

Lehman Online Learning:

A Quick Guide for Online Instructors

Based on the CUNY Online Baccalaureate guide with the same title.

Course Organization and Design

Clarity and consistency are the guiding principles for online course design. While Lehman Online Learning programs do not mandate a uniform look and function in course site presentation, students should expect minimal navigation adjustments as they move from one class and course site to the next.

Appearance

- The course banner can add welcome and visual appeal to the course site; changing the banner during the semester enhances the sense of a human presence.
- Assignments, instructions, and deadlines should be presented in an easily accessed and predictable format as the course moves from unit to unit.

Course Site Sections

- The **Announcements** page should be frequently updated and used to communicate important information.
- Every class should have a well-organized **Course Information** area where students can easily locate statements of course objectives; the syllabus; key information about class policies, procedures, technical requirements, and resources; and student evaluation criteria.
- A clear, consistent calendar of tasks helps students manage their time and organize their work routines. Consistent due dates for weekly assignments facilitate good study skills.
 - The course instructor determines when each week in the course schedule begins and ends.
 - Individual course variation in the beginning and ending dates for weeks is encouraged.

Site Navigation

- Some instructors use an interactive syllabus which integrates all of the work for the semester, grouped into units or weeks, into one document.
- Every effort should be made to ensure that everything on the site is compatible with all major browsers, and that documents are available in widely accessible formats, such as rft, pdf, or html.
- Students should be given logical, clear pathways to follow as they navigate through the course site.
 - Organize course materials economically, grouping like documents into folders: web links, e-reserve reading, and uploaded files pertaining to one subject.

- Links for easy downloading and/or printing of documents posted throughout the course site should be available.
- A minimum number of “mouse clicks” for navigation and redundancy in locating items is highly recommended.
- Post and communicate time-sensitive information such as deadlines prominently and redundantly.
- Be sure that all links to other areas of the course site and to outside websites function properly.

Evaluating Student Work

Information on the basis upon which assignments will be evaluated and weighted should be clear, well-organized, and prominently displayed.

- General course instructions in the **Course Information** area should include expectations regarding how often students should plan to log onto the course site, how often and in what form they should contribute, and approximately how much time they should set aside for course preparation and participation.
- Rubrics and any other specific grading criteria should be placed in a folder or document in **Course Information, Assignments**, or another relevant folder on the course site.
- Course schedules, assignments, and grading should be organized for timely and informative completion of formal mid-semester evaluations at the end of the eighth week of each semester and for timely submission of final grades.

Faculty-Student Interaction

Because successful and effective online teaching and learning involve extensive student-faculty interaction, instructors should plan to spend the same amount of time per course interacting with students online as in a regular classroom course.

- Instructors may choose any time during the day or night to respond to student work; they may choose to respond to online communication within daily time windows or as these arrive.
- Regardless of the style or timing, planning and scheduling for daily online communication with students will ensure a level of student-faculty interaction consistent with Lehman’s standards of online teaching and learning.

Setting the Stage for Online Discussion

Most instructors use the Blackboard **Discussion Board** as the main communication and interaction venue in their courses.

- Discussions typically continue for a specified span of time as determined by the instructor. The dates should be clearly indicated on the forum assignment.
- To facilitate topical clarity and ease of student navigation, each discussion topic and the relevant readings or other materials should be posted to the course site in a consistent way

and location, for example, under **Assignments** and/or in the space designated for **Discussion Forums**.

- Instructors should make clear how often students are expected to participate (make a meaningful post to discussion board sessions per week or module). In some cases, instructors may wish to specify the length of postings (minimum and/or maximum).
- Because effective class discussion requires students to complete the readings in advance, especially instructors in introductory courses often assign journal or other reading comprehension assignments to be completed prior to participation in a **Discussion Forum**.
- Students participate in discussions in various ways: stating positions, asking questions, making comments, disagreeing with the instructor or another student's comment, or developing the ideas in prior postings. Instructors should clearly indicate when and how they will receive a response and how various types of participation will be assessed.
- Many instructors find it helpful to end each unit by briefly summarizing recent discussion and adding any other information which they consider important for the topic.
- Students may be encouraged to establish an electronic notebook using any word processing program.

Classroom Management

As with any other teaching and learning environment, problems with students inevitably arise. Instructors vary enormously in their tolerance levels and in their strategies for maintaining an environment conducive to teaching and learning.

- Guidelines for “netiquette” set the tone and provide a point of reference on the course site for appropriate online communication.
- Instructors may provide areas on the course site for students to convene socially or to pose questions to other students.
- Prompt and private communication about inappropriate communication should resolve most classroom management issues; however, determined efforts to disrupt online communication should be reported immediately to the department chair and/or the Director of Online Learning.

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