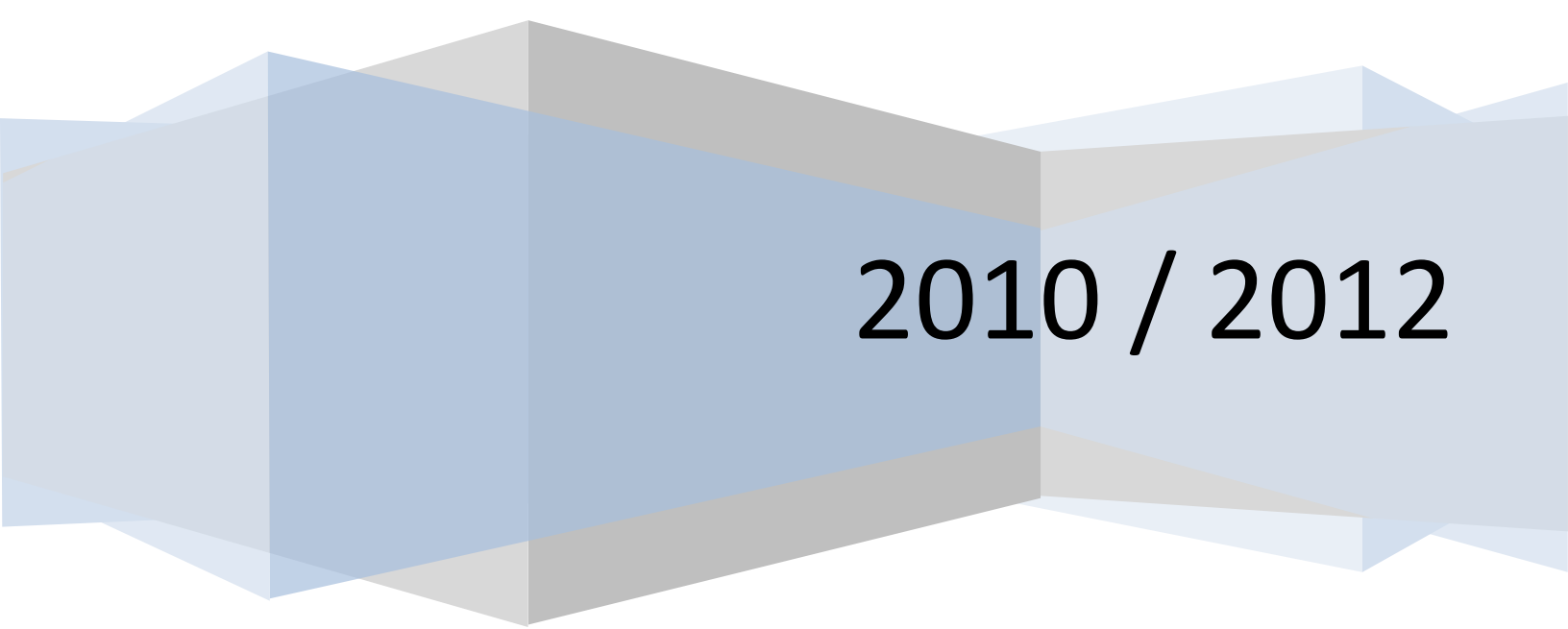


College of the Mainland

DE Faculty Handbook

Version 1.4.1



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Academic Standards of Online Instruction

College of the Mainland (COM) will provide quality distance learning opportunities for students in support of the vision, mission, and values of the College.

Online instruction will meet the same standards and academic rigor as their traditional counterparts, adhere to the guidelines outlined in the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools distance education policy statement and will meet the minimum requirements as published in the Distance Education Faculty Handbook.

Evaluation of Instruction

Online, anonymous student evaluations will be administered to guide improvement of all distance courses. These evaluations will measure the same quality of instruction as traditional sections of a course but also include assessment of the unique methodology to provide feedback to the faculty member.

Curriculum and Instruction

Courses offered at a distance will have the same credit value as the face-to-face equivalent and the cost per credit hour will be identical to the per-credit hour cost of other courses in the College catalog. An additional distance education fee will be charged for each Internet and hybrid enrollment.

Department chairs and deans are required to complete training in our course management system (CMS) in order to effectively monitor distance education courses that reside on our course management system and publisher's web sites.

All published class schedules must indicate which course sections will be delivered by distance education, but these courses will not be distinguished on transcripts from sections of these courses delivered in more traditional ways.

The majority of distance education courses will be offered on the College's current course management system to maximize consistency and minimize distance students' learning curves and confusion.

Decisions to offer courses or programs through distance education should reflect student need or the necessity for the College to compete with other institutions of higher education. If a degree program is designed to be offered entirely by distance education, the enrolled student must be able to satisfy all requirements of the degree program online.

The Chief Academic Officer (and his/her designee), the appropriate academic dean (and his/her designee) and the relevant department chair (and his/her designee) shall have the same access to distance education courses and its materials as any teaching assistant. The DED (DED) (and his/her designee) shall have the same access to distance education courses as the designer/instructor of record.

The DED will provide ongoing analysis of current course offerings and identify what areas are of the most interest to students. The DED will work with department chairs and faculty to develop courses that are in high demand. The deans will develop strategies to encourage faculty members to participate in distance instruction at the College.

Department chairs must be aware of the technological needs for offering a distance course and should verify the faculty member's experience before assigning any distance education classes. Distance education teaching assignments must also be approved by the appropriate dean.

Faculty will have their online classes ready for students no later than the day prior to the official start of the section. Courses will be deemed ready when they include an updated syllabus, schedule and/or calendar and all content needed for the first 25% of the course. Exceptions can be granted by the department chair when classes are assigned to a faculty member within two weeks of the start of the newly assigned section.

Online Course Development

Faculty wishing to develop their first distance education course will complete the "Application to Develop An Online Course and Memorandum of Understanding" (<http://www.com.edu/de/online-course-readiness.cfm>) which shall be approved by the department chair and appropriate academic dean prior to developing of the course and again before delivery of the course for the first time. *(The appropriate approvals must be obtained from the Curriculum Committee and the Chief Academic Officer if the course is being added to the Course Master.)* Faculty who request to develop an online course will commit to teaching the course for a minimum of two semesters.

New Course Development Process

1. Instructor submits request / or is assigned to teach an online or hybrid course
2. Application to Develop an Online Course and Memorandum of Understanding is completed (<http://www.com.edu/de/online-course-readiness.cfm>)
3. Course Pre-Build Approvals secured and forwarded to the DED
4. Instructor must complete the required faculty training in COM's CMS (See Training and Support)
5. Instructor develops course
6. Course submitted to the Online Course Review Committee (DED signs Final Approval if Course Meets Minimum Standards)
7. Online Readiness Feedback Form returned to instructor and department chair
8. Any required course revisions completed
9. Department chair review and approval

10. If course required revisions - The department chair will provide a copy of the follow-up review to DED for review and approval.
11. Dean review and approval
12. Stipend (if applicable) paid
13. Course periodically reviewed to maintain quality

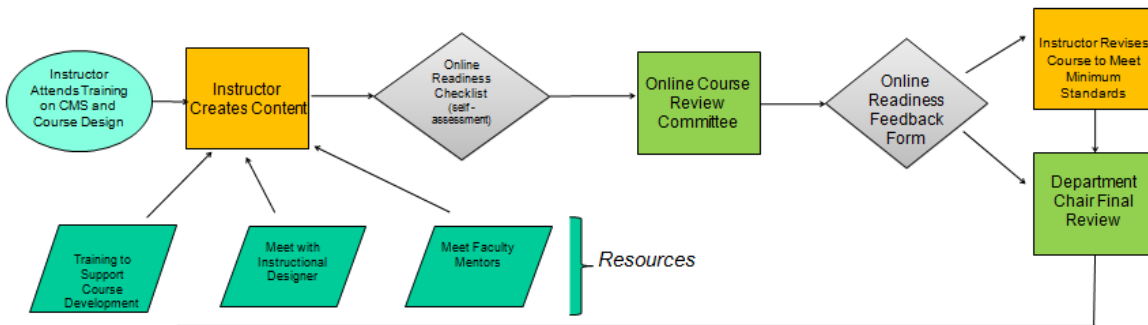
Online/Hybrid Course Development Process:

1. Proposal



2. Development

3. Course Review



4. Final Approval

5. The Course is Taught



Course Development Timeline

The following deadlines apply to new course development:

	Fall	Spring	Summer
Pre-Build Approvals	February 1st	Last Day of Summer II	Last Day of Fall Semester
Content Development*	Mon. Week 9 of Spring Semester *	Mon. Week 9 of Fall Term	Mon. Week 9 of Spring Semester
Final Deployment and Revision Approvals	Last Day of Summer II	Last Day of Fall Semester	Last Day of Spring Semester

*See Online Course Review Procedures – New Courses (pg 11) for specific information relating to the review process, deadlines and content development.

Ownership/Copyright

Ownership of the original electronic content developed for use in distance classes under the auspices of the College will be assigned in keeping with COM policy DBD Local.

It is the course developer's responsibility to ensure that written copyright permissions are obtained where needed for any copyrighted course materials used to develop a course as outlined in COM policy EDD (Legal).

Compensation

Developing a course from original material

Faculty developing their first Internet/hybrid course from original content will be awarded an adjunct contract at the masters step five pay grade. Faculty will receive this compensation after the course has been developed and reviewed to ensure that it meets the minimum standards outlined in the Online Readiness Checklist.

Developing a course using a publisher's e-pack

Faculty developing their first Internet/hybrid course using a publisher e-pack will be compensated at the rate of an adjunct contract equal to one half (1/2) of the amount the instructor would have received for developing the course from original content. Faculty will receive this compensation after the course has been developed and reviewed to ensure that it meets the minimum standards outlined in the Online Readiness Checklist.

Faculty will not be compensated for the development of subsequent Internet/hybrid courses unless the course is being added to the course master. (See previous two paragraphs for rate of compensation.)

Faculty teaching an Internet/hybrid or web enhanced course will receive compensation for teaching at a rate equal to the compensation received from a traditional course.

Faculty Workload

In determining faculty teaching load, a distance education course will be considered the equivalent of a traditional on-campus course that has the same number of credit hours and will be considered part of faculty members' regularly compensated responsibilities.

Faculty teaching online may maintain virtual office hours. Full-time faculty may provide one virtual office hour for each online section taught with the remaining 30 minutes per section being physically on campus. Part-time faculty teaching solely online may hold all of their office hours online. Faculty must be available for all service responsibilities as required by their department or the College in addition to office hours. As well as publishing office hours as normally required, office hours will be published in the online course.

A faculty members who is new to the online teaching environment may teach 20% of his/her course load in an Internet or hybrid format after his/her course(s) have successfully completed the Online Course Review process .

Online teaching load can be increased to 40% of the total teaching load in the following semester if

1. Student evaluations of the initial Internet or hybrid course(s) indicate a successful online experience for the students and
2. Recommended course improvements made in the initial Online Course Readiness Report have been implemented moving all online courses taught to a rating of Effective or Exemplary.

Department chairperson and academic dean approval is required.

A faculty member may teach up to 100% of his/her course load online after having two consecutive semesters of positive feedback from student evaluations indicating a successful online experience for the student and the course(s) consistently receive a rating of Effective or Exemplary as outlined in the Online Course Readiness Checklist. Conversely, a faculty member can have their online course load reduced based on unsatisfactory feedback from student evaluations and/or by receiving an Online Course Readiness Report with a rating of Promising.

It is a best practice to limit online course size to 10 to 15 students the first time an instructor teaches a fully online class. Subsequent offerings should be capped at 15 to 25 students, depending on the course and teaching discipline. Online sections may be split into 2 sections if enrollment exceeds the cap by 20% (or the class has more than 30 students).

Online teaching assignments and online course enrollment caps will be based on these best practices and recommendations. Other factors, under consideration by the instructor, department chair, and dean, may influence the online teaching assignments and online course enrollments. Both the department chair and dean are responsible for any changes to the recommended teaching assignments and enrollment caps.

Definitions

Internet (IN)

An Internet (online) class is an asynchronous (different place at different times) format that provides 85% to 100% of class instruction in an online, virtual classroom. Some courses may require that students come to campus to take tests in an approved testing location, attend field trips and/or complete other course requirements. On campus requirements will be listed in the course syllabus. Students must have access to the Internet and be familiar with email, the web, creating and saving documents and uploading files. Students may be required to attend a class orientation prior to the start of the class.

Hybrid (HY)

Hybrid courses combine both an online and classroom component. These courses provide 50% to 85% of class instruction in an online, virtual classroom with 15% to 50% of instruction taking place in a traditional classroom setting. Students must have access to the Internet and be familiar with email, the web, creating and saving documents and uploading files. Students may be required to attend a class orientation prior to the start of the class.

Web-enhanced (WE)

Web Enhanced classes are traditional synchronous courses that provide 100% of class instruction in a traditional classroom on campus. These courses are enriched by the addition of an online component and require that students be actively engaged in that online component. (This online component may be hosted on our course management system or other web locations.) Students must have access to the Internet and be familiar with email, the web, creating and saving documents and uploading files.

Review Committee

Review Committees are sub-committees of the Online Course Review Committee (OCR) and will be formed as needed to perform Formal Online Course Reviews and Interim Online Course Reviews. The committee will be made up of two full-time faculty members and one alternate who are currently teaching online and one member of the DE department (DED).

Archive

Archive Course feature creates a permanent record of a course including all the content and user interactions. Archived Courses are saved as .zip files. Archiving a Course does not delete it from the system.

Export

The Export Course feature creates a package of the course content that can later be imported and used to teach another Course with the same content. It is important to note that, unlike the Archive Course feature, Export Course does not include any user interactions, it only includes the content and the tools.

Online Course Quality

Department chairs and deans are responsible for monitoring the compliance of courses with the standards outlined in the Online Course Readiness Checklist for any course classified as an Internet or Hybrid course. The purpose of the Online Course Review process is to provide faculty members, department chairs and deans with information addressing the quality of online course delivery and design. The final decision on section assignment is the responsibility of the department chair and/or dean. The Online Course Readiness Checklist can be found on the Faculty page of the Distance Education web site.

<http://www.com.edu/de/online-course-readiness.cfm>

Scheduled reviews of courses with an online component will be reviewed in the following order: Internet or IN sections then Hybrid or HY sections.

Review Process

New Courses

All course information documents (e.g., syllabus, read me first etc...) as well as the content (e.g., lecture notes, assignments, exams, discussions, etc...) that would be necessary for a student to complete 50% of the course must be completed prior to the beginning of the course review process.

New courses will be exported for review during week 9 of the Fall/Spring semesters. Faculty who are developing a course to be delivered in the fall semester should contact the DED or OCR Chair if they would like a review to be started later than the 9th week of the Spring semester to ensure that committee members will be available during the summer to conduct a review. In all cases the review process should begin before the completion of the Summer I term.

New Course Review Timeline

- Courses exported during week 9
- Review period runs week 9 through Friday of week 12
- Feedback distributed during week 13

New Course Review Results

A course meets the minimum requirements to be delivered online by receiving a rating of Promising, Effective or Exemplary, the DED will approve the Application to Develop An Online Course and Memorandum of Understanding form and will forward it to the faculty member and the department chair to acquire the additional "Final Deployment Approvals." The faculty member will also be provided with a copy of the Online Course Readiness Report showing strengths and weaknesses in the course design along with recommendations for future improvements. Once a course has met the minimum standards it will be placed in the regular online course review cycle.

If a course receives a rating of Under Construction, the course fails to meet the minimum requirements for online delivery. A copy of the Online Course Readiness Report, including feedback and suggestions for revisions to achieve minimum readiness standards, will be forwarded to the faculty member, department chair and dean. The Online Course Readiness Report will be sent prior to the semester start date to allow time for faculty to make the required revisions and acquire the final deployment approvals before the deadline.

The DED will provide access to an instructional designer or a DE Faculty Mentor to assist the faculty member with the revisions. It is the responsibility of the faculty member to make revisions to his/her course with guidance from the instructional designer and/or DE Faculty Mentor and acquire the final approvals before the deadline outlined in the Course Development Timeline. (Page 8)

Once the course revisions are completed, the faculty member should notify his/her department chair that the course is ready for a second review. The department chair will use the Online Readiness Checklist to confirm that the course has been revised. The department chair will provide a copy of the follow-up review to the OCR chair and the DED. The department chair may initiate an Informal Online Course Review to verify that the required course revisions have been made. This review will be completed within two weeks after a request is made to the director of distance education. If the course is successfully revised, it will be appropriately designated as Promising, Effective, or Exemplary and will be treated accordingly. The results of this review will be communicated to the faculty member, department chair, dean, OCR chair and the DED.

If the course revisions have not been made the department chair and/or dean will determine if the course will be removed from the schedule or assigned to another online faculty member. Successfully revising the course by meeting the Online Readiness Checklist standards is not the only consideration when assigning online classes. The final decision on section assignment is the responsibility of the department chair and/or dean.

Existing Courses

Formal Online Course Review

Formal Online Course Reviews follow a schedule that is determined by the OCR chair and the DED. All online courses will be reviewed using the Online Course Readiness Criteria, Checklist

and Report. Reviewed courses will periodically undergo subsequent reviews to verify quality standards. Courses are not typically reviewed more often than once every three years if they have met quality standards. A faculty member will generally not have more than one course scheduled for a Formal Online Course Review in any single semester unless the department chair or dean makes a request for additional courses to be reviewed. Additional course reviews could be necessary if a faculty member teaches a large number of courses in the Internet/hybrid format making it necessary to review more than one per semester or if an Interim Review is requested.

For courses selected as part of the regularly scheduled Formal Online Course Review, faculty members, along with their department chairs, will be informed of upcoming reviews during the semester prior to the semester in which the course will be reviewed. Faculty members whose course will be reviewed are strongly encouraged to attend the Online Readiness Workshop offered by DED. Faculty are also encouraged to familiarize themselves with the Online Course Readiness Criteria in order to better understand the review process.

If the section is housed on COM's course management system (CMS) the DED will export a copy of the section to be reviewed ensuring that the live section is not impacted by the review. If the course contains content that does not reside on COM's CMS the faculty member will provide access information to his/her department chair.

Formal Online Course Reviews follow the review timeline below. A sitting Review Committee will be assigned the course review by the OCR chair. Each of the members of the Review Committee will review the course independently and then meet to come to consensus regarding the score in each of the rubric areas. Upon completion of the review, an Online Course Readiness Report will be generated by the Review Committee.

The Online Course Readiness Report generated by the Review Committee will be sent to the faculty member, with a copy to the department chair, academic dean and the DED. Official copies of course reviews will be kept by the DED.

Formal Course Review Timeline

- Courses backed up during week 4
- Review period runs week 4 through Friday of week 11
- Feedback distributed during week 12

Formal Online Course Review Results

A copy of Online Course Readiness Report will be forwarded to the faculty member, the department chair, academic dean and the DED.

If the course meets the minimum standards of online design and delivery the Online Course Readiness Report will indicate strengths and weaknesses in the course design along with recommendations for future improvements.

If a course no longer meets the minimum standards of online design and delivery, a copy of the Online Course Readiness Report will be forwarded to the faculty member, department chair and

academic dean and will include constructive feedback and suggestions for revisions to achieve minimum readiness standards.

The Online Course Readiness Report will be sent prior to the semester begin date to allow time for faculty to make the required revisions and acquire the final revision approvals before the deadline.

The DED will provide access to an instructional designer or a DE Faculty Mentor to assist the faculty member with the revisions. It is the responsibility of the faculty member to make revisions to his/her course with guidance from the instructional designer and/or DE Faculty Mentor and acquire the final approvals before the deadline as outlined in the Course Development Timeline. (Page 8)

The department chair must review the course prior to the next semester the course is taught online to confirm that the revisions have been made. The department chair will use the Online Readiness Checklist to confirm that the course has been revised. The department chair will provide a copy of the follow-up review and the Course Revision Approval Form (<http://www.com.edu/de/online-course-readiness.cfm>) to the DED.

The department chair may initiate an Informal Online Course Review to verify that the required course revisions have been made. This review will be completed within two weeks after a request is made to the DED. If the course is successfully revised, it will be designated as Promising and will be treated as those in Promising on page 21. If, in the opinion of the OCR member who performs the Informal Online Course Review, the course has now surpassed the Ready – Needs Work rating this will be communicated to the faculty member, department chair, dean, OCR chair and the DED.

If the course is not successfully revised by the faculty member in adequate time to offer the course again, the relevant department chair, in consultation with the faculty member, will decide how to effect the needed changes to the course so that it will meet the rubric's standards of good practice.

The department chairperson and academic dean will take whatever actions they deem appropriate to ensure that all reviewed courses meet acceptable standards in quality online instruction as defined by the Online Course Readiness Criteria and the DE Faculty Handbook. Successfully revising the course by meeting the Online Readiness Checklist standards is not the only consideration when assigning online classes. The final decision on section assignment is the responsibility of the department chair and/or dean.

Interim Course Review

Department chairs and/or deans can initiate an Interim Online Course Review as needed. To initiate an Interim Online Course Review the department chair or academic dean will email a request to the DED specifying course information including: the course rubric, course and section numbers and semester of the course(s) to be reviewed. If the section is housed on COM's course management system (CMS), the DED will immediately export a copy of the section for review. This ensures that the live section will not be impacted by the review. The

DED will notify the individual that generated the request when the copy of the course is available. The department chair and/or dean will notify the faculty member about the review at an appropriate time. The faculty member will provide access information if the course content does not reside on COM's CMS.

The DED will contact the OCR chair and advise him/her of the request. The OCR chair will convene a Review Committee as quickly as possible. The Review Committee will be given designer/teacher access to the exported copy of the course. Each member of the committee will review the course independently and then meet to come to consensus regarding the score in each of the rubric areas. Upon completion of the review, an Online Course Readiness Report will be generated by the Review Committee.

The department chair, academic dean, faculty member and the DED will receive a copy of the Online Course Readiness Report generated by the Review Committee. Official copies of Interim Online Course Reviews will be kept by the DED.

Interim Online Course Reviews will take precedence over the regularly scheduled Formal Online Course Reviews and Informal Online Course Reviews and will normally be completed within 2 weeks of the request.

Interim Course Review Results

If the course meets the minimum standards for online design and delivery, a copy of Online Course Readiness Report will be forwarded to the faculty member, the department chair, academic dean and the DED. The Online Course Readiness Report will indicate strengths and weaknesses in the course design along with recommendations for future improvements. The interim review will be treated as the regularly scheduled online review for that semester and for future scheduling of periodic reviews.

If a course no longer meets the minimum standards for online design and delivery, a copy of the Online Course Readiness Report will be forwarded to the faculty member, department chair, dean and DED and will include constructive feedback and suggestions for revisions to achieve minimum readiness standards. The department chair and/or dean will meet with the faculty member to discuss and develop a plan on how best to resolve the issues found in the course. Possible resolutions may include, but are not limited to, providing a timeline by which the outlined improvements must be made to the course (ensuring the minimal negative impact on student learning) or removing the instructor from the course for the remainder of the semester and assigning it to another faculty member.

The DED will provide access to an instructional designer or a DE Faculty Mentor to assist the faculty member with the revisions. It is the responsibility of the faculty member to make revisions to his/her course with guidance from the instructional designer and/or DE Faculty Mentor. To help remedy deficiencies in a course that scores below 40 on the Online Readiness Rubric during an interim review, the DED recommends that the faculty member go through the process for new course development before the course is taught online again in subsequent semesters.

For any course that scores below 48, the minimum standard for online quality, the department chair must review the course prior to the next semester the course is taught online to confirm that the revisions and outlined improvements have been made. The department chair will use the Online Readiness Checklist to confirm that the course has been revised. The department chair will provide a copy of the follow-up review and the Course Revision Approval Form (<http://www.com.edu/de/online-course-readiness.cfm>) to the DED.

If the course revisions have not been made within the required timeline, the department chair and/or dean will determine if the course will be removed from the schedule or assigned to another online faculty member. Under special circumstances, a one-semester extension for completion of course revisions may be granted by the department chair and/ academic dean. Extensions will be rare and based upon student need. If an extension is granted, a DE Faculty Mentor will be available to provide guidance throughout the semester.

The department chair may initiate an Informal Online Course Review to verify that the required course revisions have been made. This review will be completed within two weeks after a request is made to the DED. If the course is successfully revised, it will be designated as Promising and will be treated as those in Promising on page 18. If, in the opinion of the OCR member who performs the Informal Online Course Review, the course has now surpassed the Ready – Needs Work rating this will be communicated to the faculty member, department chair, dean, OCR chair and the DED.

If the course is not successfully revised by the faculty member in adequate time to offer the course in subsequent semesters, the relevant department chair, in consultation with the faculty member, will decide how to effect the needed changes to the course so that it will meet the rubric's standards of good practice.

The department chairperson and academic dean will take appropriate actions to ensure that all courses meet acceptable standards in quality online instruction as defined by the Online Course Readiness Criteria and the DE Faculty Handbook. Successfully revising the course by meeting the Online Readiness Checklist standards is not the only consideration when assigning online classes. The final decision on section assignment is the responsibility of the department chair and/or dean.

Informal Online Course Review

A course review conducted by only one person, regardless of that person's position. The Informal Online Course Review will utilize the same Online Readiness Criteria, Checklist and Report used in the formal review process. The Informal Online Course Review process will assist a faculty member as he/she strives to improve the quality of his/her online course or to review a course to ensure that required revisions have been made as outlined in a Formal Online Course Review. This process will generally be initiated by a faculty member.

An Informal Online Course Review may also be initiated by a department chair and/or academic dean as a preliminary step to an Interim Online Course Review. An Informal Online Course Review is appropriate when minor and/or moderate problems exist. Issues that can be resolved

quickly and will not have a negative impact on students within the class are considered to be minor and/or moderate.

To initiate an Informal Online Course Review the faculty member, department chair or academic dean will email a request including the rubric, course and section number and semester of the course to be reviewed to the DED. If the section is housed on COM's course management system (CMS) the DED will immediately export a copy of the section to be reviewed ensuring that the live section is not impacted by the review. If the course contains content that does not reside on COM's CMS the faculty member will provide access information to his/her department chair.

The DED will contact the OCR chair and advise him/her of the request. The OCR chair will assign the Informal Online Course Review to an OCR member. The OCR member that is conducting the review will contact the faculty member, department chair or dean and agree on a mutually acceptable time line for completing the review. The OCR member will generate a completed Online Course Readiness Report, email the report to the requesting party and provide a copy to the OCR chair and the DED.

COURSE REVIEW OUTCOMES

Exemplary

Courses that are identified as Exemplary have met the rubric standards for quality in an online course and have scored a 65 or above with no "1's" or "2's" on the Course Readiness Report. Courses that are identified as Exemplary are recognized as courses that meet or exceed almost all of the national standards of best practice in online learning. This recognition will be communicated with the faculty member, department chair, dean and chief academic officer.

Effective

Courses that are identified as Effective have met the rubric standards for quality in an online course and have scored a 56 to 64.9 with no "1's" and no more than 5 "2's" and no more than two "2's" in any one section. Courses that are identified as Effective are recognized as courses that meet national standards of best practice in online learning. This recognition will be communicated with the faculty member, department chair, dean and chief academic officer.

Promising

Courses that are identified as Promising have minimally met the rubric standards for quality in an online course and have scored a 48 to 55.9. Courses that are identified as Promising are recognized as courses that can be taught online but does not currently meet national standards of best practice in online learning. Feedback will be provided using the Online Readiness Report to the faculty member, department chair, academic dean and DED.

Under Construction

Courses that are identified as Under Construction have not met the minimal rubric standards for quality in an online course and have a score below 48 on the Online Course Readiness Report.

These courses do not meet national standards of best practice in online learning. Feedback will be provided using the Online Readiness Report to the faculty member, department chair, academic dean and DED.

Course revisions must be made before the course can be offered in subsequent semesters except upon approval by the dean. Exceptions will be rare and based upon student need. A DE instructional designer or faculty mentor will be available to provide guidance throughout the semester.

Best Practices for Online Faculty

As a foundation for developing, implementing, and revising online, hybrid, and web-enhanced courses our faculty should employ the principles described by Thomas J. Tobin in *Best Practices for Administrative Evaluation of Online Faculty*.

Principle 1: Good Practice Encourages Student-Faculty Contact

Instructors should provide clear guidelines for interaction with students.

Establish policies describing the types of communication that should take place over different channels. Examples are:

"Do not send technical support questions to the instructor. Submit a Support Ticket at: <http://com.parature.com>."

"The public discussion forum is to be used for all communications except grade-related questions."

Set clear standards for instructors' timelines for responding to messages. Examples: "I will make every effort to respond to e-mail within two days of receiving it" or "I will respond to e-mails on Tuesdays and Fridays between three and five o'clock."

Principle 2: Good Practice Encourages Cooperation Among Students

Well-designed discussion assignments facilitate meaningful cooperation among students.

To encourage meaningful participation in asynchronous online discussions:

- Learners should be required to participate (and their grade should depend on participation).
- Discussion groups should remain small.
- Discussions should be focused on a task.
- Tasks should always result in a product.
- Learners should receive feedback on their discussions.
- Evaluation should be based on the quality of postings (and not the length or number).
- Instructors should post expectations for discussions.

Principle 3: Good Practice Encourages Active Learning

Students should present course projects.

Projects are often an important part of face-to-face courses. Students learn valuable skills from presenting their projects and are often motivated to perform at a higher level. Students also learn a great deal from seeing and discussing their peers' work. While formal synchronous presentations may not be practical online, instructors can still provide opportunities for projects to be shared and discussed asynchronously.

Principle 4: Good Practice Gives Prompt Feedback

Instructors need to provide two types of feedback: information feedback and acknowledgment feedback.

There are two kinds of feedback provided by online instructors: "information feedback" and "acknowledgement feedback." Information feedback provides information or evaluation, such as an answer to a question, or an assignment grade and comments. Acknowledgement feedback confirms that some event has occurred. For example, the instructor may send an e-mail acknowledging that he or she has received a question or assignment and will respond soon.

Principle 5: Good Practice Emphasizes Time on Task

Online courses need deadlines.

One course we evaluated allowed students to work at their own pace throughout the semester, without intermediate deadlines. The rationale was that many students needed flexibility because of full-time jobs. However, regularly-distributed deadlines encourage students to spend time on tasks and help students with busy schedules avoid procrastination. They also provide a context for regular contact with the instructor and peers.

Principle 6: Good Practice Communicates High Expectations

Challenging tasks, sample cases, and praise for quality work communicate high expectations.

Communicating high expectations for student performance is essential. One way for instructors to do this is to give challenging assignments. Another way to communicate high expectations is to provide examples or models for students to follow, along with comments explaining why the examples are good. Finally, publicly praising exemplary work communicates high expectations. Instructors do this by calling attention to insightful or well-presented student postings.

Principle 7: Good Practice Respects Diverse Talents and Ways of Learning

Allowing students to choose project topics incorporates diverse views into online courses.

As instructors give students a voice in selecting their own topics for course projects, they encourage students to express their own diverse points of view. Instructors can provide

guidelines to help students select topics relevant to the course while still allowing students to share their unique perspectives.

Use of these principles should be incorporated into the following requirements and recommendations that have been derived from *Minimum Standards of Excellence: To be Implemented in all Online Course* by Tarrant County College District. These best practices take the form of required and optional components for online, hybrid, and web-enhanced courses.

Course Document (Syllabus)

An online syllabus is required for both online and hybrid courses and is recommended for web-enhanced courses. The course document or syllabus must comply with SACS requirements and college policy, currently EFA (Local). A description of the course syllabus requirements is stated in the Faculty Handbook, Section 4 F which can be found at: <http://www.com.edu/faculty-staff/docs/faculty-handbook.pdf>

For a complete list of what should be included in all Internet and hybrid sections please refer to the Online Course Checklist and the Course Readiness Criteria which is located on the Distance Education web site at: <http://www.com.edu/de/online-course-readiness.cfm>

Internet (IN) Early Warning Program

Internet (IN) Sections Established FA2009

Pre-Semester:

1. A student enrolled in an IN section will be instructed to contact his/her instructor prior to the start of the course. Faculty will include contact information in the comment section in Datatel.
2. Faculty will record each student's preferred email address. This will give faculty a current email address for all IN students and provide a way to contact students outside of Blackboard. (Recommendation: Create a "Text" column in your Blackboard grade book. Enter the students preferred email address in this column. Do not make the column visible to students.)
3. Faculty will respond to the student's initial email contact by returning a copy of the course syllabus, instructions on how to access the course within the first three days of the semester and a friendly welcome - glad you are here - message to the student. (Sample emails can be found in the Faculty Resources course or in the DE department folder on Infocentral.)
4. Faculty will include the following information in their IN section syllabi:



Beginning with the fall 2009 semester, the Counseling Center at COM is piloting an Early Warning Program that will include all Internet (IN) sections.

I have been asked to refer students to the program throughout the semester if they are having difficulty completing assignments or fail to log in to the course regularly. If you are referred to the Early Warning Program you will be contacted by someone in the Counseling Department. As student success and retention is very important to us, someone from the Counseling Center will schedule a meeting with you to see what assistance they can offer in order for you to meet your academic goals.

During Semester: (16 week course)


Week 1:

1. Using the last access date found in the grade center, faculty will email/phone any student who does not enter the course during the **first** week. All communication with the student should be positive and supportive.

Week 2:

1. Faculty should assign some type of activity/assignment due no later than the **second** week of the course. Example: Complete and return a student information form. This is a good way to get students' current contact information.

2. Faculty will attempt to contact any student who has not entered the course within the **first 2 weeks** and/or has not completed the **first assignment**. If the student is reached, the faculty member should encourage the student to get caught up immediately and warn the student of the potential of being dropped if he/she continues to be inactive in the class. The faculty member should provide information about the negative impact of dropping a course. If contact can't be made or if the student needs assistance with personal issues, the instructor will forward the student's name to the Early Warning Program using the Early Alert Form column in the WebAdvisor roster.

Student	ID	E-mail Address	Phone Number	Class	Status	Credits	Cross-Listed Section	Submit Early Alert Form
Ross, Betsy	1234567	brross@yahoo.com	555-555-5555	Freshman	New	0.00		<input type="checkbox"/> 

(Counseling will flag each referred student in Datatel to enable tracking and follow-up of these students.)

- Counseling will contact the instructor to verify referral.
- Counseling will remain in contact with the instructor and will provide information about their success/non-success in reaching the student.

Week 3:

1. Faculty will monitor the last access date information in the graded center for the return of the referred student. If the student has not returned by the **third** week of the semester the faculty will attempt to contact the student one last time. This contact should inform the student that drop procedures will be initiated.
2. Faculty will drop the student(s) in keeping with department/faculty procedures. (Drop reason will be noted on the drop form and will be entered into Datatel.)
3. Faculty will communicate with their contact in Counseling and advise them of the drop.

Later in the Semester:

Care should be taken to quickly address the problem of students who go missing in action during the semester. These are students who are actively engaged in the course and abruptly stop participating. Faculty members should monitor student activity closely throughout the semester, referring students to the Early Warning Program anytime during the semester for the following reasons:

- Failing grades
- Missed assignments/tests
- Not logging into the course for over 1 week



During Semester: (8 week course)

Week 1:

1. Faculty should assign some type of activity/assignment due the **first** week of the course. Example: Complete and return a student information form. This is a good way to get students' current contact information.
2. Using the Performance Dashboard in the Control Panel to track student access to the course, faculty will email/phone any student who did not enter the course during the **first** week and/or did not complete the **first activity/assignment**. All communication with the student should be positive and supportive. If the student is reached the faculty member should encourage the student to get caught up immediately and warn the student of the potential of being dropped if they continue to be inactive in the class. Information about the negative impact of dropping a course should also be provided. If contact can't be made or if the student needs assistance with personal issues, the instructor will forward the student's name to the Early Warning Program using the Early Alert Form column in the WebAdvisor roster.

Student	ID	E-mail Address	Phone Number	Class	Status	Credits	Cross-Listed Section	Submit Early Alert Form
Ross, Betsy	1234567	bross@yahoo.com	555-555-5555	Freshman	New	0.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

- Counseling will contact the instructor to verify referral.
- Counseling will remain in contact with the instructor and will provide information about their success/non-success in reaching the student.

Week 2:

- Faculty will monitor the access date found in the grade center I for the return of the referred student. If the student has not returned by the **second** week of the semester the faculty will attempt to contact the student one last time. This contact should inform the student that drop procedures will be initiated.
- The faculty member will drop the student(s) in keeping with department/faculty procedures. (Drop reason will be noted on the drop form and will be entered into Datatel.).
- Faculty will communicate with their contact in Counseling and advise them of the drop.

Later in the Semester:

Care should be taken to quickly address the problem of students who go missing in action during the semester. These are students who are actively engaged in the course and abruptly stop participating. Faculty members should monitor student activity closely throughout the semester, referring students to the Early Warning Program anytime during the semester for the following reasons:


- Failing grades
- Missed assignments/tests
- Not logging into the course for over 1 week

During Summer Semester: (5 week course)

Week 1:

- Faculty should assign some type of activity/assignment due within the first 72 hours of the course. Example: Complete and return a student information form. This is a good way to get students' current contact information.
- Using the Performance Dashboard in the Control Panel to track student access to the course, faculty will email/phone any student who does not enter the course and/or complete the

first assignment within 72 hours of the start of the section. All communication with the student should be positive and supportive. If the student is reached the faculty member should encourage the student to get caught up immediately and warn the student of the potential of being dropped if he/she continues to be inactive in the class. The faculty member should provide information about the negative impact of dropping a course. If contact can't be made or if the student needs assistance with personal issues, the instructor will forward the student's name to the Early Warning Program using the Early Alert Form column in the WebAdvisor roster.

Student	ID	E-mail Address	Phone Number	Class	Status	Credits	Cross-Listed Section	Submit Early Alert Form
Ross, Betsy	1234567	bross@yahoo.com	555-555-5555	Freshman	New	0.00		<input type="checkbox"/> 

3. Faculty will monitor the access date found in the grade center for the return of the referred student. If the student has not returned by the end of the **first** week of the course, the faculty member will initiate drop procedures in keeping with department/faculty procedures. (Drop reason will be noted on the drop form and will be entered into Datatel.) The faculty member will send one last email to the student informing him/her that a drop is being processed.

4. Faculty will communicate with their contact in Counseling and advise them of the drop.

Post Semester:

1. Counseling and the DE Department will provide DE Faculty with information on reasons for drops after each fall and spring semesters.

Training and Support - Faculty

Faculty members who teach using distance education technologies are responsible for acquiring sufficient technical skills to present their subject matter and related material effectively. This will be done by completing in-house training in the appropriate technology.

To ensure consistency of course content and delivery between traditional and alternative teaching methods, all full-time and adjunct faculty members who wish to teach Internet, Hybrid or Web Enhanced classes using the course management system (CMS) are required to receive in-house training.

Two levels of faculty training are available.

Level I training

Will be completed by all faculty members who will be teaching Web Enhanced courses. This training will provide basic instruction on the course management system.

Level II training

Will be completed by all faculty members who will be teaching hybrid and/or Internet courses after completing Level I training. This training builds on the skills learned in the Level I training by providing in depth training on the course management system and review of online pedagogy and curricular design theories.

The training will be offered in two formats. You may take either format depending on your comfort level with the technology.

Online Faculty Training

The online version is recommended for those who have some knowledge of the CMS or have advanced knowledge of the technology used. You must register your intent to receive training with the DE department at least one week prior to the start date of the training. A member of the DE department will monitor the student's progress throughout the training. Training will be considered complete when all assignments and assessments have been successfully completed. Notification of training dates, times and locations will be sent via email to DL-Faculty at the beginning of the each fall and spring semester and will be listed in the Faculty section of the distance education web site. http://www.com.edu/de/faculty_training.cfm

Instructor Led Training

The instructor led version is recommended for those who have little working knowledge of CMS or the technology used. You must register your intent to receive training with the DE department at least one week prior to the start date for the training. Participants will be provided access to training materials prior to the start of the training session.

A member of the DE department will monitor the student's progress throughout the training and will determine if the student has completed the course successfully. Training will be considered complete when all scheduled training sessions have been attended and all assignments and assessments have been successfully complete. Notification of training dates, times and locations will be sent via email to DL- Faculty at the beginning of the each fall and spring semester and will be listed in the Faculty section of the distance education web site.

http://www.com.edu/de/faculty_training.cfm

Training, in either format, is supported by COM's Professional Development Academy.

Advanced Skills Workshops

All faculty who teach using distance education technologies are required to complete one distance education related professional development activity every school year. Notification of activities/training opportunities will be distributed via email to DL- DE Faculty. Formal training workshops will be published on the Faculty page of the distance education web site each semester. http://www.com.edu/de/faculty_training.cfm

Technology Upgrade Training

Major changes to the institution's instructional technology will require that all full-time and adjunct faculty members update their skills prior to using the new technology. Notification of training dates, times and locations will be sent via email to DL- DE Faculty and will be listed in the Faculty section of the distance education web site. <http://www.com.edu/de/faculty-training.cfm>

Training and Support - Students

Students enrolling in their first Internet (IN) or hybrid (HY) section will be required to complete the Online Learner Workshop before they will be allowed to register for an Internet or hybrid section. This workshop will be available online during the fall, spring and summer semesters. Students will learn how to use the CMS software used in their online courses.

Students will be provided with technical advice on how to solve hardware and software problems by calling or visiting the Student Help Center or by submitting a Support Ticket at <http://com.parature.com>

Students enrolled in distance education courses will have access to the same student services as on-campus students. Access may be achieved through face-to-face, instant messaging, telephone, and/or e-mail contact and through dissemination of information via the College catalog and the College Web site.

Students enrolled in distance education courses will have access to appropriate library/learning resources material.

The COM Web site will provide students with resources for their online courses including, but not limited to, help desk personnel, online library resources, tutorials and links to plug-ins and downloads.

Course Management System Procedures

Course Management System Administration

The DED shall be responsible for the administration of the course management system (CMS).

The DED will work with the Information Technology Services to coordinate assistance with issues involving, but not limited to, infrastructure and data transfer between systems.

Every course listed in the College's Datatel Colleague system will have a course shell created on the CMS. Creation of course shells will be the responsibility of the Course Management System Administrator (CMS Admin) with the assistance of the Information Technology Services designee responsible for data transfer between systems. DED

User accounts and enrollments into the CMS sections will be the responsibility CMS Admin and will be coordinated with the DED.

Courses will be maintained on the live CMS for two years. All sections will be systematically archived by the CMS Admin before they are permanently removed from the CMS. Section archives will be maintained offline for an additional two years. Sections will be retained (either on the live system or offline) for a total of four years before they are permanently deleted.

Offline archiving and deletion of all courses will be the responsibility CMS Admin and will be coordinated with the DED.

Faculty members are responsible for archiving and maintaining a local copy of each section every semester. Should a section need to be restored for any reason (grade appeal etc) it will be done by the faculty member providing a copy of his/her section archive to the DED. If the section is older than two years the faculty member will contact submit a support ticket and request that the archived copy of the course be restored.

Students accessing COM's CMS will authenticate using their COM Active Directory student user account.

Student information in online classes falls under the guidelines defined in COM policy FJ (Legal).

Having sections created on the CMS server

The creation of course sections on the CMS server is an automated process. Every attempt will be made to have all sections available 6 weeks prior to the start of that section. Faculty members will be notified via email by the DED when sections have been created.

Faculty members who need more than 6 weeks to prepare a section will submit a support ticket and request that an "Under Construction" section be created. Content created in the "Under Construction" section will be copied by the instructor into the live section when it becomes available.

Sections that do not have a faculty member assigned will be created with "COM Faculty" as the designer/instructor. Once a faculty member has been designated as the faculty of record in Datatel Colleague, the automated integration process will give the faculty member access to the course within 12 hours of their assignment in the student information system.

Section visibility

Sections will be visible to faculty members as soon as the section has been created and will remain visible for two years. Faculty members will be responsible for configuring the list of courses they see on the course management system.

Sections will be visible to students at 10 AM on the first official day of the section and will be removed from their view at 9 AM 2 weeks after the official end date of the section.

If students need continued access to a section after the official end date for the section (perhaps in the case of an "I" grade) the faculty member must submit a support ticket and provide the course number, section number and the name of the student who will need additional access.

The faculty member must notify the DE department when this extended access is no longer needed and request that the student's access be disabled. .

Merging

Merging sections in the CMS allows a faculty member to point multiple sections and the students in those sections into on online section. Once merged, the merged sections will function as one large section.

Once the new semesters sections have been created on the CMS an email will be sent from the DED requesting a list of courses that need to be merged for the upcoming semester.

Faculty members must provide the following information for sections they want merged:

- Rubric
- Course number
- Section number
- Semester
- Indication of which section should be named as the Parent section.

No merged sections will be un-merged after the first day of the semester. . All teaching and learning will take place in the **Parent** course. That is where your course content must be placed. You will NOT have access to the child section after it has been merged and a Parent has been created. Content must be added after the merge is complete.

Placing course content into a CMS shell

Once the CMS Admin has created the CMS course shells the faculty member will place the course content into the course shell. This will be done in one of three ways:

Installing a Publishers Cartridge

If a new course cartridge (online ready content supplied by the textbook publisher) is to be used for the course, the faculty member will acquire access to the content and follow the publisher's emailed instructions on downloading the content file. The instructor can import the cartridge into their course or may submit a support ticket to ask for assistance. Instructions on how to import a course cartridge can be found in the Faculty Knowledge Base at <http://com.parature.com>

Creating a new course with original content

If an instructor will be creating a new online/hybrid/web enhanced course using original content, that faculty member may begin uploading their original content as soon as the shell is made available.

Copying content from a previous course

If the course was taught in the previous two years, the content will still be available to copy into the new semester's course. Instructions on how to import content from a previous semester can be found in the Faculty Knowledge Base at <http://com.pature.com> DED

Archiving a CMS Course

All faculty members are encouraged to archive their own courses on a weekly basis throughout the semester. Weekly archives should be copied to a local location and the archived file removed from the online section. Faculty members will be responsible for archiving and making a local copy of their online content at the end of each semester within 1 week after the semester closes. ITS will back up the CMS server on a nightly basis which includes all sections currently on the server. The ITS backup is intended for use in case of a catastrophic failure of the CMS server. It is not intended to be used to restore individual sections.

Restoring a course from an archived copy in case of an emergency

Should you inadvertently delete or compromise the course content of a CMS course it can be recreated by using your latest archived copy. This method will restore all current users, assignments, emails, discussions etc. You will however lose any content that was created between the date of the archive and the date of the restore. Only the CMS Admin can restore a course from an archived copy.

Deletion of CMS user accounts

It is the responsibility of each department chair to inform the DED when a full-time or adjunct faculty member who teaches online is no longer employed by COM. All user accounts that have shown no activity for two years will be permanently removed from the CMS.

Virtual College of Texas (VCT) Procedures

COM is committed to supporting and participating in the Virtual College of Texas (VCT) as both a Host and a Provider institution.

General Statements

- No student, new or returning, will be allowed to register for a VCT course via WebAdvisor.
- All students must contact an advisor to be considered for registration in a VCT course.
- All Internet based courses offered by COM will be filled prior to placing students in a VCT section of the same course.

Complete VCT Procedures can be viewed at: <http://VP of Instruction\Distance Education\VCT\Procedures>

Institutional Responsibility

Students

- Student success in distance education courses will meet the same standards as traditional face to face courses.
- Students will be provided access to training in the technologies used in their online learning environment. This training will be made available every semester.

- Students will be provided with technical assistance by calling or visiting the Student Help Center or by using the Distance Education Support Portal at: www.com.parature.com
- Online students will have access to the same library/learning resources material as our traditional students. Extensive online library resources are available to all students through the COM Library web site located at <http://library.com.edu/> . This resource is provided to all online students as a link from within the CMS.
- Online students will have access to the same student support services as our traditional students. Access may be achieved through face-to-face, telephone, instant messaging, email contact and through dissemination of information via the College catalog and the College Web site.
- All distance education students will have access to approved testing centers on campus. These locations are the Testing Center located in A-158 in the administration building (409-933-8379) and the Innovations Lab located in T-1324 (409-933-8370) during normal operational hours.
- Students who live outside the COM area must get approval from their instructor to test at a location other than our COM approved testing centers. The student must locate a testing facility at a nearby college and provide contact information to their instructor. The instructor will forward the testing material to the approved testing location. The student is responsible for paying any testing fees that the other institution may apply.
- The COM web site will provide students with resources for their online courses including, but not limited to, help desk personnel, online library resources, tutorials and links to plug-ins and downloads.

Faculty

- All faculty members will be provided the training necessary to be successful in the online teaching environment. This training will be supported by COM's Professional Development Academy.
- Faculty teaching distance education courses will be provided access to appropriate technical support through a well developed College Web site, online support center (<http://com.parature.com>), trained DE department personnel and through access to a resource course located on the CMS.
- Faculty will be provided access to the hardware and software required to create, maintain and improve their online course content.

- The Distance Education Faculty Handbook will be distributed via email to all faculty members when they complete the required faculty training and as a download on the Faculty page of the COM Distance Education web site.
- ITS will provide faculty with access to information in Colleague through WebAdvisor. Faculty will check their teaching schedule, generate class rosters and submit student's final grades through this interface. Faculty will be provided training on the use of the WebAdvisor interface.

Support Services

- The Information Technology Services Department (ITS) will provide reliable backup and recovery services for all distance education servers.
- ITS will provide the bandwidth necessary to support all distance education courses.
- ITS will provide COM email accounts for all online students.
- ITS will participate and support ongoing maintenance and upgrade of the course management system software (CMS) used for all distance education courses.
- ITS will participate in the continual upgrade of the technological infrastructure at COM in the support of our distance education students and their courses.
- ITS will provide advice on the purchase of new hardware, software and other systems to be used for the effective delivery of distance education to students.
- The distance education (DE) department will provide training opportunities for faculty and staff in the technology and software used in distance education courses. Training opportunities will be posted on the Faculty page of the distance education web site: <http://www.com.edu/de/faculty-training.cfm>
- The DE department will provide collaborative support to all online library functions that support DE students.
- The DE department will provide collaborative support for all online testing services provided to DE students
- The DE department will provide collaborative support for distance education Advising as used by DE students
- The DE department will provide Help Desk services to all DE students.
- The DE department will annually review and acquire new software as needed to improve the quality of online/hybrid/web instruction. The DE department will acquire site licenses for popular software/applications that have a significant impact on the delivery of quality distance education.

- The DE department will create and maintain a distance education web site for distance education students and faculty.
- The DE department will participate in the program review process every few years to determine if the program is meeting the needs of DE students and faculty and to suggest improvement.
- COM must maintain a continued commitment to support distance education at COM. The purchase and licensing of the course management system and the establishment of a distance education department reflect that commitment. Long and short term planning should include additional staffing, upgrades of hardware and software, training and support. These items must be given a high priority in each budget cycle.

Virtual Librarian

The Virtual Librarian program is available to all faculty teaching online and hybrid sections. The object of this program is to provide students with information on how to research and use library resources. Faculty can request a Virtual Librarian be placed in their online or hybrid section by contacting the Library Director.

Section 508 - Guidelines and Best Practices

The purpose of this section is to provide faculty with guidance on how they can design their courses to ensure accessibility to students with disabilities. Educational access for all students is the joint responsibility of administration, faculty and staff. Administration will make every effort to provide training and support to faculty and staff involved with the creation and teaching of online course content.

COM will provide pre-course training for all students on how to use the technology.

COM will provide technical support, problem solving and troubleshooting of technical issues for faculty, staff and students.

Section 508 Standards

Subpart B – Technical Standards

§ 1194.22 Web-based intranet and internet information and applications.

<http://www.section508.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=Content&ID=12#Web>

(a) A text equivalent for every non-text element shall be provided (e.g., via "alt", "longdesc", or in element content).

Best Practices: Non-text elements

- Any image that is used in online course content will have a text equivalent. Text should be descriptive without being wordy. These Alt-tags can be created in FrontPage, Dreamweaver and Netscape Composer.
- All Blackboard images have alt-tags supplied.

(b) Equivalent alternatives for any multimedia presentation shall be synchronized with the presentation.

Best Practices: Multimedia

- Multimedia presentations will provide closed captioning to describe important information or will include written transcripts. Camtasia has a closed captioning feature.
- Text versions should be provided for all audio files.
- Multimedia content should also be available in CD, diskette, videotape or audiotape format as needed.

(c) Web pages shall be designed so that all information conveyed with color is also available without color, for example from context or markup.

Best Practices: Color

- Text and graphics must be viewable without color.
- If using a colored background have one that is single and solid, rather than textured or patterned.
- The contrast between the background and the text is very important.
- There are a range of color combinations that do cause difficulty, for example:
 - Red and green
 - Red and purple
 - Yellow and white/light grey
 - Pink/lavender pastel colors
- White text on a black background will appear thinner than the same weight of font in black on a lighter background. Designers may wish to use a heavier font to compensate for this. White text out of blue is particularly legible.
- Flexibility - ensure that the chosen color can be overwritten by the viewer's browser settings.
- Test pages for readability by photocopying them several times.
- Test your web pages using several different browsers.

(d) Documents shall be organized so they are readable without requiring an associated style sheet.

Best Practices: Style Sheets

- Write well structured HTML pages that can be displayed (presented) in various ways in various Internet-capable devices and still be structurally sensible as headings, lists or other content. For example, when an HTML document is rendered without associated style sheets, it must still be possible to read the document.
- Any font sizes defined in the Cascading Style Sheet must be customizable by the end user - do not hard code.

(e) Redundant text links shall be provided for each active region of a server-side image map.

Blackboard Learning System CE 6 does not use server-side image maps.

(f) Client-side image maps shall be provided instead of server-side image maps except where the regions cannot be defined with an available geometric shape.

Best Practices: Client-side Image Maps (Links)

- Image maps (links to other pages) need redundant text for each link located either above or below the link. “Click Here” is not an appropriate descriptor.
- Make text links descriptive but not wordy.
- Links should be the traditional blue text with an underscore.

(g) Row and column headers shall be identified for data tables. –And-

(h) Markup shall be used to associate data cells and header cells for data tables that have two or more logical levels of row or column headers.

Best Practices: Tables

- Using a table to layout text on a page is not recommended.
- If a table must be used make sure it makes sense when the table is read from left to right.
- Identify the headers (first cells) in the rows and columns. Headers can be used by screen readers to identify important information.

(i) Frames shall be titled with text that facilitates frame identification and navigation.

Blackboard Learning System CE 6 provides titled framesets and header tags to convey page structure for use with screen readers.

(j) Pages shall be designed to avoid causing the screen to flicker with a frequency greater than 2 Hz and lower than 55 Hz.

Best Practices: Auto-refresh

- Tools like Messages and the Wimba Pronto instant messaging will auto-refresh to alert users to new mail or when people enter the online environment. These features can be turned off by the user if needed.
- Ensure user control of time-sensitive content changes - Ensure that moving, blinking, scrolling, or auto-updating objects or pages may be paused or stopped screen readers can lock up a student’s computer when trying to read changing text. Use another method to bring attention to the information by using bigger text, CAPITALIZATION or color.

(k) A text-only page, with equivalent information or functionality, shall be provided to make a web site comply with the provisions of this part, when compliance cannot be accomplished in any other way. The content of the text-only page shall be updated whenever the primary page changes.

Best Practices: Text-only Page

- Provide a single printable page when content spans several web pages.

- When working with PowerPoint save the slide outline as text. Review the resulting file to confirm that it accurately conveys your content. Insert a blank line between each slide.
- Avoid using a small font size.
- Large amounts of text should be broken into smaller chunks with white space between sections.
- Excessive white space may make the user think they have reached the end of the document.
- Avoid placing text in columns. Screen reader software reads across the entire display left to right. Text that has been placed in columns may appear jumbled.
- Text size should be customizable by the user.

(l) When pages utilize scripting languages to display content, or to create interface elements, the information provided by the script shall be identified with functional text that can be read by assistive technology.

Best Practices: Scripting Languages

- Faculty who use software to create custom menus should confirm that the finished web page can be viewed with JAVA scripting disabled.

(m) When a web page requires that an applet, plug-in or other application be present on the client system to interpret page content, the page must provide a link to a plug-in or applet that complies with §1194.21(a) through (l).

Best Practices: Plug-ins

- When an activity on a page requires a plug-in or applet, a download link to the plug-in or applet should be provided on that page.

(n) When electronic forms are designed to be completed on-line, the form shall allow people using assistive technology to access the information, field elements, and functionality required for completion and submission of the form, including all directions and cues.

Best Practices: Forms

- Any form included in an online course (course evaluations) must be readable by assistive technology or an alternative method of completing the form must be provided. The form could be printed out and returned via email.

(o) A method shall be provided that permits users to skip repetitive navigation links.

Best Practices: Navigation Links

- Navigation between pages should be simple and easy to follow. Repetitive navigation links should be kept to a minimum.

(p) When a timed response is required, the user shall be alerted and given sufficient time to indicate more time is required.

Best Practices: Timed Responses

- Activities that require a timed response should allow students the ability to indicate when more time is needed.
- When a time limit is set on an assessment (in CE 6) the student is warned with a pop-up alert when time is running out.

Best Practices: Chats

- Chats should be redesigned to allow students the option of participating using email or the discussions tool.
- Students should be given the option of contacting the instructor by telephone during virtual (Chat) office hours.

Assistive Software/Hardware Available to COM Students

The following items are available through our Services for Students with Disabilities department. Please contact Michelle Kettler (extension 124) for additional information.

Software:

Zoom Text 8.1

A screen magnifier. The program magnifies up to 16X.

Eclipse Easy Reader

Eclipse Reader is specialized software that reads text books in alternate format and has navigation functions.

Kurzweil 3000

A reading, writing and learning software.

- Kurzweil:
 - Reads text pages.
 - Reads web pages, which are great for on-line classes.
 - Creates MP3 files from text files.
 - Creates files from scanned documents.
 - Reads vocabulary words and definitions from the document.

Dragon Naturally Speaking Preferred 9.0

Speech Recognition Software

- Turns speech into text

Inspiration 7.6

Helps with brainstorming, developing ideas, organize thinking, outlining and writing.

- Inspiration
 - Has a template for Language, Science, History, Planning, and Goal Setting.

Math Media

Composed of three levels of math tutorials from basic math to pre-algebra.

Hardware:

- Computers in Lab
- Large, easy to read keyboard.
- Scanner - The scanner is used in conjunction with Kurzweil.
- Headsets for Computer.
- ADA compliant work station table.

Specialized Equipment:

- Daisy Player
 - Used by visually impaired students. Specialized CD Player for Daisy Format Textbooks on CD. Has navigation buttons to navigate between pages and chapters.
- FM Loop System
 - Used for students with hearing impairments. Specialized FM receiver/amplifier system.
- CCTV
 - Used by students who are visually impaired. Specialized screen to magnify textbooks or journals
- Talking Calculator
- Talking Scientific Calculator
- Tape Recorders w/ Dragon speech recognition software
- Franklin Spelling Ace
- Neo-Alphasmart
 - Used for note taking. Specialized laptop style note taker.
- Dana-Alphasmart
 - Used for note taking. Specialized laptop style note taker with speech for students who are visually impaired.

Services Offered:

- Sign language Interpreters
- Readers
- Note Takers
- Text Books in Alternate Formats
- Re-Formatting of Syllabi, Notes, and Tests
- Training of SWD Specialized Software

If you would like a demonstration of any of the assistive technologies on campus contact Cindy Kater at ext. 524.

Students with disabilities who have questions regarding services for students with disabilities should contact Michelle Kettler at ext. 8124. Michelle's office is located in the

Career and Counseling Center, room SC 212. Faculty members who have questions regarding services for students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Michelle Kettler at ext. 8124.

Other Resources:

Section508.gov tools and resource link:

<http://www.section508.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=Content&ID=8>

Accessibility Tutorials on Microsoft Products:

<http://www.microsoft.com/enable/training/default.aspx>

How to create accessible content using Adobe Acrobat Professional 7:

<http://www.adobe.com/enterprise/accessibility/creating.html>

Statistical Information about Distance Education at COM

Since the establishment of the DE department in September 2005, statistical information about online instruction and student satisfaction has been obtained on a regular basis. The DED will assist you in obtaining any additional statistical information you need.

All statistical information collected is available for viewing at:

I:\VP of Instruction\Distance Education\Statistics

Review and Updating of this Document

The Handbook subcommittee of the Distance Education committee will review and make correction and/or updates to this document during odd numbered school years with a revised version published in August of every even numbered school year. A document revision history will be maintained on the last page of this document including version numbers and major revisions. Changes are presented to the full Distance Education Committee for comment before being forwarded to the VP of Instruction and President for review and approval.

Document Revision History

Version	Release Date	Changes made
1.0	March 10, 2010	Major revision to include new procedures for online course review. Pages 9 - 15
1.1	March 25, 2010	Added clarification on section assignment. Pages 9 and 12.
1.2	April 22, 2010	Added new course development process and flowchart and improved clarity of timeline and section assignment options.
1.3	June 15, 2010	Revised compensation for first online course development. Changed review category title
1.4	March 31, 2011	Major revision to reflect a change in our course management system, the expansion of support, clarification of the online course review process, addition of new online process for the early warning program, elimination of details that are contained in other documents and the removal of documents from the Appendix.
1.4.1	August 2001	Correct broken links. Revised course format definitions, faculty workload and clarified minimum course standards in the online course review section. Added section on frequency of document review of the DE Faculty Handbook.