

Durham Tech's Distance Learning Advisory Team created the Online Course Guidelines enumerated below, with input from faculty across curriculum departments. The guidelines are intended to summarize the essential elements of quality online instruction. The team envisions that the guidelines may be used in the following ways:

- *To provide guidance for instructors who are new to online teaching*
- *To help experienced online instructors identify areas for improvement and/or professional development*
- *To assist supervisors with evaluating instructor performance*
- *To guide professional development and training efforts*
- *To communicate the college's expectations internally (faculty/staff) and externally (accrediting bodies)*

Course expectations / Basic course information

1. The course syllabus explains clearly and specifically:
 - how online attendance will be tracked
 - how to contact the instructor and response time to expect
 - ground rules for online communication (netiquette)
 - expectations for participation (how often students should visit the course site, check email)
 - any special tools or materials required
 - course structure and due dates
 - student learning outcomes (as provided by the academic department)
2. The course home page lists the course title and the instructor's name and contact information. (Optionally, the instructor can also add an image, course description, list of course outcomes, or other items to make the site welcoming and unique.)

Course organization and content

- * 3. Course content is organized in a way that is logical, clear, consistent, and easy to navigate.
- * 4. The Lessons area of the course contains a subpage for each week of the class. Each weekly subpage includes clear and complete details for assignments and activities, including due dates.
5. Course content is free of grammar/spelling errors; links to web sites and materials are functional.

Engagement

- * 6. The course includes assignments that promote active learning and utilize online tools and resources.
 - * 7. The course incorporates appropriate multimedia elements (such as images, videos, links to external resources) that support learning outcomes.
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Communication

- * 8. The course provides opportunities for regular student-instructor and student-student interaction. The instructor may use a variety of tools to accomplish this interaction (Announcements, Email, Forums, Chat, Blogs, Meetings, etc.)
 - * 9. The instructor posts an announcement at least once a week to provide updates and reminders.
 - * 10. The instructor responds to student emails and requests for help in a timely way, consistent with the response time stated in the syllabus.
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Assessment / Grading / Feedback

- * 11. The Sakai Gradebook is set up and consistent with the grading procedures stated in the syllabus. Grades are posted regularly, allowing students to track their progress.
 - * 12. The instructor provides meaningful, timely feedback to students on their work, consistent with expectations stated in the syllabus or other course documents.
 - 13. Online tests and quizzes use recommended settings to minimize cheating and technical problems.
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Legal obligations

- 14. The instructor makes a good faith effort to comply with copyright laws and fair use principles.
 - 15. The instructor is prepared to make accommodations for students with disabilities as requested through an Accommodation Plan. To the extent possible, the instructor selects and/or creates course materials that are usable by all students.
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Launching the course

- 16. Prior to the start of the course, the instructor sends a welcome email explaining when and how the course will start, orientation requirements, how to log in, any special tools or materials needed, etc.
 - 17. The instructor publishes the course site on or before the first day of the term and posts a welcome announcement telling students what to do to begin.
 - * 18. A course orientation (online or face-to-face) introduces students to the course purpose, structure, policies, and requirements and acquaints students with the course site and online tools to be used.
 - 19. An initial activity is assigned to record the student's official entry into the course ("E" date). This is often an "ice-breaker" activity in the Forum where students introduce themselves to the class or a syllabus quiz to assess students' knowledge of course policies.
 - 20. Students are provided information on how to get technical assistance with Sakai and on learning supports available (tutoring, library, disability services, counseling).
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