

Best Practices and principles of online education from Weber State

Weber State University (WSU) faculty believe that the following 18 points need to be included in any successful Online Course:

1. An online course should be based on the same learning outcomes and demand the same rigor as a traditional class. The identification of courses to be taught online, the semesters in which to offer them, and the assignment of instructors rest with the academic department.
2. Students should spend the same amount of time on an online course as they do for a campus course. The rule of 15 clock hours of class time per credit hour should guide development of an online course.
3. Online courses should reach the same learning outcomes as traditional courses. Assessment of the effectiveness of online offerings should be conducted at the same time as and in a manner consistent with departmental standards and practice for traditional courses.
4. Online faculty are responsible for identifying copyrighted materials used in their courses and for either citing that material appropriately or obtaining written permission to use it in the web environment in advance of coursework beginning.
5. Discussions, chat, use of media (especially streamed media) should all be chosen to be value-added to the student.
6. Every course should address the needs of students with disabilities; boilerplate language can be provided.

COURSE COMPONENTS

7. All online courses use the course template (which includes navigation pathways and design standards) developed by the WSU Online team and modified by the experience of WSU Online faculty.
8. Course content should be up-to-date at the beginning of the term, with dates changed from term to term and links updated.
9. Because online courses are unique in being a form of publication, experienced online faculty feel that each course must reflect the highest professional standards, including careful attention to such fundamentals as spelling, grammar, and mechanics.

Comment: Even though access to courses is restricted to enrolled students, posting material to the world wide web is a form of publication that reflects not only on the individual faculty member but also on the institution as a whole. Errors can be magnified and multiplied in the online environment. The standard stated here addresses the

instructor's work. Each instructor may set and should articulate his own standard for the level of editing expected in student work.

If the instructor views web assignments as written work to be graded on mechanics as well as content, that should be clearly stated. If the instructor is more concerned that students make substantive content contributions to an online discussion without worrying about spelling (for instance), that too should be clearly stated.

10. When possible and when supportive of course objectives, the course should draw on and incorporate some of the vast information resources available via the web.

11. Instructors should feel free to use library resources to the same extent for online courses as they do in traditional classes.

12. There should be task submissions for students with substantive feedback on a regular basis, preferably weekly.

13. Online instructors should set and articulate clear and realistic timelines for responding to students and should adhere to them.

14. Special efforts should be made to create and support a learning community among online students who may feel they are working in isolation.

15. The course should use the richness of the electronic medium to the fullest extent possible. Online faculty should possess skills in word processing and electronic communication at least equivalent to those identified in the computer literacy requirement for students.

16. Course design should include appropriate orientation about how the course is structured and how online tools work.

17. The online medium should be used for teaching and learning activities. A syllabus and a set of online tests do not constitute an online course.

18. Every course should address academic honesty.

11/17/00

For more information the actual article is located at:

<http://wsuonline.weber.edu/factraining/unit1/section1/guidelines.htm>