

BCCC Distance Learning Guide

I. Overview

A. Introduction

This guide constitutes a working document that serves as a resource for distance learning at Beaufort County Community College. It is presented as a dynamic document, which will be evaluated and reviewed annually for necessary revisions.

Because of the large geographic area served by Beaufort County Community College and the transportation barriers caused by distance and waterways, distance learning is a popular format to serve many students in our service area.

Videoconferencing and asynchronous delivery are educational options that meet the needs of many working adults who are unable to attend regularly scheduled courses.

Therefore, it is incumbent on Beaufort County Community College to offer a comprehensive program of distance learning courses with the goal of providing certificate, diploma and degree options in targeted curricula.

Distance Learning is coordinated by the Director of Learning Resources Center/Distance Learning in accordance with operating procedures in place. Support for distance learning instructors and students is provided by the LRC/DL staff, IT staff, through the regular administrative chain of Lead Instructor, Division Chair, and Dean of Instruction.

B. Mission

The purpose of distance learning is to provide students with a comprehensive array of quality, affordable, and accessible courses delivered synchronously and asynchronously. Beaufort County Community College must continue to respond to the needs of the students and faculty to develop quality and competitive distance education programs to ensure that 21st Century students acquire the skills they need.

Goals include:

- Providing quality curriculum and course materials
- Developing flexible educational opportunities for student population
- Promoting the development of instructional, technical support, and administrative procedures relating to distance learning
- Providing faculty development opportunities
- Increasing student access and retention
- Strengthen partnerships with other institutions, initiatives, and consortia involved with distance learning

C. Definition

Distance learning at the College includes the North Carolina Information Highway (NCIH), web-based courses (online, web-enhanced, and hybrid), and online courses in Continuing Education. Beaufort County Community College provides courses for people who want to continue their education, but who cannot attend classes on a traditional schedule. The admissions requirements, placement scores, methods of evaluations and other conditions of eligibility are consistent with the state

requirements for curriculum courses. These courses are delivered via appropriate technology to maximize accessibility. Descriptions of distance learning methods at Beaufort County Community College include:

Online Courses - Online courses and programs are distributed through the Internet, allowing for flexibility in time and/or place. Blackboard is the course management software currently in use.

Hybrid - The primary delivery is on-line with a requirement that the students also meet in traditional face-to-face sessions as determined appropriate by the college.

Web-enhanced - Instructors and students meet face-to-face. Blackboard may be used for posting assignments, grades and quizzes. Internet access may be required.

Video Conferencing - North Carolina Information Highway (NCIH) –Interactive television courses allow for distribution of live lectures through video conferencing equipment. This equipment allows course instruction to occur through two-way audio and video interaction at connected sites within the college's service area.

Beaufort College Academy (BCA) - The Beaufort College Academy is a unique opportunity for area high school students to earn a significant amount of college credit, tuition free, through Beaufort County Community College's video conferencing.

Education to Go– These are highly effective ed2go online courses on just about every topic imaginable - from Creating Web Pages to Accounting Fundamentals.

II. Support Services

A. Learning Resources for Distance Learning

Beaufort County Community College Learning Resources Center has several research options available to distance learning students. In addition to traditional library services, several research and informational resources are online. The following services support distance learning at BCCC: North Carolina Libraries in Virtual Education (NCLIVE – www.nclive.org) offers students online access to a diverse collection of electronic resources. NC LIVE is free of charge to students and faculty. Beaufort County Community College students have remote access to NCLIVE with a password.

Community College Libraries in North Carolina (CCLINC – www.ncces.nc.cc.us) includes 40 community colleges in North Carolina. CCLINC is a shared catalog with more than a million learning resources, making this library cooperative third in size among the libraries of publicly funded institutions of higher education in North Carolina.

The LRC web site (www.beaufort.cc.nc.us/library/library.htm) provides detailed information about the campus and the Learning Resources Center.

Additional instructional support services maintained by the LRC include:

- Research Data Bases
- Curriculum Pathways
- Serials Holdings list
- CIRCANC east
- BCCC Resources Guide
- Quick References
- Laptop for Learners

- Course- specific applications such as keyboarding, nursing management and developmental math
- *How Do I? – a Guide to Resources for Distance Learning Students*
(Blackboard, email, NetStorage)

B. Student Services for Distance Learning Students

Student Services for distance learning students are provided by a variety of methods. These students have the opportunity to partake of any and all student services that are available on campus. The college website contains the current college catalog, the current schedule of class offerings, and a downloadable application with instructions for completing the admissions process. All Student Services components (counseling, registration, financial aid are listed, linked on the College website). After students have enrolled, they are provided with an email account, a NetStorage account (allows students to save and retrieve files on and off campus) and a Blackboard login if applicable. Students can apply for admissions online. However, registration and transcript information is not available via the Internet at this time. The Academic Support Center uses eighteen student workstations and two instructor computers to assist students with a wide range of educational needs, a diverse selection of software, and virtually unlimited resources on the Internet.

C. Technical Support

Beaufort County Community College uses technology to enhance student learning in many ways, including access to 950 computers located throughout 11 buildings. To support and maintain technology, the College uses Network Services whose mission is to enhance network hardware/software to make the network robust in the delivery of services to campus classrooms and desktops. Support for the instructional and

administrative computing comes from the Office of Administrative Services, specifically Network Services and System Administrator Services.

Most classrooms are wired for network and Internet access and the majority of classrooms on campus have computers for instructional use including thirteen SmartBoard Sympodiums and 44 data projectors. The College operates two video conferencing rooms that broadcast to high schools in our service area.

A web-based PC support ticketing system is in place to provide help desk services for students, faculty and staff. The College is in the process of enabling wireless access campus-wide. Specialized software is made available in designated classrooms in accordance with specific course requirements and is upgraded as needed.

III. Procedures

A. Training for Students

The LRC/DL staff provides scheduled orientations and an online orientation for new distance learning students to familiarize them with library resources, Blackboard, email, and NetStorage. Additionally, these students are provided ongoing technical assistance through workshops and the help desk for e-learning. All new online students are required to take an assessment that tests computer skills on downloading and opening a file, inserting text to a file, saving a file to a directory or floppy disk, sending email, and attaching a file to that email. If students are not skilled in these areas, advisors recommend that they take an introductory computer course. An interactive assessment for determining if a student possesses the attributes suitable for

online learning is also available on the Beaufort County Community College distance learning website.

Students have access to technology resources in the media training center (lower level, building 5), which houses a variety of equipment and software, including Adobe Photoshop Professional, Microsoft Office Suite, Macromedia Dreamweaver, Macromedia Flash, Macromedia Studio, and Roxio Easy CD Creator. The Audio Visual area provides services such as media booking, computers for listening and editing, off-satellite videotaping, and teleconference down linking to meet content and program needs within the institution. Due to the fact that many of our distance learning students come to campus for hybrid or seated courses, they have access to all resources.

B. Training for Faculty

To ensure that e-learning remains relevant and substantive, adequate space and high quality training for instructors is essential. Both the student and the instructor benefit when instructional technology is employed, as long as training has been integrated into the pedagogical process. The development and utilization of technological devices and concepts such Web 2.0, PDAs and RSS feeds illustrates the conceptual and technical roots of media technology and its effect on education and society.

Training takes place on campus and through various workshops in various formats including face to face and via web tutorials. The media center provides a flexible teaching and learning environment, and incorporates a wide range of technologies. Technical and physical facilities that support electronically offered

programs accommodate emerging technologies. Professional development and training goals:

- To ensure that instructors are qualified to teach effectively in a web-base environment
- To introduce instructors to innovative instructional design techniques
- To provide a technology training center with up- to-date equipment and reliable, fast Internet connectivity

In order to access Blackboard, instructors are required to complete a training session with the Blackboard Administrator. This session introduces the instructor to the basics of getting started toward creating a course in Blackboard.

Examples of topics covered:

- orientation
- posting announcements
- attaching files
- adding documents
- discussion board
- grade book
- test manager
- Building Blocks (NCLOR, SafeAssign, Wimba Pronto, etc)

How Do I? A Guide to Distance Learning Resources for Instructors provides faculty with a concise, easy to navigate source for distance learning information. It covers a wide

range of topics and serves as a quick reference for a myriad of questions and is located at <http://www.beaufortccc.edu>.

Instructors teaching on the NCIH, a dedicated statewide network providing data and videoconferencing services, are required to enroll in *Teaching through video conferencing: The North Carolina Information Highway* available through NC-Net. This course has been designed to assist the instructor who uses the video conferencing technologies available in North Carolina and captures the ‘best practices’ from veteran faculty who have been using video technology for over 10 years. It is considered to be a ‘basic course’ for the novice instructor.

C. Criteria for Online Course Development

All synchronous and asynchronous courses are approved through a series of steps. The Lead Instructor, Division Chair, the Dean of Instruction, and the Director of the LRC/DL approve distance learning course development. The minimum criteria for existing online courses and for new online course development and delivery include: faculty participation in the development-training program upon approval of the course submission form (see Appendix B), inclusion of the course and course content in the college’s chosen template, adherence to all curriculum standards of the same course delivered in a “traditional”/non-distance learning format, and the development of a course syllabus.

To determine what courses are taught online the following items are considered:

- Course suitability
- faculty workload
- demand from students

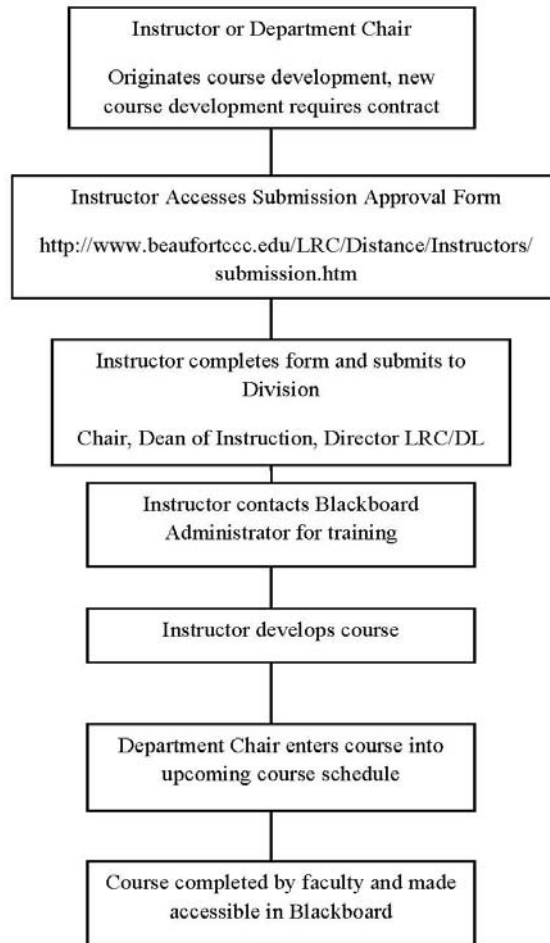
- appropriate technologies employed for the learning outcomes
- course that is a good fit with learner characteristics of the College
- VLC statewide initiative to offer online courses

D. Course Development Procedures

In order to preserve the existing standards of educational excellence guiding the pedagogical process at BCCC, curriculum faculty desiring to teach online should be computer literate, an experienced Internet user, committed to teaching at a distance and open to new ideas, take an online course such as *Principles and Techniques of Online Instruction* (PTOI), and courses offered through NC-NET, have a thorough knowledge of Windows, have a computer with Internet access and an e-mail account. Faculty new to online course development will be asked to participate in appropriate training the semester prior to course implementation, and adhere to the Commissions on Institutions of Higher Learning *Best Practices*. All faculty wishing to teach a new online course should access and review the online forms and detailed information on the [distance learning website](#). The *How Do I? Guide for Faculty* defines and fully explains distance learning procedures and policies. The course checklist, syllabus checklist, and training tutorials are available on this site.

Faculty agreeing to develop new courses for online delivery may be required to sign a contract outlining the terms of the course development, which addresses course ownership and intellectual property rights. Since the online course will be developed through reassigned time, the college will retain ownership rights. Faculty developing courses for online delivery will adhere to all copyright guidelines. The course development process is described in the flowchart.

Flow Chart Outlining Course Development Process



BCCC faculty assume full responsibility for the oversight and quality of distance education courses; this includes full responsibility for the selection and design of course content, course activities, and course assessments; the selection and use of appropriate course technologies; the facilitation of course activities and course interactions; the evaluation of course assignments and tests; etc. Online faculty share the same responsibilities, authority, academic freedom, and rights as faculty teaching face to face. Lead instructors and Division Chairs oversee the courses and course evaluations. Based on recommendations from the higher education community, BCCC uses *Guidelines for Quality Review of Online Courses* and *Best Practices for Electronically Offered Programs* as sample guidelines for the quality review process.

Guidelines for Quality Review of Online Courses (adopted from EDUCAUSE):

Curriculum design deals with the content, which dictates the learning outcomes for an educational program. In turn, the specified learning outcomes are incorporated into courses in the program. This incorporation of learning outcomes into courses based on the chosen content serves as the foundation for quality because it addresses the interests and needs of learners.

Instructional design deals with the connection among learning outcomes, course activities, teaching strategies, and the use of media and technology.

Web design is important because learners interact with content, the instructor, and other learners through the interface of the course Web site. Web design deals with usability issues, especially those that affect learning. Thus Web design and instructional design must mesh in the development of an online course.

Teaching and facilitation is the art of carrying out the curriculum and instructional design plan. It encompasses the instructor's knowledge and skill in guiding learning and occupies the forefront of quality issues because it directly impacts learning experiences. In other words, quality issues in teaching and facilitation determine how well an instructor helps learners learn.

Learning experience constitutes another dimension of quality, as learners are the ultimate beneficiaries of the desired learning outcomes. Learning experiences are closely tied to teaching and facilitation, but other factors come into play: learner prerequisite knowledge, learning styles and preferences, and the dynamics of a learning community. Quality courses aim to foster a positive learning experience. Again, the interim survey and final course evaluation assess learning experience.

Course presentation is the final component of the quality framework, covering presentation of the course materials in a professional manner. Specifically, course presentation addresses functionality, consistency (for example, in font size and layout), grammar, and look and feel of the course.

Best Practices for Electronically Offered Programs (adopted from Commission on Institutions of Higher Education):

BCCC makes every attempt to adhere to *Best Practices* developed by the eight regional accrediting commissions in response to the development of technologically delivered instruction offered at a distance. These practices explain well-established and common components of instructional quality that apply to distance learning. The five areas are:

1. Institutional Context and Commitment

Electronically offered programs both support and extend the roles of educational institutions. Increasingly they are integral to academic organizations, with growing implications for institutional infrastructure.

2. Curriculum and Instruction

Methods change, but standards of quality endure. The important issues are not technical but curriculum driven and pedagogical. Decisions about such matters are made by qualified professionals and focus on learning outcomes for an increasingly diverse population.

3. Faculty Support

Faculty roles are becoming increasingly diverse and reorganized. For example, the same person may not perform both the tasks of course development and direct instruction to the students. Regardless of who performs these tasks, important issues (workload, compensation, technical design, support services) are involved.

4. Student Support

Colleges have learned that the twenty-first century student is different, both demographically and geographically, from students of previous generations. These differences affect everything from admissions policy to library services. Reaching and teaching these students, and serving them appropriately, are major challenges to today's institutions.

5. Evaluation and Assessment

Assessment and evaluation take on added importance as new technologies emerge. For example, in asynchronous programs the element of seat time is essentially removed. For this reason the institution conducts sustained, evidence-based and participatory inquiry as to whether distance learning programs are achieving the objectives. The results be used to guide curriculum design, delivery, and pedagogy and may affect future policy and budgeting decisions.

E. Evaluations/Needs Assessment

The purpose of evaluation is for the improvement of the teaching and learning processes. The purpose of conducting specific course/student evaluations for e-learning classes is to enable the faculty and the entire college to improve the classes and services offered to distance learning students. All distance learning courses are evaluated annually by the students. The BCCC Distance Learning Workgroup suggests the implementation of a voluntary peer and independent review of online courses modeled after the University of Maryland's Quality Matters rubric to further ensure the quality of distance learning.

Additionally, overall statistics are produced term by term for comparison purposes with seated courses. Among the statistics compiled are retention rates, grade distributions, and total numbers enrolled by delivery medium. Periodic and ongoing needs assessments are integrated into distance learning courses to gain information from the stakeholders. This information is used to reveal essential data for improving instruction.

The purpose of the planning process is to report and document program and service effectiveness using demographics, documents, and evaluation results to bring about progress and change.



Blackboard Request Form
Online, Web-enhanced, Hybrid

*Course proposals must be approved by Division Chairperson in advance of BCCC course schedule deadline. All **NEW** Blackboard instructors must meet with the Director of LRC and the Blackboard Administrator prior to publication of online or web-enhanced courses.*

Please fill out completely.

Date: _____

Instructor: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____ Fulltime _____ Part-Time _____

Department: _____

Course name : _____ Section(s): _____

Course Abbreviation & Number: _____ Semester to be taught: _____

Have you taught using Blackboard before? Yes _____ No _____

Orientation : Online _____ On Campus _____ Date & Time: _____

If yes, will you need assistance with your Blackboard orientation? Yes _____ No _____

Type of Course Submission

Online course: _____ Web-Enhanced: _____ Hybrid: _____ Telecourse/Teleweb: _____

New course _____ or Recopied Course _____ FROM: Fall _____ Spring _____ Summer _____

(Check one) Self Developed _____ VLC _____ Course Cartridge _____

Completed Class Syllabus Review Checklist _____

Instructor's signature: _____ Date _____

Division Chair signature: _____ Date _____

Director of LRC/
Distance Learning _____ Date _____

LRC Use Only

Course copied from: _____ Course# _____

Date published to Blackboard: _____ Eligible for Incentive Fee _____ Yes _____ No _____

Eligible for Online Course Dev. Fee: _____ Yes _____ No _____