

DEVELOPING AND OFFERING OF ONLINE COURSES

Course Development

1. Definition of Online and Blended Courses.

Online courses are those that are delivered entirely through the College's Learning Management System (LMS). No face-to-face elements are incorporated into the course. Synchronous online sessions may be used with advance notice provided to students.

Blended courses are those that are delivered using a mix of face-to-face and online instruction. Students taking these courses are informed when they register that the course is partially online, and the course schedule provided to students will reflect the dates of face-to-face meetings and the amount of online content. While many blended courses are an even mix of face-to-face and online, the ratio will be set by the Dean/Department Chair/Program Director responsible for the course.

While the term "online" is generally used throughout this document, the same policies apply to those instructors and courses classified as blended.

The Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning (CITL) encourages all faculty members to use the LMS classroom to complement their face to face courses and provides support to assist them with using the LMS. Courses that are scheduled as face-to-face courses, but use the LMS to supplement instruction, are referred to as web-enhanced courses and are not subject to the policies outlined in this document.

2. Authorization

Before any course can be developed in an online or blended format, the academic administration will authorize the development of the course. In consultation with the Program Director/Department Chair, the Dean of the School under which the course falls will approve the development of all online courses in their respective programs. Fully online weeks cannot be added to courses that are advertised to students as on-campus courses without notifying the Department Chair/Program Director.

When a course is approved for development, the administrator who approved the course will notify the CITL and the Registrar's Office of the course approval and the dates for the delivery of the course. Every effort should be made to secure an instructor for all online courses at least eight weeks prior to the start of the course to allow adequate time for faculty training and course development/revision. The Registrar's Office will then enter the course into the administrative software system, thus allowing for the creation of a course site in the LMS.

3. Course Development Stipend

Course development stipends may be offered when a course is initially designed for online delivery. The amount of the stipend is determined by the appropriate academic department and is contingent upon satisfactorily fulfilling training and development requirements set forth by the appropriate administrative office. The course that is developed, for which a stipend is paid, is the property of Bay Path University. A stipend is only paid for developing a new online course, not for modifying an existing online course.

4. Faculty Responsibilities

If the faculty member assigned to develop a new online course has not developed one previously, they will be enrolled in the Faculty Introduction to Online Learning course administered by the CITL (see below). This course is required for all faculty teaching an online or blended course.

Prior to constructing the course in the LMS, the completed course plan/syllabus will be approved by the faculty member's Program Director/Department Chair. All course plans must include student learning outcomes that relate to the program or major's learning outcomes and the weekly schedule of course content. The Program Director/Department Chair will email the CITL when the plan is approved, notifying the CITL that the course construction process may begin. This verification is necessary to document that the intended course design meets the necessary learning outcomes of the course.

Assessment data must be collected from key courses in each program to demonstrate student progress toward meeting the learning outcomes of the program. Instructors teaching these courses referred to as points of assessment, must obtain the required information regarding collecting assessment data from the Program Director/Department Chair during the course development process.

5. Evaluation of Courses in Development

The CITL will complete an instructional design review at the conclusion of the course construction process, which should be no later than 4 weeks prior to the start date of the course. This review process will utilize the Newly Developed Online/Blended Course Review Form. For faculty participating in the Introduction course, this review process is incorporated into the course. All other faculty will receive feedback via email. Any recommended or required modifications will be reported to the faculty member who designed the course, who will then make all necessary modifications by at least 2 weeks prior to the course's start date. CITL staff are available to assist the faculty member throughout the course modification process.

The Program Director/Department Chair will be notified when the course development is completed. They will then assess the content of the course to ensure that it meets the required learning outcomes and to ensure that the assessment methods chosen to evaluate each student learning outcome are appropriate. Chairs will complete the Program Director/Department Chair Online Course Approval Form and submit it to the CITL as soon as possible following their review of the course. If the course is not approved following the first evaluation, the CITL staff will continue to oversee the modifications and notify the Department Chair/Program Director when another evaluation is necessary.

6. Course Approval Process

Newly developed online and blended courses will be subject to a two-part review and approval process. CITL staff will review the course utilizing the Syllabus Checklist and Course Quality Checklist. The Program Director/Department Chair or their designee will review course content and submit the Department Chair/Program Director Online Course Review Form, informing the CITL that the course has received final approval and is authorized to be delivered to students.

Faculty members who are preparing to teach a course that is not newly developed will be required to complete a thorough review of their course using the Instructor Self-Review Course Checklist. This

checklist will be provided at least four weeks before the course start date to all faculty teaching existing courses. Faculty members must carefully review their syllabus and course, and upon completion of the checklist, they must inform the CITL and their Department Chair/Program Director that the course is ready for student access. This checklist must be completed and the email sent at least ten days before the course is set to open to student access. The course will not be made available to students until this process is complete.

7. Preparing the Course for Student Access

Courses will be enabled for student access two weeks prior to the course start date, with the exception of courses in the SPE program which open four weeks prior to the course start date. Instructors must manually publish the course in the LMS to make it accessible to students.

Instructors have the option of locking weekly modules, releasing them to students throughout the course, or of setting the LMS to require students to complete course items in sequential order. Instructors should clearly state in their syllabi whether the content is to be available all at once or as the course progresses. If the modules are to be locked, this must be done before the course opens to students.

When courses open to students, the approved syllabus and introductory materials (such as a welcome message from the instructor and an icebreaker activity/discussion) will be open and accessible to students.

Faculty Introduction to Online Learning Course

1. Contact with the CITL

New online faculty members will receive an email about the Introduction course from the CITL as soon as they are added as an instructor to the course(s) that they will be teaching. This email will outline specific details about the course, including the timeline for course development. At this point, new online faculty members are encouraged to contact the CITL staff to schedule a meeting to discuss the details involved in the course development and Introduction course process.

Regular contact with the CITL is necessary during the introduction course to be sure all questions are addressed promptly. CITL staff will periodically review all course development efforts throughout the development process and offer suggestions as the need arises.

2. Timeline for Completion

The Faculty Introduction to Online Learning is a self-paced course consisting of various modules. When a faculty member is scheduled to teach an online/blended course for the first time at Bay Path, the CITL will work with the faculty member as well as the academic administrator who hired/selected the faculty member to teach to evaluate their level of previous online teaching/course design experience and determine the timeline and material that must be completed by the faculty member.

Faculty members will be given access to the Introduction course as soon as possible after the CITL receives information regarding the new faculty member and course schedule. The CITL highly recommends that faculty members designing new courses be scheduled and enrolled in the Introduction course no later than 12 weeks prior to the start date of the course. Those teaching existing courses should be provided with at least eight weeks to complete the course.

Faculty members will complete the Introduction course at least 4 weeks prior to their course's start date. The course will be considered complete when all modules assigned to the individual faculty member have been completed according to the instructions provided in the course. All necessary assignments must be completed in order for the course to be considered complete. Introduction course completion includes course design and development of the online classroom.

Completion of the Introduction course is part of the course development process for faculty members who are teaching their first Bay Path online course. Faculty members must complete the course in order to receive the course development stipend, if appropriate.

Structure of Online Courses

1. Consistency of Course Structure

All courses will normally follow the same basic structure so that students develop a familiarity with the presentation of Bay Path online courses. A course template is available and should be used by faculty in designing the courses in order to ensure adherence to this structure. This structure only impacts the design and layout of the course in the LMS and does not dictate course activities, assessments, or the way in which the faculty member teaches their course.

Courses classified as blended must follow the same structure as online courses; however, the course's face-to-face meeting weeks/units/modules will contain less information and content than fully online sections of the course.

2. Structural Elements for Online Courses

The following structural guidelines and uses of the LMS are required, as appropriate for each course, for the development and delivery of all online courses:

- Courses will be structured chronologically, with a module set up for each week or unit.
- A weekly overview page containing weekly learning objectives, readings, and assignments will be posted in each module through the course.
- An Introductory module will include a discussion for use in an introductory/icebreaker activity, as well as a welcome message from the instructor.
- All courses will use the grade book in the LMS.
- All other course structure and design elements as included in the checklists used to review the course will be met.

Instructional Feedback to Online Faculty

1. New Online Faculty

CITL staff will act as mentors to new online faculty members during their first session teaching online. CITL staff will check in periodically with the faculty member, offering support and assistance where and when needed.

2. Continuing Instructional Feedback

The CITL reserves the right to observe all online/blended courses and provide instructional feedback to all online faculty at any time.

Faculty Expectations

1. Accessibility to Students

Based on current research and best practices in online instruction, the CITL highly recommends that instructors respond to students within 24 hours, especially those teaching accelerated courses. Instructors must set a policy for response time for their courses and inform students of this policy in their course syllabus. Response time policies set by faculty must not exceed 48 hours.

All student work will be assessed, and appropriate feedback will be provided, within seven days of the date that the work is due. This should be stated in the course syllabus.

Online faculty will hold regular office hours online via the LMS collaborative tools, or other appropriate online tools, and will be easily and regularly accessible by students. Online faculty will return phone calls to students within the timeframe specified in the response time policy outlined in their course syllabus.

2. Discussion Facilitation

Faculty members are expected to actively participate in class discussions with students as is appropriate for the course. The amount of participation varies by class size, course content, and the nature of the course.

Faculty members will use and model good netiquette (internet etiquette) in their courses.

3. Feedback on Student Work

Students will submit all assignments through the LMS. This allows for all assignment submissions and grades to be documented in the online classroom. Faculty members will provide detailed comments with graded assignments in the gradebook. Email should not be used for submitting or returning assignments. Use of the grading rubric tool in the LMS is highly recommended; students will be provided with rubrics for all assignments, either within the syllabus or within the assignment item in the LMS.

Faculty members will use the gradebook feature in the LMS for posting grades to students. Upon the completion of the course, faculty members must enter students' final grades into the University's administrative software system.

4. Course Content and Resources

Relevant links and information may be added to the course as topics arise (current events in the field, e.g.). Major changes to the content of existing online courses must be approved by the Dean, or their designee, before being implemented.

Faculty members will contact Hatch Library as soon as possible in the course development process regarding any electronic reserve documents required for the course. Faculty members will contact Hatch Library for guidance on questions related to copyright for any documents to be used in the course.

5. Managing Student Concerns

Faculty members will check course login history records at the close of each week and contact (outside of the LMS) any students who have not logged into the course or have not met the course's attendance policy during the week. If the student does not respond within 24 hours, the faculty member will contact the CITL and provide the necessary information for a follow-up contact to be made. The

student's academic advisor will also be informed of the concern/issue if it persists.

Any students experiencing difficulties with online learning or using the LMS should be referred to the CITL for assistance.

6. Course Introduction Materials

Online faculty will provide a welcome message for their students that will be available when the course opens to student access. Welcome messages that are recorded as video clips should be no more than 5 minutes in length. Welcome messages can be recorded directly in the LMS using a webcam connected to any Internet-connected computer. Faculty needing assistance with the LMS should contact the CITL.

7. Copyright

Faculty members are responsible for determining that their online course materials are in compliance with copyright law. Information on this topic is included in the Faculty Introduction to Online Learning and on the Hatch Library website.

If copyright clearance is necessary for a document to be used in a course, faculty members may contact Hatch Library for information about how to obtain copyright clearance. Individual faculty members are responsible for determining if copyright clearance is necessary and are responsible for their own decisions regarding the use of copyrighted materials.

Program Director/Department Chair/Coordinator Involvement

1. Course Plans

Program Directors/Department Chairs/Coordinators will provide faculty members with a copy of the course plan document or existing courses syllabus, if one exists, for each online course they are developing. If such a document does not exist for a given course, the Program Director/Department Chair/Coordinator will assist the faculty member in developing the document. Online courses must meet the same learning outcomes as on-campus versions of the same course.

2. Evaluation of Courses in Development

All plans for online courses will be evaluated and approved for content by the Program Director/Department Chair/Coordinator. The Program Director/Department Chair/Coordinator will evaluate the entire plan, including the syllabus, to ensure content is appropriate and sufficient for the credit awarded and that it meets the learning outcomes for the course.

The Program Director/Department Chair/Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that all courses designed by faculty members in their department or program meet the learning outcomes of each course. Once the course is developed, the Program Director/Department Chair will evaluate the course for content before the course begins. The Program Director/Department Chair/Coordinator will inform the CITL of a course's approval status at least two weeks prior to the start of the course, under normal circumstances.

The Program Director/Department Chair/Coordinator will ensure that faculty members are aware of the program level assessment that occurs, especially if the faculty member is teaching a course that has been designated as a point of assessment for the program (see Assessment of Student Learning section below).

3. Concerns Regarding Faculty Performance

The CITL will contact the Program Director/Department Chair/Coordinator if there are any concerns with faculty members not meeting the requirements of the Introduction course. The Program Director/Department Chair/Coordinator will follow up with the faculty member to ensure the successful completion of the course.

The CITL will inform the Program Director/Department Chair/Coordinator if there are any concerns regarding faculty performance during the teaching of a course. Such concerns may involve faculty participation levels and lack of response to student questions and concerns. The Program Director/Department Chair will work with faculty members to ensure that any issues such as this are resolved.

The CITL may copy the Program Director/Department Chair/Coordinator on emails to faculty members containing instructional feedback and concerns within the course if it is deemed appropriate given the circumstances. CITL communications to online faculty members are intended to offer support and assistance in the teaching and course development process. Any concerns regarding faculty performance will be evaluated and addressed by the Program Director/Department Chair. All communications containing information that may become part of faculty evaluations are confidential and subject to the need-to-know policy.

Other Policies

1. Additional Professional Development

The CITL will offer faculty development as new technologies become available or as changes to policy require additional faculty development. Faculty members will be notified as soon as possible regarding any workshops or other faculty training/development opportunities.

2. Student Enrollment Numbers

Generally, online course enrollment will be capped at 25 students. In the event that enrollment exceeds 25 students, the decision to add an additional section of the course, to use an additional facilitator/instructor within the larger course, or to allow the course to go over the normal limit will be determined by the Program Director/Department Chair/Coordinator in consultation with the Dean.

Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

1. Department/Program Level Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

Assessment of student learning is an ongoing process; all online courses should be reviewed and evaluated by individual departments regularly to ensure quality, the advancement of student learning outcomes, and the effectiveness of designated assessment methods to determine students' achievement. As with on-campus courses, this requires discussion between faculty and the Program Director/Department Chair/Coordinator. This can occur at the end of each session but will be done at least once a year, and any approved changes to the curriculum and/or assessment methods incorporated into the course.

In addition to the ongoing assessment of student learning that occurs regularly in the classroom or online, student learning is also assessed at the program level. If a faculty member is teaching a course that has been identified as a point of assessment for the overall program, the faculty member should be aware of the need to provide the Program Director/Department Chair with the supporting data and any related observations for the assessment. The Program Director/Department Chair/Coordinator should discuss this with faculty prior

to each session of the course. Assessment data must be submitted to Academic Affairs as required by the assessment plan.

2. Student Course Evaluations

As part of the assessment process, all online courses will include an end-of-course evaluation that provides students with the opportunity to give feedback on their learning experience in the course. In addition to the faculty member, Course evaluations will be available to the Program Director/Department Chair/Coordinator, the appropriate Dean, and the Vice President of Academic Affairs.

Process Timeline for Course Development

1. Before Course Development Begins:

Decision to create a new online course is made by the Program Director/Department Chair/Coordinator, with approval of the appropriate Dean.

2. Ongoing (ideally 12 weeks before the start of the scheduled online course):

The faculty member will be enrolled in the Faculty Introduction to Online Learning course administered by the CITL unless they have successfully completed it previously.

3. During the Introduction Course:

Faculty members taking the course will complete all assignments and readings in proper sequence throughout the course.

Course plan must be approved by the Program Director/Department Chair/Coordinator before course construction begins in the LMS.

4. Four Weeks Before the Course Begins:

Course will be fully in place in the LMS by 4 weeks prior to the course's start date.

CITL staff will begin the evaluation of the course and provide feedback to the faculty member within the first week following the course development deadline.

The faculty member will begin making necessary modifications as soon as feedback is received.

5. Two Weeks Before the Course Begins:

All necessary modifications will be completed at least 2 weeks before the course's start date.

Faculty members will publish their courses. Faculty members choosing to hide their weekly modules should do so before this point in time. At a minimum, the course syllabus and introductory materials (such as the instructor's welcome message and an icebreaker activity/discussion) must be available to students.

6. During Each Course Session:

Faculty members should keep in close contact with the CITL during the course to ensure that all their questions are answered promptly. The CITL is available to assist faculty members and students throughout each course.