Mines Online Program Course Standards

to guide the design & facilitation of fully online courses at Mines

All Mines fully online courses are designed to promote rigorous learning opportunities for students to experience quality education at Mines. These standards were developed by a committee of Mines Faculty and Staff based on current research and established "best practices" in online learning. Many of these standards are "best practices" in all course formats, but this particular document's purpose is to clearly articulate the standards for online courses at Mines. All online courses will be reviewed and must meet these standards before being approved for delivery. We have the Mines Online/Hybrid Course Development Process in place to help you learn how to design, build and facilitate an online course, and walk through a course review.

These standards were created to allow faculty as much flexibility as possible, while ensuring all courses meet Mines, State, Federal, and International quality metrics. This includes equitable access to all students in accordance with Mines nondiscrimination policy.

The Course Design Standards are intended to help faculty engineer online courses with rich learning opportunities. The course design requires that credit hours reflect learners' workload each week. The Course Facilitation Standards build on the Design Standards and are intended to help faculty guide meaningful interactions between instructor and learner, learner and learner, and learner and content. Such interactions in a course lead learners to higher levels of satisfaction, retention, and success, and support teaching and learning through distinctive online courses at Mines.

Course Design Standards

Engineering the learning experiences

Develop clear learning outcomes (What all successful learners will gain from the course):
- Course learning outcomes represent the skills, knowledge, and abilities learners should expect to gain from successfully completing the course. The outcomes should be representative of the course level (e.g., graduate-level), and be part of a comprehensive program of study (e.g., Certificate, MS).
- Course learning outcomes are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely).
- Course learning outcomes are written from the learner's perspective and make sense to the learner.

Assess student learning/mastery of the learning outcomes:
- Each assessment is associated with at least one learning outcome and each learning outcome is measured with at least one assessment.
- There is direct alignment between assessment task and learning outcome level (e.g., "design" requires demonstration of being able to design).
- Assessment grading and criteria for success are clearly stated before the assignment is given.
- The course includes weekly assessments and feedback opportunities.
- Weighting of each assessment in the overall course score reflects the importance of the associated learning outcome(s).

Select/design instructional materials/activities so students achieve the learning outcomes:

- Instructional materials/activities build toward at least one learning outcome and at least one assessment.
- Expectations, instructions and guidelines for instructional activities are specific and clearly articulated.
- Learners engage with course content in a variety of ways (e.g., visual/textual or graphical, auditory).
- Learners have opportunities to engage with content, practice skills, reflect on learning, and receive feedback before being summatively assessed.
- Students are able to fully engage with the content and demonstrate cognitive engagement (students doing the mental work); this requires moving beyond simple information delivery and memorization.
- Tasks and activities are designed to address the Mines' Fully Online Course Facilitation Standards – ensuring that the course is facilitated as required.

Clear, explicit, and accessible experiences for all learners

Design with accessibility for all learners in mind:

In the build stage of our course development process, we strive to meet all [Universal Design for Learning](#) (UDL) best practices.

- The course provides alternative means of access to all course materials and in formats that meet the needs of diverse learners (e.g., all video and audio files are closed captioned, use of high contrast colors in all graphics and text, alternate text or format is available for all media, all text must be designed for screen readers, or provided in alternate format).
- If integrating 3rd party learning materials, ensure compliance with copyright law, license agreement, data security, data access (to what extent the tool will generate data you can use for assessment purposes), and accessibility of the resources.
- The course meets or exceeds all established Mines' policies with regard to accessibility.
- Required technology tools, applications and services are in compliance with Mines CCIT software request processes and timelines.
- Course navigation facilitates ease of use by students, providing a clear and consistent path to follow.
- Terms and labels are consistent throughout the course.
- Contact the [Trefny Center](#) or [Support Services](#) for more guidance or support.

Communicate explicit expectations:

The syllabus clearly states all required content including, but not limited to:

- Required prerequisite knowledge in the discipline and/or any required competencies.
- Course-specific software, references (e.g., texts), and technology requirements to participate in the course.
- Measurable learning outcomes (LOs).
- A course grading policy that clearly defines how assignments will be graded and the score or points for each assignment. The policy should align with the learning outcomes, and is adhered to throughout the course. If curving is a part of grading, it should be clearly stated up front that this is done and how curve will be applied.
- The weight each assessment contributes towards a student's final grade.
- Established deadlines for all activities are posted.
- Your contact information and your preferred name (how you want learners to refer to you).
- When your two (or more) synchronous office hours will be hosted and explanation that the two hours are strategically placed to accommodate varying time zones.

- Required synchronous participation times are posted so that learners can plan for the dates. If students cannot attend, an alternative assignment must be offered.
- Required behavior in an online environment (netiquette).
- Explanation of the general structure of the course (e.g., every Wednesday X is due and Sunday Y is due, or some predictable pacing format is used weekly, Wed/Sun, other).
- Course policies and exceptions (e.g., What happens if an assignment is late?).
- Syllabus must have a student accessibility/disability statement prepared by DSS (see the online syllabus template).
- Course and/or institutional policies are clearly stated, or a link to current policies is provided.

Manage the course resources:
- The course is fully built, tested, reviewed, revised, and approved at least 2 weeks before the first day of the term. All content does not need to be published on day one, but should be built.
- All instructional materials are appropriately cited and compliant with copyright laws and vendor licenses

Course Facilitation Standards

Introducing the course and setting expectations

Pre-course communication:
An email or other communication will be sent to all students before the course begins to introduce the course and requirements. It must:
- Identify all prerequisite materials and requirements (texts, software, technology, knowledge/skills, internet access). This should be sent well enough in advance to allow sufficient time for them to acquire necessary materials.
- Provide initial guidance for where and when to start in the course.
- Direct learners to the Canvas orientation, which will include how to log in, locate global navigation features, and how to access the Canvas helpdesk.
- Direct learners to review the syllabus.

Building a learning community

Engage learners and be present in the course:
- Developing instructor presence includes interacting within the course at least 5 out of every 7 days. At least one of these days should be on the weekend since there will be a learner population that works on the course assignments on nights and weekends. Exceptions to this rule may occur; however, they must not occur excessively, must be with good reason, and need to be communicated in advance to learners so they know in advance why an instructor might appear absent.
- Provide a self-introduction that welcomes learners, shares experiences related to the field, and provides guidance about getting started in the course. If video is your preferred method, the Trefny Center can help with filming, editing, and adding closed captioning to the video.
- Provide initial guidance for where to find instructions, through text or video, that demonstrate how to get started and where to find course-specific components.

- Communicate what students should expect as the normal response rate from you on questions, assignments, and/or discussions (e.g., *I will respond to all questions within one business day*).
- If at any time during the course, a student has not been responsive to assignments or has low performance that might put them at risk of failing or dropping out of the course, the instructor reaches out quickly to help get the learner on track.
- Communicate the distinction between technical and course content questions. *Technical* questions should be directed to the Canvas help desk or appropriate support resource. *Content* questions should be directed to the instructor.

Create a supportive online course community:
- Learners create a personal introduction of themselves for the course as a first or very early assignment.
- Norms (netiquette) are communicated, monitored, and reinforced to ensure a safe and collegial environment.
- Instructor responds to each learner in a discussion at least once per course.
- Instructor responds to 10-15% of original posts in each discussion.
- Course offers at least one opportunity per week for peer participation activity (e.g. group assignment, class discussion, synchronous meeting).
- Peer participation activity can be synchronous or asynchronous and is related to at least one learning outcome.
- Instructor encourages learners to share appropriate personal experiences and knowledge with each other frequently.
- The instructor models and monitors appropriate academic language.
- Instructor provides opportunities for learner collaboration and feedback/reflection/questions about their progress in the course.
- Instructor coordinates academic adjustments (accommodations) with DSS to ensure consistent understanding of requirements where there are any questions.

Guiding learners to mastery

Guide learners through increasingly complex projects and assignments:
- Formative feedback for course activities (e.g., papers, quizzes, projects) will be given to learners within 1-3 business days; if the review and feedback requires more time, then communicate within 1-3 business days how much more time will be needed to learners.
- Instructor's feedback is constructive and supportive.
- Assessment/assignment formative feedback is offered before mastery/final assessment is required.
- Each course activity is associated with at least one learning outcome.
- Instructor clearly states expectations for participation in discussions and other course activities.
- Instructor announces course information and progress at least once a week via his/her preferred tool (e.g., Canvas Announcement Tool, Piazza).