Best Practices for Blended Learning

Gateway Seminary 2017-2018

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General

- Calculation of hours of coursework should be a combination of all on-campus and online components.
- Clear information about the division of coursework between on-campus and online should be communicated to students.
- Information about accessing the online course components should be present in the course syllabus.
- All course content should follow copyright and fair use law.
- All online components should be both professional-looking and well-organized, but maintain the professor's own personality and character.
- If a professor creates and imbeds videos a part of a course creation contract, then Gateway has in effect purchased the videos since the professor created them as part of a "work for hire". See course development contract for details.
- If professors create and use videos in the normal course of teaching a class (not part of a class creation contract) then the ownership should be considered the same as any other course material – retained by the professor - and our continued use of it should be by mutual agreement.
- Instructors are encouraged to share their pedagogical plans and practices with their fellow faculty, both what is working and what is not working, for the benefit of educational effectiveness.

Online Components

- Online components should be organized into Modules for quick reference and clear structure. A "module" is a grouping of assignments, content, and information according to week or unit of study.
- All online components of any delivery system should include clear instructions for finding, completing, and submitting the required elements for the course.
- Timely feedback in online assignments and discussions is highly recommended for students' participation, development, and formation. Online courses thrive in direct portion to the sustained presence of the instructor in the course.
- Discussions

- - Clear expectations about substance, length, and frequency of posts should be communicated to students.
    - Discussion prompts should not be merely objective in nature, but provide material in which students can critically engage one another and the content.
  - Quizzes
    - To promote integrity in students, professors should take into account the nature of online education when requiring a quiz. (ex. open-book with time limit; or using a proctor with supplied contact information for verification)
  - Group Work
    - For blended courses, providing time on-campus for groups to begin work is recommended for higher success in online group work.

Online Community and Spiritual Formation

- Professors should respond to student inquiries (email, phone, or other means) within 24-48 hours to foster community and promptly address student questions and concerns.
- Professors should provide weekly updates or announcements online to keep students engaged in the online components of the course.
- Professors should engage in the creation of community online by providing opportunities for students to interact with one another, with course content, and with the instructor.
- Professors should provide opportunities for students to apply class content to their own context to encourage formation.
- Professors should provide opportunities for the student to self-reflect on his or her own growth as a result of contact with course content, peer interaction, and professor interaction.
- Professors should provide substantive feedback to encourage formation.

Remote Access

- Technology
  - Details about the software and hardware requirements should be communicated to students in the syllabus.
  - A pre-semester test of video conference software with students is recommended.
  - Students should be required to use headphones with a microphone for quality audio and elimination of feedback and echoes.
  - Instructors may want to consider providing a phone number for remote student calls in if they have technology issues. It is recommended that remote access class times should be recorded and posted on the course LMS.
  - Lapel microphones should be worn by the professor as he or she is lecturing.
  - Classroom microphones should be on when class discussion is happening.
  - It is recommended that instructors use a tablet for digital whiteboard capabilities as tablet is available.

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    - The learning technology is intended to enhance construction of a community of learning not distract from it but that intention is dependent of the instructor's courage and persistence in mastering its use.
    - Professors should prepare and upload all pertinent course documents and resources to the video conference software prior to the start of the class.
    - Professors should upload video content directly to the video conferencing software to optimize streaming for remote participants as opposed to sharing the screen to play the video.

  - Pedagogy
    - Instructors should maximize synchronous participation with remote access students during class sessions but an asynchronous online discussion should be made available to remote access students for questions or comments about the synchronous class time.
    - Professors should provide clear directions and expectations for completing coursework remotely.
    - While learning objectives will not change, assessments for remote access students should take into consideration their distance and use of the video conferencing software.
    - Pedagogy should be designed to optimize the experience of face-to-face and remote students. This may require a variation or replacement of the in-class pedagogy for remote students.
    - Professors should use the course LMS for remote student assignment submissions, class handouts, further resources, discussions, etc.

Video Creation

- General
  - All video must contain high quality audio with no distracting echo, static, or background noises that can detract from the educational purpose of the video.
  - All video content should consistently maintain a high quality image, ie. no pixilation, blur, angle distortion, distracting exposure, or anything that can detract from the educational purpose of the video. Students state that videos can detract from learning if they are poor audio or video quality.
  - If video content is not generated from Gateway Seminary or its employees, proper permissions should be acquired to use it in the course.
  - If video content is not generated from Gateway Seminary or its employees, the media should be reviewed thoroughly to ensure all content is edifying for seminary students.
  - Students tend to lose interest in a video longer than 20 minutes, therefore it is recommended that each video be less than 20 minutes. Video delivered instruction is enhanced as the video focuses on one key concept. Students learn

more and enjoy more if each video is short enough to focus on one key concept effectively rather than many concepts rapidly.
- ○ Students prefer PowerPoint/Keynote within videos that optimize learning.
- ○ Students prefer quality images, graphs, and other visual elements that pertain to the content and are not extraneous.
- ○ Comprehension of content within video should be assessed within the course curriculum by such means as but not limited to discussion, quizzes, and written assignments.
- In-Office Video Recording
  - ○ Professors should use the HD webcam provided to them or one of similar quality.
  - ○ Audio quality of the provided HD webcam is sufficient if environment is adequately quite. If the professor does not have adequate microphone or quiet environment, IT has several high quality microphones for professor use.
  - ○ Professors should adhere to the PowerPoint template best practices (see below) or use a PowerPoint template found in the Faculty Center.
  - ○ Camera shot should be at a reasonably straight angle.
  - ○ Camera shot should be at professor's approximate eye level, not too far above eye level or below eye level. Eye contact with the camera is eye contact with the student. It enhances interest and learning.
- Studio Video Recording
  - ○ If PowerPoints are included in studio recording, they should adhere to the PowerPoint best practices (below) and contain font large enough to be seen in the video.
  - ○ Camera, background, audio, and props should be set up for quality by AV, IA, IT, or Online.

PowerPoint/Keynote Best Practices

Gateway Seminary provides instructors with PowerPoint templates for quality design. Instructors may choose to use these templates or adhere to the below best practices.
- Slides should have limited text and bullet points to highlight key words or phrases instead or provide verbatim the professor's explanation.
- Slides should contain high quality images that are meant to highlight the key concepts being taught. Pixelated or unrelated images can distract from learning.
- Slides should contain limited color palette that will not distract from learning and be easy to watch within video. High contrast colors may be preferable for stage presentations, but are not for video.
- Slides should contain text at a font size that is readable for viewing on the video player.
- Slides should limit use of animation that might distract from learning. Fades are recommended for animation while flying objects and pulsating might be more distracting unless used sparingly for a specific purpose.
- Slides should be 16:9 instead of 4:3 ratio so that the slide takes up the whole width of the video.