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Recommendation for Standards of Good Practice
Online Teaching and Learning Committee
Cuyamaca College
November 2004

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May 1, 2005

Dear Faculty Members,

Teaching an online course for the first time can be a daunting proposition, especially since achieving academic quality is not simply a matter of transferring a replica of what you do in classroom to the online environment. Online learning requires students to become more active learners; so most instructors need to learn to teach somewhat differently—to become a guide on the side instead of a sage on the stage. They must also learn how to use various new forms of technology—while maintaining the same level of academic rigor they have always delivered in the classroom. The *Recommendation for Standards of Good Practice*, created by the Online Teaching and Learning Committee, was written with these issues in mind.

These standards focus on the needs of instructors, students, and administrators, offering guidelines in areas such as instructor competencies, technical support, equipment needs, rigor, contract issues, costs, student needs, accessibility, and other student support services. It was written to be a set of benchmarks the college should strive to meet whenever possible. It should be noted the committee engaged in intensive brainstorming and research in order to develop these standards. Indeed, the *Recommendation for Standards of Good Practice* is truly a group effort.

The Online Teaching and Learning Committee hopes the *Recommendation for Standards of Good Practice* proves to be a useful resource, a guide that will inspire all involved parties to continue to create a quality online learning program at Cuyamaca College. If you have any further questions or concerns about the issues described in this document, please contact any committee member. We are always happy to mentor interested instructors.

Sincerely,

Kari Wergeland
Co-Chair of the Online Teaching and Learning Committee

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Overview: Regulations and Guidelines	1
Faculty	2
Instructor Competencies	2
Technical Support	3
Equipment	4
Contract Issues	5
Academic Honesty	5
Rigor	6
Retention	7
Students	8
Profile of Successful Students	8
Orientation	9
Hardware Requirements	10
Software Requirements	10
Technical Support for Students	10
Accessibility	11
Other Student Support Services	11
Admissions and Records	11
Bookstore	11
Counseling	12
Financial Aid	12
Library	12
Online Assessment.....	12
Tutoring	12
Administration	12
Purpose.....	12
Student Access	13
Faculty.....	13
Quality.....	13
Other Costs.....	14
Recommendations	14
Marketing	15

INTRODUCTION

The Online Teaching and Learning Committee at Cuyamaca College recommends the following Standards of Good Practice for all online instruction. These standards incorporate the combined practical knowledge gleaned from online instructors at Cuyamaca College, as well as information gathered from research in the field.

The Online Teaching and Learning Committee reports to the Instructional Technology Council and the Curriculum Committee; it also submits recommendations for consideration and approval as needed. In addition, it coordinates and communicates with the Academic Senate and other college committees when necessary. The committee is comprised of eight faculty members: four from Instruction, one from the Library, one from Student Services, one from the Curriculum Committee and one adjunct faculty; the Instructional Technology Supervisor, a classified representative, and an instructional administrator.

The Online Teaching and Learning Committee concludes that online education is a viable and popular alternative to the traditional classroom. Cuyamaca College must continue its presence in this teaching environment, increasing the number of online opportunities for students as the college continues to grow. Online teaching and learning is not without challenges however.

These Standards of Good Practice have been developed to serve as a guideline and recommendation for instructors, students, and administrators to follow to ensure the college is offering a quality online educational experience for all involved.

OVERVIEW: REGULATIONS AND GUIDELINES

The California Community Colleges Distance Education Regulations and Guidelines, July 2002, allow Community Colleges to explore and develop educational initiatives using advanced communication and computing technologies to address student access issues related to geographical, cultural, disability or facility barriers. These regulations have assisted in mainstreaming and integrating Distance Education (DE) into the California Community College curriculum.

Distance Education is defined as a course/section for which the use of technology utilizes 51 percent or more of the time to deliver instruction during the course term and where the student and instructor are separated by distance. Students must engage in an additional two hours per week of educational activity for each one hour of “classroom” time in order to meet Carnegie Unit requirements for academic credit, Title 5, Section 55205. In addition, instruction provided as distance education is subject to the

requirements that may be imposed by the Americans with Disabilities Act, particularly Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, amended 1973. All distance education sections are subject to the same local and state approval standards and procedures and should be considered a “virtual equivalent” to a classroom-based course.

FACULTY

Instructor Competencies

Title 5 Regulations, Section 55215, and the State Chancellor’s Office Guidelines on Distance Education state: “Instructors of sections delivered via distance education technology shall be selected by the same procedures used to determine all instructional assignments . . . In addition, DE faculty can benefit from training in how to effectively teach in a DE environment and in how to update their DE course to enhance student learning.”

The Online Teaching and Learning Committee makes the following recommendations for good practice when considering minimum qualifications for new online instructors:

1. Online instructors should be able to use a course management tool such as Blackboard, WebCT or equivalent. This includes ability to:
 - Manage classroom communications such as discussion groups, chat rooms, large quantities of email, and posting announcements.
 - Modify course rosters for online use.
 - Create online assessments such as quizzes, tests, surveys, projects, writing assignments, and essay exams.
 - Upload and download documents and student assignments.
 - Post course content such as PowerPoint presentations, audio, video, and hyperlinks to web pages.
 - Post student grades online.
2. Online instructors should possess the following personal characteristics:
 - Effective time management skills.
 - General computer literacy, including the ability to support students with basic technical problems.
 - Ability to communicate effectively in writing.
 - Ability to adapt regular course pedagogy to the online environment including socialization, facilitating communication, offering

frequent feedback, monitoring student progress, clarifying instructions and expectations.

3. Recommended preparation may include:
 - Taking an online class.
 - Taking the Cuyamaca College class: “Teaching an Online Course.”
 - Participating in workshops relating to Distance Learning.
 - Attending WebCT or Blackboard training.
 - Including online components in a regular class in order to gain online teaching experience.
 - Maintaining an individual faculty and a course home page.
 - Using multi-media and other pedagogy to address a variety of learning styles and promote student success.
 - Consulting with Teaching and Learning Center personnel regarding instructional design.
 - Consulting with Teaching and Learning Center personnel regarding webpage development.
 - Consulting with other online instructors.

Technical Support

The Online Teaching and Learning Committee makes the following recommendations for good practice when considering technical support for online instruction:

1. The District should offer adequate and effective training in the use of:
 - Course management tools.
 - Presentation software.
 - Word processing.
 - Email.
 - Online research methods, including evaluation of internet sources.
 - Online course design, including teaching strategies.
 - Online grading programs.
 - Web authoring software.
 - Multi-media production software.
2. The District should provide technical support personnel for online instruction.

3. The network should be supported seven days per week. Planned network down-time should be communicated to faculty in advance.
4. The Help Desk should be staffed 24 hours per day, seven days per week if possible.
5. Support for the latest versions of software and course management systems should be available on campus.

Equipment

The Online Teaching and Learning Committee makes the following recommendations for good practice when considering equipment necessary for online instruction:

1. Faculty support should be available for all appropriate, required equipment.
2. Faculty is required to use District-supported servers. GCCCD Operating Policy on Web Procedure – IS10 states:
“Prior approval in writing from the appropriate Division Dean, Vice President, and the Director of Information Systems is required to:
 - a. Connect department or personal servers to the GCCCD network (LAN and WAN).
 - b. Host any of the following information on servers not maintained by ICS or IS.
 - i. Course syllabi, outlines, assignments
 - ii. Instructor office hours
 - iii. Student information (names, id numbers, grades, etc.)
 - iv. Student developed course work”
3. The College/District should keep equipment and other applicable resources up-to-date.
4. Equipment requirements for those teaching from their office or a remote location should include, but is not limited to:
 - Computer that meets or exceeds current District standards (see standard/current District specifications).
 - Current browser.
 - High-speed internet connection.
 - Active email account.

5. Other desirable equipment and services available at the College should include, but is not limited to:
 - Multi-media production equipment and software.
 - Media duplication equipment and supplies.
 - Accessibility testing equipment and software.
 - Software for detecting plagiarism.
 - Web authoring software.
 - Appropriate and reliable infrastructure.

Contract Issues

The following list represents items covered in the UF Contract and have been or should be negotiated. The Online Teaching and Learning Committee, while interested, will not make recommendations on these points.

1. Class Size.
2. Teaching Load.
3. Office Hours.
4. Course/faculty evaluation.
5. Faculty incentives/compensation.
6. Ownership of course materials and curriculum.
7. Ownership of work residing on personal or College/District server.

Academic Honesty (for further information, see college catalog)

Suggestions for ensuring that the student enrolled in an online course/section is doing the work include, but are not limited to:

- Providing on-campus or proctored exams.
- Awarding grades based on work product rather than exams.
- Making assignments requiring personal or original work.
- Posting a detailed plagiarism policy.
- Using anti-plagiarism software.
- Using timed tests (there is not enough time for students to look up every answer).
- Using randomization for test questions.
- Requiring personal identification.

- Considering what should be public (students should be made aware of what information may become public knowledge).

Rigor

Title 5 Regulations, Section 55207, and the State Chancellor’s Office Guidelines on Distance Education state: “the same standards of course quality shall be applied to distance education as are applied to traditional classroom courses.” Additionally, instructors are encouraged to observe Academic Rigor guidelines to ensure smooth course management, both for the student as well as the instructor. The Online Teaching and Learning Committee finds the more structured the course, the more likely students will follow instructions, meet deadlines, and successfully complete the course. It is the committee’s experience that courses with loosely defined deadlines for assignments and expectations result in a chaotic, frustrating experience for both students and the instructor. Structure and/or rigor that is built into the class from the very beginning generally result in timely, more complete work product, fewer questions (thus fewer emails), less confusion, and greater student success.

1. Academic rigor in online courses should:
 - Meet classroom-based class standards.
 - Offer students sufficient weekly work.
 - Include a number of alternate, hands-on assignments as there is no regular lecture (this is a way to verify the level of student understanding).
 - Include regular quizzes and/or exams in order to monitor student progress.
 - Incorporate ways to keep students on track and engaged including many deadlines, perhaps weekly.
 - Have everything outlined in the syllabus and reiterated on instructor’s home page.
 - Provide regular updates; weekly updates are recommended.
 - Include meaningful assessments based on multiple measures such as multiple choice tests, discussions, reading & writing assignments, hands-on projects, and presentations.
 - Maintain the same grading standards as a regular, classroom-based course.

2. Title 5 Regulations, Section 53200, and the State Chancellor's Office Guidelines on Distance Education state: "all approved courses offered as distance education include regular effective contact between instructor and students, through group or individual meetings, orientation and review sessions, supplemental seminar or study sessions, field trips, library workshops, telephone contact, correspondence, voice mail, email, or other activities." In addition, when approved by the Curriculum Committee, "there must be a documentation of regular and effective contact," Section 55213. Regular effective contact is an academic and professional matter pursuant to Title 5, Section 53200.

From the perspective of the Online Teaching and Learning Committee, instructor interaction with students should be increased. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Timely response to questions (within one working day is recommended).
- Monitoring of appropriate discussion boards.
- Regular announcements (weekly announcements are recommended).
- Reasonable feedback on assignments (weekly feedback is recommended).
- Close monitoring of students progress (sometimes referred to as more hand-holding) during the first few weeks of the semester.
- Anticipation that students will be online 24/7 (though instructors can emphasize to students they aren't expected to be online 24/7).
- Providing multiple means of communication such as class email, personal email, instant messenger, discussion forums, announcements, cell phone, and office hours.

Retention

In recent years, Distance Education has been recognized as a viable instructional methodology as evidenced by the fact that courses are funded the same as regular classes and are no longer funded as "Independent Study." The State Chancellor's Office Guidelines on Distance Education, "Section 58003.1[of Title 5] was revised to allow colleges to compute DE Full

Time Equivalent Student (FTES) using the same attendance accounting procedures available to a classroom-based course/section.”

This means online instruction is viewed as equivalent to classroom-based instruction. However, one of the on-going concerns is student retention and student success. The Committee believes that many students enroll in online courses who are unprepared to be successful in them; therefore the committee recommends that the college should communicate clearly to students that online courses are sometimes more difficult than regular courses. The profiles of successful students need to be disseminated via the website, to Counselors and during class orientations, to clarify which student behaviors lead to success in online courses.

Students sometimes drop online course because of technical frustrations. As the college provides technical help desk support services for students, retention should increase.

Online support services for students should increase retention: Counseling services, Financial Aide services, Help Desk, Library services, and Tutoring services. (see additional information under Support Services, page 10)

STUDENTS

Profile of Successful Students

Successful online students:

- Are self-motivated.
- Are able to stay on-task.
- Possess basic computer skills and are able to meet class software and internet requirements: email, word processing, getting files from other locations, sending and receiving files, saving a file, cutting and pasting, and other skills specific to course content and technical level of the class.
- Manage their time.
- Take responsibility for their own work product.
- Are tenacious (sometimes the problems get sticky).
- Are able to work alone.
- Are willing to communicate with the class **as required**.

Orientation

Online instructors should provide a course orientation. This may be on campus in person, online, or a combination of both. Of course the nature of the orientation should reflect the needs of the subject matter as well as the students. The following are topics recommended for any orientation to an online course:

- Overview of the instructor website and course home page.
- Overview of the instructor course management system (note students may have taken other online classes but may not have used the same course management system you have selected).
- General technical information for getting started including user names, passwords, plug-ins, hardware and software requirements, troubleshooting common difficulties, and an overview of computer issues.
- Methods of communication including how students can reach the instructor and how soon they should expect a response. It may be appropriate to loosely define instructor online hours; i.e. instructor frequently works online late at night, instructor works online early in the morning, instructor will check online every day except most Sundays.
- Overview of the class itself including how to submit assignments, deadlines, mechanics of test-taking, discussion boards, chat rooms, presentations, text book requirements, and other required materials.
- Where to find course information, how to navigate your course website, and links to further resources.
- Attributes of successful students. See <http://www.gcccd.net/online/faq.htm#3>.

Additionally, instructors may want to direct students to one of the many self-assessment tools available to students online. Examples may be found at the following websites: Peterson's Distance Learning Assessment at www.lifelonglearning.com/dlwizard/code/default.asp, Online Learning Explained at www.onlinelearning.net/ole/holwselfassess.html, Online Aptitude Assessment at www.devry.edu/online/online_quiz.html, and Is Online Learning For Me? At www.gvtc.org/self_test.asp.

Hardware Requirements

Students must have access to a computer with appropriate features for the course they are taking, including an email account, a reliable internet connection, multi-media capabilities, adequate storage, as well as any requirements specific to the course. Students do have the option of working in any of the open labs on campus; however, these computers may not have the specialized hardware specific to course requirements.

Software Requirements

Students must have a web browser, an email program, anti-virus protection, and software specific to the course as noted by instructor (e.g., MS Office, media player, Acrobat Reader, PowerPoint viewer). Students have the option of working in any of the open labs on campus; these computers may not have the specialized software specific to course content.

Technical Support for Students

The Online Teaching and Learning Committee strongly recommends the following standards of technical support for students in online courses:

- Help Desk for questions pertaining to WebCT, Blackboard, hardware, and software.
- Online FAQs (<http://www.gcccd.net/online/faq.htm>).
- Video tutorials added to the college website such as basics of Blackboard and WebCT.
- College Counselors should have a general knowledge of online classes in order to advise students about appropriate technical requirements of an online class.
- Increased open labs and open lab hours.

It remains the student's responsibility to manage hardware, software, Internet, and connectivity problems. Network and Internet problems should be addressed by contacting the student's Internet service provider. Students should be advised to have a back-up plan in case they encounter computer problems (computer crashes) or software that does not work properly. Student can log on to the college website for information pertaining to log-on problems for WebCT (<http://webct.gcccd.net/webct/public/home.pl>), Blackboard (<http://bb.gcccd.net/>), or they can go to the WebCT or Blackboard websites for further information regarding how to use these course management systems.

It remains the responsibility of the faculty to act as primary contact regarding class orientation, course content, course materials, grading and evaluation.

Accessibility

GCCCD Operating Policy on Web Procedure – IS10 states:

“B. Accessibility

1. The District and colleges shall adhere to the ADA/Section 508 requirements for all new Web pages since June 21, 2001.
2. All software/systems on the GCCCD Network, implemented since June 21, 2001, must be ADA 508 compliant.”

Other Student Support Services

The Online Learning Teaching and Learning Committee recommends the following additional student support services be available to increase student success:

Admissions and Records:

GCCCD provides college application centers online at [http://www.cccapply.org/Applications/California Community College/apply/Cuyamaca College.html](http://www.cccapply.org/Applications/California_Community_College/apply/Cuyamaca_College.html) and Web Connect at <http://web1.gcccd.net/>. Soon, the District will have a student portal system, allowing students to access all of their records via a unique student ID and unique password. As students enroll for classes, pertinent information will be uploaded into the appropriate databases for instructor access. This information will also be entered into the WebCT and Blackboard global databases. Admissions and Records will also be able to email students regarding such things as important deadlines for class orientations and class evaluations. The student portal system will greatly expand online capabilities at both colleges, facilitating instructor course management and increasing student access and success.

Bookstore:

- Students should be able to purchase books online and have books shipped to them.
- Textbook information should be available on a bookstore website.
- Bundled textbook packages for online courses should be clearly marked or identified for students as required for online classes to reduce confusion with other courses,

- Availability of discounted software for students should be researched and publicized.

Counseling:

- An online Counselor should be available to provide academic advisement to students online.
- An online Counselor should understand the issues of online learning (perhaps they have personally taken or taught a class online).

Financial Aid:

- Students should be able to receive counseling on issues such as application deadlines and status of their financial aid via chat or email. See <http://www.cuyamaca.edu/finaid/>.

Library:

- Books should be mailed to students when necessary (obvious restrictions or guidelines should be in place).
- Research tools should be available online including subscription databases and e-books.
- Librarians should be available to provide online support via chat or email.

Online Assessment:

- The College should maintain a website or link on the website to encourage students to assess their readiness or preparedness for online learning. In addition, this website or link could be designed to provide students with the basic skills necessary for success in an online class.

Tutoring:

- Access to an online Tutor should be available.
- Staff in the Tutoring Center should be familiar with online issues in order to assist students in the online environment.

ADMINISTRATION

GCCCD Governing Board Policy 3710 states:

“Employees and students who use District computers and networks and the information they contain, and related resources have a responsibility not to abuse those resources and to respect the rights of others. The Chancellor shall establish procedures that provide guidelines to students and staff for the appropriate use of information technologies. The procedures shall include that users must respect software copyrights and licenses, respect the integrity of computer-

based information resources, refrain from seeking to gain unauthorized access, and respect the right of other computer users. The procedures will also include that users must not use a system to perform an illegal, malicious act, or act in violation of District policy.”

Title 5 Regulations, Section 55219, and the State Chancellor’s Office Guidelines on Distance Education, states that districts offering DE courses/sections must include all management information system elements in their annual reports to the Chancellor’s Office and to the local governing board. This information is included in order to inform instructors of the reporting process and areas of emphasis. “To the extent possible local reports should compare and contrast DE to traditional instructional delivery. The annual report to the local governing board should, to the extent possible, address the following questions:

Purpose

- What was the intent in offering the course by DE? How was the learning enhanced by use of technology?

Student Access

- What is the evidence, if any, that the new methodology increased the number of students served, or extended services to students with disabilities?
- What student services were provided to support student success for DE?
- In what ways were the goals of the district’s Student Equity Plan furthered?

Faculty

- How were the faculty selected to teach each DE section and what relevant professional development activities and support services were provided for them?
- What was their perception of the experience? Which new approaches were judged to be effective? Which were judged to be non-effective?

Quality

- How did student satisfaction compare with student satisfaction in regular courses?
- How did student achievement compare with student achievement in regular courses?
- Did students with prior independent study experience do better in DE than those without prior experience?

- How did the type and quality of student-faculty interaction in each course compare with similar interaction in regular courses?
- What types of instructional support and student services were provided to students, especially students with disabilities?
- How appropriate and effective was the courseware for each course?
- Was equipment satisfactory for each course?
- Which technological mix was used most effectively?
- What differences, if any, were there in the level of student achievement in transferable versus nontransferable DE courses? How does this compare with any differences between transferable and non-transferable traditional courses?

Other Costs

- How did start-up costs for DE compare with other modes of instruction?
- How did continuing costs for DE compare with other modes of instruction?
- In what ways, if any, does faculty and staff load differ for DE sections?

Recommendations

- What suggestions can be made for the improvement of DE?"

Cuyamaca College Administration is committed to offering more online classes, as approved by the Curriculum Committee. Our intent is to develop online offerings as the college grows and as student demand indicates increased need. To that end, we are supportive of increased online offerings as the following conditions arise:

- Faculty demonstrates understanding of the requirements of online teaching.
- Courses under development are appropriate and reflective of departmental academic master plans.
- Thought is given to sequential offerings or offerings leading to certification or completion of General Education rather than “random” offerings.
- Courses are generally offered as an alternative for students in an online format and are not solely offered online (online and classroom-based sections may alternate each semester).
- Courses are approved through the curricular process, by the Curriculum Committee.

In addition, we encourage faculty to offer a blended version of a specific course before developing it to be completely online. This methodology allows for the implementation of online elements into an otherwise classroom-based class. At least 51% of class hours are offered during a regular, scheduled time slot and the remaining course content is offered online. Please see the attached memo defining a blended class and describing the approval process for offering a blended class, see Appendix A.

MARKETING

Online Courses are currently listed on separate pages near the beginning of the Schedule of Classes and on the College Website at <http://www.gcccd.net/online/>. In the listing of classes in the Schedule of Classes, they are noted as “offered via the Internet” and the instructors contact information is included. Blended courses are also noted in the Schedule of Classes as classes having some scheduled hours and “additional designated number of hours required on the Internet.”

The California Virtual College maintains a listing of colleges and courses available online. Cuyamaca College regularly updates our listing of courses approved for online instruction and courses offered in the Schedule of Classes each semester. For more information see <http://www.cvc.edu/>.

REFERENCES

Distance Education Guidelines, Second Edition, March 2004, Educational Services Division, Academic Affairs and Instructional Resources Unit, Chancellor’s Office, California Community Colleges
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Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District
Governing Board Members: Rick Alexander; Timothy L. Caruthers, D.C.; Wendell R. Cutting;
Ronald D. Kraft; Deanna Weeks
Student Members: Rick Collins; Peter Anderson
Chancellor: Omero Suarez, Ph.D., Cuyamaca College President: Geraldine M. Perri, Ph.D.