



COLLEGE OF THE MAINLAND DE FACULTY HANDBOOK

Fall 2026 Edition

The DE Faculty Handbook is a living document maintained by the College of the Mainland Educational Technology Services department with input from the Distance Education Committee.

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About this Handbook

This content is maintained by College of the Mainland EdTech and the Distance Education Committee.

There may be occasions when conditions fall outside the guidelines provided in this handbook. When such situations occur, the Distance Education Executive Committee will review the available information and make a recommendation to the deans and the Vice President of Academic Affairs for final resolution.

Distance Education Mission

To provide educational opportunities to students through alternative delivery methods, College of the Mainland faculty will provide and promote high-quality distance education that supports the expectations of local industry, transfer institutions, and the students we serve.

General Information and Support Contacts

College of the Mainland Website: <https://www.com.edu/>

College of the Mainland Disability Services: <https://www.com.edu/counseling/disability-services>

COM D2L Brightspace Login: <https://www.com.edu/brightspace>

COM D2L Brightspace Announcements: <https://apps.com.edu/brightspace/>

College of the Mainland EdTech Site: <http://edtech.com.edu/>

College of the Mainland EdTech Support Requests: <http://de-support.com.edu/>

From the COM website, D2L Brightspace is available under the Get Connected / Online Resources area. Faculty and students may also access Brightspace directly through the COM D2L Brightspace login link above.

Contact Information:

Area	Phone
EdTech Offices	409-933-8445
Director of Educational Technology	409-933-8207
Instructional Designers	409-933-8453
Media Services	409-933-8634

Academic Standards for Online Instruction

College of the Mainland 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 its face-to-face counterparts. Distance education courses must follow applicable accreditation expectations, College policy, accessibility standards, and the minimum expectations published in this handbook.

Evaluation of Instruction

Online, anonymous student evaluations will be administered for each distance education section to guide improvement. These evaluations should measure the same quality of instruction expected in traditional sections while also providing feedback on the design and delivery of online or hybrid learning.

Curriculum and Instruction

Online courses will have the same credit value and student learning outcomes as the face-to-face equivalent.

All published class schedules must indicate when a course section is delivered online or hybrid. Delivery format is reflected in the section designation and schedule notes, but online sections are not distinguished on transcripts from sections delivered in other modalities.

Decisions to offer courses or programs through distance education should reflect student need, program goals, and the College's responsibility to provide effective access to instruction. If a degree or certificate program is advertised as fully online, students must be able to satisfy all program requirements online.

The Vice President of Academic Affairs or their designee, the appropriate academic dean or their designee, and the relevant department chair or their designee shall have instructor-level access to distance education courses and course materials. The EdTech Director or their designee shall have the same access to distance education courses as the designer or instructor of record.

Distance Education Committee and Governance

The Distance Education Committee is a subcommittee of the Faculty Senate. Its role is to support faculty oversight of distance education, including the rigor of programs, quality of instruction, and effectiveness of online and hybrid learning practices.

The DE Committee co-chairs are elected from and by the committee membership and serve staggered two-year terms. Co-chairs are not term-limited and may be re-elected to consecutive terms.

Only faculty members may vote, and a majority of voting members constitutes a quorum.

DE Committee Membership

- Two committee co-chairs
- Faculty representatives as defined through Faculty Senate processes
- One current faculty senator, when applicable
- Representative from Information Technology
- Representative from the Library
- Representative from the Tutoring Center
- EdTech Director

Members of the DE Committee are expected to

- Attend regular DE Committee meetings during the fall and spring semesters.
- Share information with the areas they represent and request feedback when appropriate.
- Review and recommend learning standards for online and hybrid courses.
- Review and evaluate technology needs related to distance education.
- Review and recommend practices that support student success.
- Support pedagogical and technical training for faculty and staff.

- Support tools and processes used to evaluate online faculty and online courses.
- Assess and evaluate the quality of the distance learning program.
- Serve on ad hoc committees related to handbook updates, student online learner content, course review processes, and software evaluation.

Committee Recommendation Process

- Distance Education Committee
- Instructional Council
- President's Cabinet

Distance Education Executive Committee

The Distance Education Executive Committee coordinates distance education initiatives at the College. The committee is composed of the DE Committee co-chairs and the EdTech Director and meets regularly during long semesters.

- Distance education issues that impact student success.
- Coordination of distance education initiatives at the College.
- Recommendations and communication with administration on behalf of the DE Committee.
- Agenda development for DE Committee meetings.

Distance Education at COM

The goal of Distance Education is to provide students with the opportunity to earn college credit through alternative, technology-based methods of instruction and learning. Instructors in online and hybrid courses provide students with the same high-quality instruction expected in the physical classroom.

Effective online instructors are proactive, organized, responsive, accessible, and intentional about communication. In online learning, clarity is not decoration; it is the classroom architecture.

- Positive attitude toward online learning.
- Understanding of the needs of adult and online learners.
- Working knowledge of the College learning management system.
- Strong interpersonal, writing, and communication skills.
- Adaptability and willingness to use appropriate instructional technologies.
- Commitment to timely communication and feedback.
- Understanding of accessibility requirements.
- Organizational skills that support clear course navigation.

Minimum Course Presence Standards

The following elements must be present in each course shell and across all modalities, including online, hybrid, and face-to-face courses:

1. Welcome Announcement: introduces the course and instructor, clarifies modality, identifies required software or special resources, and includes Inclusive Access information when applicable.
2. Accurate and Up-to-Date Syllabus: provides instructor contact information, office hours and location, accurate course dates, section numbers, and other essential details.

3. Up-to-Date Gradebook: updated at least weekly. If a third-party platform is used for grading, it must sync with the LMS or grades must be manually entered into the LMS each week.

Faculty Responsibilities

1. Use the current approved syllabus template as indicated by the Vice President of Academic Affairs.
2. Post a syllabus or course outline that clearly explains online assignments, quizzes, tests, discussions, journals, blogs, projects, due dates, adaptive release requirements if used, and other information students need to navigate the course.
3. Ensure curriculum offered in online courses is consistent with, and as rigorous as, the curriculum offered in face-to-face courses.
4. Post course materials in common file types and ensure materials meet accessibility standards.
5. Clearly identify student academic support services, including library, tutoring, EdTech support, and testing resources, within the LMS course shell.
6. List textbooks with the College Bookstore or provide links to Open Educational Resources when used.
7. Provide course orientation information for students.
8. Provide succinct and substantive meeting-time or delivery-method summaries for class schedule publication. Required campus meetings, testing, labs, or other in-person activities must be clearly stated in schedule notes and the syllabus.
9. Provide timely feedback designed to improve student performance on future work.
10. Establish contact with students at the beginning of the semester and maintain regular communication throughout the term.
11. Respond to student email or voicemail within two working days.
12. Promote instructor-student and student-student interaction.
13. Maintain virtual office hours consistent with College policy.
14. Clearly state deadlines and expected activities at the beginning of the term.
15. Monitor student participation and progress and follow the online attendance policy posted in the College catalog.
16. Use the College-approved LMS. Supplemental learning systems and outside learning resources must be linked within the LMS course.
17. Ensure electronic and information resources comply with applicable accessibility standards, including ADA, Section 504, and Section 508 expectations.
18. Ensure copyright provisions are met and permissions have been obtained when appropriate.
19. Maintain an up-to-date gradebook for all courses, regardless of modality.
20. Use the LMS to support instructional continuity during campus disruptions or shutdowns.

Administrative Responsibilities

1. Faculty developing an online or hybrid course should work with their department chair and EdTech before course development begins.
2. Faculty should complete the appropriate online or hybrid course approval process before designing the course in the LMS.
3. Online courses will undergo student evaluation consistent with the evaluation methods used in face-to-face courses.
4. Technical support for distance education courses and related services will be provided through College support structures, including EdTech.

5. Support for Financial Aid, Library Resources, Counseling, Special Student Services, and Career Services is available through the College website.
6. Distance education faculty will be supported through training opportunities and ongoing professional development.
7. Adjunct and full-time faculty must meet the same requirements to teach online courses as they do for face-to-face courses.
8. All distance education faculty must have documentation on file in EdTech of online training certification or an equivalent accepted by the Distance Education Committee.
9. Students retain the same rights to privacy in online classes as they do in traditional classroom environments. Confidential information, including grades and private contact information, must be transmitted only through secure channels.

Online Attendance and Academic Engagement

In a distance education context, documenting that a student logged into an online class is not sufficient by itself to demonstrate academic attendance. Attendance must be based on academically related activity, such as submitting an assignment, contributing to a discussion, completing an assessment, or initiating course-related contact with the instructor.

Faculty should consult the College catalog, current federal student aid guidance, and EdTech resources for detailed attendance examples and documentation practices.

Evaluation and Professional Development

Distance education faculty will be evaluated by their department chairs in a manner consistent with faculty who teach traditional or face-to-face courses. Distance education faculty should set an annual goal to improve their online or hybrid teaching practice. Goals may be met through campus training, professional development day, conferences, additional coursework, or other approved learning opportunities.

Faculty Training and Certification

Pedagogical and Technological Proficiency

Faculty must complete training or certification in online teaching methodologies, instructional design, and technology proficiency, including the LMS currently used by COM. Training should address:

- Strategies for promoting student engagement and participation.
- Active learning techniques and assessment methods.
- Continuous professional development in online teaching practices and educational technologies.
- Effective design and delivery strategies for the online environment.
- ADA and accessibility best practices within the LMS.
- LMS navigation, communication tools, assessment tools, and gradebook use.

Training Flexibility

Faculty may demonstrate proficiency through one or more of the following pathways, subject to approval by the appropriate academic or administrative authority:

- Participating in relevant training modules.
- Testing out based on previous online teaching experience at COM.
- Presenting verified certification from another qualified institution or provider.

Course Modality Definitions

Official instructional hour calculations, modality thresholds, and schedule coding requirements are maintained in the College catalog and main Faculty Handbook. This section provides a practical summary for faculty developing or teaching in the LMS.

Internet / Online (IN): Instruction is delivered primarily online. Courses may include required in-person components only when clearly published in the schedule notes and syllabus.

Hybrid (HY): Instruction intentionally combines online learning with scheduled face-to-face meetings or activities. The syllabus should explain how the online and face-to-face portions connect.

Classroom (CL): Instruction is delivered in a traditional classroom setting. Classroom courses receive an LMS shell that may be used for syllabi, communication, resources, grades, and assessments.

Online Course Development and Review

The Online Course Readiness Rubric (OCR), based on established online course quality practices and refined through College of the Mainland faculty input, is used to measure the minimum requirements of a quality online course.

Course content remains the purview of the faculty member and department. The OCR focuses on whether course materials are presented in a clear, organized, accessible, and learner-focused manner.

The course review process supports quality online courses by:

- Providing constructive feedback aligned to the rubric.
- Using a faculty-driven review process for quality assurance.
- Reporting review results to faculty, department chairs, and deans to support continuous improvement.

The department chair or dean should submit an email request to the EdTech Director to begin the new online course development process.

New Online Courses

Before the course review process begins, all documents and content needed for students to complete the first half of the course must be complete and posted in the online course. This includes items such as the syllabus, start-here materials, lecture notes, assignments, exams, discussions, and related resources.

Courses should be easy to navigate, use web-friendly formats such as PDF or HTML when appropriate, and maintain a logical file and content structure.

Course Development Checklist

- Assign an Instructional Designer to support the faculty member.
- Establish a timeline and meeting schedule.
- Define course objectives and learning outcomes.

- Plan the course structure and module organization.
- Develop relevant course content and multimedia elements.
- Align content and assessments with learning objectives.
- Set up the LMS course shell and gradebook.
- Build interaction opportunities such as discussions, collaborative projects, and instructor feedback touchpoints.
- Review course elements for clarity, accessibility, usability, and functionality.
- Complete review using the COM online course readiness process before launch.

Master Course Requirements

A Master Course is a fully developed course created by one or more faculty members with content-area expertise. It successfully completes the Online Course Review process and includes additional materials needed for adoption by other faculty.

All Master Courses must contain the elements required for new online courses and the additional requirements below.

Adopting Faculty Instructions

Master Courses must contain a Faculty Instructions file for the faculty member adopting the course. This file should explain how to modify and save the syllabus, add due dates to the schedule and assessments, update calendar items, and manage publisher content when applicable. The file should be easy to find and hidden from student view.

Hybrid Master Course Materials

Hybrid Master Courses must include materials needed to conduct the face-to-face portion of the course in an Instructor Resource folder. These may include lesson guides, handouts, lab documents, or faculty guides.

Syllabus

Master Course syllabi must contain all required components from the Faculty Handbook and DE Faculty Handbook. The syllabus should be specific about course and College requirements but should not include instructor- or semester-specific information.

- Schedules included in the syllabus should not contain specific due dates.
- Schedules for common term lengths should be placed in a clearly labeled syllabus or instructor resource folder.
- Documents must be provided in an editable format. Microsoft Word is preferred.
- Areas that need to be modified, such as instructor name, contact information, and schedule items, should be clearly identified.

Assessments

Gradable activities should not include specific due dates or adaptive release criteria in the Master Course shell. Instructions should provide suggested timing by course week or module instead of a specific month and date.

Course File System

The course file structure should be well organized and easy to navigate. Content should use intuitive naming conventions, and empty or unused files and folders should be removed.

Approved Master Courses

To be designated as a Master Course, the course must be fully developed with all content, activities, and assessments needed for the full duration of the course. The course must successfully complete the Online Course Review process with an Exemplary rating. Final course approval will be determined by the department chair, dean, and Vice President of Academic Affairs.

The faculty developer of a Master Course must agree to maintain the course in exemplary condition for three academic years after it has been approved as a Master Course.

Requesting Master Course Content

Faculty who wish to use a Master Course should submit a request through the EdTech support request process. EdTech will place the most recent approved Master Course content into the requested LMS course section. Faculty who adopt a Master Course may add content to the course but may not alter the existing approved Master Course content.

Ownership, Copyright, and Accessibility

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

It is the responsibility of the individual developing the online course to ensure written copyright permissions are obtained when needed for copyrighted course materials, as outlined in COM policy CT (Legal).

All online course materials must follow applicable accessibility standards. Faculty should apply accessibility best practices when creating or revising course content, including documents, videos, images, assessments, and linked resources.

Online Course Review Forms and Documents

Application to Develop an Online Credit Course and Memorandum of Understanding: Used to document the initial approval to develop a new online course.

Online Course Readiness Criteria: Sets online course development expectations.

Online Course Readiness Report: Generated by the Review Team after completing an Online Course Review.

Faculty Concerns Related to Review Results

If a faculty member has concerns or questions about a completed Online Course Review Report or revision request, those concerns should first be directed to the Review Team. If the Review Team response does not resolve the concern, the faculty member may bring the concern to the OCR Chair for final resolution.

Training, Support, and Resources

Faculty should use the EdTech website, EdTech support request system, and LMS training resources for current guidance, best practices, and support materials.