

Grambling State University Distance Course Manual
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Introduction

Grambling State University (GSU) provides distance courses to students in a manner that supports the mission and goals of the University. This includes, but is not limited to any form of distance education offered outside the traditional classroom. This document constitutes the University-wide policy intended to allow for the proper delivery of all distance education. This manual applies to staff, faculty, and students involved in the delivery of Web enhanced (WE) online (INT) or compressed-video courses (DIST). Appropriate delivery or support should always be legal, ethical, reflect academic honesty, and reflect Grambling standards. These guidelines specifically stipulate what is to be expected for a distance education course at Grambling. Grambling is committed to offering courses, programs, and certificates using a variety of instructional technologies to meet the diverse needs of students that we serve. These guidelines will allow Grambling State University to maintain compliance with the policies of the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges regarding distance education.

Overview

Grambling State University is a comprehensive university that emphasizes the practical application of knowledge in post-secondary programs, provides contemporary and experiential delivery systems, including distance education, to a diverse student population. Distance Learning is defined as a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction occurs when student and instructor are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous (SACS, 2000). Moreover, distance learning provides the learner with alternative delivery methods which utilize the skills and technology required in the professional community. These delivery methods also provide the learner with the opportunity to complete his or her college degree requirements from an off-campus environment.

Distance Learning (eLearning) Delivery Formats

1. Online course – Classes which are totally delivered via the Internet are defined as online courses. Blackboard, a course management system for course delivery will be utilized; that also involves the use of publisher and other online sites. All activities are primarily conducted online, including class discussions, homework assignments, and testing. On-campus visits may be required for an orientation meeting and testing. Date and time must be included on course syllabus.
2. Hybrid course – Classes that combine face-to-face classroom instruction with computer-based learning. A significant part of the course learning is online and as a result, the amount of classroom seat-time is reduced. Blackboard and Moodle course management systems are used for course delivery. Many activities are conducted online, including class discussions, homework assignments, and testing. On-campus visits may be required for an orientation meeting and testing. Date and time must be included on course syllabus.

3. Web-Enhanced course- Traditional face-to-face classes that are augmented with course web sites (Blackboard/Moodle). However, unlike hybrid courses, web enhanced classes continue to hold all of their meetings on campus.
4. Videoconferencing Course - A videoconference (also known as a compressed video) is a set of interactive telecommunication technologies which allow two or more locations to interact via two-way video and audio transmissions simultaneously. All activities are primarily conducted in the various videoconferencing suites located on campus and at remote campus sites.

Distance Learning (eLearning) Course Approval Process

Courses that are proposed to be offered in an eLearning format must already exist as a traditional course. Any faculty proposing to develop an online or hybrid course must complete the Distance Learning Training.

The steps listed below are required for the development of online and hybrid courses:

1. Dean, Department Head, or Faculty identifies potential course(s) to be developed for Distance Learning (eLearning) delivery.
2. Faculty completes the GSU Distance Learning (eLearning) Course Application and has it approved by Dean or Department Head.
3. Upon receiving and approving the proposed course, Director of Office of Distance Learning email applicants confirming acceptance to attend training. The Office of Distance Learning Staff will train faculty and assist with course materials as needed.
4. Faculty develops the course and has it reviewed by the Office of Distance Learning staff and/or Course Review Panel. Each online course developed will adhere to the Quality Matters standards. These standards have been adopted by the Board of Regents.
5. Dean, Department Head, or Faculty will submit course to Registrar's office for the proper Distance Learning course locator.
6. Dean, Department Head, or Faculty will notify the Office of Distance Learning of the course locator assigned for particular course offering. The course offering will be posted on the following sites: The University schedule of Classes, the Office of Distance Learning webpage and Southern Regional Education Board (SREB).

Copyright Issues

In general, Instructors are to create original material for their lessons or appropriately license the material from a publisher. However, they may use others' materials as long as they do not violate copyright. For material that may not be posted to the site without such violation, instructors are to assign readings from textbooks or other outside sources.

Instructors may make use of any and all public domain material that they feel is appropriate. This may include material that is out of copyright, material created by educators and others for free use, and material which is not and never has been protected by copyright. Source credit for such material must be provided on the site, if available.

Copyrighted material may be used with the author's permission, notice of which must be posted to the site in an appropriate fashion.

Copyrighted material may be used without the author's permission, as long as it conforms to the dictates of the "fair use" section of the Copyright Act. Section 107 of the Copyright Act sets forth the four fair use factors which should be considered in each instance, based on particular facts of a given case, to determine whether a use is a "fair use":

1) The purpose and character of use, including whether such use is of a commercial nature or is for nonprofit educational purposes.

2) The nature of the copyrighted work. Here the instructor must ensure that the purpose of the copyrighted work is not being violated or used in a way contrary to its intent.

3) The amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole. No use of whole books, long chapters, etc.

4) The effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work.

This is particularly important when using contemporary work with information that is still useful in such areas as the marketplace, equipment design, and so on. Any such work really must be used only with permission of author. Obviously, material that is dated, cheaply and/or commonly available, or fictional more readily satisfies this criterion. Some further relevant paragraphs from the code:

"These guidelines apply to the use, without permission, of portions of lawfully acquired copyrighted works in educational multimedia projects which are created by educators or students as part of a systematic learning activity by nonprofit educational institutions. Educational multimedia projects created under these guidelines incorporate students' or educators' original material, such as course notes or commentary, together with various copyrighted media formats including but not limited to, motion media, music, text material, graphics, illustrations, photographs and digital software which are combined into an integrated presentation. Educational institutions are defined as nonprofit organizations whose primary focus is supporting research and instructional activities of educators and students for noncommercial purposes.

"For the purposes of these guidelines, educators include faculty, teachers, instructors and others who engage in scholarly research and instructional activities for educational institutions. The copyrighted works used under these guidelines are lawfully acquired if obtained by the institution or individual through lawful means such as purchase, gift or license agreement but not pirated copies. Educational multimedia projects which incorporate portions of copyrighted works under these guidelines may be used only for educational purposes in systematic learning activities including use in connection with non-commercial curriculum-based learning and teaching activities by educators to students enrolled in courses at nonprofit educational institutions or otherwise permitted under Section 3. While these guidelines refer to the creation and use of educational multimedia projects, readers are advised that in some instances other fair use guidelines such as those for off-air taping may be relevant."

"Educators may incorporate portions of lawfully acquired copyrighted works when producing their own educational multimedia projects for their own teaching tools in support of curriculum-based instructional activities at educational institutions."

Ownership of Online Courses

In accordance with existing University policies all curricula prepared by a faculty member in conjunction with his or her assigned duties as a faculty member remain the property of the ***Grambling State University***. Moreover, when a faculty member has received release time or extra compensation to develop an online or compressed-video course, the University can continue to offer the course even if a faculty member no longer teaches the course. If, however, a faculty member leaves Grambling, he or she must negotiate with the University for permission to use the course elsewhere.

Online Course Selection and Delivery Policies and Procedures

1. Department Heads with the approval of the appropriate Dean determine the courses within his or her academic programs to be developed and delivered online.
2. Faculty must be certified by the Director of the Office of Distance Learning to teach an online course. This certification requires successful completion of a training program which includes instructions on the development of an online course. Certification may be gained by verification of previous online teaching experience as well.
3. Blackboard is the only University supported delivery software for online courses. Compressed-video courses may or may not use Blackboard at the discretion of the Instructor.
4. All academic policies and procedures established for traditional classroom courses apply to distance courses.

Delivery Platform

Blackboard has been adopted as the official platform for the teaching of online classes at the Grambling State University. The Office of Distance Learning and the Information Technology Center (ITC) provide training for faculty on how to use Blackboard on a regular and on-going basis.

The Blackboard instructional software platform allows for quizzes and self-testing. Other teaching tools include instruction or demonstrations by html pages, pdf pages, textual instructions, virtual reference tools, video or audio enhanced instruction, PowerPoint presentations, webcam or net meeting interactions or selected links with annotations on the website. Instruction may be at the orientation level or the in-depth research level. Information literacy teaching tools and online tutorials are available to all students.

Grambling State University Website

The ITC is responsible for maintaining a current, accurate website which centralizes the location of information about all the resources, services, events and programs of the University. This website is the library faculty's central portal to licensed databases of the ITC and it its main communication tool to the distance learning student. The website contains current selected reviewed links to resources which are program, course or information literacy tools. This site has all contact points including 800 numbers, addresses, email information, and a list of staff and their contact information. All courses, whether web-based or web-enhanced, are expected to link to the Grambling homepage.

Evaluation and Assessment

All online courses are evaluated and assessed in accordance with the policies governing institutional effectiveness. All evaluation and outcomes assessment methods established for online courses must, at a minimum, be equivalent to those established for classroom courses. It is the responsibility of the Director of the Office of Distance Learning in conjunction with Department Heads and Deans to monitor quality, dropout rates, Interactivity and Log-in rates, grade distribution, student satisfaction, faculty satisfaction, staff satisfaction, support and overall online delivery progress and success.

The following guidelines will be used by the Office of Distance Learning to determine which courses are evaluated each term:

1. All first-time distance Instructors.
2. All new distance courses the first term it is offered.
3. Twenty percent of all distance courses selected at random (excluding courses selected in 1 and 2 above).
4. All distance courses taught by an Instructor who received a poor student evaluation during his or her previous distance course(s).

Student evaluations of distance courses will be reviewed by the Instructional Designer for constructive suggestions and immediately discussed with the Instructor. Further, written notification of the results of the student evaluation will be provided to the Instructor's immediate supervisor and to the Dean of the respective College/School via email as soon as possible.

Security and Privacy

Privacy and security issues as stated in the ***Grambling State University Catalog***, Graduate Bulletin, Student Handbook, and Faculty Handbook apply to online and compressed-video instruction.

All Department Heads and Deans are authorized to “View as Guests” online course materials (Blackboard) for distance courses under their auspices. In order to “View as a Guest” a particular online course a Department Head or Dean must express in writing that the Blackboard Administrator enable him or her to “View as a Guest” a particular online course or set of courses. The written request must state the course title and course number as well as the desired beginning and ending times of the viewing privileges. Due to Blackboard system capabilities and security concerns, any single viewing privilege will be limited to fourteen (14) calendar days beginning with the day following receipt of written notice by the Blackboard Administrator.

Online Etiquette

It is imperative that each student, staff member, and faculty member involved in Grambling’s online programs be courteous of others’ views and feelings while communicating online. Therefore, all policies and procedures dealing with etiquette apply to written or spoken communication online as well. Etiquette issues are handled in accordance with established procedures as stated in the ***Grambling State University Catalog***, Graduate Bulletin, Student Handbook, and Faculty Handbook.

Student Services

Distance Learning students have access to standard student services available to on campus students such as admissions, career development and counseling, bookstore and academic advising. Every effort is made to provide off-campus students with the same student-centered services. All student services are listed in the ***Grambling State University Catalog***. Unless otherwise noted, services are the same for online instruction as for traditional instruction.

Proctored Examinations

In general, Instructors are encouraged to utilize a variety of methods to evaluate students’ progress through the course, such as, use worksheets for each lesson, small projects, large projects broken into sections, online quizzes, essays, community participation (such as performance in the chat room or discussion board, or any other such means as benefits the students’ instruction in terms of the course material). The key point is that regular and frequent feedback to and evaluation of student work is vital to any online course. Instructors must devise the best system of communication with their students regarding their work.

In certain cases, a formal examination is the only means of evaluating student progress. In those cases, a proctored examination can be used. The Office of Distance Learning staff will assist the faculty member in finding suitable proctors and facilitating the proctored examinations. The following types of institutions have proven to be reliable sources of proctors:

- 1) Official Test Centers
- 2) Colleges or Universities
- 3) Military Education Offices
- 4) Public Libraries
- 5) School Principals or Counselors
- 6) Human Resource Departments at Companies
- 7) Clergy
- 8) Other individuals or institutions approved by the Office of Academic Affairs

Course Design Requirements

Faculty participation in distance education means that faculty must take roles in classroom instruction that are different from the traditional faculty member. The development of distance education is often a team effort. Therefore, faculty may find themselves in the role of "team member" and content expert in the instructional design and teaching process.

Grambling faculty creating courses for online delivery should build the following criteria into their course.

- Standardized Syllabus using NCATE format.
- Interaction (mandatory): To enhance the learning experience, interaction/feedback with students is vital.
- Introduction Video (suggested): Each faculty member may create a short introduction video for each course where the faculty member introduces himself or herself and explains a little about the course. This introduction may be archived in Blackboard or hot linked into a distance server located in the ITC.
- Lowest Common Denominator policy: Blackboard is the delivery method of choice. Innovation is encouraged, but not at the expense of students. All classes should play to the lowest common denominator in regard to technology. Any exceptions must be approved by the Office of Distance Learning.
- Faculty teaching online courses must submit their syllabi to the Instructional Designer at least six weeks before delivery of the course, so that they can be posted. Exceptions to this policy must be approved by the faculty member's supervisor. The syllabi will not be released to the students until the first day of class.

Lessons

Online lessons should be comparable to classroom sessions in terms of the material covered. After individual lessons have been completed, they are to be made available for the students' review.

Lessons should be organized so that students have a balance of reading and interactivity. Lessons should not be set forth as a straight read-through, but should engage the students with questions and options, such as the opportunity to view additional examples of critical or theoretical points, opportunities to post their own questions and/or answers to a bulletin board or discussion board, or other means of engaging the student's own participation.

Message Boards

An active & happy message or discussion board is the key to creating a learning environment for students outside the classroom. Instructors need to spend time posting, responding, and encouraging students to post and respond, to a variety of topics through the term.

Instructors using online materials to augment their classroom environments should post discussion questions to the board and have students respond to the instructor and each other before class periods. Classes should then refer to online posts.

Instructors using message or discussion boards for an online course should have mandatory stipulations and guidelines for board participation and must fully integrate the use of the boards into their lessons and assignments.

If possible, the Instructor should provide all central and essential reference materials online in a format students can easily access at all times. The GSU Library Staff will provide assistance in posting reference materials.

Course Delivery Requirements: Interactivity

Online courses (Asynchronous) are expected to actually begin during the first week of scheduled classes unless expressed permission for a delayed beginning is approved in advance by the Department Head. Online Instructors are required to initiate some form of interactivity by both the Instructor and students during the first scheduled week of classes. Some examples might be the posting of announcements, discussion board introductions, an actual assignment, email calling of the roll, etc.

The Office of Distance Learning (ODL) will monitor interactivity during the first two weeks by producing an interactivity report from Blackboard that will indicate logins-by-day and total number of logins. These reports will be transmitted to the Dean of the respective College/School on the first work day following the end of week-three.

Faculty Compensation and Work Load

Enrollment Caps

Online courses should require the same minimum number of students as required on campus if the instructor is going to receive full compensation (15 students for undergraduate courses, 10 for Masters level courses, and 5 for Doctoral level courses). Online course maximum enrollment cap is determined by the Department Head in consultation with the Office of Distance Learning and the Instructor.

Number of Online Courses in Faculty Member's Workload

The maximum number of online or compressed-video courses any faculty member should teach in a semester is two. This policy applies to regular and adjunct faculty alike. A faculty work load should be determined by the Department Head using 1.5 credit hours for each course credit hour taught. For example, two 3-credit online classes is equal to 9 work load credit hours (2 courses x 3 credit hours x 1.5 = 9)

Rationale: Online courses are very labor intensive and require more extensive one-on-one exchanges with students. It is easy for a faculty member to overlook this in light of the flexible teaching schedule; yet, an overburdened faculty member would not be able to give the online students the attention they expect, resulting in student dissatisfaction.

Extra Compensation for Instructors-- Teaching

As long as an online course does not exceed the maximum enrollment cap, faculty members should receive no extra compensation for *teaching* an online course, as long as the faculty member is instructing the course on an "in load" basis. If the faculty member is instructing a distance course on an "overload" basis, compensation will be awarded as it is for any other overload course.

Credit Toward Promotion and Tenure and Merit Salary Increase

Teaching performance in online courses should be evaluated, just as teaching performance is evaluated for courses offered on campus; however, the developmental stage of an online course should be considered as well. For example, if a faculty member is teaching online for the first time and the course is being offered online for the first time, performance evaluations should be interpreted in that context

Obligation to Maintain Course and Compensation for Maintenance

The obligation to maintain online course materials is consistent with all the various responsibilities associated with teaching at a university and does not require extra compensation.

Rationale: The obligation to maintain online courses is not substantially different than the obligation to maintain the currency of information and application of new technology in an on-campus course. These responsibilities go hand-in-hand with the teaching assignment and do not necessitate extra compensation. The activities are subsumed in the compensation for teaching, as the obligations that go along with teaching beyond mere delivery of information.

Instructor Availability

Instructors are expected to return grades on assignments and respond to email and phone inquiries from students in a timely fashion. If the instructor does not wish to answer email, they may instead assign an online meeting time where students can log on to consult with them. Faculty are expected to post online (in Blackboard and on syllabus) the hours and days of the week he or she is available in the office so students can contact him or her via telephone or chat.