



Butte College Distance Learning Committee

Revised May 26, 2009

Course Diagnostic Standards (CDS) for Online and Hybrid Courses

Definitions

Fully Online Course

A course in which 100% of the in-class seat time is replaced by work within the online course site.

Hybrid Course

A Hybrid course for instructional purposes is defined as any course that replaces anything less than 100% regular face-to-face seat time with distance learning. The distance learning portion of the hybrid course must provide for "regular effective contact" as defined by the Academic Senate. The hybrid course requires separate approval of both the Curriculum Committee and the Distance Learning Committee. (Definition adopted by the Distance Learning Committee May 12, 2008.)

Telecourses and Other Distance Courses

Any non-Internet course in which 100% of the regular in-class seat time is replaced by distance delivery. Some of the requirements that follow may not apply to such courses. Consult the Distance Learning Committee for additional details.

The following checklist is intended to provide examples of how each Category item might be implemented. It is not expected that a course will contain all of these items.

Category 1 - Accessibility

Provides instructor, department and program contact information

- Contact information for the instructor
- Contact information for academic department or advisor
- Faculty member introductory information

Provides access to Plug-ins or other applications supporting course content

- Link(s) to specific software downloads (or TMI-provided software download page)

Provides links to campus resources, including Blackboard support

- Link(s) to Bookstore to order textbooks or other instructional materials
- Link(s) to Butte College Student Support, including email and phone contacts

Complies with Section 508 (Priority 1)

- Images are optimized for rapid display and include alternative text
- Universal accessibility concerns are addressed throughout the course, including transcripts of any non-text objects
- Alternative formats of materials provided, when possible (e.g. print packet of reading materials, CD of audio used in course, etc.)

- Use of color adds interest but does not disadvantage those with color blindness

Category 2 - Communication

Use of a variety of media (graphics, audio, video, etc.) to communicate course materials

- Graphics/images/photos
- Audio clips
- Video clips
- PowerPoint presentations
- Flash animations
- Tutorials with screen captures and voice over
- CD-Rom or DVD supplemental materials
- Other learning objects, simulations or interactivities

Use of standard online communication tools (e-mail, bulletin board, chat, etc.)

- Email
- Discussion boards
- Synchronous “chats”
- Instant messaging
- Group discussions, when appropriate for group activities

Evidence of provision for “regular effective student contact”

Regular Effective Contact (definition)

Procedure adopted March 25, 2008 by the Butte College Distance Learning Committee

As per Title V, section 55211(a), all distance learning courses, whether hybrid, fully online, or telecourse, will include “regular effective contact” which Butte College defines as follows:

1. Initiated interaction—

Instructors will regularly initiate interaction with students to determine whether they are accessing, comprehending, and participating in course activities.

2. Frequency—

(a) Since distance learning courses are considered the electronic equivalent of face-to-face courses, the frequency of the contact will be at least the same as would occur in a comparable face-to-face course.

(b) At a minimum, the number of instructor contact hours per week normally available to face-to-face students will also be available, in synchronous or asynchronous mode, to distance learning students.

3. Expectations—

The instructor’s specific policies regarding the frequency and timeliness of instructor initiated contact and feedback will be part of the syllabus or other course documents made available to students at the start of the course.

4. Instructor absences—

(a) If an illness, family emergency, or other unexpected reason prevents the instructor from continuing regular contact, the instructor or department will inform students within the course when regular contact is likely to resume.

(b) In the event of prolonged absence, the instructor will make appropriate arrangements for class continuation.

5. Timely contact—

Online instructors are responsible to respond to students in a timely fashion.

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- Expectations of availability of and turnaround time for contact with instructor
- Frequent and substantial feedback from the instructor
- Students given an opportunity to introduce themselves
- Students are encouraged to respond to classmate introductions
- Instructor introduces himself/herself to model interaction
- Netiquette described and enforced
- Student participation is tracked and “wallflowers” drawn in to discussions
- Students are prompted by facilitator to expand on relevant points
- Students are required/encouraged to pose discussion questions and respond to others’ posts
- Peer review opportunities
- Clear guidelines for peer review, if applicable
- Facilitator may play “devil’s advocate”

Category 3 - Assessment

Student learning outcomes are clearly identified

- Course objectives are present
- Course completion requirements are present
- Expectations of students’ participation, honesty, etc.
- Timeline for student participation is clear
- Activities lead to learning desired concepts

Assignments and grading standards are clearly stated

- Clear directions are given for each task or assignment
- Samples of assignments illustrate instructor’s expectations
- Estimated amount of time needed for completing course requirements

- Criteria used to evaluate participation in online discussion groups
- Clear guidelines for peer review, if applicable

Use of self-tests or other feedback provided throughout the course

- Rich and rapid feedback – self-grading assignments released immediately
- Self-tests similar to the final evaluation instruments

Ongoing assessment of student knowledge, attitudes and/or skills

- Students are not assessed solely on tests/quizzes but are provided ample opportunity to demonstrate proficiency in different ways
- Reading assignments match learning objectives
- Activities lead to learning desired concepts
- Study questions
- Acceptable methods for completing assignments are identified (group work, open book, etc.)
- Reading and writing requirements are consistent with student abilities and course unit load

Category 4 - Navigation

Syllabus or orientation pages provide course navigation guidance

- Syllabus is easily located
- FAQ site on course information

Course is well organized and easy to navigate

- Navigation is clear, simple and user friendly
- Course schedule is summarized in one location
- Course content is organized in a logical format
- Organization and sequencing of the course content is logical and clear
- Instructional materials required are easily located
- Topics are clearly identified and subtopics are related to topics
- Links to other parts of the course or external sources are accurate and up-to-date

Category 5 - Design

Course is visually and functionally consistent

- Spelling and grammar are consistent and accurate
- Written material is concise, sentences and paragraphs are brief
- Language of written material is friendly and supportive
- Typeface (font) is easy to read
- Course pages are a comfortable length using white space
- Sufficient contrast between text and background makes information easy to read

- Numbers identify sequenced steps; bullets list items are not prioritized or sequential
- Appropriate images supporting course content add visual interest
- Pace of delivery of course content is managed

Use of standard icons or terminology to identify course tools.

Other Suggestions

- “Ice-breaker” activity to get acquainted
- Discussions center on questions without a single correct answer
- Personal interview reports
- Crossword or word search puzzles
- Matching and game-show-style trivia games
- Online scavenger hunt
- Annotated bibliography
- PowerPoint presentations as assignments
- Compare and contrast exercises
- Case studies
- Critique classmates’ assignments
- Collaborative exercises
- Portfolios (building one activity upon another) to share/peer review

(Adapted from “Instructional Design Tips for Online Learning,” developed by Joan Van Duzer of Humboldt State University.)

For more information: Contact the Distance Learning Committee of the Butte College Academic Senate (<http://www.butte.edu/departments/governance/committees/dlc/index.html>)

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