

# **University Quality Standards for Fully Online Courses**



**Guidelines and  
Best Practices**



## General Guidelines

- The course is accessible through Blackboard/Moodle.
- The course syllabus is posted in Blackboard/Moodle course site.



## Course Preservation

- All course materials, including source materials (e.g., PowerPoint slides, Word documents of syllabus or assignments, etc.), need to be stored in the Blackboard/Moodle course for preservation and future reteaching of the course.



## Content Delivery

- The topical outline for the course is organized in Blackboard/Moodle chronologically by class sessions, weeks, or modules/units.
- Instructors are encouraged to use UMass Library services including eReserves and video/audio streaming to ensure that content can be accessed by all students.
- Critical course content is provided asynchronously for students who have difficulties attending synchronous class meetings (through recordings of online sessions, instructor-created screen-captured videos or PowerPoint presentations etc.).
- Students are provided with transcripts for all instructor created video or audio recordings. These transcripts can be generated automatically through Echo and Zoom.
- All asynchronous content for students is stored in the LMS and can be accessed via the LMS.
- Documents and presentations should adhere to [accessibility standards](#) as much as possible.



## Engagement

- Students are provided with opportunities to interact with the instructor and their peers either during synchronous sessions and/or asynchronously through discussion forums or chats.
- Synchronous office hours are scheduled weekly. In addition, instructors may schedule appointments to meet with students individually.



## Assessment

- Instructors provide clear guidance for the academic integrity expectations for all assessments, assignments, and examinations that i consistent with the syllabus
- Assessments, assignments, and exams are flexibly designed to meet th needs of students who may experience disruption in learning because of COVID-19-related issues as well as for those with documented disabilities.



## Faculty-Student Communication

- A printable version of the course syllabus is posted on the Blackboard/Moodle site (i.e. Word, pdf).
- The course syllabus follows the Faculty Senate guidelines and includes:
  - **Course objectives.**
  - **Expectations and requirements** such as papers, lab reports or exams.
  - **Attendance policies.**
  - **Grading criteria** and the approximate weight of each course requirement in the final grade.
  - **Examination schedule** and any make up or rescheduling policies.
  - **Policies** on academic honesty.
  - **Office, phone and, mailbox numbers of instructor** (instructors should include preferred online contact information (i.e. instructor or course email or use of Blackboard/Moodle communication tools)).
- Synchronous class sessions (including final examinations) are scheduled according to the class meeting times posted in SPIRE.
- The instructor provides students with information on all technology tools and equipment required for the course.
- Provide clear expectations and norms regarding communication.

## Best Practices for Asynchronous Content Delivery

- It is preferable to use shorter video segments (approximately 10 – 15 minutes) for content delivery. This include video segments that provides broad overviews or introduction to content/concepts, review segments or “how to’s”.
- Content typically taught as lectures should be “chunked” or organized into shorter segments.
- Provide critical content through short lecture captures, PowerPoints with text or audio notes.
- Supplement course content with other media to enrich course content (for example library video and audio streaming)

## Best Practices for Synchronous Content Delivery

- Offer synchronous contact for further class discussion, instructor interaction (office hours), peer-to-peer interaction, and to increase engagement.
- Provide review sessions, just-in-time teaching, and to connect the dots for students who benefit from additional, synchronous contact.
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## Instructional Tools for

### Asynchronous Content Delivery

- **Echo360:** Universal and Classroom Capture to record lectures
- **VoiceThread:** Multimedia lecture recording
- **Zoom:** Lecture recording
- **Powerpoint:** Narrated presentations
- **Library Reserves:** Text, audio, and video content
- **Library Streaming:** Video and audio

## Instructional Tools for

### Synchronous Content Delivery

- **Echo360:** Live Streaming
- **Zoom:** Live Streaming

## Best Practices for Asynchronous Engagement

- Encourage student participation through survey or forms for asynchronous engagement.
- Provide multiple venues for student discussions.
- Consider additional tools available through Moodle/Blackboard to increase in individual engagement with content.
- Provide expanded opportunities for student interaction with peers and with course material (for example, include student generated FAQ).
- Consider including options for peer review or team evaluations of student assignments.



## Best Practices for Synchronous Engagement

- Encourage student participation through audience response systems (polling options) during synchronous sessions
- Offer synchronous contact for further class discussion, instructor interaction (office hours), peer-to-peer interaction, and to increase engagement.

## Instructional Tools for Asynchronous Engagement

- **Moodle/Blackboard:** Discussion forums and questionnaires
- **VoiceThread:** Multimedia commenting
- **CATME:** Team building and peer evaluation
- **Apps at UMass:** Document sharing and peer editing
- **Perusall:** Peer annotation of documents

## Instructional Tools for Synchronous Engagement

- **Echo360:** Live streaming
- **Zoom:** Live streaming, breakout rooms, and synchronous polling
- **iClicker Cloud/REEF:** synchronous polling

## Best Practices for Faculty-Student Communication

- Establish out of class opportunities for faculty student contact including synchronous office hours and asynchronous communications.
- Establish regular and consistent routines for communicating with students and share the expectations with your students (individually and as a group).
- Monitor student participation and use active alert to reach out to students who are not engaged in course activities.
- Establish “social presence” as a person and instructor who is available to support students in their learning.
- Include an introductory activity that provides an overview of the course norms and expectations.
- Include a syllabus knowledge quiz or other activity to ensure students understand the course expectations.



## Instructional Tools for Asynchronous

### Faculty-Student Communications

- **Moodle/Blackboard:** Discussion forums, Class Announcements, Chat-based office hours
- **Emails**
- **VoiceThread:** Multimedia commenting

## Instructional Tools for Synchronous

### Faculty-Student Communications

- **Zoom:** Video-conferencing and chat
- **Phone calls and Video calls**
- **Apps@UMass:** Google Hangouts, Google Meet

## Best Practices for Asynchronous Engagement

- Include multiple assessment opportunities (both formative and summative) as an alternative to “high stakes” testing practices.
- Provide practice and/or expanded support for all summative assessments.
- Clear and specific guidelines are provided for how students should complete assignments, exams and assessments including due dates, file formats, and Blackboard/Moodle submission tools.
- Provide re-recorded review sessions and/or review notes.
- Offer practice exams and quizzes.
- Post student resource links for the Writing Center, Supplemental Instruction and Student Success.
- Provide students with support and assistance during high stakes assessments (finals, exams).
- Provide regular and frequent feedback on student learning. This can include both feedback given to the class as a whole and feedback given to individual students
- Consider assessment design options that support academic integrity (for example the inclusion of academic honesty statements, randomization of test items, alternative test forms, time limits for exams and the use of “open book/resource” assessments as appropriate).
- Provide students with information on how assignments, assessments, and exams will be graded and evaluated.
- Review disability accommodation statements to design assessments more flexibly to meet student needs.
- The use of curves in grading is discouraged.



## Instructional Tools for Asynchronous Assessment

- **Moodle/Blackboard:** Quizzes, Assignments, Rubrics, Checklists, grading, Quick-mail messaging
- **Zoom:** Proctoring
- **Proctoring Software**
- **VoiceThread: Comment moderation**



## Instructional Tools for Synchronous Assessments

- **Moodle/Blackbaord:** Feedback functions in LMS activities such as quizzes, assignments, and gradebook, discussion forums created as journals for faculty communication with individual students, Rubrics (files or within LMS), User overrides in activities to create accessible activities for students with disability accommodations.



## Best Practices for Asynchronous TAs/UTAs

- Maintain communication with and support for teaching assistants.
- Consider the use of rubrics or checklists for assignment grading and evaluation.
- Provide synchronous and asynchronous opportunities for TA led discussions.
- Provide TA's and UTAs with guidance on setting discussion section expectations.



## Best Practices for Synchronous TAs/UTAs

- Provide TA's and UTAs with guidance on setting discussion section expectations.

## Instructional Tools for Asynchronous TAs/UTAs

- TAs may access self-paced TA course facilitator training within the LMS.

## Instructional Tools for Synchronous TAs/UTAs

- **Zoom:** Breakout rooms

## Best Practices for

### Asynchronous Discussion Sections

- Include opportunities for students to work together in text and non-text based venues.

## Best Practices for

### Asynchronous TAs/UTAs

- Provide students with opportunities to communicate with each other and with their UTA and/or TAs.



## Instructional Tools for

### Asynchronous Discussion Sections

- **Moodle/Blackboard:** Group assignments, discussion forums, Google Apps collaboration tools
- **Apps@UMass: Google apps for collaboration**

## Instructional Tools for

### Synchronous Discussion Sections

- **Zoom:** Breakout rooms
- **Apps@UMass:** Google apps collaboration