



### **GUIDELINES FOR ONLINE INSTRUCTORS**

1. **An Instructors Web Page will be available.** A personal instructor web page will be developed to include information of courses the instructor teaches along with an instructor introduction. In addition, the instructor access information will be available and the instructor will quickly respond to all questions and comments within a 24 hour period of time.
2. **Training in accessing and navigating the course should be available.** Students often put off obtaining e-mail accounts as long as they can, avoid getting basic computer operation help until the class is underway, plan to purchase a computer and then find they cannot afford one when the time comes, or presume they can access the Internet if they simply have access to a computer. Early communication with students is imperative, and pre-course basic training in how to navigate the course, use e-mail, and participate in class discussions is strongly advised and available for all interested students through the ENMU-Ruidoso website.
3. **A course syllabus should be presented before the first class.** Especially for students who have never before taken an online course and for whom the participation and other requirements may be untypical, they need to know just as early as possible what to expect. The syllabus should show at least the following included in the ENMU-Ruidoso syllabus template:
  - a. number and title of the course,
  - b. instructor's name and e-mail address,
  - c. instructor's office and (if available) home page location,
  - d. instructor's in-person office hours and phone number,
  - e. course start date, length of the course, and expected time involvement of students,
  - f. textbook(s) and other materials needed for the course,
  - g. an outline of the course format and a clear description or exercise in the use of navigational aids used in the course,
  - h. a concise description of the course content,
  - i. an evaluation plan and exam and project schedule,
  - j. an explanation of the forms of student participation and instructor expectations regarding participation, clear deadlines,
  - k. directions for how students can communicate online with both the entire class and with individual classmates, and
  - l. a clear statement about appropriate online communication, behavior, and etiquette with communication to the instructor, other students, discussions, and assignments.
4. **Online material should be attractive.** It is important that all material be clear and concise and easy to read. The course material should be easy to view and follow.
5. **There should be a wealth of links to other sites on the Internet.** Links should also be provided, if relevant, to anecdotal pages and other parts of the course. The course should be as dynamic as possible (as opposed to strictly linear, or lock step).
6. **Mechanically the course should be fully functional.** All links should work, images should pop in as designed, and classes should appear on line as scheduled. Especially if the course has been offered online previously, the mechanics should be thoroughly checked as each page is reloaded. Links that work, for example, suggest that course material is up-to-date and the instructor has

prepared adequately for *this* class.

7. **Material presented on the web should be compatible with the course type.** If chalkboard work, slides, and other visuals would be important in a classroom version of the course, web materials should include a lot of graphic images. If field trips would be important in a classroom course, online video, required outside video viewing, or individual camcorder field trips should be included. If construction projects would be involved in a classroom, at-home projects should be included. Problem-solving, small group discussion, research, and other common classroom activities all have equivalent or better online counterparts.
8. **Material should be presented in such a way that it is compatible with a number of learning styles.** *Visual* learners benefit most from charts, maps, filmstrips, notes and flashcards. *Auditory* learners benefit most from tapes, videos, lectures, notes, and recitation. *Tactile* learners benefit most from writing repetition, construction and display projects, note taking, analogy, and study sheets. Consider all three styles when designing course material and activities.
9. **Material should be presented logically, but students should be able to move around in class at ease.** Navigational aids to discussion forums, classmate e-mail links, references, and the instructor should be nearby at all times.
10. **Students should be able to readily and easily communicate with the instructor online.** Some degree of immediacy is required. Students should not need to wait more than a day or more to have questions answered. An advantage of online instruction is its flexibility. Rather than simply slowing down the question-response process that in a classroom is immediate, it should be possible for students to ask questions and receive responses outside of instructor office hours and as immediately as convenient to everyone involved. The instructor must state how long it will take to return and email or phone call. Within 1-2 days is best, but often times it may need to be sooner, depending on the course assignments. It needs to be clearly stated how the instructor wants private contact with her/him to take place. If it is all within the structure of the class that needs to be clear. If outside telephone calls are allowed that also needs to be stated along with "office hours" to make that contact.
11. **Students should be able to "speak" to the class as a whole in "threaded discussions" where discussions are organized by topic or unit.** Chat sessions might also be used, but they should be used only *in addition to* threaded discussions. A very important advantage of online instruction is the opportunity it affords students to "attend" classes at times that their different schedules allow. Requiring them to participate at tightly scheduled times, such as a particular hour of a day, eliminates this advantage.
12. **Keep it interesting.** Avoid too much text without a break, vary activities, and keep it light and fun. Incorporate a lot of color, small animations, video clips, sound, etc. Refer to individual students by name, use more contractions (it's, we'll, they're) than in formal writing, (again) include links to other sites, brief personal experiences, lighthearted comments, and interesting anecdotes. Remember, however, that students cannot see you, so what you think is lighthearted may not seem so online unless you somehow make it clear. Look for and use online substitutes for body language. Involve students in the actual presentation of at least some of the material.
13. **Use good English.** Mistakes in writing are more prominent online than in speaking. Course material should look professional and the instructor should look educated and responsible. The online course should look well planned, and text should look proofread. It should be an example of the quality expected in the students' own work.
14. **Pages should load quickly.** If online text for a class is lengthy, it should be presented on separate pages linked together so that each page loads in a reasonably short time. Graphic images should be kept small in both graphical and file size. Scanned photos can often be cropped to eliminate unimportant backgrounds and peripheral elements. GIF format is preferred over JPG format. Page banners should be kept simple and shallow. Animations must be kept very small. Video clips should be linked rather than embedded.
15. **Special attention should be given to testing design and procedures.** Without classroom controls

that are easy to maintain, tests should be designed specifically to ensure evaluation integrity.

Online instructors should realize that giving an online test is equivalent to giving a classroom test where the instructor is not present and where students can use all notes and other materials, consult with each other, and seek help from experts and students who have previously taken the course.

16. **Attention should be paid to the fact that the online class is always available.** An advantage of online courses is the flexibility afforded students to attend at times when their schedules allow. Some students will attend during the daytime, others at night, and still others on weekends. This accommodation should be built into every online course. Some students will also need to spend more time than others "in" class. Some students will go slowly and benefit from the online form as a result. Others will speed through classes and benefit from not being hampered by slower-paced students. However, it is probably best to *not* allow students to proceed at any pace whatsoever, even if the course is competency based. Timeframes should be listed and followed by instructors. Some students will go slowly because they really need to, but others will simply procrastinate, fall far behind, and possibly drop the course because of a lack of adequate discipline in the course. At the same time, the speedier students may be inclined to discuss with the class material that most of the students have not yet gotten to. The best discussions, team work, and involvement occur when the class is together in the course.
17. **Correct APA or MLA style and format should be followed.** Any instructor who requires written assignments should always have students follow correct grammar, writing, and documentation of any resources used. Part of the higher education experience is the attainment of course goals and objectives. Academic integrity in online course writing assignments is mandatory.