DISTANCE EDUCATION POLICIES

Los Medanos College

Developed by the Distance Education Committee
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INTRODUCTION

There are three major documents supporting online instruction at Los Medanos College.

They are:

6. *Distance Education policies and procedures* – The parameters under which online instruction operates at LMC.
7. *Distance Education best practices* – Practical guidance in instructional design and pedagogy for your online course.
8. *Blackboard handbook* – Step by step instructions for the most of the tasks you’ll undertake with Blackboard, the course management system (CMS) currently being used by LMC.

This is the initial draft of the Distance Education Policies manual. If there are any additions, deletions, or changes you think should be made, please let us know!

This document is based in part on the mission statement adopted by the Distance education Committee in January, 2006:

The Los Medanos College Distance Education Committee provides leadership in the planning and delivery of the college’s distance education program. The Distance Education Committee supports and reinforces the mission that promotes learner success through innovative, interactive teaching, learning and technology. The Distance Education Committee is dedicated to provide learning opportunities in both traditional and non-traditional environments within LMC’s diverse community.
I. FACULTY

1. Course Management System (CMS) training requirements

To use the college’s course management system (currently Blackboard) full and part time faculty must first complete a training session in its use. New faculty may complete this training during the first part of the semester.

The training will consist of two parts:
1) Use the CMS as it functions here at LMC, include adding and removing students from classrooms and policies underlying these actions.
2) Fundamental classroom design, again as it relates to the CMS here at LMC. This will include the use of images and file types, management of announcements, and other basic considerations.

2. Online instruction qualifications

Instructors of partially online (hybrid) or completely online courses that use the college course management system must also:
1) Complete a course, flex session or other instruction in the design, pedagogy, and teaching of an online course, such as those offered by @ONE, Cerro Coso Community College, and California State University East Bay. The objective of the instruction is to provide prospective online instructors with best practices to be used in the design and teaching of an online course.
2) Have taken an online class (can be accomplished in conjunction with #2.1)

3. Other professional duties

An online instructor is required to fulfill his/her college responsibilities in the same manner and to the same degree as if the instructor were teaching face-to-face sections. Such engagement in the college community may include, but is not limited to:
1) College and District committees
2) College events
3) Community events
4) Extracurricular programs
5) Continuing training in online instruction
6) Management called meetings
7) Course approval process
8) Professional associations
4. **Scheduling**

Academic departments may have individual guidelines regarding the instructional load, type, or sequence a member of that department may teach online. For example, a department may require that if a part time instructor is teaching more than one course in a semester, one of these be a face to face class.

The college may also have guidelines concerning the online instructional load a faculty member teaches in a semester.

Also, as a part of the collective bargaining agreement, faculty may have online office hours in proportion to their online load (e.g. 40% online, 2 hours a week of online office hours).
II. **CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT**

1. **Information that may be available before the first day of class**

   Information that may be available before the first day of instruction:
   
   1) Those parts of the course syllabus explaining the requirements of the course, policies, grading and any other material that assists students in understand what will be expected of them in this course. Actual assignments **can not** be available until the first day of class.
   2) Textbook information
   3) Accessibility information specific to that online environment
   4) Any special instructions (e.g. special software, broadband connection that will be needed)

2. **Information that must be available on the first day of class**

   Information that must be available on the first day of instruction:
   
   1) A complete syllabus
   2) That students are subject to being dropped if they don’t contact the instructor within 72 hours of the start of the course. This does not require a student to be dropped at that point.

3. **Waiting lists**

   There will be no waiting lists for completely online courses. This does not prevent the instructor from adding students if he/she wishes.

4. **Classroom availability**

   The CMS System Administrator will create all classrooms, setting them to unavailable at the time of their creation. The instructor of record will:

   1) Be responsible for making their classrooms available and unavailable to students.
   2) While some information should be available before the start of the course (parts of the syllabus, textbook, special instructions), actual assignments and other material that will be a part of the course grade can not be available before the first day of instruction.
   3) The complete classroom should be available to students no later than the morning of the first day of instruction for that course.
   4) Classrooms should be made unavailable no later than the end of the second week of instruction of the subsequent semester (including summer) unless there is a specific need for a classroom to remain available.

5. **Responding to email**

   Instructors of online courses should respond to email within one business day.