

# Best Practice Guidelines for Distance Learning Instructors

at Atlantic Cape Community College

## Quality Statement of ACCC Online Courses:

All programs and courses delivered online through ACCC meet the same academic program and learning support standards as programs provided in the more traditional format within the institute. Online courses must meet the Middle States standards for quality of instruction, academic rigor, educational effectiveness and a supporting infrastructure. Recognizing that one bad course can have a major impact, every course must be held to high standards.

## Expected Standards for Preparing a Course for Delivery:

- a. Faculty must ensure they have the commitment to teaching online.
- b. Faculty must get the department chairperson's approval to teach online. It is the responsibility of the department chairperson to notify the Academic Computing & Distance Education Department (ACDED) about the online course.
- c. A request for support from the ACDED in developing the course must be made by the following deadlines (advanced multimedia enhancements may require more time. Check with ACDE:)
  - March 15 for both summer sessions
  - June 15 for the fall semester
  - October 15 for the spring semester
- d. Faculty must be familiar with the software that will be used in delivering the course (such as WebCT or FirstClass). The ACDED will provide the needed training and support. It is also recommended that the faculty use this software in a traditional class prior to teaching online for practice and understanding of the software. This will also give the faculty an opportunity to determine the common problems and questions that may arise among students using this software.
- e. Faculty should draft class policy and a general course outline for course structure prior to the first week of course delivery. The course should be modularized (one topic per week or two week period). Each module can contain Web-based and lecture materials, collaborative assignments, student assessment activities, and questions for discussion or response. It is important to include a communications component, such as threaded discussions, chats, or whiteboard.
- f. Faculty should select multimedia that supports the goals and objectives of the course.\*
- g. Faculty must comply with copyright law. \*
- h. Faculty should consider having an online tutor available for students with needs. A request for a tutor should be addressed to the Learning Assistance Center.
- i. Faculty should consider ADA requirements for online accessibility when designing the course. For example, include alternative text information for graphics and make sure backgrounds provide enough contrast and clarity. \*

## II. Expected Standards for Conducting a Course:

**Faculty should:**

- Return student calls and e-mails within a reasonable length of time.
- Exhibit patience with students for the duration of the course, but especially in the beginning of the semester as students get acclimated to the online environment.
- Regularly notify students of their grades through e-mail or an online gradebook.
- Consider providing models or student samples of the expected quality of work.
- Design assignments that allow for group collaboration and cooperative learning, like threaded discussions, group projects or team problem-solving. The instructor should regularly monitor these activities.
- Assess each outcome separately, using the verbs in the objectives as the verbs in the assessment task.
- Keep a record of student work (eg. a copy of the gradebook) for at least two semesters after the course is complete.

### III. Expected Standards for Evaluating and Improving the Course:

#### **Faculty should:**

- Encourage students to fill out the online evaluation form.
- Be committed to review comments on evaluation and to make appropriate changes if necessary.
- Discuss online evaluations with the department chair.
- Attend training offered on campus to constantly update skills.
- Revise and improve the course content and technology regularly.