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Teaching in an Online Environment – Minimum Expectations

As when teaching face-to-face courses, instructors of online and hybrid courses must meet basic expectations for course design, presence, and communication. Specifically, minimum expectations for all online or hybrid course include:

1. The Canvas Learning Management System must be the principal platform for instruction.
2. The Instructor of Record (IOR) must design the course structure, include original content, and provide context for any imported content.
3. The IOR must interact regularly with students or supervise teaching assistants (TAs) in their interaction with students; class meetings may not be required outside class meeting times specified in SOAR.
4. A syllabus for the course must be included and located in the “Syllabus” tab.
5. The course content must be organized sequentially in Canvas using modules with clear due dates.

Each of these five expectations is outlined in more detail below.

1. Teach the course through the Canvas Learning Management System as the principal platform for instruction.
 - Canvas provides the virtual environment for online instruction. Although other tools may be brought into Canvas to enhance instruction (e.g., Yuja, online homework), Canvas must be the core platform and house the syllabus, schedule, policies, and grades.
 - The quantity of material in Canvas will vary, with asynchronous classes having more than synchronous ones.
2. Create the course design and guide students through all instructional content.
 - Although instructors may incorporate textbook-publisher content and other third-party resources (e.g., YouTube videos), these materials must be contextualized within the instructor-designed framework as a supplement to the IOR’s instruction of students. The IOR or TA must interact with any content from a third party by providing context for students, answering their questions, and connecting that material to other course content.
3. Initiate and facilitate interaction with students.
 - Instructors must regularly initiate, lead, and participate in interaction with students within Canvas throughout the semester as per Department of Education standards, which may include the use of Canvas discussion boards, scheduled meetings in a synchronous course, TAs who interact regularly with students, virtual office hours, feedback on assignments, and other means.
 - Synchronous classes may only meet during their scheduled times, and asynchronous classes may not require students to meet as a group at a particular scheduled time.
4. Provide a copy of the syllabus under the “Syllabus” tab.
 - As per *Faculty Handbook* Section 3.4.2.5, a syllabus must be provided for all courses. The syllabus must be located under the Syllabus tab and can be provided as a downloadable file or as a full text insertion. Faculty are welcome to also include module content that covers details from the syllabus.
5. Organize the class content sequentially using modules.
 - Course content must be presented sequentially using weekly or unit-based Canvas modules.
 - Modules should include clear due dates for assignments and tasks. This entails appropriate use of tabs in the navigation menu, such as assignments, quizzes, and pages.

We appreciate everyone’s attention to these essential fundamentals of online teaching, especially during this year of heightened levels of online delivery.

Both our Center for Faculty Development and Office of Online Learning offer workshops to develop classes in ways that are unique to each subject matter and teaching style. Visit <https://www.usm.edu/faculty-development/> for more information.