

YAVAPAI COLLEGE ONLINE COURSE STANDARDS

Minimum standards for online courses and guidelines for proposing and developing online courses at Yavapai College.

Introduction

In pursuit of its mission to provide high quality, convenient and cost-effective learning opportunities for the diverse populations of Yavapai County, the college endeavors to provide high quality online delivery of courses. The purpose of this document is to outline the process for proposing an online course, to provide recommendations for best practices and establish a minimum standard for online courses.

The Process

The process to offer a course in an online format will be initiated at the division level district wide. Anyone wishing to develop and/or teach a course online will initiate a discussion with the appropriate Division Dean or Program Director. The Division Dean will determine whether the course should be delivered in an online format by consulting with faculty in the discipline. The Division Dean will then determine whether a course section should be offered by evaluating the proposal against the minimum requirements (Appendix B) and guidelines (Appendix C) for an online course. In order to reach a decision, the dean will refer to a checklist regarding best practices on instructors' skill abilities in teaching in an online format.

Minimum Standards for Online Courses

All sections of a course approved for online instruction are expected to meet the following minimum requirements:

Instructor Preparation

- Previous experience teaching an online course or appropriate training in Blackboard or other tools, if applicable;
- Appropriate training has been conducted, as determined by Online Course Proposal Checklist (Appendix A)

Instructional Design

- Course must meet at a minimum certain minimum criteria of **Effective** Instructional Design Standards for Online Courses at Yavapai College (Appendix B);
- Course has been evaluated by instructor using the Instructional Design Checklist for Online Courses at Yavapai College (Appendix C).

After the course has been delivered for the first time, post course evaluations, student feedback and assessment results will be utilized by the instructor and the Division Dean to determine course effectiveness and apply modifications as needed.

It is strongly recommended that hybrid and/or web enhanced courses also adhere to the minimum standards.

Additional Clarifications

- Blackboard is the standard delivery platform for fully online and web enhanced courses and materials at Yavapai College. Exceptions must be approved by the Division Dean.
- New courses (never offered in any delivery format) must have the required curricular approvals.
- Existing courses (but not offered previously in online format) must satisfy the standards established in this document before it is offered online.
- Existing courses may be converted to a distance delivery format without going through additional curricular reviews, provided the process outlined above is followed.
- The division dean will determine whether a course is 'effective' or 'exemplary'. While retaining the right of review, the division dean will rely primarily on self declaration by the instructor to assign an 'effective' rating. A rating of 'exemplary' can only be assigned after a review of the course by the division dean.
- 'Exemplary' courses will have priority in scheduling.

APPENDIX A

Online Course Proposal Checklist

COURSE INFORMATION:

- Yes No Support for online delivery of this program or course is justified.
Supporting data:
 Student Requests Waitlist Data Section Combining Access
 Other _____
- Yes No Recommended delivery format is appropriate (fully online, hybrid, web-enhanced, etc.)
- Yes No Course has previously been offered online
If yes: Name of previous instructor: _____
- Yes No Current online materials are relevant, usable or can be repurposed.
- Yes No Textbook has been approved by Division Dean
- Yes No Submitted syllabus meets all requirements
- Yes No Learning outcomes are equivalent to those achieved when the course is delivered on the ground
- Yes No If the course currently falls under any articulation or transfer agreements, are there any ramifications for the course being delivered online?

FACULTY PREPARATION:

COMPUTER SKILLS

- Yes No Do you have (or are you willing to obtain) access to a computer and Internet connection at home?
- Yes No Do you know how to use email and access the Web using a browser?
- Yes No Can you download a file from the Web and save it on your own computer?
- Yes No Can you attach a document to an email message?
- Yes No Can you cut or copy and paste from one program into another?

TEACHING STYLE

- Yes No Can you dedicate 4-6 hours a week (any time during the day or night) to participate in the online teaching process?
- Yes No Are you willing to log on and contribute to your online classroom discussions and interact with your students at least 3 times a week?
- Yes No Are you flexible in dealing with students' needs (due dates, absences, make-up exams)?
- Yes No Are you comfortable in communicating almost entirely through writing?

APPENDIX B

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN STANDARDS FOR ONLINE COURSES AT YAVAPAI COLLEGE

As a guide to best practices, elements of what constitutes an effective course or an exemplary course are described under five key areas of instructional design. The expectation is that all online courses will be either effective or exemplary. It is unlikely that instructors will be able to design a course that will meet all the elements of an effective course when they are offering it for the first time. It is expected that over time instructors will enhance the courses they teach online to meet all the requirements of an effective course. However, instructors are expected to design courses to meet the elements shown in bold. The set of those elements constitute the minimum standards for an online course at Yavapai College.

LEARNER SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

In order to retain comparable learner support and services in its online delivery format, Yavapai College requires that its learner support systems and resources must be as complete, responsive and as customer-oriented as those provided for the on-campus learner. A well-designed online course provides alternative support methods to ensure that distance education students are not significantly inconvenienced or barred from accessing any and all services and resources required. Online courses are rated for learner support and resources, based on the following requirements:

EFFECTIVE COURSE	EXEMPLARY COURSE
Course contains some information for online learner support and links to campus resources.	Course contains extensive information about being an online learner and links to campus resources.
Course offers access to some resources supporting course content.	Course offers access to a wide range of resources supporting course content.

ONLINE ORGANIZATION AND DESIGN

In order to foster positive learning communities in its online delivery format, Yavapai College requires that each online course contains clear and concise guidelines for accessing and navigating the Blackboard environment. Course information must be easily-accessible, understandable, and consistent with Yavapai College syllabi standards regarding course requirements, attendance policies, etc. Online courses are rated for organization and design, based on the following requirements:

EFFECTIVE COURSE	EXEMPLARY COURSE
Course is organized and navigable. Students can understand the key components and structure of the course.	Course is well-organized and easy to navigate. Students can clearly understand all components and structure of the course.
Course syllabus identifies and delineates the role the online environment will play in the course.	Course syllabus identifies and clearly delineates the role the online environment will play in the total course.
Aesthetic design presents and communicates course information clearly, including customized buttons	Aesthetic design presents and communicates course information clearly throughout the course, including customized buttons and banner.
Most web pages are visually and functionally consistent.	All web pages are visually and functionally consistent throughout the course.
Accessibility issues are briefly addressed.	Accessibility issues are addressed throughout the course.

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN AND DELIVERY

In order to reinforce basic principles of cooperation among students and active learning environments, Yavapai College design standards emphasize the importance of interaction and communication in its online courses. An exemplary online course models collaboration, which builds support networks to enhance learning outcomes. Online courses are rated for instructional design and delivery, based on the following requirements:

EFFECTIVE COURSE	EXEMPLARY COURSE
<p>Course offers some opportunities for interaction and communication student to student, student to instructor and student to content.</p>	<p>Course offers ample opportunities for interaction and communication student to student, student to instructor and student to content.</p>
<p>Course goals are defined but do not fully align to learning objectives.</p>	<p>Course goals are clearly defined and aligned clearly to learning objectives.</p>
<p>Learning objectives are identified and learning activities are implied.</p>	<p>Learning objectives are identified and learning activities are clearly integrated.</p>
<p>Course provides some visual, textual, kinesthetic and/or auditory activities to enhance student learning.</p>	<p>Course provides multiple visual, textual, kinesthetic and/or auditory activities to enhance student learning.</p>
<p>Course provides some activities to help students develop critical thinking and/ or problem-solving skills.</p>	<p>Course provides multiple activities that help students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.</p>

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF STUDENT LEARNING

Yavapai College considers assessment and evaluation to be a vital part of the entire teaching and learning process. The online environment presents a unique set of challenges and opportunities in helping students learn of their strengths and academic deficiencies, while still maintaining academic integrity. Online courses are rated for assessment and evaluation of student learning, based on the following requirements:

EFFECTIVE COURSE	EXEMPLARY COURSE
Course has some activities to assess student readiness for course content and mode of delivery.	Course has multiple timely and appropriate activities to assess student readiness for course content and mode of delivery.
Learning objectives, instructional and assessment activities are somewhat aligned.	Learning objectives, instructional and assessment activities are closely aligned.
Ongoing strategies are used to measure content knowledge, attitudes and skills.	Ongoing multiple assessment strategies are used to measure content knowledge, attitudes and skills.
Opportunities for students to receive feedback about their own performance are provided.	Regular feedback about student performance is provided in a timely manner throughout the course.
Students' self-assessments and/or peer feedback opportunities exist.	Students' self-assessments and peer feedback opportunities exist throughout the course.

APPROPRIATE AND EFFECTIVE USE OF TECHNOLOGY

Yavapai College maintains state-of-the-art instructional technology resources that are used to enhance instruction in both traditional and distance education environments. In order to apply the rich blend of technology available, online courses are rated for innovative teaching with technology, based on the following elements:

EFFECTIVE COURSE	EXEMPLARY COURSE
Course uses Internet access and engages students in the learning process.	Course uses a variety of technology tools to appropriately facilitate communication and learning.
Modality appropriate teaching methods are applied to enhance student learning.	New teaching methods are applied and innovatively enhance student learning, and interactively engage students.
Multimedia elements and/or learning objects are used and are relevant to student learning.	A variety of multimedia elements and/or learning objects are used and are relevant to student learning throughout the course.
Course optimizes Internet access and effectively engages students in the learning process.	Course optimizes Internet access and effectively engages students in the learning process in a variety of ways throughout the course.

APPENDIX C

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN CHECKLIST FOR ONLINE COURSES AT YAVAPAI COLLEGE

LEARNER SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

(NOTE: THIS SECTION WILL BE CREATED AND MAINTAINED BY TECHNOLOGY ENHANCED LEARNING SERVICES ; INSTRUCTOR SIMPLY HAS TO PROVIDE A LINK TO THIS INFORMATION TO MEET THE MINIMUM STANDARD)

[HTTP://WWW.YC.EDU/CONTENT/TELS/RESFORSTUDENTS/DEFAULT.HTM](http://www.yc.edu/content/TELS/RESFORSTUDENTS/DEFAULT.HTM)

A. Information About Being an Online Learner

- Tips for being a successful online student
- Quiz to self-assess readiness to be an online student

B. Information About College Resources

- Computer labs (location and schedules)
<http://www2.yc.edu/content/its/computerlabs-yc.htm>
- Learning Center <http://www.yc.edu/content/learningcenters/default.htm>
- Library Resources <http://www2.yc.edu/content/libraryservices/default.htm>
- Student Disability Resource Center
<http://www.yc.edu/content/disabilityresources/default.htm>
- Testing Center <http://www2.yc.edu/content/testingservices/default.htm>
- Admissions, Registration and Records <http://www.yc.edu/content/registration/default.htm>
- Bookstore <http://www.cbamatthews.com/yavcol/>
- Contact information for technical support or Help Desk
<http://www2.yc.edu/content/its/helpdesk.htm>

C. Information About Online Resources:

- Conducting online research
- Writing a research paper
- Guidelines for APA/MLA format of papers and/or citations

D. Information About Resources Supporting Course Content

- Information/tutorials on how to use software required by class assignments
- Checklist or other method for common troubleshooting tips
- Minimum computer hardware and software requirements
- Sources for any required plug-ins (and links)
- Tutorials for how to use Blackboard tools
- FAQs for Blackboard

- Netiquette guidelines
- Link(s) to web sites with supporting information relevant to course content
- Link(s) to web sites of organizations or associations related to course content
- Glossary of terms or links to definitions of new vocabulary

ONLINE ORGANIZATION AND DESIGN

✓ CHECK YOUR COURSE:

A. Course Navigability and Organization

- Course modules are clearly identified and described
- Course content is organized in a logical format, and is consistent from module to module
- Organization and sequencing of the course content is logical and clear
- Links to all sections of the course or external sources are accurate and up-to-date
- Instructional materials required are easily located
- Topics are clearly identified and subtopics are related to topics
- Topics have due dates provided
- Accessibility issues are addressed throughout the course

B. Syllabus

- Is easily located
- Is available in a printable format
- Contains Instructor contact information (phone, email, website address-if applicable)
- Contains course information (description, credit hours, objectives and learning outcomes, assessments, grading)
- Contains course completion requirements
- Contains expectations of students' participation, honesty, etc.
- Contains clear timeline for student participation
- Expectations of availability of and turnaround time for contact with instructor
- Course calendar is summarized in one place and available in printable format
- Textbooks, software, supplies, equipment and tools required for the course are clearly described

C. Aesthetic Design and Consistency

- Typeface is easy to read, and in web-friendly font (example: Arial, Verdana)
- Sufficient contrast between text and background makes information easy to read
- Appropriate images supporting course content add visual interest
- Design keeps course pages to a comfortable length with white space.
- Layout of course is visually and functionally consistent
- Spelling and grammar are consistent and accurate
- Written material is concise (Sentences and paragraphs are brief)

- Language of written material is friendly and supportive
- Clear directions are given for each task or assignment

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN AND DELIVERY

✓ CHECK YOUR COURSE:

A. Promote Interaction and Communication

- Instructor welcomes students and introduces himself/herself to model interaction
- Students introduce themselves and are encouraged to respond to classmates in an “Ice-breaker” activity
- Discussion Board assignments are relevant and graded
- Course provides multiple means by which students and instructors may interact (email, discussion board, etc.)
- Rules of Netiquette are enforced
- Students are prompted by facilitator to expand on relevant points
- Reading and writing requirements are consistent with student abilities and course unit load

B. Goals and Alignment to Learning Objectives

- Goals and objectives are outlined and presented with measurable outcomes which match the teaching.
- Objectives are written for what the student will be able to accomplish at the end of the learning.
- Pace of delivery of course content is managed
- Course content is “chunked” for more manageable learning
- Instructional design is made clear (e.g., is it self-paced, or group-paced)
- Expectations for synchronous vs asynchronous activities are clearly spelled out
- Reading and writing requirements are consistent with student abilities and course unit load

C. Learning Objectives and Activities Are Integrated Into Course Activities

- Students are informed how each topic, task and activity support the learning outcomes
- Reading assignments match learning objectives
- The instructor’s underlying learning and teaching theories are clearly articulated and appropriate for targeting the various learning styles of the students.
- Activities lead to learning desired concepts
- Tasks and activities are designated as synchronous or asynchronous; sequential or may be completed in any order (clarified)
- Instructional material may be reviewed repeatedly (built-in redundancy)
- Summary provided frequently, particularly at the end of topics, to reinforce learning

D. Activities to Enhance Student Learning (Addressing Multiple Learning Styles)

- Video clips of interviews, movements
- Historical audio clips of famous speeches

- Screen animations for instructional exercises using software
- Personal interview reports
- Crossword or word search puzzles
- Matching and game-show-style trivia games
- Online scavenger hunt / WebQuest
- Annotated bibliography
- PowerPoint presentations as assignments
- Flash simulations
- Online research

E. Activities To Develop Critical Thinking And Problem-Solving Skills

- Discussions center on questions without a single correct answer
- Compare and contrast exercises
- Case studies
- Critique classmates' assignments
- Collaborative exercises
- Portfolios (building one activity upon another) to share/peer review

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF STUDENT LEARNING

✓ CHECK YOUR COURSE:

A. Assess Student Readiness for Learning

- Pre-requisites are defined and enforced
- Acceptable methods for completing assignments are identified (group work, open book, etc.)
- Consequences of cheating or plagiarism
- Pre-assessment if feasible

B. Assessment Activities are Aligned With Learning Objectives

- Criteria used to evaluate participation in online discussion groups
- Study questions
- Quantity and scope of graded assignments is reasonable
- Authentic assessments
- Student assessment is tracked
- Students continuously know their class ranking from outcome assessment results
- Criteria used to evaluate learning activities is clearly defined
- Assessments compel the pragmatic demonstration of the learned outcome

C. Multiple Assessment Strategies

- Students' bibliography or reference list includes a variety of materials such as URLs, books and journals, and videos
- When possible, options among assignments are provided to allow for different interests, backgrounds, and personal learning styles
- Students are not assessed solely on tests/quizzes but are provided ample opportunity to demonstrate proficiency in different ways
- Post-assessment if pre-assessment was administered

D. Regular Feedback

- Rich and rapid feedback – self-grading assignments released immediately
- Frequent and substantial feedback from the instructor
- Samples of assignments illustrate instructor's expectations
- Detailed instructions and tips for completing assignments
- Due dates for all assignments
- Rubrics for all assignments identify assessment guidelines
- Grading scale
- Instructor models assignment

E. Self-assessments and Peer Feedback

- Self-tests similar to the final evaluation instruments

- Students pose discussion questions, respond to others' discussion topics, later post answers to their own questions and respond to others' comments on their discussion topic
- Peer review opportunities
- Students apply rubric to their own work and describe/defend their score
- Clear guidelines for peer review, if applicable
- Self-tests and internal evaluation instruments are frequent assignments

APPROPRIATE AND EFFECTIVE USE OF TECHNOLOGY

✓ CHECK YOUR COURSE:

A. Appropriate Tools to Facilitate Communication

- Course maximizes the use of web course tools available, in support of the learning objective.
- Discussion boards
- Synchronous “chats”
- Email
- Listserv
- Teleconferencing
- Group discussion areas, when appropriate for group activities
- Instant messaging

B. New Teaching Methods

- Graphics and media used have clear instructional purposes which reinforce content.
- Instructor is open to trying new methods of delivery of instruction
- Instructor is open to accepting new methods of students preferred learning styles.

C. Multimedia Elements

- Flash animations
- Tutorials with screen captures and voice over
- Audio clips
- Graphics
- Video clips
- PowerPoint presentations
- CD-Rom or DVD supplemental materials
- Other learning objects, simulations or interactivities

D. Engage students throughout the course

- Students off-campus with modems are provided with low-bandwidth alternatives for downloading media
- Technology is used to engage students in learning, not just for viewing but for interacting with other students or with the course content
- All external links and internal functionality of web courses will be fully operational when students begin the course.

FACULTY USE OF STUDENT FEEDBACK

✓ CHECK YOUR COURSE:

A. Course Content

- Evaluation survey at end of course
- Student input sought at regular intervals
- Open ended questions
- Students falling behind are prompted to determine what might be delaying their progress
- Students prompted to find web-based resources supporting the topic to share with classmates; the highest quality resources incorporated into the course
- Course offers multiple opportunities for students to give feedback on course content
- Instructor designs anonymous surveys with open ended questions

B. Online Technology

- Instructor has an open door to students to point out flaws of delivery of instruction using technology
- Instructor solicits feedback on how delivery can be more effective for student learning (e.g., a Discussion Topic for Feedback)
- Course offers multiple opportunities for students to give feedback on ease of online

C. Instruction and Assessment

- Instructor is willing to modify course (live) as needed to improve or fix inadequacies
- Instructor is able to modify elements (e.g., fix bad quiz questions, extend deadlines, review methods of achieving course objectives)
- Instructor uses formal and informal student feedback in an ongoing basis to help plan instruction an assessment of student learning throughout the semester
- Instructor has an "open door" to students
- Instructor is able to modify course content activities to improve outcome learning