upload, among others.
- Control over how the content is accessed by your students.
• Turn to the different communications tools to plan assessments.
• Spot-check student understanding with quizzes, discussion board posts, journal entries, or other activities.
• Synchronous tools such as chat, Skype, or the telephone are also possibilities but not necessarily the most efficient tools for assessment.
• Follow guidelines for summative assessments you can trust.

ASSESSMENT SUGGESTIONS FROM DL COMMITTEE

• If any one test is worth a substantial portion of student’s grade (20%+), the test should be proctored.
• No more than 50% of the final course grade should be based on online tests and multiple tests are used to determine the final grade. The remainder 50% should be determined by other assessment methods (proctored final exam, multiple research writing assignments, graded discussion boards postings and/or group or individual projects).
• Faculty are encouraged to implement various methods to ensure the integrity of online testing (delay release of score until availability period ends, prohibit copying and/or printing; randomizing test questions and/or responses, limiting time, forcing completion in one sitting).

ASSESSMENT SUGGESTIONS FROM KO & ROSSEN

• “The test should be lengthy or difficult enough that it isn’t easy for students to look up information and still complete the test on time.”
• “A good proportion of the questions should relate directly to in-class discussions or other in-class activities, including instructor lectures or case studies.”
• Do not give open-ended assignments for essays. Give very specific instructions that include the requirement to include content (primary sources, topics) from your course. In the rubric, make sure "responsiveness to the assignment requirement is made a major determinant of the grade."
• Assess via the creation of a portfolio over the course of the semester.

RUBRICS

• For every activity you are going to assess in the online environment, it is a good practice to provide a rubric to your students communicating how you will evaluate the products of that activity.
• Discussion board post: include how you are assessing use of references, adherence to netiquette guidelines, frequency and number of posts, quality of posts, and both the original post and comments on other posts.
• Group work: how you are assessing individual contributions using the information provided in chat transcripts and the wiki edit history.
• It is a good idea to include this rubric with the assignment (if the assignment is not in the tool), with the tool, and also possibly in your syllabus.
• Some sample rubrics:
  o http://www2.uwstout.edu/content/profdev/rubrics/discussionrubric.html
  o http://etatmo.missouri.edu/toolbox/doconline/discussionrubric.php
  o http://www.udel.edu/janet/MARC2006/rubric.html
BEST PRACTICES TO KEEP YOUR COURSE ON TRACK DURING THE SEMESTER

- Set expectations for students (e.g. you will check in with course once a day during the week)
- Send reminders before assignments are due, set due dates on assignments
- Send weekly summaries of discussions, course progress
- Update announcements on a regular basis and/or send weekly messages
- Have online office hours in email or chat, a time when students can expect a prompt response
- Grade and respond to questions in a timely fashion, provide feedback with grades
- Set up student assignments for engagement (interaction with content and/or other students that requires higher-level thinking)
- Make your on-campus office hours open to online students
- Many DL faculty have reported that they answer questions in email all day long, frequently within minutes of the question being sent

LINKS

- Distance Education Policy is available here: http://www.ccri.edu/distancefaculty/Distance%20Learning%20Policy%20with%20Addendum.pdf
- Minutes from meeting 10/27/2009 in which testing recommendations were made available here: http://www.ccri.edu/distancefaculty/dlcommittee/DLmeeting10-27.pdf
- Distance Learning for Faculty Website: http://www.ccri.edu/distancefaculty/index.html
- Overview of DL at CCRI and Faculty Orientation: http://www.ccri.edu/distancefaculty/overview.html

SUPPORT

- Distance Learning Faculty Coordinator: Maggie Burke, mburke1@ccri.edu, 401.825.2058
- Distance Learning Advisory Committee: http://www.ccri.edu/distancefaculty/dlcommittee/
- Faculty Technology Mentor:
  - Kathleen Beauchene (Lincoln), kbeauchene@ccri.edu
- Center for Instructional Technology: http://it.ccri.edu/instructech/
- To obtain Teaching Online: A Practical Guide, contact:
  - Donna Mesolella, dsmesolella@ccri.edu
  - CITLA, http://www.ccri.edu/citla/

RESOURCES FOR DL FACULTY AND STUDENTS

- Distance Learning 5-Week Pedagogy Course
  Pedagogy training is required by DL Policy. This is offered in the summer and the intersession.
- DL Faculty Forum
This is a Blackboard course of resources for Distance Learning faculty. There is a discussion board where best practices are discussed every week.

- **Teaching Online: A Practical Guide by Susan Ko and Steve Rossen**
  This book is available to borrow through Donna Mesolella in Academic Affairs and through CITLA. Is it the book that is used in the Pedagogy course.

- **Technology Readiness Checklist**
  Use this as a self-checklist or preferably with a CIT staff member to ensure technological readiness to teach at a distance.

- **Course Shell**
  Created by the Distance Learning Advisory Committee, this shell has a set of standardized components to help you create a distance learning course with all of the necessary components in place.

- **Course Rollover Checklist**
  This checklist of reminders will help you start up, run, and close out your distance course. You will receive most of these reminders in email as well from the Distance Learning Faculty Coordinator.

### RESOURCES FOR DL FACULTY AND STUDENTS

- **Automated messages**
  When a student registers for a DL course, she is sent an email message that describes the format and the possibility of on-campus meetings.

- **Document templates: DL Syllabus, Start-up letters**
  These templates of recommended components will help you build a DL syllabus and start-up letter that contains information that will help students succeed in your online course.

- **List of sample rubrics**
  A list of sample rubrics that can be used or modified to evaluate discussion board posts and other artifacts of distance communications tools is available to DL faculty.

- **For within your course: Copyright notice, Course evaluation**
  The copyright notice and course evaluation should appear in all DL courses.

- **Coming soon: Student Orientation**
  A 1-credit student orientation to online learning proposal currently awaits approval.

- **Distance Learning For Students Website**
  The Students DL website allows for course search by semester and subject and provides self-check readiness quizzes for online learning.
Beth Anish's online literature class.

Note structure on left includes weekly materials and tools.

Each week's materials follow the format you see on the right.
Jim Glickman's online World Literature class, with structure based on Beth Anish's literature class structure. Note Jim changes the entry page of the course each week to the current week's page.

Clicking on Assignment yields a module that requires the student take a quiz before participating in discussion.

Note Jim has assigned the students to discussion groups.
The DL Template created by the distance learning committee is a "course package" that you may import to your course and modify to suit your needs.

It contains this resources page which is an orientation for online students. If you use the template, could add course-specific orientation materials here.
Discussion Board Rubrics

Basic Rubric

MU instructors teaching online courses have used this streamlined rubric to assess student discussion board participation.

Grading Criteria for Weekly Discussion Question Postings (4 points/week, 60 points total)

Your weekly postings will be assessed using the following guidelines. Of course, your postings are expected for each weekly unit of the course and the final evaluation will take place the final week of class. Your original postings addressing the weekly discussion questions should be made no later than noon each Wednesday. Final postings commenting and reflecting upon the posts of your peers should be made no later than noon each Friday -- late postings will not be given credit. If you post weekly and interact with your peers, you can expect full credit unless otherwise notified.

As you can see, the following rubrics assess the quality of your postings and not the quantity (we're not looking for "good idea" or "I agree").

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weekly Discussion Posting Grading Criteria</th>
<th>Weekly Point Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meaningful and New Ideas: Ideas examine topic from new perspective that contributes to group understanding of topic</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Message Coherence: Messages explain issues, provide new perspectives, effectively question, or meaningfully elaborate on topic</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relevance of Replies to Other Messages: Responses elaborate, contradict, modify, or explain the original message</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Detailed Rubric

Instructors accustomed to more sophisticated grading rubrics may find this example useful.

To facilitate ease of use and communication, all online discussion postings should be typed or pasted directly into the discussion message window.

For each discussion, please take time to consider the associated reading before posting your initial comments. Pay particular attention to the focus of the assignment outlined by your instructor. "Initial comments" are your original thoughts about the assignment, posted prior to reading/replying to messages posted by your classmates.

In order for our online discussions to be effective it is important for each member of the class to participate during the allotted time frame. In addition, your presence in the discussion should be apparent throughout the discussion period.

When composing replies here are a few approaches to consider:

- provide an alternative perspective
- share stories about your own experiences
- ask questions to further the discussion
- post additional resources (websites, books, articles)
- discuss why you agree or disagree with something

Your participation in each online discussion will be evaluated based on the following rubric:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unacceptable</th>
<th>Needs Improvement</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initial Comments</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Initial comments were posted but did not address the assignment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Initial comments address some of the assignment requirements. Comments are not well organized and show limited knowledge and evaluation of the topic.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Initial comments address most, but not all, of the assignment. Comments are reasonably organized and demonstrate adequate familiarity and analysis of the content.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Initial comments thoroughly address all parts of the assignment. The comments are clearly and concisely stated, demonstrating that the content was appropriately reviewed and synthesized.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Message Quality</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Postings are not substantial, limited to &quot;I agree&quot; types of replies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Only one substantial message was posted.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Multiple postings including some substantial content were posted, however, a limited number include errors or need additional supporting detail.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Multiple postings are made offering substantial, well written contributions-opinions, observations, questions, experiences, critiques, suggestions, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Response</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Questions/comments posed to you were not addressed.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Several questions/comments posed to you were not addressed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The majority of questions/comments posed to you were addressed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>All questions/comments posed to you were appropriately addressed.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Contribution/Duration</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Participation was not continuous throughout the discussion period (1 day only). Replies were only posted for 1 classmate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Postings were submitted on at least 2 different days during the discussion period (11:00 PM and 12:00 AM the next day does not qualify). Replies were posted for at least 2 classmates.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Postings were submitted on 3 or more days during the discussion period (2 or more during a 1-week discussion), but may not reflect participation from start to finish. Replies were posted for at least 2 classmates.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Postings are evenly distributed throughout the discussion period reflecting participation from start to finish. Multiple replies were posted for at least 3 classmates or more.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Etiquette</strong></td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Postings are not appropriate—poor grammar/structure, inappropriate slang/abbreviations, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Postings include inappropriate references and may include several errors in grammar/structure.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Posting are reasonably appropriate, but contain a few errors.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Postings are appropriate, using proper language, cordiality, grammar, punctuation, etc.</td>
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</table>