

AA.02: Expectations of Faculty Teaching Online

The U.S. Department of Education mandates that all online courses meet its definition of a Distance Education course. That definition includes the requirement that faculty provide “regular and substantive engagement with students” in the online course structure. The following expectations were derived from best practices in online teaching and strive to meet two complementary goals: meet the definition of Distance Education provided by the Department of Education and provide the best academic experiences to our students in an online format.

Expectations of all faculty teaching online or hybrid courses include the following:

General items and course structure

1. All online courses must use the DSU Learning Management System: Canvas.
2. All courses must correctly use the Canvas shell developed by DSU.
3. All courses must use the online course syllabus template, ensuring that student expectations for attendance in an online course are clearly communicated to students and are consistent with DSU attendance policy.
4. Faculty must “publish” their course no later than 12:01 a.m. of the first day of class of each term the course is offered.
5. All new faculty, or faculty teaching online for the first time, must complete OIT training in Canvas and pedagogy for teaching online.
(<https://deltastate.instructure.com/courses/21609>)
6. All new courses offered online must work with OIT in designing their courses, keeping in mind that copyrighted materials, videos and other multimedia materials take a significant amount of time to incorporate.
7. Set clear expectations for discussion participation (quality, quantity, netiquette, participation, interaction with other students).
8. Create collaboration and community by using a variety of tools and approaches in Canvas including discussion boards, conferences, and collaborations.
9. All faculty who teach online must attend annual training provided or approved by OIT.

Communicating with students

1. Be explicit and clear in the syllabus and in course modules regarding how students should progress in the course, when they should expect feedback from the instructor, and how best to communicate with the instructor if they need assistance.
2. Respond to student communications within two business days, with sensitivity to assignment deadlines.
3. Use Canvas as the primary means of communication with students enrolled in an online course.

4. Inform students of their right to privacy regarding their education record as defined in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
5. When responding to a student (unless it's an individualized response), use the tools in Canvas that address the whole class so that all students can benefit from the explanation (for example, the discussion board or Announcements and course Q&A page).
6. In addition to the scheduled readings, videos, or PowerPoint slides you have planned for content presentation, faculty must engage the class directly on course content at least once a week. Direct participation in group discussions is required. Active guidance or facilitation demonstrates substantive engagement. Student posts do not demonstrate substantive engagement between faculty and students.
7. Maintain a friendly, respectful environment in the online classroom, ensuring that student and faculty interactions follow basic principles of netiquette.
8. Monitor student activity and login events through the Canvas Course Analytics tool and contact students with low or no participation.

Grading and Attendance

1. Assignment, quiz, test, and participation grades must be posted in Canvas. Grades have to be available to students through the Gradebook in Canvas.
2. Include a grading rubric in your syllabus for every assignment, so students have a clearer understanding of how to structure their work and how their work will be assessed.

Addressing typical student concerns

1. Require students to submit all assignments through Canvas, not personal email. Use of an external site for submission of student work requires prior approval of chair and dean and compatibility assurance from OIT.
2. All class discussions and blogging must take place in Canvas. Use of external tools, sites, or services requires prior approval of chair and dean, as well as compatibility assurance from OIT.
3. Instructors must make themselves visible at the beginning of the course and respond to student questions during the first week.
4. Most student problems/questions stem from lack of clarity around specific assignments, deadlines, content, and submission policies. Instructors must make instructions clear.
5. Grade student work within one week of submission so that students know where they stand in the course and if they are on the right track.
6. Clearly note whom students should contact if they have technical problems with Canvas.