



CONTINUING AND DISTANCE STUDIES

FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCE

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Online Course Development: A Guide for Instructors

Overview of CDS Online Course Offering

One of the most important ingredients for successful online learning is the creation of social learning online through interaction between the students and instructor and among students. In addition, a key role for instructors is to facilitate, monitor and support online communication.” (Folinsbee, 2008)

Our goal is to offer online courses that adhere to best principles in online learning and which preserve the high quality of education associated with Queen’s University to meet the needs of students regardless of their location. The experience gained through offering credit courses to distance students for over a century, evolving from paper based to online delivery, has enabled the Faculty of Arts and Science, through its Continuing and Distance Studies unit (CDS), to establish clear quality standards for the development, design, delivery and support of online courses.

While all seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education outlined by Chickering and Gamson (1987) guide our practices, three factors play a critical role in effective course pedagogy in the online learning environment: active learning techniques, cooperative learning among students, and student and faculty interaction (Bangert, 2008). Engaging students in active learning increases their knowledge of content and promotes critical thinking and problem-solving abilities (Anderson et al. 2005; Williams & Lahman, 2011), while a sense of belonging to the learning community and increased communication with the instructor are associated with student persistence in online courses (Hart, 2012). The purpose of this document is to provide design and instructional support that will maximize these foundational design elements to facilitate learning in your online course.

All online courses in the Faculty of Arts and Science are developed using a team-based approach. The home academic department assures academic quality—ensuring that the content and learning outcomes correspond to the on-campus version—and CDS provides expertise in course design and online pedagogy.

Since development of quality online learning materials requires a range of skills, development teams in CDS will comprise of:

- faculty members (as the subject matter experts)
- instructional designers
- technology specialists (LMS, graphic design, digital technology)
- subject liaison librarians
- production assistants

CDS Phases of Online Course Development

Phase 1: Conceptual Framework

- conduct a learner needs analysis
- identify key skills and competencies
- develop 4-6 course learning outcomes
- identify teaching strategies, key resources and technologies
- request copyright approval
- prepare curriculum submission
- develop timelines and set completion of each phase

Phase 2: Development

- identify active learning strategies
- determine opportunities for student to student interaction and student to instructor interaction
- create opportunities to provide feedback
- create assessment measures that align with learning outcomes
- prepare online course materials, outline learning activities such as case studies, scenarios, etc.

Phase 3: Production

- gather and produce all course materials (e.g., copy, images, audio files, video clips)
- create an intuitive, accessible and graphically appealing user interface
- test all course elements and correct if necessary

Phase 4: Feedback and Revisions

- introduce TAs to teaching and learning and facilitating either on online or blended course
- introduce instructor and TAs to Moodle and use effective strategies to interact with students
- adjust and modify instructions and activities as needed based on feedback from students and TAs
- address unanticipated problems

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