**Online Teaching Guidelines**

The College of Arts & Sciences has a policy for evaluating teaching; this policy applies to full-time and adjunct faculty, both online and on-campus. Faculty are evaluated by their supervisors regularly.

To assist faculty in improving their teaching, here are a few of the key evaluative components and guidelines on how to do well in these areas:

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| **Evaluative Component** | **Guidelines** |
| ***Organization/Administration*** |
| Provides completed, updated syllabus (e.g., due dates, contact info) | In most cases, every course is provided with a syllabus template outlining assignments, readings, etc., especially for online courses. Make sure that you are using the latest syllabus template (see your department chair). Do not simply use the syllabus from the previous time you taught the course as the syllabus template may have changed. Use the template provided in the course shell and update it with the necessary information. Once you have filled in your information, save the syllabus in PDF format and upload it to Blackboard. For online courses, the assignment details will usually be located in Blackboard, and not the syllabus. The syllabus will provide the course schedule, due dates, etc. Make sure these due dates are also added to each corresponding Blackboard assignment. |
| Utilizes faculty information page appropriately | Complete the *Your Instructor* section in Blackboard with contact information and a brief biography. |
| Retains basic course template with few modifications | The University has implemented a Bb course template that is required for all courses. This template can be modified slightly, but not without the permission of your department chair. Banners and course menu colors cannot be changed. The University is implementing a branding campaign using the Regent school colors; course shells have been modified to reflect this color scheme. |
| Posts readings/course materials | For online courses, all readings, videos, and other course materials must be posted and available in Blackboard. If the instructor emails materials to students, those materials should also be posted in Blackboard (e.g., in an Announcement). |
| Grades in a timely manner and provides adequate feedback | When courses are reviewed, instructors are evaluated on timely and adequate feedback. This involves honoring the guidelines established by CAS and your department chair for timeliness (e.g., seven days for assignments) and feedback (e.g., 20-25% of threads in a discussion board forum are from the instructor). This can be determined in Bb based on timestamps on student submission and instructor grade postings. The level of feedback is determined by reviewing returned assessments (e.g., essays, case studies) for MS Word track changes (for example) and completed rubrics. Rubrics are essential to providing accurate feedback and are required for SACS reporting. If an assignment does not have a rubric associated with it, contact your department chair. All feedback should be provided in the Blackboard course shell and not given through any external communication, such as email. |
| Grades fairly with appropriate rigor  | Over the past two years, the College has made a concerted effort to increase academic rigor. Your department chair will review the rigor requirements for CAS, as well as, the department. |
| Demonstrates availability to students by email/phone | This is especially important in the online environment. Establish times when students can (and cannot) contact you, and communicate to them that you will respond within 24 hours. Given the nature of online learning and the 8-week timeframe, prompt responses to student requests are critical. Include contact information in Bb and the syllabus. This evaluative component is also assessed through Student Evaluation of Teaching responses.  |
| Follows school policies regarding attendance roster, mid-session reports, non-participating students, etc. | This is evaluated by the Associate Dean of Students and Academic Administration |
| ***Content*** |
| Demonstrates content knowledge expertise  | Faculty are the content experts. Students are learning and many have good ideas, but the instructor is the subject authority in the class. Encourage students to think through the topics, but exercise your subject matter authority and correct students when necessary. Use the Socratic method, as well as direct instruction, to steer students toward the right answers. Ask questions in the dialogues, for example, that will encourage students to think about the topic and help them discover the answers themselves. |
| Explains difficult topics, concepts, or problems in multiple ways | Not every learner is the same: some learn by doing, some by seeing, some by hearing, etc. Anticipate difficult topics for students and develop different ways to explain them. In the Announcements and dialogue forums, there exists functionality to create brief audio notes to students in addition to text. If students are really struggling, it may be necessary to create a brief video and post it in Blackboard or utilize and archive a Blackboard Collaborate segment. Sometimes it may help to have one student explain it to another, a peer-to-peer approach. Point the student to another student post that provided an excellent explanation or description. |
| Integrates current issues, as appropriate (e.g., in announcements) | This helps with maintaining student interest and it speaks to relevance and novelty. Help students make connections to their world by linking course topics to current events or the culture. Post news stories, movie clips, book excerpts, music videos, etc. that relate to the discipline. This helps students make the connection between academic study and their lives and gives their study a greater sense of purpose. |
| Offers discipline-specific faith/learning integration | Your department chairs are working through a detailed faith/mission integration approach that they will share with you. Faith integration is not simply a prayer or devotional to start the class (although this is good), but it is a way to help students connect their discipline to their lives and to demonstrate that their lives are not silos of information and activities, but must be holistic, connecting their study and vocation with what it means to be a good human being. |
| **Interaction** |
| Effectively and consistently utilizes announcements | Given that for most online courses the content and structure is already established, one of the most powerful tools in the online environment is the Announcement function. Text and audio announcements can be posted at any time through Blackboard. Choose the option to email the announcement to the students. Use the posts for encouragement, instruction, course organization, etc. Open and close each week with an announcement, introducing and then wrapping up the week’s topics. Highlight key learning points. To open a week, give students a sense of where the class is headed – what is the purpose. This can be achieved through outlining clear outcomes for each course; i.e., “By the end of this class student will be able to…” But another approach is to pose questions that the class will seek to answer; e.g., “Are there differences between Marxism and Christianity?” The more interesting and provocative, the better (usually). You could begin a class on eschatology with, “Is the world going to end tomorrow?” The goal is to grab student interest at the start of the course andrevisit those interesting questions throughout to keep them engaged (e.g., reference those questions when applicable in the discussion forums and at the week’s close). Posting these questions or outcomes in the Announcements is a good way to keep students focused. |
| Sufficiently engaged and responsive in dialogues (i.e., maintains presence) | The College has established a minimum standard for faculty participation in the discussion forums (i.e., 20%-25% of all posts must be from the instructor), but department chairs may have higher standards. Instructor presence in discussion forums is critical. Presence throughout the week is expected, not just at the end. Use the forums as teaching opportunities. Use questions to push students to think more deeply about their responses. Students should not ignore their professors’ questions. Establish in advance that students must respond to instructor posts even if they have already met their response quota. If they do not respond, their grade will be adjusted accordingly. |
| Offers encouragement, questions, and instruction in dialogues | The dialogue forums serve a number of purposes including encouragement and instruction. The Q&A section in the Community area is also a space for students to ask questions about the course or content. Encourage students to use it and respond in a timely manner. This is another teaching opportunity. |
| Provides informative and respectful feedback | Sarcasm can be funny, but it can also be problematic in the classroom, and especially online when body language and facial expressions are absent. Sarcasm may work best among peers, not in a student-instructor relationship. Sarcasm, in many cases, is considered “negative humor,” which consists of aggressive humor (e.g., using humor to hurt or tease) and self-defeating humor (e.g., humor to amuse others through saying self-disparaging things). Instead, employ “positive humor” or humor that is affiliative (e.g., using humor to say funny things and using jokes to amuse others to facilitate relationships) and self-enhancing humor (e.g., reflective of a generally humorous outlook on life). Humor aside, be respectful as students are fellow human beings and, often, brothers and sisters in Christ. |
| Encourages mutual respect among students  | Be mindful if discussions become too personal and aggressive in the forums. Step in to remind students that they are to respect each other as human beings even if they disagree on an issue. |
| Demonstrates a professional rapport with students | There is a danger of becoming too friendly with students – cultivating a peer-to-peer relationship with them – instead of a respectful student-to-instructor or mentee-to-mentor relationship. Students must understand that the instructor is the authority in the online classroom. Having students refer to their instructor by his or her first name, for example, is not conducive to a professional class environment. |
| Displays the fruit of the Spirit | Express love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. |
| ***Presentation Delivery*** |
| PowerPoints, PDFs, etc. are clear and well-organized | In many of the online courses, the presentation tools are provided. However, faculty are free to post additional resources in the Announcement area, offering alternative approaches to the topics. If offered, these resources should be thoughtful, organized, and professional. |
| Employs instructional technology and pedagogical delivery appropriately (e.g., videos, audio, Bb Collaborate) to promote student engagement. | When appropriate use various media to drive home key points. Teaching is comprised of direct instruction, discussion, assignments and exercises, and demonstration or “showing.” Sometimes showing a video clip to make a point is more meaningful (and efficient) than telling students about it. Use the technology wisely and with the intent to transform the students thinking. This may mean showing a 5 minute movie clip, not the entire movie. You can use that 5 minute clip in a way that is different than intended by the film maker, but in a way that will transform the students’ thinking. Blackboard Collaborate has replaced Wimba and is much more user friendly. Conduct weekly or bi-weekly Collaborate sessions to meet with students, answer questions, offer encouragement, etc. These Collaborate sessions can be archived so all students can benefit from the sessions. Note: At least once every 48 hours, the instructor must demonstrate engagement with the students by providing feedback, grading, posting an announcement, answering a question, or any other course activity. |