

## ***Best Practices for Online Instruction***

These features are recommended as best practices in online course design and instruction. This document is designed as an informational resource only.

***General Course Information***- This information should be provided within the course shell and, when possible, be readily available (on either the instructor or department website) prior to the start of the semester. It is suggested that the items indicated with an asterisk (\*) be made available prior to the start date so the student can prepare. Many of these items can be provided within the syllabus itself.

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| <b>General Online Information*</b> - Guide students to PNC Online at <a href="http://www.pnc.edu/distance/">www.pnc.edu/distance/</a> to complete the online readiness quiz and for other valuable information.  |
| <b>Syllabus*</b> - See <a href="http://www.pnc.edu/academic_affairs/syllabi.pdf">http://www.pnc.edu/academic_affairs/syllabi.pdf</a> . This includes college/instructor name, contact information, course information, grading standards, attendance requirements, required materials, statements of responsibility, services related to special accommodations and a subject to change statement. A statement related to academic continuity should also be included in the syllabus. |
| <b>Learning Resources*</b> - Textbook and other resource requirements are noted.   |
| <b>Technology*</b> - Requirements and plug in/additional software download processes are presented.  |
| <b>Instructor*</b> - Contact information, office hours and instructor introduction are available.  |
| <b>Expectations*</b> - Information is included on the demands and requirements for success. Delivery methods are defined. For example, on-campus requirements, field-trips, etc.   |
| <b>Learning Objectives</b> - Defined, measurable and consistent with course competencies.  |
| <b>Course Access</b> - For continuity, the institution's learning management system should be used as the course gateway (even if a different system is used for the actual course).   |
| <b>Getting Started</b> - Process is in place for students to get information on initial course steps and access to the course. For example, what is needed before class, when course goes live, initial contact, a 'start here' feature, etc.  |

***General Course Design*** - All of the information in *General Course Information* should be provided in the course shell. In addition, the following information should be considered when designing an online class.

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| <b>Structure</b> - Course organization is clear and the course is easy to navigate.   |
| <b>Navigation</b> -Instructions are available to help students familiarize themselves with the course. For example, a scavenger hunt, virtual orientation, etc. |
| <b>Learning Module/Assignment Objectives</b> - Defined, measurable and consistent with course competencies.   |

***Assessment*** - Assessing student participation and progress regularly is essential to good course design; student feedback can also provide valuable information when considering course modifications and updating.

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| <b>Objectives Alignment</b> - Align course competencies/learning objectives, learning activities and assessment/evaluation activities. |
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| <b>Assessment Process</b> - Identify and explain assessment policy and procedures. See <a href="http://www.pnc.edu/assessment/">http://www.pnc.edu/assessment/</a> for the campus practices.  |
| <b>Evaluation</b> - Provide detailed description or criteria for evaluating student work. For example, rubrics or grading explanations/criteria.  |
| <b>Instruments</b> - Describe activities that monitor student progress throughout the course and measure learning objectives/outcomes. For example, tests, projects, essays, etc.<br><b>Assessment Safeguards</b> - State cheating, student-only work and plagiarism policy. See <a href="http://www.pnc.edu/eng/plagiarism.html">http://www.pnc.edu/eng/plagiarism.html</a> for further information. Also, use software such as TurnIt In ( <a href="http://www.pnc.edu/distance/turnitin.html">http://www.pnc.edu/distance/turnitin.html</a> ) to check for plagiarism. |
| <b>Grading Policy</b> - Provide a detailed explanation of grading policy. For example, point/percentage requirements for assignments and for the overall letter grade.  |
| <b>Grade Book</b> - Provide students online access to their progress in the course. The gradebook in blackboard can be used for this purpose.   |
| <b>Course Evaluation</b> – PNC provides on-line course evaluations for each course (both on-campus and on-line). You may want to provide a tool that captures student feedback at some point during the semester, fFor example, suggestion box or anonymous survey.   |

***Communication*** - It is important to engage students in your course and make them feel part of a community. Frequent communication helps to promote retention and increases student participation and interaction.

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| <b>Contact Information</b> - Clearly state contact information and procedures, including instructor availability. This is especially critical in on-line courses so that students don't feel like they are out in cyberspace 'on their own'. |
| <b>Response Criteria</b> - Clearly state timeframes for responding to student questions (usually 24 to 48 hours during the week), weekend/holiday responses, providing feedback on assignments, and posting grades.                          |
| <b>Student Communication Plan</b> – Outline the process for communicating with students. For example, class announcements and emails.  |
| <b>Class Interaction</b> - Methods to allow student/student, student/instructor, student/content and student/technology interaction.   |
| <b>Create and Nurture a Learning Community</b> - Process for class introductions and ongoing activities that create a sense of community and comfort.  |

***Learning and Technology Support*** - Delivery methods should promote learning. In addition, students often feel isolated in online/distance education courses so it is important to connect them with support resources.

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| <b>Learning Resources</b> - Provide information on learning assistance resources. For example, stated office hours, publisher tutorials and textbook websites, PNC Library services at <a href="http://www.pnc.edu/lis/index.html">http://www.pnc.edu/lis/index.html</a> and other resources. |
| <b>Technology Support</b> - State how students can obtain technological support. For example, the PNC Help Desk at <a href="http://www.pnc.edu/helpdesk">http://www.pnc.edu/helpdesk</a> or outside support options if using a publisher-provided instructional management system.            |
| <b>Learning Support</b> - Technology tools should support learning objectives and promote active learning. For examples, see  |

***Legal Matters*** - It is important to address security and legal issues.

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| <b>Copyright</b> - Have proper permissions and citations for any copyrighted materials or creative commons, <a href="http://creativecommons.org/">http://creativecommons.org/</a> used in your class. See <a href="http://www.pnc.edu/distance/it_resources.html">http://www.pnc.edu/distance/it_resources.html</a> for copyright information. |
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| <b>Course Integrity</b> - State cheating, student-only work and plagiarism policy. |
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**Accessibility** - *It is important that the course be accessible to all students.*

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| <b>Disability</b> - Include an ADA statement and willingness to make accommodations based on disabilities. <a href="http://www.pnc.edu/cd/policy/501.html">http://www.pnc.edu/cd/policy/501.html</a> Some thought should be given to alternative modalities based on student needs. |
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| <b>Readability</b> - Consideration should be given to the readability of course information. |
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\*For more information on best practices, please visit <http://www.qualitymatters.org/> and link on FIPSE Grant Project.

This document was created using the ideas generated by Maricopa Community College. Thanks to them for making their resources available on the web for other faculty to use.