

## **Faculty Competencies and Course Requirements that Support the A&M-Texarkana Online Course Standards**

To be approved for offering Web-based/Web-enhanced courses, faculty must be able to:

- utilize the Blackboard or INACT platform for presenting course content, assignments, and instructions for communications and submissions;
- upload the course syllabus and place a link to the syllabus on the homepage or via the course menu;
- specify methodology for course communications to include phone, email, messaging, etc. in the course syllabus;
- and be able to utilize hardware and software needed to support the course objectives.

In addition, Web-based /Web-enhanced courses must meet all of these minimum standards.

Does the course website:

- clearly delineate for students the use of hardware and software needed to complete course assignments, projects, and tasks;
- offer an online introduction available to students by the first day of the semester
- clearly delineate the assignments and course deadlines;
- specify the method to be used for verifying attendance prior to the census date (e.g., discussions, email, submissions);
- post instructor availability and responsiveness (e.g., email, feedback, posting of grades, office hours, etc.);
- identify methods for interaction between faculty, students, and among students (three methods of interaction);
- and is the course content organized and easily accessible?

The Dean of each college would be responsible for communicating, implementing, and enforcing:

- that each faculty offering a Web-based/Web-enhanced course would have mastered the four faculty competencies listed above before offering the course;
- and that each Web-based/Web-enhanced course meets the seven minimum standards listed above before it is offered.

The intent is for faculty that plan to offer a Web-based/Web-enhanced course to self-evaluate with approvals being the responsibility of the College's Dean.

Faculty should use the Online Course review toolkit located at <http://www.tamut.edu/Training/PDFs/OnlineCourseToolkit.pdf> to evaluate their skills for offering Web-based/Web-enhanced courses. If additional training is needed:

- Face-to-face and online training is available to boost faculty's skills in utilizing the Blackboard Learning Management System. See the online professional development schedule.
- As of January 2013, a professional development workshop covering best online practices is ongoing which should lead to an online teaching certification.
- Additional face-to-face tools and technology training are presently being developed to address faculty hardware and software skills related to distance learning.

Pursuant to a federal requirement, the University is required to track and report a student's last date of class participation. In a traditional class format, a record of attendance would suffice. However, in a web-based or web-enhanced format, a student's last access to the website does not suffice as "participation."

To meet the requirement for tracking weekly participation in a web-based or web-enhanced class, students must engage in active participation—including but not limited to posting a comment to a blog or discussion board, a journal entry, or an assignment; taking a quiz or exam; or engaging in other measureable and tracked activity. Simply logging into Blackboard does not represent active participation.

This issue has important financial implications for students who have federal loans or grants. If they drop a web or web-enhanced course prior to the end of the semester, they are required to refund federal financial aid dollars based on their last documented date of participation. Therefore, faculty teaching web and web-enhanced courses are responsible for invoking a reputable method of tracking students' active participation on a weekly basis throughout the semester.