

Online Instructor Certification

Background:

As stated in the cover letter to the Cuyamaca College Recommendation for Standards of Good Practice, “Teaching an online course for the first time can be a daunting proposition, especially since achieving academic quality is not simply a matter of transferring a replica of what you do in classroom to the online environment. Online learning requires students to become more active learners; so most instructors need to learn to teach somewhat differently...”

In addition, the Cuyamaca College Recommendation for Standards of Good Practice includes a discussion of recommended instructor competencies and preparations. The recommended preparations included:

- Taking an online class.
- Taking the Cuyamaca College class: “Teaching an Online Course.”
- Participating in workshops relating to Distance Learning.
- Attending Blackboard or other course management system training.
- Including online components in a regular class in order to gain online teaching experience.
- Maintaining an individual faculty and a course web page.
- Using multi-media and other pedagogy to address a variety of learning styles and promote student success.
- Consulting with Teaching and Learning Center personnel regarding instructional design.
- Consulting with Teaching and Learning Center personnel regarding webpage development.
- Consulting with other online instructors.

Issue:

Evaluation and comparison of online course offerings over the past few semesters has highlighted a wide disparity in both quality and rigor. Some classes are excellent with frequent instructor presence and interaction in the course. Others lack instructor presence completely and resemble correspondence courses.

The current “recommended instructor competencies and preparations” aren’t ensuring that quality education is being maintained in our online courses.

Recommendation:

The Online Teaching and Learning Committee strongly recommends that instructors assigned to teach fully online classes, including to a lesser degree, those teaching in blended classes be required to completed the following training:

Phase 1: Before an instructor is assigned to teach an online class for the first time they must complete training in the following areas three areas:

- Online teaching and pedagogy
- Course management system
- Course material accessibility

Examples of satisfactory training include completion of one of the following:

- San Diego State University's Educational Technology or similar degree program
- Cuyamaca College offered courses
 - ED214 (Online teaching and pedagogy course)
 - Teaching with Blackboard online course (offered via LRC)
 - ED216 (accessibility course under development)
- Completion of the California Community College @One Online Teaching Certification (<http://www.cccone.org/certification/index.php>). The @One certification includes all three elements considered essential preparation for teaching online.
- Completion of a similar online instructor certification program at another institution

Phase 2: After an instructor has started teaching an online course, it is strongly recommended that they be required to complete the following:

- Training in multimedia products pertinent to their proposed course material delivery.
- Mentoring from an experienced online instructor for at least the first semester and longer if deemed appropriate.
- Subscribe to the Cuyamaca College Online Blog
- Continuing professional development in online teaching (minimum of 5 hours/year)

Phase 2 training can be accomplished through a variety of means including but not limited to:

- Presenting or participating in online learning multimedia courses and workshops offered during Cuyamaca College Flex Week.
- Completion of California Community College @One multimedia courses

- Participation in conferences, webinars, listservs, forums or workshops related to online teaching.
- Mentoring new online instructors.

Continuing Evaluation

A critical component of maintaining the quality of online education is continued evaluation. This doesn't mean a new evaluation system needs to be developed; it simply means that online classes should be evaluated as part of the normal instructor evaluation process. Online and traditional instruction are dissimilar, they require different skill sets for class preparation and delivery. If an instructor teaches both online and in the classroom, it is most strongly recommended that both venues be evaluated in a comprehensive instructional evaluation.

DRAFT