

Teaching Online at Queens College

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A variety of courses offered at Queens College feature teaching and learning activities that take place online. This document defines three different categories for teaching online at Queens, and offers some recommendations for courses with online components on the following topics: departmental clearance, notification to students via registration system and via syllabus, identity of participants, and teaching evaluations. Using Internet-based technologies for teaching and learning activities can be a rewarding experience for both students and instructors. (Throughout the document, *target students* refers to the set of students the department would expect to register for the course.)

Definitions

Courses with online components can be categorized as follows:

- **Online.** More than 80% of scheduled class meetings are replaced with online activities or virtual meetings.
- **Hybrid (Blended).** Between 20% and 80% of scheduled class meetings are replaced with online activities or virtual meetings.
- **Web-Enhanced.** No scheduled class meetings are replaced, but some of the course content and assignments, as well as required or optional activities, are online.

Recommendations

1. Offering a course as online or hybrid should be cleared by the department chair or department curriculum committee, and its categorization as online or hybrid should be supplied to the Registrar (see 2); departmental clearance should be guided by considering criteria such as the following:
 - a. Will the target students benefit from the flexibility that online instruction brings? (Online instruction can be beneficial to non-traditional students, including those who work full-time or have family responsibilities.)
 - b. Are the target students online learning “ready”? (Variables that affect online learning readiness include: efficiency with time management, skill in written communication, familiarity with computers and online technologies.)
 - c. Is the course adequate for online delivery? (Some courses might not lend themselves to an online format, because the content is not easily digitizable or because sustained face-to-face student-instructor interaction is crucial. Also to consider is the expected enrollment for a course: large enrollments could be detrimental to an online format. Importantly, any course previously taught as face-to-face will need adaptation for online delivery, to better exploit the unique resources offered by the Internet.)
 - d. Does the instructor have sufficient training in and experience with teaching online? (Expertise in a range of hardware and software platforms is important for instructors teaching online, as is an awareness that online courses require a higher level of transparency regarding how student performance will be evaluated.)
 - e. Will the online teaching burden on the instructor, particularly the first time the course is offered, offset other aspects of that person’s teaching, research, and service responsibilities? (Teaching online consumes real instructional time, even with a course that has already been extensively developed, time for: interacting with students, updating and grading assignments, updating and creating course material.)

2. The registration system should indicate that the course has an online component (e.g., by categorizing courses with online components using the three-way distinction above).
3. The syllabus should state the nature of the online component for a course, by addressing items such as the following:
 - a. the proportion of class meetings that will be replaced with online activities;
 - b. the proportion of required and optional work that will be completed or submitted electronically;
 - c. the types of technology students will need for successful participation (e.g., required or recommended accounts, hardware, software, bandwidth) and whether alternatives will be available for students without access to such technology (e.g., laboratory spaces).
 - d. the level of proficiency students will be expected to have in the use of the various technologies used to access course content, participate in online activities, and complete or submit online tasks (e.g., required or recommended skills in specific hardware or software, required or recommended skills in online resources for research).
 - e. the communications policy for the course, including information on virtual office hours, email response time, etc., as well as the course policy regarding down systems;
 - f. information on when and where to go for help to resolve technical difficulties, including the frequency and level of technical support the instructor (and/or fellow students) will be able to provide, and the availability of alternative sources of support (e.g., Help Desk staff).
4. The identity of parties involved (students and instructor) should be confirmed. This is particularly important in the case of courses taught entirely online, with no face-to-face sessions.
5. The department should plan procedures for any contractual observations and evaluations of the course, particularly in the case of fully online or hybrid courses.
 - a. Students must evaluate the course and instructor using the existing mechanism for course/faculty evaluations.
 - b. Teaching observations might incorporate an evaluation of the online component of the course.

For More Information

Instructors and department chairs are advised to contact the Center for Teaching and Learning (<http://qcpages.qc.cuny.edu/ctl/>) and/or the Educational Technology Laboratory (<http://qcpages.qc.cuny.edu/edtech/>) for more information and training on various aspects of teaching online.

About this Document

These recommendations were drafted during the fall 2008 semester by the Queens College Academic Senate's Special Committee on Technology and the Library (<http://senate.qc.cuny.edu/TechLib/>), in consultation with several members of the Queens College faculty and staff.

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