

## **UWW CoBE Benchmarks for Online Courses (November, 2016)**

Online instructors in the College of Business and Economics are required to successfully complete a new online instructor training workshop. The basic workshop learning benchmarks change over time. This document provides an outline of current online course instructional benchmarks in the College of Business and Economics at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater.

The guidelines refer to course content regarding subject area and administrative issues as well as response timeliness. 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. Benchmarks for course introduction are as follows:

- Instructors will create their D2L profile.
- Instructors will include the “Introduce Yourself – Profile Assignment” for students in the online course.
- Instructors will 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 will 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 will include a separate Assignment Due Dates document so students will know what to expect and when.

### **Interaction**

When teaching an online course, instructors are expected to have access to a reliable internet connection that is available on a regular basis. Students expect a high amount of 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 will 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. CoBE online courses require a minimum of four faculty-student interaction activities regarding course content (discussions, WebEx, and other tools approved by DEAC). Please note the average online course contains seven faculty-to-student interaction activities.

- Instructors should strongly consider the use of WebEx or other 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. Web Ex conferences can be recorded so students unable to “attend” can still learn from the activity.
- Instructors will engage with students on both procedural and course content areas. Procedural questions and answers are those devoted to things like due dates, assignment criteria, etc. Courses should have “raise your hand” type discussion areas devoted to both procedural and content areas. It should be clear to students as to where/how they should be asking these questions and what response time they can expect from the instructor.
- Instructors should communicate regularly with students about expected response times. During the work week, instructors should respond to student questions within 24 hours (preferably less). Students expect instructors to respond within that time frame during the week and weekend unless told differently. Instructors should inform their students about any anticipated deviations to their response time (travelling, other obligations, etc.)
- 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**

Students expect a 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 are:

- Instructors will create a significant number of media files covering basic instructional content. A minimum of two media files must include a visual image of the instructor. The video of the instructor will serve to familiarize the student with the instructor as a person rather than a non-entity on the other end of a computer. The more instructors are 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 as follows:

- 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 will provide regular updates and postings through the Announcement Page, Raise Your Hand discussion area and/or email.

### **Feedback and Grading**

Students expect 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.
- 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.
- TurnItIn software must be used to check for plagiarism for all written assignments submitted to the dropbox.

### **Course Development**

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

- Instructors will complete a full review and update of all Online MBA and BBA classes on a regular basis.
- If a significant revision or course development is required, instructors will complete new online course media two weeks prior to the first day of class. Course development and significant revisions of all course content (other than media) must be completed four weeks prior to the first day of class.
- If the course requires minor updates, instructors will complete the online course content prior to the first day of class. Timely material may be added during the course.

All Online MBA and BBA courses will 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 new course development contract, all online instructors must 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 will apply the case and/or problem-solving based methodology.

Additional Online BBA Guidelines

- Instructors will apply the academic dishonesty prevention policy for Online BBA courses.