UWW CoBE Benchmarks for Online Courses

Online instructors in the College of Business and Economics are expected to successfully complete a new online instructor training workshop. The basic workshop learning benchmarks evolve over time. The benchmarks represent best practice in effective online course development and teaching and are considered guidelines for CoBE online courses. This document provides an outline of current online course instructional benchmarks in the College of Business and Economics at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. As always, unique circumstances may require exceptions.

Course Introduction
Students expect to have a clear introduction to the course. This introduction includes getting to know their instructor, understanding course objectives and expectations, and getting started on the course. In light of this course introduction benchmarks are:

- Instructors should create an opening video that introduces the instructor to the students, welcomes students to the course, and indicates “where to get started.”
- The first day Announcement Page template will be applied on the first day of an online course. This page is designed to introduce students to how to use D2L and how to access the material.
- Instructors should prepare an appropriate syllabus or content topics including an ADA statement, academic dishonesty policy statement and Turnitin statement, when applicable. These statements may be added by including the standard CoBE online course template.
- Instructors should include a separate Assignment Due Dates document so students will know what to expect and when.

Interaction
Instructors teaching online courses should have access to a reliable internet connection that is available on a regular basis. Students expect regular and meaningful instructor-to-student interaction. They have elected to enroll in online courses with qualified instructors. Student feedback from low-interaction classes indicates that they negatively associate the classes with a “correspondence course.” Benchmarks for interaction are:

- Instructors should develop courses that provide significant student-to-student and instructor-to-student interaction. Perceived instructor engagement in the class is a significant indicator of quality.
- Instructors should strongly consider the use of WebEx or other communication technologies that allow direct instructor-to-student interaction. WebEx teleconferences are strongly recommended for reviewing and providing “office hours” in support of quantitative courses and similar topics in all courses. WebEx conferences can be recorded so students unable to “attend” can still learn from the activity.
- Instructors should engage with students on both procedural and course content areas. Procedural questions and answers are those devoted to such things as due dates, assignment criteria, etc. Courses should also have “raise your hand” type
discussion areas devoted to both procedural and content areas, wherein it is clear to students where and how they can ask these questions and what response time they can expect from the instructor.

- Instructors should communicate regularly with students about what response time they should expect. During the work week, instructors should attempt to respond to student questions within 24 hours (preferably less). Students will expect instructors to respond within that time frame during the week and weekend unless told differently. If there are any anticipated deviations to response times (e.g., traveling or other obligations), instructors should inform their students.

- Instructors should attempt to contact students who are not actively engaged in the online course (not participating in discussion, missing assignment, etc.) to advise the students of expectations, course drop dates, etc. These reminders are especially critical in Online BBA courses.

**Course Quality**

When students enter our CoBe online courses, they expect high quality course delivery. Experience shows that they judge quality partly on the number, length, and quality of instructor developed course media. Benchmarks for course quality include:

- Instructors should create a significant number of media files covering basic instructional content. A minimum of two video files should include the instructor. The video of the instructor familiarizes the student with the instructor as a person rather than a non-entity on the other end of a computer. The more the instructor is present in videos, the better.

- Generally, media files should be shorter than 20 minutes followed by an activity (assignment, discussion, etc.). Many instructors have limited classes to one media file per module. In fact, a best practice is to include multiple media files and short activities in each module. The strong preference is to have multiple short media (10 minutes) followed by short activities.

- Quantitative courses should include problem example and solution demonstration media.

**Course Currency**

Students judge the quality of a course partly on its currency. Benchmarks for course currency are:

- Each time an online course is taught instructors should
  - Create a new introductory video
  - Review all media and content for a) dated material and b) opportunities to include more current information.
  - Make sure all due dates, calendar events, dates on syllabi, and all other items refer to the current term’s course dates.

- Throughout the course, instructors should provide regular updates and postings through the Announcement Page, Raise Your Hand discussion forum and/or email.
Feedback and Grading
Students expect that they will receive timely and constructive feedback on drafts, assignments and discussions. Benchmarks for feedback and grading are:

- For each assignment, students should be informed of when they can expect to receive feedback. The general expectation is that shorter graded assignments should be returned within a week. Best practices include returning graded assignments before the next assignment is due so that students can incorporate instructor feedback in the next assignment.
- Feedback should be significant, constructive and directed to the individual student. Responding to the entire class may be appropriate if a student can clearly identify from that notice what he/she did wrong and what he or she can do to improve in the future.

Course Development
Courses should be developed according to COBE guidelines to assure a quality product. Course development benchmarks include:

- Instructors should complete a full review and update of all Online MBA and BBA classes on a regular basis.
- Instructors should complete new online course media four weeks prior to the first day of class. Course development and significant revisions of all course media should be completed eight weeks prior to the first day of class.
- Instructors should complete the online course content prior to the first day of class. Timely material may be added during the course. Course development and significant revisions of all course content should be complete eight weeks prior to the first day of class.

All Online MBA and BBA courses are required to meet Quality Matters standards for development.

- Courses should be developed in consultation with instructors that also have some level of responsibility for the course (will teach it in the future, teach other sections, etc.)

When submitting a financial grant, all online instructors should include the statement identifying the sharing of copyright in regards to course content and media between UW-Whitewater and the course instructor(s).

Additional Online MBA Guidelines

- Online courses should apply the case and/or problem-solving based methodology.

Additional Online BBA Guidelines
• Instructors should apply the academic dishonesty prevention policy for Online BBA courses.