Online/Blended Teaching Handbook

The University of Texas at Dallas
eLearning Team

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Introduction

Online/Blended education is becoming commonplace in colleges and universities throughout the world. It is the goal of this manual to facilitate a smooth entrance into online/blended teaching by outlining processes and procedures for creating and teaching your course. Topics covered include: Organizational Information, Philosophy, Course Development, Technology, Faculty, Staff, Students, and Legal Issues.

Organizational Information

Programs. The fully online degree programs at the University of Texas at Dallas are extensions of campus programs. Internet-based programs have been available since 1999.

Administration. The programs are managed by the program directors.

Course Development. Courses are developed by faculty with support from the UTD eLearning Team.

Philosophy

Definition of Distance Education. Distance education is defined as planned learning that normally occurs in a different place from teaching and as a result requires special techniques of course design, special instructional techniques, special methods of communication by electronic and other technology, as well as special organizational and administrative arrangements (Moore & Kearsley, 1996).

Title 19, Texas Administrative Code, Section 4.257, states that a fully online course "may have mandatory face-to-face sessions totaling no more than 15 percent of the instructional time." Those face-to-face sessions can include orientation, laboratory sessions, or exam reviews. Generally speaking, online courses at UT Dallas are 100% online and do not require face-to-face sessions. A "hybrid" or "blended" course is conducted more than 50 percent but less than 85 percent online. A course conducted 50 percent or less online is not specially coded and is considered a technology enhanced course.

Effectiveness of Online Instruction. Many have questioned if distance education is as effective as traditional education. A compilation of research findings entitled *The No Significant Difference Phenomenon* (NSDP) explores the effective use of technology, chiefly distance learning, compared to alternative methods or techniques of teaching. The annotated studies in the original article are arranged chronologically. There are 355 research reports, summaries, and papers cited in which no significant difference was reported between the variables compared (Russell, 1999).

The US Department of Education conducted a meta-analysis comparing online, blended, and face-to-face effectiveness. It was found that "…blended instruction has been more effective, providing a rationale for the effort required to design and implement blended

approaches. When used by itself, online learning appears to be as effective as conventional classroom instruction, but not more so." (Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia, Jones, 2010).

Mission of Online/Blended Learning Programs. The mission of online/blended programs at The University of Texas at Dallas is to provide high quality educational opportunities to students who may be at a geographic disadvantage, have employer travel and other conflicts which prevent on-campus class attendance, have course conflicts, or have personal circumstances that require scheduling flexibility.

Online/Blended Course Standards. The University of Texas at Dallas' standards for online/blended courses are as follows.

Online/Blended courses will:
- adhere to the same rigorous standards as traditional courses.
- result in learning outcomes appropriate to the credit awarded.
- comply with the "Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Distance Education Advisory Committee Guide for Incorporating The Principles of Good Practice into Electronically-Based Courses."
- utilize the best available technology and pedagogy to create and provide a high quality educational experience to students.
- be taught by academically qualified faculty.
- include regular communication and feedback to students.
- be regularly updated.

Online/Blended courses follow the same academic calendar as face-to-face sections. The faculty member responsible for conducting each course is required to develop all content and a corresponding syllabus which will include assignments, texts, due dates, grading rubrics, and other relevant information. The syllabus, textbook and all course materials are to be approved by the program director.
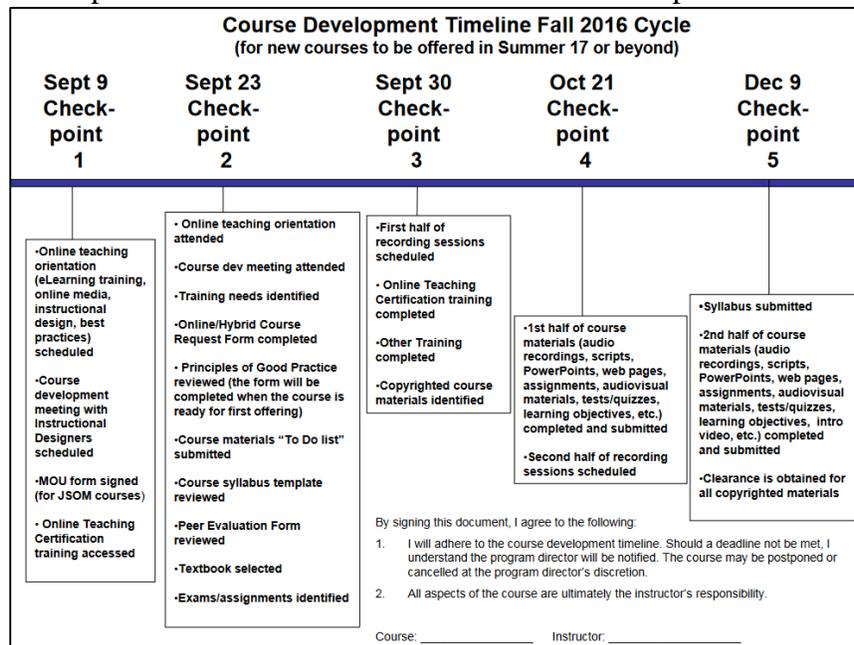
Course Development

There are two options for course development, the Full-service and Consultative Models. In the Full-service Model, all technical aspects are handled by an instructional designer. Essentially the instructor is the subject matter expert and the instructional designer produces the content in various formats (including text and multimedia), and builds all assignments/assessments. Both the instructor and the instructional designer review the course prior to the first offering.

In the Consultative Model, the instructor handles all technical aspects of building the course, but is encouraged to contact instructional designers as needed for training, technical support, and pedagogical assistance. Services such as the recording studio are available on a first-come, first-served basis, with Full-service courses having priority.
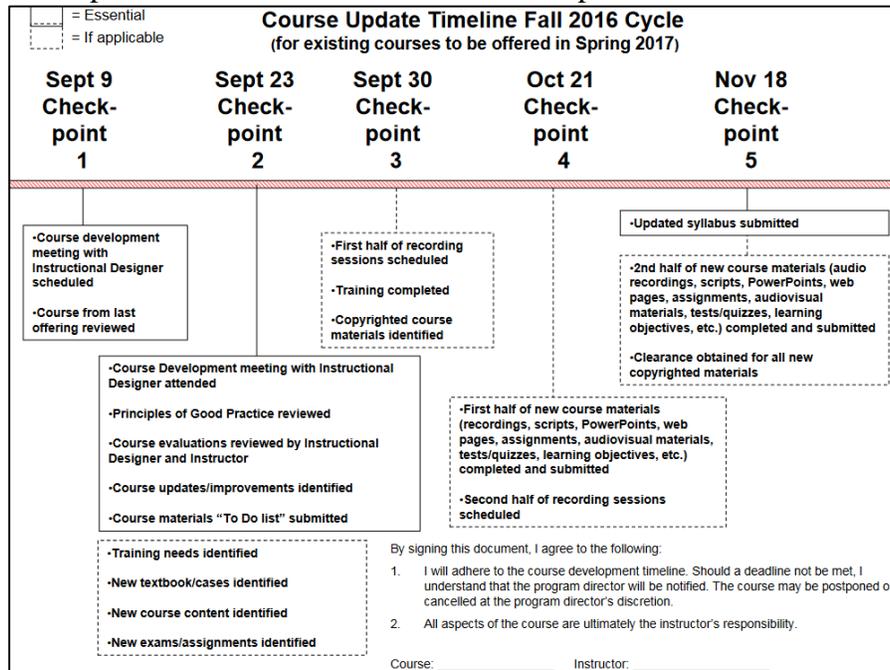
Courses using the Full-service Model require two semesters for course development, while courses following the Consultative Model can be completed on the instructor's schedule. The time commitment to developing a course may seem daunting. A course development timeline has been created to assist in the planning and production of course materials. Typically, the content of new courses and those undergoing major revisions will be developed over the course of a 16 week cycle, with the 2nd semester for finishing the course construction and review process. Courses with minor updates are developed during an abbreviated 10-week timeline. As the eLearning Team is responsible for managing approximately 400 online/blended sections per year and providing support to roughly 7,000 face-to-face sections using eLearning, it is essential that instructors using the Full-service Model strictly follow the timeline.

Regardless of the model used, all courses must meet the standards outlined in the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's Principles of Good Practice form.

Below is an example of the 16-week Full-service course development timeline:

Course Development Timeline Fall 2016 Cycle
(for new courses to be offered in Summer 17 or beyond)

Sept 9 Check-point 1	Sept 23 Check-point 2	Sept 30 Check-point 3	Oct 21 Check-point 4	Dec 9 Check-point 5
•Online teaching orientation (eLearning training, online media, instructional design, best practices) scheduled •Course development meeting with Instructional Designers scheduled •MOU form signed (for JSOM courses) • Online Teaching Certification training accessed	• Online teaching orientation attended •Course dev meeting attended •Training needs identified •Online/Hybrid Course Request Form completed • Principles of Good Practice reviewed (the form will be completed when the course is ready for first offering) •Course materials "To Do list" submitted •Course syllabus template reviewed •Peer Evaluation Form reviewed •Textbook selected •Exams/assignments identified	•First half of recording sessions scheduled • Online Teaching Certification training completed •Other Training completed •Copyrighted course materials identified	•1st half of course materials (audio recordings, scripts, PowerPoints, web pages, assignments, audiovisual materials, tests/quizzes, learning objectives, etc.) completed and submitted •Second half of recording sessions scheduled	•Syllabus submitted •2nd half of course materials (audio recordings, scripts, PowerPoints, web pages, assignments, audiovisual materials, tests/quizzes, learning objectives, intro video, etc.) completed and submitted •Clearance is obtained for all copyrighted materials

By signing this document, I agree to the following:

1. I will adhere to the course development timeline. Should a deadline not be met, I understand the program director will be notified. The course may be postponed or cancelled at the program director's discretion.

2. All aspects of the course are ultimately the instructor's responsibility.

Course: _____   Instructor: _____

Below is an example of a 10-week Full-service course update timeline:

Course Update Timeline Fall 2016 Cycle
(for existing courses to be offered in Spring 2017)

☐ = Essential
┈ = If applicable

Sept 9 Check-point 1	Sept 23 Check-point 2	Sept 30 Check-point 3	Oct 21 Check-point 4	Nov 18 Check-point 5

•Updated syllabus submitted

•Course development meeting with Instructional Designer scheduled

•Course from last offering reviewed

•First half of recording sessions scheduled

•Training completed

•Copyrighted course materials identified

•2nd half of new course materials (audio recordings, scripts, PowerPoints, web pages, assignments, audiovisual materials, tests/quizzes, learning objectives, etc.) completed and submitted

•Clearance obtained for all new copyrighted materials

•Course Development meeting with Instructional Designer attended

•Principles of Good Practice reviewed

•Course evaluations reviewed by Instructional Designer and Instructor

•Course updates/improvements identified

•Course materials "To Do list" submitted

•First half of new course materials (recordings, scripts, PowerPoints, web pages, assignments, audiovisual materials, tests/quizzes, learning objectives, etc.) completed and submitted

•Second half of recording sessions scheduled

•Training needs identified

•New textbook/cases identified

•New course content identified

•New exams/assignments identified

By signing this document, I agree to the following:
1. I will adhere to the course development timeline. Should a deadline not be met, I understand that the program director will be notified. The course may be postponed or cancelled at the program director's discretion.
2. All aspects of the course are ultimately the instructor's responsibility.

Course: _____   Instructor: _____

Procedures. For courses being developed via the Full-service Model, the following procedures should be followed for the preparation of materials.

The instructor will:
- follow the Course Development Timeline.
- make arrangements with instructional designers to receive technology training.
- schedule studio time for the recording sessions.
- review all aspects of the course at least two weeks prior to each offering.

The development of course materials is time consuming. Sufficient time must be allocated to this process to ensure the course is complete prior to the start of the semester. Examples of course materials used in distance education courses include text-based lectures, multimedia presentations, interactive web-based exercises, case studies, and instructor videos. The instructional design staff is committed to supporting faculty, but content and the creation of course materials is ultimately the responsibility of the instructor. 150 hours is a good estimate of how much (combined) time personnel (instructor, instructional designers, teaching assistants) will spend preparing a course. Additionally, professors are encouraged to seek advice and assistance from the UT Dallas eLearning team for face-to-face courses that utilize the university's learning management system or other educational technologies.

Syllabus. The syllabus is the roadmap to the course. A rough draft of this document should be created very early in the course development process. This document will ultimately contain all of the information students will need for the course including textbook information, due dates, special instructions, etc. An Online/Blended Course Syllabus Template can be found on the eLearning website.

Learning Objectives. Like courses taught in the traditional classroom, distance education courses should be based on objectives. The instructor should develop a list of objectives for the course as a whole, as well as for each section (or module/unit)*. Here is an example of course/module objectives:

Course Objectives:
- After completing Strategic Management 101, the student will explain core concepts and provide examples of their relevance and use by actual companies.
- After completing Strategic Management 101, the student will present explanations of analytical tools used in the managerial process of crafting and executing strategy.

Module Objectives:
- After completing Module 1, the student will list the components of Porter's Five Forces.
- After completing Module 1, the student will define key success factors (KSF's).

*Instructional designers are available should the instructor need assistance writing objectives.

Textbook Selection. The instructor should select textbooks/case studies and communicate this information to the area administrative assistant (who will pass it on to the bookstore at least four weeks prior to the start of each semester to provide ample time for ordering and shipment). Please contact the bookstore and the publisher if you are interested in creating a custom textbook or an eBook. Many textbooks come with supplemental online course material. Please contact an instructional designer if you would like assistance importing this material into your course.

Course Activities/Assessment. Activities for assessing students in an online course can be as dynamic as in traditional face-to-face classes. Instructors have the options of incorporating graded activities such as discussions (threaded, blogs, journals), group presentations, papers, and online or proctored exams.

Communication.
- Announcement: Post reminders, news and updates to the entire class.
- Discussion: Questions or discussion topics are posted on the discussion board in threaded, blog or journal format. The amount and quality of student interaction can be graded.
- Email: Instructor and students can use Course Messages or UTD email tool to exchange information and address any issues and concerns.
- Web conference: Web conferences provide various methods of synchronous communication, including audio, voice-chat, text chat, and desktop and application sharing.
- Group tools: Groups can use group communication and collaboration tools for group assignments.

Group Presentations.
- Student presentations: In the Group Discussion area in eLearning, students may be given a private venue to post discussions and files (such as Word documents, PowerPoint presentations and Excel spreadsheets). The instructor has the option to make these files available when the work is complete. The work can be graded by the instructor and critiqued by students.
- Class Discussion Forum: Groups can present in the designated class discussion forum for feedback and comments.
- Group presentations via web conference: Student presenters can upload PowerPoints (or any other type of document) and conduct a web-based presentation using audio, text chat, and desktop/application sharing. Content, delivery, and attendance can be recorded.

Assignments. Assignments may be submitted electronically via the eLearning Assignment tool. Notes can be made on the submission and returned electronically if desired. As in the traditional classroom, plagiarism is a concern. Turn-it-in is a software program that can scan a student's paper and compare it to millions of previously submitted papers and literary works in a database. A report is then displayed that flags potentially plagiarized sections. This tool is available for use in all eLearning courses.

Online Tests. A test can be created within eLearning that can be automatically scored and entered into the Grade Book. At the instructor's discretion, results can be made available to the student. It is recommended that the instructor write questions that test higher levels of learning as opposed to rote knowledge. For background on this, please see Bloom's Taxonomy.

To address the issue of test security, the instructor should set up the test as follows:

- Randomize questions from the test bank to ensure that students do not receive identical tests.
- Randomize the answers so that if students do receive the same question, the answer order will not coincide between tests. *Do not do this with questions that have answer options such as "all of the above, none of the above, etc." as when answers are randomized it will cause confusion.
- Adjust settings so one question appears at a time to discourage students from printing test questions.
- Set a time limit on the test to minimize the possibility of students looking up several answers in the textbook.
- Shorten the test availability time window.
- Consider LockDown Browser for test delivery.
- The Testing Center can host proctored web-based exams. Students at a distance can make arrangements to take proctored exams at an approved testing facility.
- Limit the amount of time test results are released.

Uploading Course Materials. Once the course materials are created, they must be uploaded to eLearning. The instructor and an instructional designer should develop an intuitive course structure to insure ease of navigation for the student.

Course Review. The instructor is responsible for reviewing all aspects of the course for accuracy. Once the course meets the instructor's approval, the instructor must sign off on the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Distance Education Advisory Committee's Guide for Incorporating The Principles of Good Practice into Electronically Based Courses. Finally, the course is to be approved by the program director.

Technology

Getting Started. To ensure access and proper functioning of course materials, the following steps should be taken:

Access
- Ensure there are no issues with the instructor's NetID or password. If issues exist, contact the UTD Helpdesk at 972-883-2911 or assist@utdallas.edu.

Browsers and Operating Systems
- View Blackboard's Browser and OS Requirements for 9.11.

Software
- Microsoft Office (install the latest supported version). Contact the help desk at 972-883-2911 to install this at no charge.
- Virus detection/protection software.
- Plug-ins may be required to view media in or your eLearning class. Below are links to the most common plug-ins used.*
  - Adobe Acrobat Reader
  - Adobe Flash Player
  - Java
- Login to your eLearning account.
  Note: If you have problems logging in, see a wrong course listed, or do not see a course listed, contact the eLearning Help Desk or 1-866-588-3192.
- To customize your eLearning course, contact the eLearning Team at elearning@utdallas.edu.

*This should be done each semester to insure the most current software versions are installed. Outdated versions have been known to cause technical issues.

Course Development Tools. In an Internet-based course, the teacher and learner can be in different places at different times. Just as in the traditional classroom, communication is essential for a course to be successful. The instructor and students may maintain constant contact via announcements, discussion boards, web conferences, and emails. By using a combination of asynchronous and synchronous tools, the barriers of space and time are eliminated. In addition to the communication tools mentioned, information may be conveyed to students in several ways such as text, audio, multimedia, synchronized slide presentations with audio, and simulations.

Listed below are brief descriptions and hyperlinked examples to introduce the technologies used in distance education programs:

- eLearning: A course management tool (or container) where all materials/communication tools, grade book, etc. reside.
- Streaming video: Allows students to access video clips via the Internet without any files being downloaded to their computers.
- PowerPoint: A component of Microsoft Office that facilitates computer-based slide presentations.
- Camtasia: Allows the creation of multimedia presentations for viewing via computer. Translates presentations into to streaming multimedia presentations.
- Respondus: Enhances the functionality and usability of eLearning's quiz, survey, and self-test tools. This tool saves considerable time developing tests by allowing the creation of all questions in a single text file and importing them directly into the eLearning test bank. This can be downloaded for free.
- Adobe Acrobat: A cross-platform (any computer can open it) program that can convert Word Documents, Excel Spreadsheets, and PowerPoint Presentations into a file that is very difficult to alter. PDF files tend to be much smaller, therefore taking less time to download.
- Microsoft Word: A program for generating text documents.
- Microsoft Excel: A program used to generate spreadsheets.
- Tablet PC recording: Allows graphic illustration of any computer application.
- Library for Distance Students: Distance students may access UTD Library resources including a chat-based reference service, a document delivery service (books, articles, and media are sent via mail), and connection to the UTD Catalog.
- Web conferencing: A tool used for synchronous class meetings and small group discussions. Capabilities include file sharing, audio/voice chat, video, desktop/application sharing, and interactive features.
- Recording studio: This facility may be scheduled to record and edit audio/video material. The material can then be produced and uploaded into the learning management system for students to access.

Training/Tech Support: In order to get help as quickly as possible, please direct your question to the proper contact.

- NetID issues: assist@utdallas.edu or 972-883-2911.
- eLearning course issues: eLearning Help Desk or 1-866-588-3192.
- Assistance developing/uploading materials, creating tests, general eLearning questions: elearning@utdallas.edu.
- Training Requests: Faculty Training Site.

Faculty

Once the course is complete, the instructor is responsible for managing it throughout the semester. This management includes monitoring the course, communicating regularly with students, grading assignments and assessments in a timely manner, managing the grade book, etc. A breakdown of the responsibilities of faculty, staff, and teaching assistants using the Full-service model follows.

Responsibilities. The instructor is ultimately responsible for all aspects of the course.

Prior to Course Offering	- Attend a course development meeting. - Request training as needed. - Schedule studio recording time. - Insure course is available in eLearning. - Insure all course materials are in compliance with accessibility standards. - Prepare course materials (syllabus, lectures, quizzes, etc.) in accordance to the course development timeline. - Communicate textbook/case studies to be used with bookstore. - Keep course materials up to date. - Obtain clearance for copyrighted materials. - Review course in its entirety at least two weeks prior to course offering. - Identify needed corrections. - Communicate needed corrections to instructional designers one week prior to course offering. - Insure the course is complete prior to the start of the semester.
During Course Offering	- Respond to student questions within 48 hours. - Regular communication with students (announcement, discussion board, email, web conference, etc.). - Schedule and communicate times for synchronous communication (web conference/chat) with students if needed. - Maintain online course throughout the semester (discussions, group formation, grade book, assignment submissions, calendar, course material uploads after course release).
After Course Offering	- Review course evaluations. - Reflect on experiences in the course. - Determine necessary changes for the next offering. - Communicate these changes to instructional designers.

Staff

For the Full-service Model, Instructional designers will:
- prepare a course development timeline.
- assist with instructional design and development.
- upload the course each semester.
- evaluate and offer suggestions for course revisions.
- conduct faculty workshops.
- train teaching assistants.
- assist with media selection, design, and development.
- provide guidance on copyright clearance.
- provide guidance on accessibility issues.
- provide technical assistance.

eLearning Teaching assistants will:
- monitor, record, edit, and complete a technical review of lectures.

Students

Admission requirements and tuition are the same as for traditional students. The fees are comparable to traditional classes (there is a distance learning fee, but students are exempt from fees such as student union, recreational facility and medical service). Students can take online courses and traditional classroom courses simultaneously.

Requirements.

Students will:
- have regular access to a computer that meets the specifications outlined.
- have regular access to a reliable Internet connection.
- access eLearning three times per week (minimum).

Knowledge/Attitude/Skills.

The online student must be:
- proficient using a computer.
- disciplined to complete projects by deadlines.
- a self-starter with intrinsic motivation to read, write, and participate fully in class activities.
- able to manage time effectively.
- able/willing to work independently and in virtual teams.
- willing to devote approximately 12 hours a week to a 3-credit course.
- committed to academic honesty.
- willing to contact the instructor immediately should course content issues arise.
- willing to contact technical support immediately should a technical issue arise.

Legal Issues

Copyrighted Material. The instructor may not use copyrighted material without proper clearance. Obtaining clearance to use copyrighted material is the responsibility of the instructor. To determine if clearance needs to be obtained, the following four factors should be considered:

1. The purpose and character of the use, including whether use is of a commercial nature or is for nonprofit educational purposes.
2. The nature of the copyrighted work.
3. The amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole.
4. The effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work.

It is recommended that the instructor reviews the UT System's Crash Course in Copyright.

Accessibility. Course materials should be accessible to students, regardless of disability. A text equivalent for every non-text element should be included for all course materials. This includes images, graphics, video, and audio files. A detailed set of guidelines can be found at the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) website.

A student identifying him/herself as having a disability should be directed to the UTD Office of Student AccessAbility. Phone: 972-883-2098.

References

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