Designing a great ONLINE or HYBRID course
“Technology is nothing. What's important is that you have a faith in people, that they're basically good and smart, and if you give them tools, they'll do wonderful things with them.” –Steve Jobs

Check the Online Learning website regularly.
commons.hostos.cuny.edu/online

New instructional 5 minute videos will be available this fall

SECTION 5: TEXTBOOKS AND MATERIALS

We continue to add new resources, examples, and explanation to help you implement your ideas.

NOTE: Read The Chronicle of Higher Education Advice Guide on “How to be a Better Online Teacher”
URL: https://www.chronicle.com/interactives/advice-online-teaching
It offers excellent and universally applicable advice on both course design and delivery.

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Online Course Development Guidelines

Overview

The purpose of these online course development guidelines is to ensure that online and hybrid courses are as effective as face-to-face variants and that students’ experience in these courses is comparable. These guidelines were designed following best practices and have been strongly influenced by national best practices and emerging standards.

Participation in The Online Initiative offered by the Office of Educational Technology (EdTech) is strongly recommended, which provides instructors with training in Blackboard, other technologies, mentoring, and specialized instructional design support.

The Application Process

Instructors interested in the online designation can be recommended by their respective department chairs who will then inform the Director of EdTech and the Chair of the Educational Technology Leadership Council (ETLC). Those selected will be contacted and provided with resources, guidelines, and training.

The assessment and approval process for the course may take a little time. In the meantime, the course section should be submitted by the respective department no later than MARCH 1st, for classes to be scheduled in the fall, or OCTOBER 1st for scheduling in the spring.

Please note: The department Chair must approve the submission of the course in the online modality to the Registrar.
Online Course Designations

Online or Asynchronous Courses

For a course to be considered online, more than 80% of the instruction has to occur online. The instructor can decide to meet students in a classroom to complete examinations and other related tasks but it is recommended that most instructional processes take place within the online environment through Blackboard, which is the official platform for online instruction at CUNY.

Hybrid or Blended Courses

For a course to be considered hybrid, 33 - 80% of the instruction has to occur online. For example, if a regular face-to-face course meets twice a week, the hybrid course will only meet once per week in the physical classroom, and the remaining content will be offered online. If a face-to-face course meets three times a week, the hybrid course will meet either once or twice per week in the physical classroom, and so on. The online portion of the course should take place within Blackboard.

An online or hybrid class is expected to cover all the learning objectives that would be found in a similar face-to-face course in the college curriculum. What distinguishes an online or hybrid course from a traditional face-to-face class is the mode of delivery, not the content of the class. It is recommended that instructors design their online courses using learning modules or learning units that should be organized in a coherent and systematic way matching the academic coursework that is done during a regular semester.
The Approval Process

For a course to be considered online/hybrid, it must be approved by the ETLC. Once faculty complete developing the course shell, the Online Course Submission Form must be filled out at:

Online Course Evaluation System

1. Two or more members from ETLC, one of whom will be from the faculty developer’s department, will be selected to evaluate the course using the “Development Guidelines for Online Designation.” Their recommendations will be available immediately upon completion of the online evaluation.

2. If the course meets the criteria, ETLC will notify the Department Chair and the Office of Academic Affairs that the course may be offered with the “Online designation”.

3. If the course does not meet the criteria, the ETLC and EdTech will advise the developer on ways to revise the submission.

Tips on Getting Started

Take advantage of the “always open” classroom, and develop strategies to encourage students to take advantage of that as well. Remember, learning doesn’t only take place when you are standing in front of a class. Peer-to-peer learning and drop-in learning can be powerful.

Pierce Sanute, Penn State World Campus

Start by flipping your classroom—don’t lecture, but instead put the lecture materials online and then use class time for activities and hands-on exercises. It will be less stressful than going fully online from the get-go.

Stevie Rocco, Penn State

Start using the eLearning as a repository for pre-reading and post-reading materials, including videos and books not easily accessible in the library.

John Branya, Strathmore University
Goals to:

- Clearly state expectations for the course
- Provide additional and relevant resources
- Effectively present content in a student-friendly environment
- Establish communication to bolster engagement
- Use and manage assessments effectively

Over the past ten years (2009-present) the Office of Educational Technology has worked with faculty to develop training, resources, and certifications of both faculty innovators and online coursework.

Best Practices and measures are continuously being analyzed to impact the design, development, and implementation in relation to the specific needs of the CUNY community in general with specific attention to Hostos. The Evaluation and findings from the HOLA committee complements the ETLC’s implementation of new findings.

After many cycles of this practice, the most significant and proven criteria were derived and adapted from the most respected standards available. These include:

- Chico - Exemplary Online Instruction
- Quality Matters - HE and INST rubrics
- OSCQR - Online SUNY standards
# DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES FOR ONLINE DESIGNATION

These guidelines define a framework to establish a clear and effective online/hybrid course development roadmap.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORIES:</th>
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<tr>
<td>General/Core= <strong>GC</strong></td>
<td><strong>Defining Expectations</strong>: Clearly state expectations and policies for the course</td>
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<td>Course/Specific= <strong>CS</strong></td>
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<td><strong>GENERAL/GENERAL REQUIREMENTS</strong></td>
<td><strong>GENERAL/Core GC requirements</strong>: These would include basic static information such as contact information, rules, regulations, and campus-wide policies. Additionally, elements that are specific to that course but representive of consistent elements common to all courses would be included in this section.</td>
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<td><strong>Course Specific CS level requirements</strong>: Include all other criteria that are essential to teaching college level coursework in a partial or full online setting. These elements are mostly specific to this iteration of the course or requiring subjective or arbitrary evaluation to determine it is at a successful level of quality for its purpose.</td>
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<td><strong>Advanced/Expert AE level requirements</strong>: The implementation of these elements will be included in the evaluation for constructive purpose. They do not have a pivotal role in the approval of the course, but are strongly encouraged as a certain amount of innovation can lead to new insights into the process overall.</td>
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Determiners as they relate to Requirement type

It is important for the approval process to indicate areas in need of improvement or missing elements that are needed for the effective development of an online course. Additionally, the ability to support faculty well is improved by ascertaining the areas the EdTech team focuses their time and effort on to best offer assistance. Any rating system for course approval is primarily for this reason. In reviewing the current trends and methods, these determiners should be considered:

In Development:
Limited or not evident. These elements require refinement to be considered effective.

Effective:
Evident and providing the necessary tools or resources in the most accessible manner.

Exemplary:
An element representing best practice. Several such elements indicate a candidate to be featured in the commons, newsletter, etc.

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<td>Ice-breakers</td>
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When considering the determiners above, the following must be evident for a course to be approved:

General/Core Requirements must ALL be ‘Effective’ or higher as they are essential.

Course Specific Requirements: 50% or more should be ‘Effective’ or higher overall.

Advanced/Expert Level Features are not required but are encouraged as evidence of effort to refine and improve education on the whole.
## RUBRIC FOR ONLINE DESIGNATION

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Defining Expectations:

Clearly state expectations for the course.

It is essential that all course instructions and academic expectations are stated in writing since students need clear guidelines to complete their academic coursework without the physical presence of the instructor in the “online classroom.”

Course Description

Information from the College Catalog, Departmental Course Syllabus, and Prerequisites. Clearly designate the modality the course will be offered in here as either HYBRID or ASYCHRONOUS.

Course Objectives

Clearly posting objectives in a prominent location on Blackboard (e.g. course information section) helps to remind students what their learning goals are and what they should be able to accomplish through this course. These objectives also set up a marker for students to measure their progress against.

What are the **learning objectives** of the course?

What are the **desired learning outcomes** for the students?

What are the **indicators** that students have reached these objectives?

Course Syllabus

- Conforms to the Office of Academic Affairs (OAA) guidelines
- Uploaded as PDF (This improves portability and platform-independent access to the information)

Contact Information

Typically, this is the first opportunity for faculty to post a self-introduction and contact information. Details include several methods for communication and availability:

- A short biography with relevant information about teaching style, research interests and expectations about the course
- A photograph (or a representative image) of the instructor
- Contact information and procedures including office location, relevant phone numbers, and e-mail addresses
- Information about turn-around times for replying to emails or voicemail
- A policy for communicating with students in the event of a system failure
OBJECTIVES VS. OUTCOMES

Learning Objectives:

- tend to describe specific, discrete units of knowledge and skill
- were useful during the 1970's and 1980's when attempts were made to describe workplace activities as specific tasks to be completed
- can be accomplished within a short time frame - still may be relevant for a class period
- tend to be statements of intent; do not necessarily suggest that the behavior has been demonstrated

Learning Outcomes:

- describe broad aspects of behavior which incorporate a wide range of knowledge and skill
- increased use in the 1990's when workplace requirements involve broader skill-sets which are transferable to a wide range of work settings
- accomplished over time in several learning experiences
- refer to demonstrations of performance

Textbooks and Materials

What do students need to be able to prepare for and participate meaningfully in the course?

Textbook(s)

- Electronic course pack in PDF and/or HTML format
- Information on required textbooks, including acceptable editions and their ISBN numbers
- Purchase information and links for required textbooks (where applicable), including the price for both new and used versions
- Textbook availability at the college library
- Other classroom materials
- Required hardware and software

TIPS

In courses with clear and consistent behavior expectations:

- Students know and understand what’s expected of them, which gives them confidence.
- Students monitor themselves and take more responsibility for their behavior — and their learning.
- Students spend more time on task and academic learning time increases.
- Teachers can more easily recognize and motivate positive behaviors. The classroom culture and the school culture become more positive overall.

Online participation policy

Students need to understand how much time they should be participating in the online course, so they can plan a realistic schedule for participation.

- What is the expected pace of student attendance and participation?
- How often do students need to visit and actively participate on Blackboard? For example: Students are required to visit the virtual class and contribute in a discussion forum at least two days a week to be considered present.
Provide additional and relevant resources. These may include:

- Outside references
- Exercises
- Current Data used for activities in class
- Review

What other forms of support may be needed to help students better comprehend course content, reach learning objectives, and successfully complete the course?

**Nutrition**

**Language & Composition**

**Math, Science, STEM**
**Minimum technology requirements**

Students are informed about technology and applications that will be used to participate in the course, as well as the level of digital literacy required to succeed. This includes reference and direction on accessing the ‘Are you Ready?’ student online course preparation.

**Tips on Getting Started**

Start small. Look for the most critical piece of content your students need practice on and start there. One small, fun, engaging activity so they can test their skills will give them a positive view of eLearning, and you’ll experience success quickly.

Lisa Ferris, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences

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**Are You Ready?**

This course is available to all Hostos students. It is advisable for instructors to make this a mandatory requirement to insure that students are prepared for taking Online or Hybrid courses. It has been adopted by several other CUNY campuses and is revised and updated every semester.

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**General support section**

Preloaded in Developer Shell

Contact information for academic resources. This is included in the Blackboard course template, and should NOT be modified in any way.

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**Mindset:** to have the online content support or provide the foundation for the needed knowledge and comprehension, so that the in-classroom experience can focus on application and analysis. Key online course structure: (1) well-organized and material properly partitioned for effective student engagement and digestion; (2) quality content; (3) assignment instruction clarity; (4) a playground for students to practice without pressure (for example, untimed quizzes with multiple attempts); and (5) keep the course simple in design—let the content be the star with dynamic, interactive content to inspire and motivate learners.

Freddy Angel, Champlain College
Course Design & Environment

Effectively present content in an organized and student friendly environment

Course timeline and schedule

The dates for each and every course topic, learning unit, and assessment are provided in enough detail so students can maintain their own calendars to keep track of due dates.

Learning Units

A Learning Unit or Module is defined as a distinct group of learning activities and course content created by the instructor to guide the progress of students through a structured presentation of materials.

Learning Units may be organized by textbook chapter, module, course week, topic, theme, or by some other method, but it is suggested that each Learning Unit should be approximately equal in terms of amount of content covered and time required for completion.

Each Learning Unit includes:

- Learning Objectives/Outcomes
- A table of activities
- A detailed description of all online activities
- A list of resources

A description of the assessment items and procedures that is itself cross-referenced with each Learning Unit’s Learning Objectives/Outcomes.

Learning Units can be thought of as an organizational structure for presenting course content. They may be organized in individual folders and made available within the Course Content section on Blackboard. As an example, each Learning Unit may have a video lecture, required reading, supplemental multimedia sources to foster deeper learning, assignments, quizzes, and exams.

Accessibility of content

As an instructor, you want to reach as many students as possible and ensure that course content is accessible to learners with a range of abilities and needs; this is as important in a physical classroom as it is in an online environment. Designing accessible content is essential to implementing an effective online course.

This goal can be achieved often with some simple considerations for how content is posted. For example, when posting multimedia con-
tent, images need to be coupled with alternative text, and videos need to be captioned. Scanned PDF documents are often less accessible than Word files because text in PDFs may not be picked by screen readers.

Blackboard also has features and functions that can accommodate students with particular needs, such as offering extra time or attempts for tests for select students. Instructors can also utilize the adaptive release option, which differentiates instruction for students, based on rules set by the instructor. Content targeting specific gaps or levels of proficiency can be unlocked when students meet certain criteria as they progress through the course.

Navigating the Course

This should be a clear explanation for students about how to locate and access various sections of the course, menu organization, and section consistency. This could take the form of a permanent announcement, which would sit prominently on the homepage and be the first item students see when they log in. It could also include a video introduction.

Multimedia Elements

Consider the best use of multimedia sources to help students reach learning objectives. Using a lecture capture tool like Panopto offers students the advantage of experiencing your presentation of content through video recordings available for review at any time.

Other online resources including videos, podcasts, and websites can supplement reading material in ways that support deeper learning, exploration and elaboration for students. They can be used to illustrate course topics and complex concepts in the reading assignments; they can also be used to prompt students to apply their content knowledge in a myriad of contexts. Additional resources include Blackboard’s mashup tool and Kanopy (available from the library).

If students perceive the content and/or context presented in these resources to be relevant to their own personal experience, values, and interests, they will feel more motivated to engage with it.
Establish methods of communication to bolster engagement

Announcements

Faculty can post announcements to send important messages to their students. Periodic use of announcements helps to keep students alert in the course and serve as reminders for due dates. The following are some examples of appropriate use of announcements.

A welcome announcement at the beginning of the course.

An announcement for each Learning Unit that includes clear start and end dates.

An announcement for each assignment or assessment clearly stating the due date and point value. Reminding students about the value/percentage of the grade is important.

Netiquette

Establishing a safe and productive space to learn and experiment is essential to any learning environment. This is particularly true in an online course, because students are expected to frequently communicate their ideas in writing or demonstrate their work to the entire group.

How well do you establish and sustain a safe environment for students to contribute ideas and show work?

Establish Netiquette guidelines and send reminders when appropriate.

Create opportunities for students to introduce themselves to the class (using a discussion board, blogs, or a Collaborate session)
**Instructor Presence**

Although students may not receive a lot of face time with instructors in an online course, cultivating a safe and engaging environment is as essential as in a conventional classroom. Student motivation and perseverance is correlated with how connected they feel to the instructor and the learning environment, and that doesn’t change with an online course.

Consistent and regular communication from faculty can establish and maintain a strong instructor presence. This could include (but is not limited to):

- a self-introduction (perhaps as a video) to begin the course
- regular e-mail communications about assignments
- moderating a discussion board to ensure students contribute in a thoughtful manner

Providing clear details about how to communicate and timely, action-specific feedback for assessments also help students develop confidence in the instructor’s presence.

**Student collaboration tools**

Oftentimes, the element students miss the most about being in a classroom is the social environment and interaction.

Do you create opportunities for students to get to know each other?

How conducive is the environment for collaboration?

Use at least 1 interactive media application to encourage communication and collaboration for each Learning Unit: blogs, wikis, personal response systems (clickers), ePortfolios, discussion forums, BB Collaborate.

**Ice-breakers**

Include activities that create an opportunity for students to introduce themselves to each other (using the discussion board, a blog, or a collaborate session). Supporting students in getting to know each other helps them feel connected to the course, and motivates them to participate in collaborative activities.

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**Tips on Getting Started**

First, you need to build your digital presence. When instructors teach face-to-face, the physical presence is effortless. By standing in front of a class, you present yourself as a person that students can instantly connect to and relate to. When transitioning to online teaching, instructors have to build their presence as educators deliberately. Record a short bio video, post a picture of yourself, add a warm welcome announcement, create a self-introduction discussion forum and introduce yourself to the class, etc.—all of these would be your initial digital presence to your online students.

Yi Zhang, St. John’s University

It is important to pull in your personality and teaching approach from the classroom and translate it online. One way to do this is to think of the most difficult theme, concept, process, practice, etc., and pay attention to what you do, say, or provide students in the classroom. You can translate using a variety of tools for video, audio, and interactives. The other thing is to think about the themes that you love to teach. What is it that you do? How do you perform? What resonates with students? How do you get them talking?

Tess Crossen, instructional designer
Online Assessments

Assessments are particularly essential to an online course because these are the primary tools for measuring student progress and are useful for learning how well students comprehend course content.

Assignments, quizzes, and tests can be set up online on Blackboard to mimic how they typically are presented in any course. With special features such as allowing students to attempt a test multiple times, or setting a time limit, or randomly organizing the questions, instructors can customize an assessment to capture a student's progress at any moment in time.

Blackboard offers a range of tools that allow students to demonstrate their work and learning process for the entire class: Blogs, ePortfolios, Wikis, Discussion Board. Faculty can activate these tools and assessments and should include at least 3 of the following in a hybrid course, and 4 in an asynchronous course.

- Assignments (essays, papers, lab reports, practice exercises, etc.)
- Quizzes
- Exams
- ePortfolios
- Blogs
- Wikis
- Individual projects
- Group projects
- Discussions

* Multiple Rubrics

These assessments ensure students actively participate in an online course and inform faculty about their students’ progress. When instructors provide timely and actionable feedback to these assessments, students also increase their own awareness of progress.

Grading criteria

Do students understand how they will be graded, and how they can track their own progress on Blackboard? This information includes the following:

- List of assignments, due dates and point values adding up to 100% of the final grade
- General assignment submission procedure
- Description of late work policy
- Policy regarding extra credit, if any.
Tips on Getting Started

Keep what works. It’s generally not necessary to completely change an instructional event, collaborative activity, or assignment to make it suitable for eLearning.

Start with something that is already pedagogically sound and effective, and then determine which elements of it you can modify to suit the online environment.

Jackie Bruso, Regent University

Even though you will be in the online environment, your goals and objectives for the course remain the same. Think about how to retain the same richness of the content through new and engaging activities.

Jennifer Albat, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

First, determine whether or not your learner audience will be able to access the materials you are putting online. Second, use a free tool to build and experiment with the structure that will suit your content and assessment methodologies. (There are free trials for LMSs, or use Google Apps, or use Mozilla’s free website tool to design and build the structure, schedule, and some of the content.) Third, get some training on how to effectively assess learning and retention using online tools.

Tim McMahon, Emily Griffith Technical College

Tools to ensure academic integrity

Use tools to deter students from plagiarism. Blackboard includes tools such as SafeAssign and Turnitin to help instructors and students identify plagiarized content and uncited sources.

The Grade Center

The Grade Center is a Blackboard feature that calculates and keeps track of students’ scores and progress. It also allows students to be able to see how they are doing in the course in real time, how they performed on all their assessments, and how close or far away they are from fulfilling the learning objectives.

The Grade Center shows the results of all assessments that students completed in a table. Faculty can enter grades directly in the cells, customize which columns can be seen, Calculation formulas are readily available in the Grade Center, easily computing each student’s final grades. It displays the information by student, making it easy to see how each student is progressing in the course. This data can be downloaded as a spreadsheet or in another format so faculty can keep an offline record.

Furthermore, the Grade Center allows students to see their own progress in real time. (They do not see other students’ scores. Only the instructor can view all student scores.) Posting clear instructions about how to access this information ensures students are able to see grades and any feedback offered by faculty in a timely manner.

Feedback, Surveys, and Polls

Are students offered opportunities to reflect on the course and their experience?

Use of surveys to collect student feedback can give useful information to address any areas for improvement in course design in future semesters.
Online courses allow instruction to be available to a broader range of students, allowing them to work at their own pace. Both faculty and students have the flexibility of accessing course content off campus as long as they have an internet connection.