

FACULTY GUIDE

Developing an Online Course

How do I get started?

A good way for instructors to enter the online arena is by using technology to enhance on-campus or traditional courses. As you gain experience in the online environment, moving from a traditional technology-enhanced course to a class which delivers a learning experience wholly online becomes easier. The same methods, procedures, and care that you take to produce the content for a course taught on-campus (i.e., the syllabus, course goals and objectives, lessons, activities, assessments, and guidance) are the same concepts you will use to develop the content for online courses (Southern Regional Education Board, 2006). As you prepare to move your course to the online environment, you will use various instructional strategies. Your strategies may differ from the online and traditional format, as it is important to use the characteristics and capabilities associated with the environment to encourage learning (University of Illinois, 2010c).

Typically, the teaching experience associated with an online course will lead you to reexamine some of the fundamental differences between the two classroom cultures. As you migrate to the online environment, you will find that you are paying more attention to the instructional design of your courses. As a result, you are likely to improve the quality and communication techniques in both the online and on-campus teaching formats (University of Illinois, 2010b).

No single faculty member or course is perfect: learn from the process and improve on the course as you discover what works well or what should be changed. Realize that computers will go down, system glitches will occur, students won't always understand, and you will forget something. Alexander Pope said, "To err is human; to forgive divine." Errors will occur; we all make mistakes. Accept it, learn from it, and move on.

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*"The question is no longer IF the internet
can transform learning in powerful ways."
- The Web-Based Education Commission*

Traditional Courses vs. Online Courses: What's the difference?

A course is defined by Webster's dictionary as, "A number of lectures or other matter dealing with a subject; *also*: a series of such courses constituting a curriculum or rather a focused body of instruction offered by an educator which may be made up of one or more classes" (2011). In other words, a traditional course is education imparted in a series of lessons or meetings. The education or instruction is the content of the course. In terms of content and pedagogy, the differences between an online course and one taught on-campus may be that an online course is taught within a learning management system or with some other technological infrastructure.

Most distance learning classes today are delivered over the Internet. However, not all online distance learning classes are created equal. A white paper posted on the website of Blackboard, a course managing software package author, defines online education as "an approach to teaching and learning that utilizes Internet technologies to communicate and collaborate in an educational context which includes technology that supplements traditional classroom training with web-based components and learning environments where the educational process is experienced online" (Blackboard, p. 1, para.4). This definition signifies that there is more than one method for delivering classes and one method may not necessarily be preferable to another.

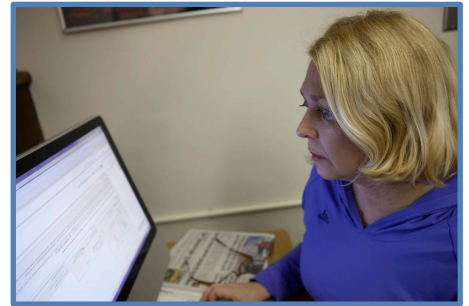
Copyright Issues: Who owns the course content?

One common concern associated with developing an online course relates to ownership of the course and its content. Instructors often spend weeks developing course content and curriculum. While you may have the right to trademark or copyright any literary material and to patent any invention, review your employment contract or program agreement charge to see if it includes the duty of producing material for your employer to copyright or trademark or to develop an invention for the organization to patent. Many organizations will claim copyrighted or trademarked materials or patented inventions developed totally or partially on the organization's time, with the use of organizational materials or facilities or with organizational funding. In special circumstances, you may negotiate with the organization concerning copyright, patent, and

trademark issues. (University of North Alabama, 2011a)

Distance learning courses typically incorporate performance and display of audiovisual and other copyrighted works. Please remember that all educators are guided by the Educational Fair Use Guidelines for Distance Learning (<http://www.adec.edu/admin/papers/fair10-17.html>). As you develop your course, verify that you are following these guidelines (American Distance Education Consortium, 2002).

Copyright information specific to UNA can be found in the Employee Policy Manual online at <http://www.una.edu/employee-policy-manual/policies/copyright-policy.html>.



Please remember that all educators are guided by the Educational Fair Use Guidelines for Distance Learning.

What types of activities and assignments should I use?



Avoid passive learning activities such as long lectures, videos, and memorization-based exams, as student outcomes from these activities produce marginal results at best.

Whether online or in the traditional classroom, you should strive to "... facilitate easy assimilation of theory into concept and application" (University of Illinois, 2010a, item 5). Incorporate life, work, and educational experiences as part of the learning process. Avoid passive learning activities such as long lectures, videos and memorization-based exams as student outcomes from these activities produce marginal results at best (University of Illinois, 2010a). Consider using active learning assignments and activities such as simulations, small group work, case studies, discussion forums, presentations, and projects as part of the course activities.

With the course goals and objectives in mind, consider how you want to organize the content over the course of the semester. Will each objective be met individually or can some of the objectives be taught together? Your

(Continued on page 4)

Planning for my Online Course:

What are the tools and strategies I should consider?

Planning your content is crucial to developing a successful online course. As an instructor, it is your responsibility not only to transmit knowledge online but also to serve as online facilitators of learning (University of Illinois, 2010b). Ask yourself, how will I facilitate learning for my students? Consider these four basic questions as you identify and/or quantify your online course objectives and goals:

1. What do you want students to learn?
2. What assignments, classroom activities, and pedagogical approaches will help students to master the identified knowledge, skills, or attitude changes?
3. How will you determine that students have accomplished what you set out to teach them?
4. How will you evaluate students' achievements?

Because of the logistics involved, presenting content online is usually more time consuming than presenting the same content in a traditional classroom. Realistically consider the amount of content that can be effectively delivered to master learning objectives within the online course. Don't try to use all of the "bells and whistles" available in the online environment during your first attempt at teaching an online course. Sometimes less is more. Take time to learn from each experience and modify your content as needed. Rome was not built in a day and realistically you should not expect to master online course development during your first online teaching experience.

Angel Learning (2009) recommends organizing your content into a module format to assist learners in the process of completing instructional units. Learners are more likely to recognize instructional units and easily understand the predetermined schedule following this format. The modular approach lets you design your instruction around learning rather than time. You can also redesign course material easily, because every module is like a "mini-course." If you find that a certain topic needs a new activity, reading, or assessment, you can redesign the element without compromising the integrity of the entire course.

Using the modular approach is a great way to make online content more interactive. You can do this by building into each module pieces of instruction that allow for students to interact with the subject matter. Because you base these activities on relevant modular instructional objectives, students are also more likely to see the relevance of the instruction, associated activities and how each module fits into the overall course structure. While a variety of modules may be used, Angel Learning (2009) recommends the following format for an online approach:

- Explain online activities to be completed. Give specific instructions on how to interact with the course content. Activities can consist of movies, discussions, wikis, blog postings, voiceovers, PowerPoint slideshows, and so on (even something as simple as a reading).
- Because most online learning occurs asynchronously, some form of assessment must be in place to determine the learner's understanding of the concept. This assessment will take the place of a question-and-answer session in a traditional classroom. A similar online approach incorporates discussion forums.
- Review all online activities with the students. Collaborate with students to understand any problems they had with the initial material.
- Provide feedback to either individual students or as a class-wide summary of issues associated with practice activities. As an example, consider offering a "Final Thought" to wrap up discussion forum activities. Address the class as a whole and offer praise for excellent points and offer constructive criticism when necessary. You might also address important items or concepts that students failed to cover during the discussion window.
- Provide assessments to demonstrate student learning. Typically this will be in the form of an assignment or activity.

(Continued on page 4)

Tools and Strategies (Continued from page 3)

- Provide a final feedback review of frequently missed concepts; offer a breakdown of grade distributions such as a high, average and low scores to allow students measure up to the class average. Often times, students will recognize if their performance is below par and work to improve future performance on activities. Additionally, when several students do not understand the content, they can realize they are not alone in their struggles and possibly assist you in improving the learning activities for future students.

(An Angel course lessons tab image depicting a linear online design is illustrated in Figure 1, page 5.)

Before adding content into your online course, create an outline for the semester. Break the content down into manageable instructional modules. The modules should be labeled clearly with the title and subtitle, accurately describing the content and learning that will take place. Incorporate your course goals and objectives, lessons, activities, and assessments. Review the Course Design Check Sheet in Table 1 (page 6), to assist you in this process. Once your goals and objectives have been identified and clearly articulated, the question of which learning strategies, activities, and experiences to employ can be addressed.

WHAT INFORMATION SHOULD I PROVIDE TO STUDENTS?

You will provide similar information to students in the traditional and online environments. Remember you must meet student needs without being in their physical presence. Providing information to the students assists you in this process. In a traditional classroom, instructors typically control the learning environment as they control the course information. However, online courses are providing more opportunities for collaboration, contextualization and activities. After designing your goals and objectives, consider how to achieve the learning objectives. As you begin with content development, review the Student Course Information Check Sheet in Table 3 (page 8) to identify basic information to incorporate into your syllabus and online course design.

Activities and Assignments (Continued from page 2)

instructional units should be centered on a significant educational objective. All objectives are different; some might take only a few minutes to master, whereas others might take days or weeks. Consider time tables for completing each module as you develop the course calendar.

An instructional designer is available to assist you in overall course design and loading of course content. Before developing new content, check and review existing materials for content and presentation ideas. When meeting with the instructional designer, have all content items, activities and assessments in a Microsoft Word or PDF document. Develop your course calendar prior to this meeting as well. Preparing the content items and calendar in advance will allow you to be more productive in creating the class online during your appointment with the instructional designer. Review Table 2 (page 7) as you prepare content for the online course.

COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE.

Student interaction with faculty and other students is an essential element for successful online experiences and is facilitated through a variety of ways including shared documents, wikis, blogs, discussion forums, instant messaging, e-mail, voice-mail, and synchronous meetings online. You may find that in adapting your courses to online models, you will pay more attention to the instructional design of your courses. As a result, you will most likely notice an improvement in the quality, and patterns of communication associated with student practice activities.

As an online instructor, you must be able to provide a supportive environment within the online course; this involves being accessible. Failure to create an open line of communication may alienate the class both from each other and from you. Create communication policies, expectations, and a timeframe for responding to your students. Try to consider life events such as births, deaths, illnesses, and accidents as they occur for everyone. It is best to address these issues and how to solve these problems before the course begins. However, always offer an open-mind for additional unexpected exceptions. Be fair, consistent and honest will all students.

Students not only view communication aspects from you as the professor, they also expect to see comments and questions from their online classmates. Typical online courses require students to complete an assignment, such as reading a textbook chapter, and then respond to a question, and discuss the various responses. By completing these activities, the students are not only indicating completion of the assignment and demonstrating their understanding of the materials, but also developing a more comprehensive perspective of the content (Smith, 2005).

Figure 1: The Online Approach

Angel Learning. (2009). Angel 7.4 Instructor Reference Manual. p. 514.

The Online Approach – Lessons Tab



Getting Started – Level 1



Welcome Video or Flash Movie

- This can be a simple Word document if multimedia is not an option



Syllabus



Course Overview and Learning Goals



Introductory Discussion Forum

- Introduce students to each other
- Students should be instructed to give relevant background information and explain why they are taking the course



Module One – Level 1

- Clearly labeled title and subtitle



Media (video, audio, or Flash) introducing the module content



Supplemental module material (reading, links, library resources, etc.)



Learning activity (see guidelines in Bloom's Taxonomy section)



Learning Assessment (quiz, survey, game, drop box, etc.)



Module Discussion Questions (also can be used as an instructor help area or "Ask the Coach" section)



Module Assessment



Module Two – Level 1

- Clearly labeled title and subtitle



Module Three – Level 1

- Clearly labeled title and subtitle

Table 1: Course Design Faculty Check Sheet

The University of North Alabama's Faculty Check Sheet (2011b)

Address all copyright issues related to the course	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide instruction and media for multiple learning styles	<input type="checkbox"/>
Match learning outcomes to the instructional objectives.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sequence events and assignments for online learning and provide opportunities for in-depth content material exploration	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide course content in logical chunks (weeks, modules, units, chapters, objectives, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide course content in segments that are technologically deliverable via limited bandwidth	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use multimedia suitable to the topic and within delivery constraints	<input type="checkbox"/>
Edit video/audio segments to reduce long downloads and/or streaming	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check all links to content modules to ensure they are working prior to start of course	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide technically sound multimedia files (good audio and video; no playback issues)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Utilize appropriate graphics	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consider accessibility issues (ADA compliance, Section 508 guidelines)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Create a method for monitoring attendance and activity participation (Course Tracking)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Address security issues (assessment protocols, proctored exams, honor codes, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maintain a records of all communication with students for at least one semester after the class has been completed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Back up course content and downloaded it at both the beginning and end of a term	<input type="checkbox"/>

TALK TO ETS

You can contact Educational Technology Services by telephone at ext. 4208, (256-765-4208), by email at ets@una.edu, or stop by our offices on the first floor of Stevens Hall.

Table 2: Assessment Check Sheet*The University of North Alabama's Faculty Check Sheet (2011b)*

Describe the methods and plans for student learning, activities and assessments	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prepare supplemental materials, assignments, activities, discussions, projects, presentations	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide demonstrations of achievement of learning outcomes and competencies for class assessments (videos, stories and/or written examples)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide a variety of methods for assessment (multiple choice, short answer, essay, papers, case studies, discussions, presentations, projects)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide submission instructions describing acceptable file/ software formats	<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop a complete and flexible course schedule. Be sure the testing schedule accommodates various student schedules	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consider any necessary security issues (proctored exams, timed exams, random question exams, Respondus Lockdown Browser, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Describe feedback procedures for assessments	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide evaluation forms for assessing the quality of activities (Rubrics)	<input type="checkbox"/>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ANGEL TUTORIALS AND GUIDES

<http://www.una.edu/ets/tutorials.html>

This site offers assistance in creating content and utilizing tools within the Angel Learning Management System.

DISTANCE LEARNING POLICIES

<http://distance.una.edu/policies/>

This site offers students, faculty and staff general information on the Distance Learning program and off-campus proctored testing requirements.

ANGEL SUPPORT

e-mail angelsupport@una.edu

GETTING AROUND IN ANGEL

<http://distance.una.edu/help/>

This site offers students resource tutorials and guides for navigating through the Angel Learning Management System experience.

ANGEL LISTSERV

<https://listserv.iupui.edu/cgi-bin/wa-iupui.exe?A0=ANGEL-L>

This listserv provides rapid response queries about Angel software from the user community.

COMPUTER SUPPORT

e-mail cpsupport@una.edu

Table 3: Student Course Information Check Sheet

The University of North Alabama's Faculty Check Sheet (2011b)

Course title, number, and section	<input type="checkbox"/>
Instructor information: e-mail, work phone, office location, office hours, link course site	<input type="checkbox"/>
Welcome message	<input type="checkbox"/>
Instructions for primary course components	<input type="checkbox"/>
Course syllabus	<input type="checkbox"/>
Course description	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prerequisite courses	<input type="checkbox"/>
Course objectives	<input type="checkbox"/>
Text and other required materials	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supplemental materials, including instructions for accessing these items (video, audio etc...)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Library resources	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assignment expectations (due dates, assignments graded by date, scoring criteria/rubric, types of assignments)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Instructor expectations	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student expectations	<input type="checkbox"/>
Instructions for handling technical difficulties and contact information for technical support	<input type="checkbox"/>
Expectations for frequency and timing of class participation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Expectations of response time to e-mails and/or phone calls	<input type="checkbox"/>
Schedule of course activities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Instructions for modules, assignments, activities and tests	<input type="checkbox"/>
Institutional term information (course start/end dates, withdrawal dates, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Regular updates to students on course changes (announcements, e-mail, weekly reminders)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Student Course Information Check Sheet (Continued on Next Page)</i>	

Student Course Information Check Sheet (Continued)

Netiquette rules and clear expectations for student behavior in discussion forums.	<input type="checkbox"/>
A moderated "help" discussion forum	<input type="checkbox"/>
Questions that encourage student analysis and discussion be sure to "facilitate" rather than "dominate."	<input type="checkbox"/>
Interactive opportunities frequently	<input type="checkbox"/>
Demonstrations of activities for the class	<input type="checkbox"/>
Instructions for submitting assignments and describe acceptable file/ software formats	<input type="checkbox"/>
Variety of assessments (multiple choice, short answer, essay, papers, discussions, presentations, projects)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Instructions for security issues (proctored exams, timed exams, random question exams, Respondus Lockdown Browser, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Feedback for all assessment activities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Instructions and media designed to address for multiple learning styles	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning outcomes for the course.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Guidance and opportunities for in-depth exploration of content material	<input type="checkbox"/>
Course content in logical chunks (weeks, modules, units, chapters, objectives, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Suitable multimedia to the topic and instructions for delivery constraints	<input type="checkbox"/>
Edited video/audio segments to reduce long downloads and/or streaming	<input type="checkbox"/>
Links to content modules and other resources	<input type="checkbox"/>
Instructions for addressing accessibility issues are considered (ADA compliance, Section 508 guidelines)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Expectations for attendance and course participation (Course Tracking)	<input type="checkbox"/>

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FACULTY GUIDE is a publication of Educational Technology Services for the instructors at the University of North Alabama. This issue was written by Natasha Lindsey, Instructional Designer. Visit our website at www.una.edu/ets and www.una.edu/distance for more information.

SAVE THE DATE!

Distance Learning Best Practices Conference

Thursday, April 4, 2013, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Nationally known speakers will present; mark your calendars now to attend this exciting conference on campus.

Details will be announced shortly. Watch your e-mail for more information!
