UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS AT PINE BLUFF

Center for Teaching, Learning and Advising

DISTANCE EDUCATION GUIDELINES, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

DR. ROBERT Z. CARR, JR.
PROVOST AND VICE CHANCELLOR FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

DR. LAURENCE B. ALEXANDER, JR.
CHANCELLOR

Policy on Distance Learning for Faculty Delivery of Technology Mediated Instruction

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to the faculty related to the expected levels of competence, necessary to plan and deliver a rigorous distance learning instructional program.

- The policy provides for faculty support services specifically related to teaching via an electronic system.

- The policy assures appropriate training by the institution for faculty who teach using technology.

- The policy is designed to assure that the program provides adequate equipment, software and communications to faculty for interaction with students, institutions and other faculty.

General Provisions

1.1   Nothing in this procedure is to be construed to prevent faculty from continuing to develop materials and conduct on-campus classes in accordance with the traditional guidelines of the University policy.

1.2   Depending on the availability of resources a developer of a distance delivered course may receive various degrees of financial support and other University resources. Adopted materials are subject to the same evaluation process as developed materials.

1.3   Before the commitment of resources is authorized, the instructor must demonstrate to the Distance Learning Administrator that he or she is competent to develop distance learning instructional materials.

Procedures

2.1   The relevant department chair or equivalent for a program will identify faculty who have   been teaching an on-campus course and or who have the credentials to teach the course and who are interested in voluntarily participating in the distance learning instructor training and subsequent course development.

2.2   All online courses will be evaluated and approved by a distance education committee prior to implementation to ensure rigor, relevance, and engagement of students in online studies.

2.3   Online courses must be fully developed and approved one semester prior to implementation.

2.4   Faculty who develop online courses should be given release time equivalent to one course (e.g., 3 credit hours) during the semester the course is being developed, or compensation if no release time is provided.

    2.5   Faulty teaching online courses should be evaluated comparable to the University's faculty evaluation system (i.e., student, peer, and chairperson evaluations).

    2.6 The Center for Teaching and Learning will maintain a listing of faculty who have completed training in Distance Education delivery or who have acquired the training experientially.

    2.7   Students enrolled in online classes must login and submit an assignment by the 11th day of class for Fall/Spring session. Students enrolled in online classes must login and submit an assignment by the 4th day of the summer sessions. Students who do not adhere to the allotted time frame will be administratively dropped for nonattendance.

    2.8   Students enrolled in online courses should not be required to complete any assignments or examinations at a physical location. All assignments and examinations developed for online courses should be designed to allow students to complete all necessary components within blackboard.

    2.9   Official communication between faculty and students enrolled in online courses should be conducted via UAPB Blackboard or UAPB email only.

Curriculum and Instruction

Each course of study results in learning appropriate to the rigor

The course provides for appropriate interaction between faculty and students and among students. Academic standards for all courses offered electronically are the same as those for other courses delivered at the institution where the programs originate. Student learning in a course delivered electronically should be comparable to student learning in a course offered at the campus where the courses originate.

Course Syllabus

In addition to the items mandated by the Faculty Handbook, instructors of DE courses should include the following in their syllabi: The syllabus must adhere to the guidelines set by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP).

- A statement of virtual office hours, and what you consider reasonable response time to students' queries via email, phone, the web, or by other means.

- A detailed statement of hardware, software, and information technology skills expected of students to participate in the course. It is important that the instructor is explicit about expectations for students in the course description and in the syllabus. This includes not only what type of equipment students will need or what type of Internet connection, but also the instructor's expectations regarding student expertise in software applications. Along with other course requirements,

> students need to know if they will need to use the Internet or certain software applications in order to complete or submit course assignments.

- A statement that it is the student's responsibility to check any electronically submitted assignments for viruses. Any document that fails to pass your virus checker will not be opened.

- A detailed statement of your expectations regarding how frequently students should access the course website, post to discussion lists, etc., including how such class participation will affect their course grades.

- A Start Here Link that provides tutorials and resources for the course.

- A link to the UAPB network use policy so students are advised of their rights, responsibilities.

- An additional statement about plagiarism that includes materials obtained through the Internet and the consequences.

- An expanded definition of classroom disruption that includes "flaming", "spamming", and other forms of electronic/email harassment, plus a statement regarding the consequences for such disruption. Students may need to be encouraged or reminded of the need for courteous and professional behavior when sending email or engaging in online discussions. It might also be helpful to remind students that electronic communication within the course should be confined to topics directly relevant to the course content.

- A recommendation that students should make at least electronic backup copies of everything submitted.

- An explanation of what will be considered "nonattendance" and thus possible grounds for removal from class or reduction of grade.

- A statement of what students should do in the case of technical difficulties, such as downtime on the course server or disruption of Internet connection. http://uapb.blackboard.com/

Course Standards

UAPB also endorses a set of best practices for individual Distance Education courses. These are based on accepted standards of best practice for teaching and learning regardless of the medium used. There is a general consensus that quality web-based or web-enhanced courses **involve**:

- Encouraging student-faculty interaction and contact.
- Students having the ability to contact faculty easily with the assurance of receiving a prompt response (e.g., within 24 to 48 hours).
- Faculty interaction with students that encourage engagement and provide sufficient data to assess student achievement of learning objectives.

- Encouraging student cooperation and interaction.
- Substantive, constructive, and meaningful feedback between students.
- Encouraging active learning.
- Substantive student responses to prompts.
- Assignments that encourage use of critical thinking strategies as well as an emphasis on time and task.
- Students interacting with, writing about, and incorporating what they are learning into their experience.
- Giving frequent and prompt feedback regarding student progress in the course.
- Frequent, periodic, and substantive work, including contact with the course site.
- Giving students guidelines on how much time they should expect to work on each segment of the course.
- Communication of high expectations.
- Learning objectives that communicate collegiate level learning appropriate to the course level (introductory, advanced, and graduate).
- Course content and requirements as demanding as face-to-face courses with similar content.
- Respect for diverse talents and ways of learning.
- Instructors who provide alternative ways of learning for student.
- Instructors who provide alternative ways of assessing student achievement.
- Letting students know what to expect.
- Information regarding the objectives, assessment deadline, grading policies, technology needed to succeed, etc.; clearly stated and easy for students to find.
- Making effective use of the technology.
- Technology appropriate for the learning objectives.
- Technology appropriate for the discipline.
- Support for students who need assistance with the use of the technology.
- The Learning Outcomes for every unit.
- Start Here navigation button.

Scheduling of Final Examinations

The university has a fixed schedule for final examinations based on a particular class' regular meeting time. Given that web-based classes do not have a traditional "regular meeting time", there may be uncertainty on the part of faculty and students about when a final examination, if one is given, should be scheduled. However, Students are not required to come to campus to take any examinations.

1. Final examinations in web-based classes should be scheduled during the same week that on-campus finals are scheduled.

2. Faculty should provide a minimum of a two day (48 hour) window during which students may take the final exam. Students would be allowed the same length of time to complete the exam as they would for an on-campus class. However, they would have the flexibility to take the exam any time during the 48 hour window. This recognizes the fact that online students, just like on-campus

students, could have several exams scheduled at the same time. It would also help them to work around any on-campus final exam that they must take.

3. If the instructor cannot allow a minimum of a two day window, then it must be clearly stated in syllabus posted at the beginning of the class. Faculty must be willing to work with students who can demonstrate that this will cause them to have more than three final exams during the same 24 hour period.

Student email accounts are created within 24 hours of class registration and are an official means of communication with students. Faculty are encouraged to inform students about the importance of accessing their UAPB email even if/when communicating with them using other electronic communication tools such as Blackboard email. Important university-related information will be sent to individual UAPB email accounts. Students are responsible for regularly reading UAPB email messages.

Establishment of Teaching Load for Distance Learning Faculty and Faculty Responsibilities

The impact of planning and/or delivering a technology-mediated class will vary. It is generally accepted that during the development or conversion phase the teaching load will increase. In general, the faculty member will be supported in the development and delivery of distance courses.

Procedures

1.1 The distance class enrollment is to be limited to not more than twenty students per section for a graduate course or thirty students per section for an undergraduate course.

1.2 In semesters following the initial offering, the distance course is to be considered in the same manner as on-campus courses in determining the teaching load of an instructor.

Faculty Responsibilities

All current policies outlined in the Faculty Handbook are applicable regardless of whether the course is conducted face-to-face. In addition, instructors using the latter should adhere to the following guidelines:

▪ The same grade appeal procedures and timelines will be followed. Phone calls or emails may count as contact. However, it is prudent to record all such contacts at the time to ensure due process for all parties. Ensure that students are advised of University Policy.

▪ Links that include in your course materials will take students to sites with ads or other solicitations. It would be prudent to warn students of such a possibility and that the link to that site does not constitute a recommendation or endorsement by UAPB.

▪ Back-up must be done at the end of each semester of grade book and all assignments.

- If some form of e-pack is being used, it is the instructor's responsibility to explain to the students where and how they can obtain access codes. It is important for instructors to realize that students may be charged by the publisher for these access codes—in addition to other textbook or materials charges. It is the responsibility of the instructor to give the Blackboard Administration access to all digital content.

- During the first eleven days of class the instructor should email request(s) stating any problems related to their courses or call (870) 575-7040 to leave a message.

- Instructors must have a fully developed course one week prior to the first day of class.

- Instructors who are using digital content must obtain the content before class starts.

- Instructors must know how to login and navigate the Blackboard system.

- It is the responsibility of the instructor to incorporate the Learning Outcome for each module in the course.

- At the end of each semester it is the responsibility of the faculty to down-load the grade book.

Equal Access for Students with Disabilities

"It is the policy of the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff to create inclusive learning environments. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of courses that result in barriers to inclusion of students with disabilities or to accurate assessment of achievement – such as time-limited exams, inaccessible web content, or use of non-captioned videos – students are encouraged to notify the instructor as soon as possible. Students with disabilities are also encouraged to contact the Disability Services Center at (870) 575-8552.

ADA Web Accessibility Policy

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (1990) and the Rehabilitation Act Section 504 (173), it is the policy of the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff to make UAPB Web page information and online course material (hereafter referred to as "Internet content") accessible to persons with disabilities in order to provide them with effective communication through the Internet. Communication should be, to the extent possible, as effective for persons with disabilities as it is for persons without disabilities. This includes information that departments, programs, faculty, or staff present over the Internet. The UAPB policy is designed to ensure that the communication available to Internet users with disabilities is effective and useful.

The policy does not cover the accessibility of sites outside of UAPB to which a UAPB page may be linked. However, UAPB encourages other providers to make their content accessible. An exception: if outside links are required course content, this content must be accessible.

Department chairs, deans and directors are responsible for ensuring that full-time and part-time faculty/staff are aware that modifications to existing Internet content as well new Internet content should be made in accordance with this policy.

Copyright

All members of the UAPB intellectual community understand the importance of honesty and respect for the intellectual property rights of others. However, the new information technology sometimes blurs the boundaries of what is considered "fair use." It is important for faculty to keep abreast of the latest guidelines for fair use of materials obtained from the Internet and for placing other materials on the Internet for teaching purposes. It is also important that faculty be informed regarding adherence to the license rules and restrictions on use of software or library resources that the University makes available for use by members of the University community.