Faculty Best Practices Guide for Digital Learning

This document serves as a comprehensive guide for faculty teaching courses in both Online, Hybrid Online, and Digital Learning course formats.

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Welcome

Welcome to the *Best Practice Guide for Digital Learning*. This guide serves as a comprehensive guide for faculty teaching courses in online, hybrid online, and digital learning formats. Regardless of previous teaching experience and familiarity with instructional technologies, we hope that this resource can assist you with strengthening your skill sets in online teaching and learning practices across all disciplines.

The objective of this guide is to provide you with a basic understanding of the instructional tools necessary for teaching online and hybrid, as well as the framework for designing thoughtful learning activities online.

To ensure the highest quality of online instruction at Coastal Carolina University, our comprehensive [Distance Learning Policy](#) and [Quality Assurance Inventory](#) articulate specific expectations intended to maximize the academic performance of digital learning students and to guide faculty in best practices for design and support of their online learning classes.

Digital Learning Course Definitions

**Online Courses**
Online courses are distributed 100% online using the Moodle © Learning Management System (LMS). Online education students are able to participate in their courses remotely without the need to come to campus. These courses are typically designated with a “D” in course format at CCU. Online courses may include both asynchronous (distributed, not real-time) and/or synchronous (real-time) interactions, such as through chat and web conferencing. However, online classes with synchronous components will provide students with optional make up activities outside of time/place restrictions.

**Hybrid Courses**
Hybrid online courses combine regular classroom meetings with online instruction delivered through the campus LMS, reducing the number of hours a class meets on campus. Hybrid courses provide 51-99% of course instruction online and/or remote from campus. This designation has now been added to WebAdvisor; students may search for courses that are designated with the Hybrid course format, and faculty may schedule classes with reduced classroom meeting times throughout the semester using the Hybrid designation.

Hybrid courses may reduce course meetings in many different ways. Some hybrid courses may reduce course meetings from 3 class meetings a week to 1: for example, three 50 minute on-campus meetings MWF may be modified to 1 campus meeting per week of 50 minutes on Wednesdays (this example equates to a 66% hybrid course). This reduces classroom usage space and opens up classroom scheduling for other campus needs. Alternative hybrid classroom schedules may also flex around weeks or even

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months. For example, some hybrid classes may meet 2 days a week for the first 3 weeks; take 2 weeks of remote and/or online work, then meet again on campus periodically. Provided that the course maintains a total of 51-99% work completed remotely, it may be classified as Hybrid, Flex, and Web Assisted at CCU.

Learning Management System (LMS)

It is strongly recommended that faculty use the university’s approved Learning Management System (LMS), Moodle, for posting content relating to courses, holding discussions and course activities, along with posting student grades. Both face-to-face and online training opportunities are available to faculty for our Moodle system, along with accessible templates to begin your course development work. Please contact coastalonline@coastal.edu for more information on these trainings.

Faculty members who choose to use an alternative learning management system or a 3rd party system that is not supported by the university are responsible for ALL technical support, student registration, and any other features students and faculty may require assistance with. The campus faculty and student technical and academic support units may only support the tools that are formally adopted by the campus and that have been approved through proper channels.

A list of large adoption 3rd party tools supported by the university that are used in conjunction with the Moodle LMS are included below. Faculty may also request additional options by completing the COOL Feature/Tool Request Form. However, this is just a request, it does not guarantee approval.

- Adobe Connect
- Echo360 Lecture Capture
- Cengage
- Mahara
- McGraw-Hill
- Office 365
- Pearson
- Respondus Lockdown Browser
- Respondus Monitor
- Skype for Business
- Teams
- Turnitin

Details on 3rd Party Tools Supporting Moodle at CCU

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Turnitin
Turnitin is fully integrated with Moodle at Coastal Carolina University, which means that students (and faculty) do not need to create accounts or log in to use the program. Turnitin is an online program that is used by “26 million students at 15,000 institutions in 140 countries” (“About Us”). Although it is most widely known for its plagiarism detection, Turnitin is also a valuable tool for providing feedback and grading student writing. Learn more about the Turnitin tool with the Instructor Quick Start Guide.

Respondus Lockdown Browser & Monitor
Respondus Lockdown Browser and Respondus Monitor are both adopted by the university and integrated with the Moodle LMS. Respondus Lockdown Browser is a browser that has been customized to prevent access to other materials except for the online Moodle quiz or exam. If LockDown Browser has been enabled on an exam by a faculty member, students will be unable to access another URL, access other applications/software, print, or digitally copy material. Students will only be able to access the exam through the Respondus LockDown Browser application. Respondus Monitor is an add-on feature for LockDown Browser that requires students to use a webcam to real-time record completion of their online exams. If Respondus Monitor is enabled, students are required to have a microphone and webcam to complete the exam. After students complete the exam, instructors can review the recorded videos of any student’s exam; suspicious behavior is automatically noted for each faculty member. In order to enable Respondus Monitor, LockDown Browser must also be enabled.

*Best Practices Tip for Online Student Authentication*
Faculty at CCU are strongly encouraged to adopt the usage of Turnitin, Respondus LockDown Browser, and/or Respondus Monitor in order to enhance the security of your course assessment methods, including both exams and document submissions.

Echo 360 Lecture Capture
Coastal Carolina University's official lecture capture platform is Echo360, a system that captures class lectures and allows faculty to perform personal captures from their computers and/or mobile devices. Echo360 brings a high level of engagement to the classroom setting whether you just want to record your lectures for your students to review, or use some of the advance features that truly give a sense of your student knowledge on a particular subject. Echo360 provides you simplicity as there is a seamless tie-in to the Moodle environment. Instructors have the ability to track real time analytics on your students’ online behaviors in viewing your recorded lectures and videos.
Web Conferencing Tools
In an online course, teacher presence is instrumental to student success. One way to achieve a more personal relationship with online learners is through web conferencing. Below is a list of a few free tools for communicating with students live online:

• Skype for Business and Microsoft Teams (campus-wide option available through Office 365) •

Best Practices for Digital Learning

Universal Design & Digital Accessibility
The materials you develop for your online and hybrid online course should conform to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 (WCAG) to ensure accessibility for all students and make the learning experience more inclusive. Consider the materials and media that you are using, along with the design of your course itself in terms of accessibility and usability. According to the National Center for Universal Design for Learning instructional resources should:

1. Provide multiple means of representation.
2. Provide multiple means of action and expression.
3. Provide multiple means of action and engagement.

Additional Accessible Support Documents for Faculty:

• Accessible Syllabus Template
• Accessible Module Template

• Avoid sole usage of color coding for text without other distinguishing characteristics
• Embrace the use of multimedia while designing with all users in mind
• Include ALT tags or image descriptions to all images and graphics, including textual graphics
• Include closed captions to all media (to have your media captioned, please fill out this online COOL Form)
• Promote easy readability by avoiding lengthy blocks of text
• Provide an accessibility statement for students in syllabus
• Provide descriptive hyperlinks (not raw URLs)
• Use semantic structures such as embedded styles/headings
• Use tables and true bulleted / numbered lists when possible to preserve format across screens
• Use heavy color contrast in images
• Use high resolution images in all areas of the course including in Quizzes, Documents, Assignments, Syllabus, etc. Images with poor resolutions results in poor image quality for the students making it difficult to see and interpret.

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Ally
Coastal Carolina has adopted a tool, Ally, to help make your content more accessible in the campus’ Learning Management System (LMS), Moodle. Ally creates alternative file formats to provide students with a greater opportunity to have access to course materials. These formats include PDF, HTML, ePub, Electronic Braille, Audio (mp3), and multiple foreign languages. For more information on Ally please see the Ally Learning Management Systems Help Site.

Accessibility Block in Moodle
Allows users to customize their Moodle course to their visual needs by changing text sizes and colour schemes.

Assessments and Grading in Digital Learning Courses

Assessments
One of the most common forms of graded assignments online are quizzes and exams, both of which our Moodle LMS allows instructors to design and implement, as well as automatically score in many types of questions. Growing online student assessment methods in online and hybrid online courses include:

• Discussion forums
• Wikis and blogs
• Research papers, article reviews/critiques, and other written assignments either with or without graphics included
• Student presentations, including screencasts, and audio and video presentations. All of these options are available for you to create and include in our Moodle LMS (with a little 3rd party help)
• Moodle allows for both private student submissions of assignments (such as in Journals or Assignments) along with group and/or peer-reviewed opportunities (such as in Discussion Forums, Wikis, and Workshops).
• Faculty are strongly encouraged to utilize various tools and methods to ensure academic integrity in their online and hybrid online courses. COOL offers training workshops focused on enhancing Academic Integrity, and faculty teaching through these modalities are strongly encouraged to attend these workshops and implement methods for ensuring student authentication security measures.

Grading
Rubrics are advanced grading forms that are used for criteria-based assessment. When faculty use the rubric to assess some student's work, they select the level describing the student's performance best for each criterion. An excellent rubric editor is available in Moodle under the advanced grading method management screen, available via the 'Advanced grading' link in the activity settings block. The rubric editor lets you set the rubric form name, the description, and the rubric itself. The editor lets you add new criteria and levels, delete them and change the criteria order. There are several rubric options that can be configured, too. Creating a rubric for assignments that students may submit online through the
Assignment tool in Moodle or through Turnitin expedites and standardizes grading for faculty in online and hybrid online courses.

**Course Organization & Design**
The COOL department has developed two Moodle course templates for Coastal faculty that may be used at your discretion within your courses. These templates have been added automatically to the Resources area of Moodle for all CCU faculty members. To request copies of these templates to be added into desired courses, faculty may use the [Course Request](#) tab in Moodle. Faculty should specify under the COOL Course Template field of this form whether they desire the Basic Moodle Template (which includes the standard textual Moodle homepage) or the Advanced Moodle Template (which includes a new graphical layout for the Moodle homepage), using the drop-down menu to select your preference. You may request individual elements be copied over from either template, rather than the entire template, as well. Both templates are designed to meet [W3C’s AA](#) accessibility requirements, including the use of proper headings, alt tags, etc.

**Best Practice Tips for Digital Learning Courses**

**Templates**
Templates provide faculty with a straightforward starting point for digital learning course design and a consistent framework based upon best practices and high-quality course design, which improves student navigation and performance. Templates also reduce the amount of time spent by faculty building online and hybrid courses.

**Navigation**
Developing a pathway that clearly outlines what students are supposed to do in your course helps them to find the next steps and focus on the content, rather than the LMS or the technology. A strong syllabus is an important first step; in many instances, faculty have found that an online syllabus will be much longer and more detailed than a face-to-face syllabus. Consistency in design can include graphics, headings, an HTML block course menu, and even language, tone, and style of writing. This aids your learners also in clarifying the goals in each page you develop.

**Protecting Student Privacy**
When designing online and hybrid courses it is important to protect students’ privacy by doing the following: only post non-grade related content behind a secure login (no texting/emailing it), not personally identifying students’ work without express permission, not recording their online presence in video without permission unless they are unidentifiable, etc.

**Student Support**
It is a best practice that online and hybrid courses have a designated started place within the course, such as a Getting Started section as shown in the COOL Course Templates. Within this Getting Started section, it is highly recommended that faculty include a course syllabus, course schedule, instructor information, and readily available access to academic and support services to areas such as the library, tutoring centers, counseling services, financial aid, etc.

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Recommended Course Development Path for Faculty
Note that it is preferred where time allows that a course not previously taught in an online format be first developed and taught through hybrid online format, to allow faculty time to learn the unique communication patterns and develop proper support resources for students within their class. Faculty who follow this pathway tend to gain a greater understanding of the online communication and support dynamics necessary through their venture into hybrid teaching, which yields a more comfortable experience once one moves fully into an online teaching space.

Recommended Course Development Path

Digital Learning Institute
The Digital Learning Institute (DLI) is a certificate program designed to give faculty the knowledge and skills to develop and manage successful online and hybrid courses. This program consists of a series of 5 required sessions, 5 elective sessions, and a capstone. The modalities of these sessions will vary from session-to-session. Some sessions will be completely online, while some will require you to attend an in-class session.

Academic Continuity Support
Continuation of instruction is important for student success and retention even in the event of unexpected absences from campus, such as due to natural disasters (i.e., hurricanes, flooding,

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Through the use of the Moodle LMS, faculty teaching in all formats including online, hybrid online, and traditional may utilize the resources provided by CCU to ensure this academic continuity. In the event of natural disasters, pandemics, or other unexpected scenarios, a faculty member may need to provide instruction remotely, online, or through alterations to an original class schedule. Faculty should follow closely guidelines provided by the Coastal Carolina University provost’s office during any time of emergency, including recommendations for making up missed work. COOL strongly encourages faculty teaching through all course formats to develop one online course module (i.e., equivalent to one class day of learning) for each class that is taught in a typical 2-year cycle. This material may be developed and reside on the Moodle LMS, and may be activated in the event of a long-term leave from campus such as due to a natural disaster, or in short-term unexpected leaves of absence such as a family or personal illness on the part of the faculty member.

COOL has developed a set of recommended Best Practice Steps for Academic Continuity at Coastal Carolina University that faculty, departments, and colleges are encouraged to consider adopting for proactive planning for academic continuity.

To stay up-to-date on emergency situations on campus, all Coastal faculty and students are asked to sign-up for text alerts found on the CCU Alerts Page. Faculty are encouraged to direct students to the CCU Alerts page as a means for critical communications via a statement in their syllabi.

Resources

Accessibility Resources
Accessible Syllabus
Accessible Module Template
Best Practices in Teaching Research Articles for Faculty
Captioning Resources
COOL Grants
COOL Online Faculty Resources Website
Copyright Policy (CCU)
Faculty Libguide
Moodle Course Templates
Online & Hybrid Student FAQ’s
Quality Assurance Inventory Checklist
Respondus Faculty Guide
Training Workshops

Faculty Professional Development (offered by COOL)

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• Academic Integrity and Best Practices in Digital Learning
• Best Practices for a Strong, Reusable Framework for An Online Learning Course
• Blended/Hybrid Workshop
• Digital Learning Institute
• Encourage Active Learning in Your Course Using Echo360
• Integration of Accessible Assignments & Activities into Your Online, Hybrid, and Flex Courses
• Getting Started with Moodle – Tier 1 Training
• Advanced Moodle Training – Tier 2 Training
• QAI Online
• Using Best Practices to Update Your Online Learning Course
• 10 best practices
• OER

Please visit our Training Workshop site to view available dates and register for sessions.

Distance Learning Committee

The campus has a standing committee of faculty and staff who work with COOL to ensure quality for consistency in all of the digital learning environments, curricula, and related initiatives. The committee provides recommendations to faculty senate to support digital learning. The committee also serves as an advisory body for the Coastal Office of Online Learning.