# Policies and Procedures for Planning & Conducting Distance Learning

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1. General Information and Purpose

Farmingdale State College (FSC) recognizes the significance of organizing the distance learning initiatives of the institution so that a well-coordinated program will be delivered. Coordination of distance learning initiatives is required to ensure a high level of quality, provide resources and assistance for faculty, provide support services for distance learning students, maximize the use of college resources with a minimum of duplication, and ensure consistent and fair policies and procedures related to faculty and students. Organized and well-coordinated programs facilitate marketing and promotional strategies and strengthen the college’s image as an innovative and technologically sound institution.

Rapid advancements in technology will continue to create new methods for providing and delivering distance learning. FSC is committed to ensuring that distance learning programs and courses will be as academically rigorous as their face-to-face counterparts and will result in appropriate and deep learning. The college also recognizes that emerging methods for delivering educational content bring new and different teaching and learning challenges. Therefore, policies and procedures that impact distance learning will continuously change and these guidelines will continue to be reviewed and revised to reflect current best practices. Additionally, as changes occur (whether internally developed or required by the New York State Department of Education or the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools), this document will be revised to incorporate those changes.

The following distance learning policies and procedures are intended to assist with planning, coordination, and technological support for participating administrators, faculty members and staff. These policies and procedures are built on FSC’s current academic policy manuals and shall apply to new distance learning activities as well as to existing courses and programs in which the method of delivery has changed significantly from that approved in the original curriculum proposal.

2. Definitions

Distance learning - For the purposes of this document, distance learning will be defined as instruction delivered through electronic means such as television, interactive video conferencing, or computers. The following terms have been utilized throughout the document or are key concepts in distance learning.

2.1 Distance Learning Course – an individual course in which the majority of instruction occurs when the student and the instructor are not in the same physical setting. The course is considered distance learning if students receive a significant portion of their instruction at a distance.

2.2 Distance Learning Program – an approved collection of courses or course of study where a student can earn 50% or more credits necessary to qualify for a degree through distance learning.

2.3 Attendance in an online course is defined by the Department of Education as an academically related activity as “physically attending a class where there is an opportunity for direct interaction between the instructor and students; submitting an academic assignment; taking an exam, completing an interactive tutorial, or participating in computer-assisted instruction; attending a study group that is assigned by the school; participating in an online discussion about academic matters; and initiating contact with a faculty member to ask a question about the academic subject studied in the course” (Federal Student Aid 2013, 5-59).

2.4 Web-enhanced Course – an individual course in which face-to-face instruction is supplemented with materials delivered via distance learning, but maintains 100% seat time/Carnegie units in...
face-to-face delivery.

2.5 Hybrid Course – any course that meets both online and in a traditional classroom setting.

2.6 Online Course – an individual course in which the majority of instruction is delivered via the online environment.

2.7 Asynchronous Distance Learning – occurs when the instructor and the pupils interact in different places and during different times. Student enrolled in an asynchronous course are able to go online at any time of the day or night, seven days per week, and work toward the completion of course requirements.

2.8 Synchronous Distance Learning – occurs when the instructor and his/her pupils interact in different places but during the same time. Students enrolled in synchronous courses are generally required to log on to their computer during a set time at least once a week.

2.9 Push Technology – refers to software systems that provide periodic distribution of information to clients or learners based on their profiles in the student information system or self-identified interests.

2.10 Multimodal Delivery of Instruction and Services – are varied modes of presentation to and interaction with and among learners including face-to-face, video conferencing, audio conferencing, and online delivery. Varied modes of delivery are necessary in order to provide flexibility to learners and respond to their needs and interests.

2.11 Learning Management System (LMS) – a software application designed to support the delivery of online instruction. The LMS can create and manage records, organize and deliver content to learners, and facilitate communication among learners and with the instructor. Additionally, a Learning Management System may also be used as a course management tool to support classroom-based teaching.

2.12 Virtual Learning Communities – made up of learners interacting with each other utilizing online technologies. While separated by distance, learners create social communities as a part of a learning process, which is interactive, supportive and collaborative.

3. Planning for Distance Learning

The planning for a distance learning program should be part of the strategic planning process of the institution and should be aligned with the mission of the college. This planning should show evidence that a needs analysis study has been conducted, and should include information about areas of growth in terms of course offerings and plans for full degree program offerings. There should also be plans for the allocation of resources for instructional staffing and support. The commitment to this initiative requires an Office of Distance Learning with the responsibility of assuring the quality of the distance course being offered. The support for, design of, and evaluation of the distance learning program should be commensurate with the support, design and evaluation of the campus’ traditional courses and programs.
4. Academic Requirements and Quality Standards

The following standards represent important guiding principles for developing, conducting and evaluating distance education instruction activities at Farmingdale State College (FSC).

4.1 The distance learning activity is consistent with the mission of the college.

4.2 For programs offered completely in a distance learning format, the distance learning activity complies with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education’s “Distance Educational Programs: Interregional Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Learning Programs,” with the New York State Education Department’s “Principles of Good Practice for Distance Learning,” and with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

4.3 Distance learning courses will be identified as such in the campus’ course listings.

4.4 The quality of distance learning activity shall be at the same level of quality as the campus’ traditional classes.

4.5 Admissions requirements, academic standards and other administrative requirements are the same for distance learning students as for on campus students.

4.6 The college ensures that an evaluation process is used to improve the teaching and learning processes.

4.7 Program evaluation is commensurate with that for traditional classes.

4.8 In accordance with the SUNY Policy, the semester credit hour has been defined as one 50-minute session of instruction per week including two hours of out-of-class preparation by the student for a semester of not less than fifteen weeks. This basic measure may be adjusted to reflect modified academic calendars and formats of study. On-line and hybrid courses and other formats of learning should contain the same amount of academic activity as provided in a traditional setting and in accordance with the credits assigned.

For every hour of credit, students must engage in 37.5 hours of academic activity. Online and hybrid courses should be assigned credit hours based on a similar understanding, even though the activities for electronic instructional time will be different from traditional face-to-face instruction. The course content provided by the instructor in an online or hybrid course would therefore be equivalent to the course content that would be provided by the instructor in a face-to-face course with the same number of credit hours.

In accordance with SUNY policy, traditional lecture courses include two hours of student learning outside of instructional time for each semester credit hour. The number of hours spent outside of instructional time can be difficult to determine based on learning styles, abilities, rates of content retention, subject matter of course, and so forth. A general guideline is that students should expect to spend twice the amount of instructional time in activities and assignments, which is the same as would be expected in a face-to-face course of the same subject).

4.9 The department is responsible for the format (hybrid or online) for delivery of their courses. The decision whether or not to teach a scheduled distance course section is up to the individual faculty members unless it was a part of the conditions under which they were hired.

4.10 The Department, Dean and Provost will determine the appropriate enrollment that can be supported in the program and in individual courses based upon the content and learning activities.
4.11 It is not recommended that faculty teach more than one distance learning class during intersession. During summer sessions, the number and combination of distance learning classes should be at the discretion of the department chair and with the approval of the Dean.

4.12 In order to balance the teaching demands of face-to-face and distance learning classes, it is not recommended that faculty teach a full load of fully online distance learning classes during the academic year. The balance between distance learning classes (fully online and hybrid) and face-to-face classes should be at the discretion of the department and with the approval of the Dean.

4.13 Faculty on reduced load need their Dean's approval to teach online.

4.14 Faculty teaching distance courses will be provided with adequate training and technical support in the development of distance courses, and all first-time distance learning instructors will receive mentoring throughout the development process.

4.15 All distance education courses in development are required to follow the time schedule for course development as outlined by the Office of Distance Education.

4.16 The Office of Distance Learning will provide training and support for the faculty.

4.17 All faculty members new to teaching in the distance learning environment should have a peer observation in the first semester that the course is taught.

4.18 To support the faculty teaching in the distance learning environment and protect the integrity of distance learning offerings, access to distance learning courses is granted to the Office of Distance Learning staff (administrators, technical assistants, IDs). In addition, the instructor's immediate supervisor, Academic Dean, Provost or their designee may make a formal request for access to a specific class. Access will be granted for one 36-hour period and the instructor will be notified in writing or e-mail before access has been granted.

4.19 The faculty member will be responsible for delivery of the instruction and evaluation of student progress.

4.20 Distance course design encourages student to student and student to faculty interaction.

4.21 Meaningful and timely feedback is provided by the faculty member teaching the course.

5. Administrative Approval and Coordination of Distance Learning Courses and Programs

5.1 Distance learning instruction will be offered with the consensus of the Office of Distance Learning, the responsible academic department chair and academic deans.

5.2 The institution shall provide the means for assessing the quality of the distance learning offerings comparable to traditional instructional approaches.

5.3 Faculty observations will follow the observation guidelines outlined in the FSC Best Practices document (See Appendix).

5.4 Distance learning instruction shall be offered through the academic department that also administers the corresponding on-campus instruction.

5.5 Before any currently approved face-to-face course can migrate to a distance learning environment, the following procedures must be completed:
Faculty Training

- The course shall be redesigned for online delivery by the faculty member in consultation with the Office of Distance Learning.

- The course design shall be reviewed by the Office of Distance Learning for best practices in distance learning, and by the Chair of the Department to ensure course objectives and assessments can be met in the new format. Should there be questions between the instructional designer and the faculty member about whether the course can be effectively delivered in the distance learning environment they can be resolved in consultation with the Chair or Dean.

- Information must be provided to students, at the time of course registration, as to the percentage of the course that will be taught at a distance, and the technology requirements for participation and assessment.

Faculty Policies

To offer an online course, departments must submit to the Office of Distance Learning a Course Proposal Form signed by the Chairperson and Dean.

During the semester, prior to teaching an online course for the first time at Farmingdale, faculty must participate in training offered by the Office of Distance Learning, which will assist faculty in the creation of their online courses and will help them understand the pedagogy of online education. If a faculty member has previous experience with online course development and delivery, they may schedule a meeting with the Instructional Designer to determine if their qualifications are sufficient to forgo training. Faculty will still be required to review the completed online course with the campus Instructional Designer.

Thus, faculty training for teaching online courses must take place the semester before the class is offered. During this training, faculty will develop the entire course to be offered before the course goes live.

- If a distance-learning program is new to the college, proposals are prepared according to current practices for all program proposals. The Office of Distance Learning will review program proposals to ensure that current resources can support the delivery of the program.

- Faculty members are expected, as a normal condition of employment at Farmingdale State College (FSC), to develop and keep current the courses they are assigned to teach. FSC retains full rights to common elements of course syllabi including learning objectives, course descriptions, course requirements and course schedules that are submitted, reviewed and approved as specified by the appropriate academic department. Faculty own the copyright to all other course materials under the academic work-for-hire exception embedded in SUNY’s copyright policy. Alternatively, SUNY and faculty may enter into work-for-hire written agreements relating to materials produced for online use in which the parties may agree to vest copyright in either SUNY or the faculty and to provide for related licenses.

- Departments or faculty who wish to use other faculty course materials must seek written approval, which can be in the form of email, from the faculty member who owns the course material. The written approval must be given to the Office of Distance Learning.
A decision to terminate a distance learning course or program is accomplished by means of the same procedures as on-campus programs.

6. Student Support

The mandate of learner services in a college environment is to respond to students’ individual needs and support their personal goals and success in their program of studies. While these goals are the same for all learners regardless of instructional modality, Farmingdale State College (FSC) recognizes the need to provide equitable services for online learners in light of the unique challenges they experience.

In an online environment, effective instructional and service delivery requires a collaborative cross-functional approach coordinated with the academic division.

6.1 Department Chairs/Program Coordinators/Directors will be responsible for ensuring that all distance learning program materials clearly and accurately represent the program, including detailed program completion requirements, the nature of the learning experience, program and faculty responsibilities, and the nature of faculty-student, and student-student interaction opportunities, and requirements.

6.2 Department Chairs/Program Coordinators/Directors will be responsible for ensuring that all distance learning program materials clearly and accurately define any specific student background, knowledge, or technical skills needed to undertake and successfully complete the distance learning program, and describe in layman’s terms any program-specific technical equipment and/or software required or recommended.

6.3 For any programs that are fully online, students will be able to obtain academic advisement by phone, e-mail or in-person. Technical support will be available via the Help Desk as it is for all other student populations. Program materials clearly describe how students obtain these support services.

6.4 The institution will provide adequate library and information resources, services, and support for academic programs, including training in information literacy. Through the FSC’s Thomas D. Greenley Library web pages, access is maintained to scholarly databases and to the online catalog of materials owned by the library. Interlibrary Loan service should be accessible to distance learning students via the web page to borrow materials from our libraries. Resource material should be available electronically through this system, and also via postal delivery for items not able to be transmitted electronically.

6.5 Administrative processes such as admissions and registration will be readily accessible to distance learning students. Students will be provided with e-mail. Students can register online and access course schedules, grades, degree audits, financial aid and billing information through the OASIS system.

Tuition payments can be made online. Additionally, the bookstore is available via the web, and all books and course materials can be purchased online. Program materials will clearly describe how access is obtained.
6.6 For any programs that are fully online, the institution provides orientation opportunities and resources for distance learners that are appropriate to the technologies used, the content, and the learners.

7. Outcomes Assessment

7.1 Distance learning courses are expected to produce the same learning outcomes as courses that are taught in a traditional face-to-face classroom. Learning outcomes are clearly defined—in regard to student knowledge to be acquired and skill development. The procedure for assessing and evaluating these outcomes will be similar to the procedures being utilized in other online courses at Farmingdale State College.

7.2 All aspects of the distance learning courses taught at Farmingdale will be consistent with and created to achieve demonstrable learning outcomes. All courses are designed to be coherent; the modules each serve a purpose, and build on one another (whether sequentially or in parallel) to achieve predetermined, measurable learning outcomes. Sometimes specific courses are identified as the means of achieving specific program goals and objectives (such as writing in the discipline). It is up to each department to establish a plan for how each course fits into each program, and in particular for how courses build on one another.

7.3 The means chosen for assessing student learning are appropriate to the program content, course learning design, available technologies, and characteristics of the learners. The instruments used for assessing student learning online may be different from those used for assessing learning in the traditional classroom.

7.4 Assessment of student success across curricula, including student performance, intended learning outcomes, and student retention in online classes is conducted on a regular basis.

8. Program Evaluation

8.1 Farmingdale State College (FSC) should have processes in place to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of all aspects of its programs, including distance learning programs on a regular basis, both at the course and program level. Each course or program should have assessment activities embedded within it that allow the instructor and the student to compare the extent to which learning outcomes were achieved. Examples of assessment activities employed in distance learning at FSC include surveys of current and former students, electronic portfolios, and standardized tests (in-house or externally administered). Periodic program reviews examine all programs, including distance-learning programs, for their effectiveness.

8.2 The protocol for the recommended student course feedback surveys is as follows:

- The faculty member sends an email invitation through the Axiom Mentor `system to the class section that they would like to survey.

- Students complete the survey on their own time. Alternatively, faculty members can book a computer lab and have students respond to the survey during class time. In such cases, the faculty member is not permitted in the room while students respond to the survey.
Faculty may give the survey as an assignment, but cannot include participation as criteria for students’ final grades.

The survey should be administered after mid-semester but prior to finals week. Surveys administered during finals week typically have lower response rates.

It is highly recommended that the faculty member monitor the response rate(s) of the survey(s) on Axiom and send out reminder notifications as necessary. Insufficient response rates will not be granted consideration.

All surveys will be closed just prior to the release of results.

Aggregate results will be available on Axiom after grades have been submitted for that semester. No exceptions will be made.

Results will not be available to anyone other than the faculty member administering it, unless the faculty member chooses to grant access to their supervisor to view their results or add it to their portfolio, which can both be done by the faculty member through Axiom.

The Office of Institutional Research shall be the administrators of the survey software, and as such, will set the dates that the surveys are closed and results can be viewed.

Alternative:
Faculty members may select alternative surveys and utilize alternative protocols other than the one recommended by the Provost’s Office. The faculty should consult either with the Provost’s Office or the Office of the Dean of their School regarding the survey and the protocol they would like to utilize. Protocols that are deemed to render the results invalid will not be granted any consideration.

8.3 Evaluation results should be used for continuous program improvement. Program Coordinators/Directors/Chairs and instructors should monitor student progress and student complaints and develop intervention strategies utilizing academic support staff (e.g. academic advisors, tutors, the Writing Center) where needed.

8.4 Program evaluation procedures include a determination that distance learning programs result in learning outcomes appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the college degree or certificate awarded. All programs (traditional and online) demonstrate that students achieve deep learning. Program evaluation surveys will be administered apart from student evaluation surveys.

9. Learning Management System

9.1 Farmingdale State College currently uses the BLACKBOARD Learning Management System (LMS) to support online and hybrid courses for distance learning, and as a course management system to support classroom-based courses with online teaching and learning tools. The LMS allows faculty to create course content, communicate with students, set-up discussion forums, exchange course work with students, create and administer assessments, record grades, and run course reports. Open SUNY provides the technological infrastructure for the LMS, supports faculty with training specifically created for online teaching and learning, and provides helpdesk services for both students and faculty. An Academic Coordinator and Instructional Designers provide local support on campus.
9.2 To use BLACKBOARD as a course management system to support classroom-based courses, a faculty member does not need permission from their Chairperson and Dean. Faculty need only contact the campus Instructional Designer with their request for course management support. Attendance at a two-hour orientation is required before courses will be enabled in LMS. All faculty teaching at Farmingdale are encouraged to utilize the course management to enhance their courses.

9.3 Each course, by default, will be unavailable to students until one week prior to the start of classes. Instructors using the LMS for instruction are responsible for making their course(s) available to students prior to the first day of class. Faculty members who are using the LMS as a course management system to support classroom-based courses must enable their own course shells. Directions for enabling course shells are located on the BLACKBOARD Homepage, under Tutorials for Faculty, (Course Management).

9.4 Twice each business day, updates are conducted on the BLACKBOARD system to add students who are enrolling in classes. Therefore, newly enrolled student's names will appear on a class page roster after an update has been completed.

9.5 All courses taught through the LMS are held on the LMS for 15 months, at which time they will be removed. Instructors are responsible for exporting any of the course materials they wish to archive. Instructions for archiving courses through the Learning Object Repository are located in the Blackboard Faculty area, under the Content Tab. Farmingdale State College is not responsible for archiving courses or including course statistics.

9.6 The LMS utilizes Course Mail, an internal messaging system, accessible via the LMS. Farmingdale State College considers Course Mail to be the exclusive vehicle for official communication related to online courses. All users are expected to regularly check their Course Mail and to acknowledge messages in a timely manner. Any course related electronic business conducted with the College must be done via Course Mail or an official FSC e-mail account.

9.7 Faculty interested in offering courses in a hybrid format must comply with the policies and procedures outlined below:

**Hybrid Courses**

Definitions

A. A hybrid course is defined as any course that meets both online and in a traditional classroom setting. Chairs should work with the Registrar’s Office to maximize the management of classroom resources through appropriate scheduling. All other instruction will be done online through the LMS. Using the LMS as a course management tool for such purposes as posting course materials, communicating with students outside of class, etc., does not constitute a hybrid course. Hybrid courses must only be offered with prior approval from the department chair and the school dean.

B. Hybrid courses must be scheduled as such with the Registrar. Faculty are not permitted to change course modality after the beginning of registration or at any time during the semester.
C. Hybrid courses must meet the same academic rigor and standards as those offered fully online or in a traditional classroom setting.

Procedure

A. Faculty will consult with the campus Instructional Designer to develop the proposed format for the hybrid course.

B. Faculty will submit to the Academic Coordinator for Distance Learning and the Registrar a Hybrid Course Proposal Form signed by the department chair and school dean.

C. If they have not already attended LMS training, faculty will attend an LMS Orientation.

D. Faculty will attend a hybrid course workshop.

E. Prior to teaching the course for the first time, faculty will review the completed hybrid course with the campus Instructional Designer.

F. If a faculty member has previous experience with hybrid or online course development and delivery, he or she may schedule a meeting with the Instructional Designer to determine if their qualifications are sufficient to forgo training. Faculty will still be required to review the completed hybrid course with the campus Instructional Designer.

G. In subsequent semesters, existing hybrid courses will be scheduled by the Department Chair with the Academic Coordinator for Distance Learning and the Registrar.

10/2015 completed 2-year review
11/2016 updated

Farmingdale State College has based its wording and format on policies and procedures regarding distance learning on the policies and procedures statements by The Sage Colleges and Plymouth State University on their websites at the following addresses:

http://www.sage.edu/resources/sageonline/faculty_resources/policies
FARMINGDALE STATE COLLEGE
ONLINE COURSE PROPOSAL FORM

Instructor: _________________________________  □ New Online Instructor  □ Trained Instructor

Department: _______________________________

Semester: _________________________________

Course Number: ___________________________  □ New Online Course  □ Offered Previously

Credits: _________________________________

Course Description:

***************************************************************************

Department Chairperson: _______________________________  □ Approved

_____________________________________________________________________

Signature

Comments:

***************************************************************************

School Dean: _______________________________________________  □ Approved

_____________________________________________________________________

Signature

Comments:

***************************************************************************

Send signed original to the SLN Campus Coordinator (Michael Knauth, Greenley Hall).
FARMINGDALE STATE COLLEGE
HYBRID COURSE PROPOSAL FORM

Instructor: _______________________________  □ New Hybrid Instructor  □ Trained Instructor

Department: ______________________________

Semester: _______________________________

Course Number: _________________________  □ New Hybrid Course  □ Offered Previously

Course Description:

Explanation of proposed format for the hybrid course, including what content will be presented in the classroom and what content will be presented online:

Indicate the number of classroom/lab meetings that you will require during the semester, including the day of the week and the time.

***************************************************************************
Department Chairperson: ____________________________  □ Approved

________________________
Signature

Comments:

***************************************************************************
School Dean: _________________________________  □ Approved

________________________
Signature

Comments:

***************************************************************************
Send signed original to the SLN Academic Coordinator (Michael Knauth, Greenley Hall) and a copy to the Registrar.
The new online and hybrid course shall be reviewed by Department Chairperson & Instructional Designer to ensure course objectives and assessments can be met in the new format and the course design is in alignment with the *Policies and Procedures for Planning & Conducting Distance Learning* and *Faculty Best Practices for Distance Learning*.

**Course Title:**

**Instructor:**

**Department:**

**Department Chairperson Comments:**

**Department Chairperson:**

**Signature**

**Date**

**Instructional Designer:**

**Signature**

**Date**

Please send signed original to Maya Bentz, Distance Learning, Greenley Hall or email as an attachment to bentzm@farmingdale.edu.
How to Log Into Blackboard Learn

2. Locate the "Login to Blackboard Learn" module and click on the Blackboard Login button.

3. Then, on the Farmingdale State College login page, enter your CAMPUS (EMAIL) USERNAME AND PASSWORD. It is important to remember that you will only use the username portion, not including "@farmingdale.edu".

Reset Your Password
In order to reset your password, you must go to the following self service link. The helpdesk does not reset passwords; make sure to use this link before calling the helpdesk for any account issues.

Link for Password Reset: https://reset.farmingdale.edu/showLogin.cc

How Do I Find My Courses?
You can access your course(s) under the "My Courses" section on the right side of the Blackboard Learn homepage or by clicking on the Course tab at the top right side of the screen. If you are unfamiliar with Blackboard Learn, please go through the Open SUNY Student Orientation, the link for which is on the upper left of the homepage.

How Do I Find Out My Login for Blackboard?
Please note that the College uses your campus (email) username and password to log into your online courses on Blackboard. If you do not know your campus email username and password, please log into the student information system, OASIS, a link to which is on the upper right side of the College's homepage; under "Personal Information, click on "View Email Addresses". You can also call the College's Information Technology Help Desk at 631-420-2754 for assistance with username/password issues.

How Do I Get Help?
For all other issues with Blackboard Learn (other than login issues), please call the Open SUNY Help Desk at 1-844-OPENSUNY TOLL FREE; the Help Desk is available to assist you seven days a week. You can contact the Distance Learning Department at Farmingdale by emailing: distancelearning@farmingdale.edu or calling 631-794-6300.
Online Courses - Faculty Observation Form

Guidelines for Observation:

Observer must have experience in teaching online or hybrid courses at FSC otherwise must meet with the Online Mentor Committee for guidance prior to the observation.
Prior to the observation, the observer should contact the faculty member to select a mutually agreed upon class module(s) and time.
Observer will look at previously agreed upon module(s) and all course overview materials.
Observer will have access to the class for a one-week period.
Observation should happen within the first six weeks of the semester (or equivalent for intensive semesters).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>Date of online observation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observed by</td>
<td>Time accessed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Name</td>
<td>Course No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topics/Modules</td>
<td>Has the observer taught online courses?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For each category listed below, please fill out the tables. Insert N/A if a field is not applicable.

**1- Course Development / Classroom Management**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Not Enough Information to Evaluate</th>
<th>Doesn’t Meet Criteria</th>
<th>Partially Meets Criteria</th>
<th>Meets Criteria</th>
<th>Exceeds Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course syllabus including course description, course schedule, contact information and evaluation procedure are communicated with students.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Course Goals and Objectives/Outcomes are available and clearly defined for the student.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Module Objectives/Outcomes are clearly presented and are in line with the overall goals and objectives for the class.</td>
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<td>Course content can be navigated easily.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Course content follows copyright and fair use laws.</td>
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</table>

**Comments:**
### 2- Faculty Knowledge of Subject Matter, Presentation and Preparation

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Description</th>
<th>Not Enough Information to Evaluate</th>
<th>Doesn’t Meet Criteria</th>
<th>Partially Meets Criteria</th>
<th>Meets Criteria</th>
<th>Exceeds Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructor demonstrates a high degree of knowledge, understanding and skill with respect to the subject matter areas being taught.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content of the course is current and appropriate to subject. It contributes to the achievement of the stated course and module/unit learning objectives.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lessons are well suited to students’ ability; adapts the materials and methods well to the needs of students.</td>
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**Comments:**

### 3- Learner Support

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*Comments:*
Observer Comments:

Please write a brief summary relating to the items on the previous page. In particular, please comment about any areas you feel the instructor didn’t meet the criteria or exceeded the criteria.

This page, in some instances, may take the place of a post observation meeting. Faculty member may attach his or her own comments to this observation.
Hybrid Courses - Faculty Observation Form

Guidelines for Observation:

Observer must have experience in teaching online or hybrid courses at FSC otherwise must meet with the Online Mentor Committee for guidance prior to the observation.
Prior to the observation, the observer should contact the faculty member to select a mutually agreed upon class module(s) (online) and class time (in class).
Observer will look at previously agreed upon module(s) and all course overview materials.
Observer will have access to the class for a one-week period.
The in-class observation should follow the Classroom Observation Procedure in the Professional Handbook.
Observation should happen within the first six weeks of the semester (or equivalent for intensive semesters).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>Date of online observation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observed by</td>
<td>Date of in-class observation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Course Name</td>
<td>Course No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topics/Modules</td>
<td>Has the observer taught online courses?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For each category listed below, please fill out the tables. Insert N/A if a field is not applicable.

1- Course Development / Classroom Management (online observation)

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<tr>
<td>Course syllabus including course description, course schedule, contact information and evaluation procedure are communicated with students.</td>
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<td>Course Goals and Objectives/Outcomes are available and clearly defined for the student.</td>
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<td>Course content can be navigated easily.</td>
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<td>Course content follows copyright and fair use laws.</td>
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Comments:
### 2- Faculty Knowledge of Subject Matter, Presentation and Preparation

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<td>Instructor demonstrates a high degree of knowledge, understanding and skill with respect to the subject matter areas being taught.</td>
<td>Online</td>
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<td>Content of the course is current and appropriate to subject. It contributes to the achievement of the stated course and module/unit learning objectives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lessons are well suited to students’ ability; adapts the materials and methods well to the needs of students.</td>
<td>Online</td>
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Please write a brief summary relating to the items on the previous page. In particular, please comment about any areas you feel the instructor didn’t meet the criteria or exceeded the criteria.

---

Signature of Observer | Signature of Instructor

Name of Observer (please print):

Date:

This page, in some instances, may take the place of a post observation meeting. Faculty member may attach his or her own comments to this observation.
Organizational Commitment to Distance Learning

Course Schedule and Syllabus Information

- The Organization’s commitment to distance learning should include specific policies that address the following four areas: Institutional Planning and Support, Learner Support, Faculty Support, and Assessment.

Institutional Planning And Support

- The organization’s distance learning activity is consistent with the mission of the institution.
- The organization demonstrates evidence that it values distance learning through its strategic planning, goals, policies, procedures, faculty recognition, and infrastructure.
- The organization’s distance learning programs show evidence of careful planning including identification of need, the nature and size of intended audiences, and provisions for serving those audiences. Plans should include areas targeted for growth in terms of course offerings and any plans for full degree offerings. It should also include plans for allocation of resources for the areas of growth including instructional staffing and support functions. The organization has committed sufficient resources to its distance learning program to assure its success.
- The organization has clearly identified a single office or officer with responsibility for assuring the quality of all distance education courses offered.
- The organization ensures that the administration of its distance learning courses is carried out by knowledgeable individuals with adequate time and resources to accomplish this task.
- The organization should experiment with offering courses in a wide variety of subject areas and encourage all disciplines to consider developing distance education classes.

Learner Support

- The organization should assure students are prepared to participate in an online course.
- Distance learning classes provide clear statements of the learner’s responsibilities and expectations of student participation and learning.
- The organization ensures that class size allows for a high degree of interactivity between faculty and students; therefore, class size should be determined by each department and faculty developing online classes.
- The organization assures that departments within the college offering degrees via distance education make certain students receive appropriate academic advisement.
- Information on campus services that are available to online students, such as library services, information resources, tutoring services, writing center, and assistance for students with disabilities, should be easily accessible.
- Login instructions for the Learning Management System should be sent to all students who have registered for online classes.
- A well-documented technology plan is in place and is operational, to ensure both quality standards and the integrity of the online courses offered.
- The reliability of the technology delivery system (Learning Management System) is as dependable as possible.
Faculty Support

- Faculty is provided with adequate training and technical support in the development of online courses.
- Instructor training and assistance, including peer mentoring, continues throughout the development of online courses.
- Sustained professional development opportunities have been established and implemented. This process should recognize that teaching in a distance learning environment requires different pedagogical and communication strategies to function effectively and that faculty and the institution share the responsibility for assuring effectiveness.
- Teaching online courses should be voluntary.
- Decisions regarding the online delivery of specific courses should be made at the department level.
- The organization should have a policy in place to determine the number of online courses that one faculty member may teach.
- The organization should assure there is a policy in place regarding intellectual property rights for faculty who develop a course. The policy should clearly state whether faculty retain creative control over the use and reuse of the course. Protection of intellectual property rights for faculty who have created courses should be assured.
- The organization should assure that guidelines exist regarding the minimum standards for course development, design and delivery of online courses.
- The organization assures that course design is managed by teams made up of faculty, content experts, instructional designers, technical experts.

Assessment

- The organization ensures that an evaluation process is used to improve the teaching and learning processes.
- Intended learning outcomes are reviewed regularly to ensure clarity, usefulness, and appropriateness.
- Evaluations are conducted that examine student success in online learning courses across curriculums, including student performance, intended learning outcomes and student retention in online classes.
- Data on enrollment in online courses and the successful use of this technology are used to evaluate the institutions effectiveness in this method of course delivery.
- Satisfaction surveys are conducted to determine student satisfaction with course delivery as well as faculty satisfaction in developing and teaching online courses.
This document outlines comprehensive best practices for distance learning. Best practices are not “rules” that must be followed, but rather suggest what methods and strategies have been successful in a wide variety of distance learning classes. Not all best practices apply to every class and every discipline.

Course Development and Classroom Management

- **Course Schedule and Syllabus Information**
  - Provide a detailed course schedule with all expectations, including the timeline for the course and specific information regarding due dates for assigned readings, completion of activities, submission of assignments, and module access dates. Start and end dates for each module should be provided, as well as weekly requirements (where applicable).
  - Announcements should be structured to remind students of the opening of new modules and use of the Calendar function is also recommended, as is the inclusion of a printer-friendly version of due dates. Links to required software for succeeding in the course should be provided.

- **Navigability**
  - Place material in easy-to-locate folders, verify the functionality of all links and external content, ensure that instructions are logical and clear (i.e., students should always know what to do next), clearly identify topics and related content.
  - Give clear directions for each task or assignment.
  - Ensure that links to outside web sites open in a new browser window or access the content within an ANGEL window to prevent loss of work or unnecessary complications.
  - Course readings, supporting materials, and other module-specific content should be easily available and in prominent and predictable locations within module folders.
  - Discussion Boards (DBs) should be included when appropriate.
  - Provide Tech Support contact information.

- **Design**
  - Be sure that the layout design and labeling are consistent throughout the course.
  - Design choices (typefaces, color, background, etc.) should enhance readability.
  - Images should support content and add visual interest.
  - A consistent theme should be employed throughout content and pages (ensuring visual and functional consistency).
  - Spelling and grammar are consistent and accurate.
  - Page content is a comfortable length (avoid overly long pages that require scrolling down).
  - Written material is concise and sentences and paragraphs are brief.
  - Courses should be divided into between five and eight modules rather than a “weekly” structure.

- **Contact Information and Communication Protocols**
  - Provide students with instructor contact information and communication protocols (office location/hours, use of Bulletin Board, email policies, etc.).
  - It is highly recommended that all email correspondence related to the course occur exclusively within the ANGEL site for the course (avoid use of faculty, student, and private emails).
  - A Discussion Board (Bulletin Board, Talk with the Professor, Ask a Question, etc.) for student questions should be included under the Learning Modules for queries related to requirements, due dates, etc.
  - Each module should be accompanied by an engaging announcement that includes key information about content, requirements, etc.

- **Code of Conduct and Expectations**
  - All classes should include a detailed definition of plagiarism, examples of plagiarized material, and the consequences of plagiarism.
  - Collaboration among students should be clearly defined and penalties for cheating specified.
Develop specific pages that cover instructor’s expectations and student/instructor roles as well as requirements and rules for each course (netiquette, citations, research guidelines, etc.).

- **Icebreaker**
  - An icebreaker module is highly recommended to introduce students to course tools such as the Discussion Boards, submission boxes, assessments, etc.
  - A required icebreaker Discussion Board where students introduce themselves and interact with other students is highly recommended (the instructor should welcome each student individually).

- **Course/Module Goals and Objectives**
  - Include the course catalog description and specific objectives for the course.
  - Provide guidance on the SUNY Learning Network and the commitment required to learn in the online environment.
  - Stipulate Learning Outcomes and provide a brief overview of requirements and expectations for the course and each module. Examples are provided or highlighted when appropriate.

- **Evaluation of Student Performance**
  - Specific information on evaluation should be provided under Course Information, including the percentage of each activity, i.e., Discussion Boards, Assessments (Tests & Quizzes), Written Assignments, Group Work, etc.
  - The college-wide grading scale should also be included.
  - Rubrics for Discussion Board assessment are highly recommended, as are notations about submission of late work, grammar, etc.

- **Copyright** – Ensure that the course follows copyright and fair use laws.

- **Accessibility**
  - All Welcome Video’s should display the message “Please contact the Disability Service Center if assistance is needed with the captioning of video lectures in learning modules.” Corrections or edits in the captioning of video’s must be made by the faculty. Corrections can be made in the notes are of the video.

**Faculty Knowledge of Subject Matter, Presentation and Preparation**

- As appropriate to the subject matter, course materials may include, but not be limited to, a mix of resources such as:
  - Instructor generated Power Point presentations, lecture notes, audio lectures, video lectures, and /or materials provided by the publisher for the assigned text(s). While these publisher materials such as e-books, review exercises, films and podcasts, may be used to enhance teaching, they may not be used in place of instructor teaching or faculty presence in the classroom
  - Optional learning tools for each module (maps, diagrams, formulas, images, etc.)
  - Games, web sites, podcasts, and video resources to support learning outcome (documentaries, short films, public lectures, etc.) from scholarly/relevant external sources (PBS, C-SPAN, iTunes, CNN, etc.) and YouTube.
  - Instructor generated narrated PowerPoint presentations, video lectures and lecture notes should be included for all learning modules, if appropriate.

- Class design will have been reviewed by peer, superior, or volunteer review board before the class is offered the first time. (Peers and superiors should have gone through SLN training or must review the course in tandem with someone who has.)

- The assessment instruments selected are sequenced, varied, and appropriate to the student work being assessed.
  - The requirements for DB grading, including a rubric for assessing the quality of the posts, minimum number of posts, word-count, citation/sourcing requirements, style guidelines, use of assigned reading, etc. should be clearly explained.
  - DBs should be graded within one week of their close (best practices is 48 hours); the first graded DB
should include extensive comments about why each student did not receive full credit for his/her post, using either the Comments section of the grading tool or an individual email (as well as course-wide announcement about common problems)

- All assignments should be graded within one week of their close (best practices is 48 hours)
- Quizzes and tests should be timed to prevent cheating via the use of Internet sites.

Faculty Presence in the Classroom

- During the first week of class, an e-mail should be sent to each student welcoming them to the class and prompting them to start work. The syllabus and Angel tutorial should be specifically mentioned.

- The course information should state the professor’s availability. Examples:
  - the professor logs in 4 times a week between Monday 9 am and Thursdays 5 pm;
  - the professor will answer e-mails Tuesday and Thursdays between 10 am and 2 pm;
  - assignments will be graded within 5 days of submission.
  - The announcement area and/or e-mail should be used to indicate any departure from this schedule.

- Expectations for course work should be defined
  - Good and bad examples of discussion and homework assignments should be given within the course information area or within the assignment area.
  - Netiquette guidelines should be provided or referenced and these guidelines should be modeled and encouraged.

- Course design and delivery encourages student/student and student/faculty interaction.
  - Students may be required to introduce themselves to the instructor and the other students when they first log on to the course.
  - The instructor may provide a forum, such as “Ask the Professor”, for discussion about general course issues and/or problems.
  - Courses may include a “Chat Room” or “Water Cooler”, or similarly named area, for casual non-course related discussion.
  - Class discussions are planned and assigned to foster interpersonal dialogue and create a sense of community.
  - Discussion boards should be monitored and may require reminder e-mails addressing the level of participation required.
  - Students should be challenged to voice their opinions, supporting these opinions with facts/data/experiences.
  - Feedback on discussions should be provided to students in a timely manner
  - Team activities might be planned to further foster interpersonal dialog.
  - Students who have not logged in for over a week are contacted to see if they are experiencing technical difficulties or problems with course content.

- All communication related to the course and its contents should be conducted via the LMS e-mail and/or through appropriate discussion forums (“Ask the Professor”) and/or the Course Announcement area unless the student utilizes the faculty member’s Office Hours.

- A unit summary might be used to provide instructor insight as to how students, in general, are progressing through the course.

- Meaningful feedback is provided on graded assignments with recognition of good work as well as specific suggestions for improvement.

- Consider utilizing Web 2.0 tools to vary teaching strategies as this might help with learning style differences among students as well as add some diversity to the course content.
Learner Support

- Students' should be required to complete the SLN Orientation prior to the start of the course. Courses should include an Ice Breaker Module that can be used to demonstrate student's completion of the Angel Orientation. (as indicated in Classroom Management, Part A)
  - Students might be asked to report on a particular activity in the orientation such as a lecture or video.
  - Students might be required to repeat an activity that they did in the orientation such as send an e-mail, make postings to a discussion, or submit a written assignment.

- Information on Support Services available for students with disabilities should be posted within each online course.
  - Information on the location of the Office for Students with Disabilities as well as the contact information should be included in the course syllabus.

- There are links within the course to tutorials and/or other information to help students with course content.
  - When appropriate, provide links to external resources, such as videos or printed materials on the Internet that might clarify some difficult concepts; these links should be checked over time to assure that they are still active.

- There are links within the course to tools required for viewing course content (such as Acrobat Reader and other plug-ins), or accomplishing course work (such as required software), instructions on how to use these tools are included.

- A grade book is available for checking student progress and grades are posted in accordance with stated response times.
  - An easily accessible list of all graded items is available for each student to monitor their progress in the course.
  - This could be the course grade book, or an individualized spreadsheet.

- Student evaluations of courses are utilized to develop strategies for course improvement.
  - Course evaluations should include student suggestions for improving course design.

Content to be reviewed bi-annually. Reviewed and updated 11/2016
Best Practices Checklist for Setting Up Distance Learning Classes

This document outlines comprehensive best practices for distance learning. Best practices are not "rules" that must be followed, but rather suggest what methods and strategies have been successful in a wide variety of distance learning classes. Not all best practices apply to every class and every discipline.

1. Course Development and Classroom Management

- Course Schedule and Syllabus Information
- Information about the instructor with a photo is included.
- Syllabus is included in the Course Information folder and is linked to the course menu. A printable version of the syllabus is available to students.
- Course schedule/timeline (due dates for assigned readings, completion of activities, submission of assignments, and modular access dates) are included.
- Calendar is set up with relevant start/end dates.
- Individual announcements for each of the modules as well as other key tasks (icebreaker, exams, etc.) are utilized.
- College-wide grading scale is provided.
- Rubric for Discussion Board assessment is provided.
- Tech Support contact information has been provided.
- Information on the support services available to students with disabilities is included within the course.
- Netiquette guidelines should be provided or referenced and these guidelines should be modeled and encouraged.
- Instructor availability, contact information and communication protocols (office location/hours, use of email, etc.) are clearly defined. Examples:
  - the professor logs in 4 times a week between Monday 9 am and Thursdays 5 pm
  - the professor will answer e-mails Tuesday and Thursdays between 10 am and 2 pm
  - assignments will be graded within 5 days of submission.
  - The announcement area and/or Blackboard email should be used to indicate any departure from this schedule.

Navigability

Course Menu

- There is an overview of course navigation. The Course Menu should contain the following links or buttons:
  - Home Page (Includes modules with links to the OPEN SUNY Student Orientation, Open SUNY Helpdesk, and the Disability Office)
  - Course Menu contains a START HERE link, which may include a Welcome Message and a Video. There is an Orientation or overview of the Course, as well as for each module to assure students know how to navigate the course, and are aware of due dates for tasks.
  - Syllabus (there is a link to the syllabus located in the Course Information Documents)
  - Course Information
  - Icebreaker Activities
  - Learning Modules
  - Calendar
  - Contact the Professor
  - Course Grades
Discussions (hidden from students—all discussions are linked to the modules)

Tools (unused Tools are hidden from students)

The instructor can modify the above links/buttons or add any additional links as needed.

- Course material is placed in easy to locate folders.
- Instruction and labels are logical, clear, and consistent and present for each task.
- Design choices (typefaces, color, background, etc.) enhance readability and are consistent.
- Images and videos support content and add visual interest.

Course Information Folder

- The Course Information Folder includes the following:
  - Contact Information
  - Course Catalog Description
  - Course Learning Objectives
  - Course Calendar, My Expectations
  - How You Will Be Evaluated (including the College Grading Scale)
  - Student and Instructor Roles
  - Disability Guidelines
  - The Student Code of Conduct
  - How to Use Turnitin or Safe Assign
  - Academic Integrity Policies
  - APA/MLA Citation Style

Course Design

- Course is organized in a logical way and is easy to navigate; hyperlinks are used where appropriate.
- Links to outside websites open in a new browser window or access the content within a Blackboard window.
- Links are provided for all required software.
- Spelling and grammar are consistent and accurate.
- Page content is a comfortable length and written material is concise.
- Courses are divided into between five and fourteen modules.
- A Discussion Board (Bulletin Board, Talk with the Professor, Ask a Question, etc.) for student questions is included under the Learning Modules for queries related to requirements, due dates, etc.
- Collaboration among students is clearly defined and penalties for cheating are specified.
- My Expectations and Student and Instructor Roles are included.
- An icebreaker module has been included.
  - The icebreaker module includes a Discussion Board where students introduce themselves, and interact with other students.
  - The instructor should welcome each student individually
  - The icebreaker activities may include an ungraded Turnitin assignment and quiz to enable students to feel comfortable using these tools
- Examples are provided and highlighted (when appropriate).
- Course material and resources including videos are in compliance with copyright and fair use laws are properly attributed and indicate permission to share where applicable.
- Verification is complete of the functionality of all links and external content before the class goes live.
- All Welcome Videos should display the message, “Please contact the Disability Services Center if assistance is needed with the captioning of video lectures in learning modules.”
- Corrections or edits in the captioning of videos must be made by the faculty. Corrections can be made in the notes area of the video.
2. Faculty Knowledge of Subject Matter, Presentation and Preparation

- As appropriate to the subject matter, course materials should contain a variety of engaging internal and external resources that support course content which may include, but are not limited to:
  - Instructor generated PowerPoint presentations, lecture notes, audio lectures, video lectures, and/or materials provided by the publisher for the assigned text(s) such as e-book resources, review exercises, films, podcasts, PPTs, etc.
  - Optional learning tools for each module (maps, diagrams, formulas, images, etc.)
  - Games, websites, podcasts, and video resources to support learning outcome (documentaries, short films, public lectures, etc.) from scholarly/relevant external sources (PBS, C-SPAN, iTunes, CNN).
- A variety of technology tools, teaching methodologies and activities are utilized to appropriately facilitate communication and collaboration, deliver content, and support student learning and engagement.
- Each module should be accompanied by an engaging announcement that includes key information about content, requirements, etc.
- Course content is current, free of bias and represents multiple perspectives
- Quizzes and tests are timed to prevent cheating via the use of Internet sites.
- Class design has been reviewed by an instructional designer, and chair before the start of the semester.
- Instructor generated narrated PowerPoint presentations, video lectures and lecture notes should be included for all learning modules, if appropriate.
- Course materials may include publisher resources, e-books, review exercises, films and podcasts, which can be used to enhance teaching, but may not be used in place of instructor teaching or faculty presence in the classroom

3. Best Practices – Learner Support

- A link for the Blackboard Orientation is embedded within the course.
- Course schedule includes due dates for assigned readings, completion of activities, submission of assignments and modular access dates
- Course objectives/outcomes are clearly defined, measurable, and aligned to student learning activities and assessments.
- Opportunities for student-to-student interaction and constructive collaboration are included.
- Course provides activities for students to develop higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills, such as critical reflection and analysis.
- Activities that emulate real world applications of the discipline, such as experiential learning, case studies, and problem-based activities are required.
- Criteria for assessment are clearly articulated (rubrics, exemplary work).
- Links to tutorials that might assist students with content are available.
- Instructions and/or links to information on how to use course tools that may be required for viewing course content or specific software needs is available within the course.
- A grade book is available within the course.

4. Best Practices - Faculty Presence in the Classroom and Student Engagement

- A video welcoming the students should be posted in the classroom.
- During the first week of class, students should be greeted by either individual recognition in the ice breaker module or via Blackboard class and prompting them to start.
- Adhere to posted statement of response time in terms of the interactive components of the class unless otherwise indicated in announcements or email.
- Interaction should be encouraged via initial introductions, course question discussion area, casual discussion area, team projects, email contact with inactive students.
- All communication should be completed via the Learning Management System.
Discussions, tests and assignments are graded within 48 hours to one week of the due date. Extensive comments critiquing student submissions including why the students did not receive full credit and recommendations for improvement should be an integral part of the grading process.

Discussion boards should be monitored and may require reminder emails addressing the level of participation required.

Instructors should leave comments on the Discussion Board and be present.

Peer review opportunities with clear guidelines are provided.

Student evaluations are utilized to improve teaching practices.