eLearning Policies and Procedures

Introduction
The College of Coastal Georgia has developed a set of policies and procedures to guide development of eLearning programs according to accepted design and build principles and external requirements. These policies are intended to assist faculty and college units with ensuring that fully and partially online courses are of the highest quality and can be supported sufficiently with college resources and support infrastructure. The eLearning policies are set forth to ensure that the College offers quality online and blended courses and programs.

Institutional development, delivery, and evaluation of eLearning courses and programs take place in the context of the policies and procedures of all existing college academic programs and external agencies. The eLearning policies are intended to maintain alignment with the United States Department of Education, Southern Association of Colleges & Schools (SACS), other accrediting institutions, and the Program Integrity Rules in support of quality eLearning design and build principles. New and updated federal regulations and accreditation are critically linked to Federal Student Aid which includes Title IV funding for student loans and other aid. Board of Regents (BOR) and accrediting institution policies also require that eLearning programs and courses meet minimal standards.

The Office of eLearning at the College of Coastal Georgia facilitates course design, technology integration and user support for the purpose of offering quality learning experiences. This is accomplished through comprehensive user training, expanding course delivery models and options, promoting technological innovation, and assessing course design in cooperation with appropriate faculty.

The Office of eLearning has five goals:

1. Ensure eLearning courses are designed and built in accordance with the nature and objectives of the academic programs
2. Expand learning opportunities and access in a financially responsible manner
3. Promote innovative eLearning course designs that focus on student interaction
4. Provide technical training and faculty development in the use of eLearning instructional techniques
5. Ensure compliance with all related laws, regulations, and policies governing eLearning courses and programs
Definitions

The following relate to eLearning courses as defined:

**W designated courses** (95-100% = Fully Online) The course uses Distance Education (DE) technologies for more than 95% of instruction time. Instructors may require a maximum of one face-to-face meeting and a proctored exam. All W-designated courses have a $33/credit hour online-course fee in addition to the base tuition; this fee is the same for out-of-state and in-state students. In addition to tuition and online-course fees, students who enroll only in eLearning courses pay technology and institutional fees, but not other student fees.

**B designated courses** (51-94% = Blended, partially online) The course uses videoconferencing, online, or other technologies instead of face-to-face contact for 51% to 94% of instruction time. Taking B-designated courses has no impact on tuition and fees.

**G designated courses** (fully online) The course is delivered via eCore.

All courses shall adhere to requirements as set forth by the University System of Georgia Board of Regents (USG BOR), federal requirements as related to funding, and accrediting bodies for the College and applicable schools and units.

**Intellectual Rights**

In general, courses designed in conjunction with faculty remain dual property of the faculty and the College. “Intellectual Property” as defined by Board of Regents policy 603.02 refers to patentable materials, copyrighted materials, trademarks, software, and trade secrets. It is the policy of the College of Coastal Georgia to do the following: 1) encourage the creation of intellectual property by members of the institutional community; 2) facilitate the utilization of such discoveries and materials for the benefit of the public, the institution, and the members of the institutional community; and 3) provide for the equitable sharing of any proceeds derived from the commercial exploitation of intellectual property in which the institution is determined to have an interest.

**Copyright**

Faculty members and students must comply with USG BOR copyright policies and federal law when duplicating print materials and periodical publications and when including video or broadcasting programming, software materials, digital materials, music, or web-based materials in their courses. The USG Copyright Policy may be viewed at [http://www.usg.edu/copyright/](http://www.usg.edu/copyright/)

**Accessibility**

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, reaffirmed by the 1992 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), was created to protect the rights of people with disabilities. Section 508 of the Act specifically applies to online content including that of online courses. Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 requires that web-based information and data be equally accessible to individuals with and without disabilities. The Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia has determined that institutions under the Board of Regents fall within the scope of Section 508. Web designers and web content providers must ensure that content complies with Section 508 prior to making it available via
the worldwide web (http://www.section508.gov/index.cfm?fuseAction=stds). All online course material and content must comply with existing Section 508 minimum standards, including captioning and transcriptions of media, before being opened to students for instruction. All courses must include an accessibility statement (see below).

**Outside Online Resources**
Courses (with the exception of eCore) must use the current CCGA adopted Learning Management System (LMS) for instruction. Faculty may request an LMS sandbox for developing courses. However, instruction should not take place within a Sandbox. Outside services such as ePacks, MyPearsonLabs, and other online sites must comply with standards of accessibility and security of student records. Grades, student artifacts, and other academic data must be maintained on the college LMS or other appropriate and secure locations. It is the responsibility of the course instructor to ensure adherence to FERPA requirements for outside online services and for the migration of student data to the college LMS. For more information on FERPA, see- http://www.ccga.edu/OIE/FERPA/ and http://www.usg.edu/business_procedures_manual/section12/C1449

**Basic Services**
Basic services such as plagiarism checkers, online tutoring, lockdown browsers, LMS and other services shall be provided in support of all online courses. A list of basic service shall be available on the college website. Recommendations regarding prioritization of needed services are made by the eLearning Advisory Council.

**Online Course Fees and Other Fees**
A per-credit-hour online course fee is charged for fully online courses with the differential going to support online and blended courses. In addition to tuition and online-course fees, students taking only online courses will pay only the institutional fee and the technology fee. Students taking a mixture of face-to-face and online courses will pay all normally required fees.

**Attendance Verification**
All courses utilize standard procedures for attendance verification that include a reasonable amount of activity during the first days of classes. To establish presence, students must log in and participate in the course by completing at least one post to an Introduction/Attendance Verification discussion board or some other easily verified assignment. Students not completing this post or assignment should be reported to the registrar as non-attending.

**Equal Access**
Online courses and programs must provide equivalent access to all college services (advising, financial aid, library, counseling, ATTiC and other modalities of tutoring, Writing Center, and so on) as for other students and courses.

**Student Preparedness**
Students must complete an online orientation/assessment prior to enrolling in their first online course at CCGA.
Class Size
Appropriate class size depends greatly upon the discipline, course design, and experience of the instructor. As class size is directly related to a specific discipline and course design, the appropriate class size should be considered a part of the design process and determined by the offering school/unit. This determination must carefully consider the implications of a large class size on professor workload, student engagement, retention, and other factors affecting the quality of the online-course experience. Typically, the maximum class size should be limited to 30 students. Final class size is determined by the Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA) and the academic deans.

eLearning Advisory Council
The eLearning Advisory Council will provide input to the Office of eLearning and will provide a forum for shared decision making among the academic units. The council will be involved in developing eLearning goals and strategies and in short and long-range planning. This council will also provide a forum for discussing eLearning issues, establishing procedures, and recommending policies regarding eLearning. Membership will include Director of eLearning; Chief Information Officer (CIO); Dean of Library Services; one faculty member from the School of Business and Public Affairs, the School of Education and Teacher Preparation, and the School of Nursing and Health Sciences; two faculty members from the School of Arts and Science; and one student. The eLearning Council will meet at least once per semester.

Course/Faculty Policies

eLearning Faculty
Before being scheduled to teach an online course, all faculty (full and part time) must complete the College-offered training or demonstrate online teaching competence. The College training will include best practices in teaching online courses as well as course-design principles. All eLearning faculty are strongly encouraged to continue participating in future faculty development and training.

eCore
All faculty new to online teaching are encouraged to consider teaching their first online course with eCore. Training and support offered by eCore can enhance faculty’s first experiences with online teaching. An application to teach for eCore (http://ecore.usg.edu/faculty/application.php) requires approval by Chair, Dean, and VPAA. When an eCore course is offered to a faculty member, approval to accept the course shall be sought from the Dean/Chair in consideration of faculty load and scheduling. The Office of eLearning should be notified. eCore sections are considered overload for full-time faculty.

Designing and Scheduling Online Courses

Schools and units are encouraged to identify new online courses in a strategic fashion. Student demand, access, reaching new markets, pedagogical advantage, and other such criteria should be used to determine suitable online courses. The design and building process of new online courses should begin a minimum of one semester before being offered for instruction. Courses will adhere to design standards (see below) and be developed in collaboration with eLearning staff, faculty, and other experts as
needed. A new online course may not be delivered unless it has been submitted in accordance with the eLearning policies. Courses must be entirely designed and built before the start date of classes.

*Procedure-

1. School/Unit determines a course is to be newly offered online according to College, School, and faculty governance procedures.
2. Notification of the intent to teach a course online is submitted by a unit to the Office of eLearning. Notification is submitted via the Request for New Online Course Form.
3. Design team (appropriate faculty, eLearning staff) has initial meeting to discuss course needs, vision, timeline for design, and so on. A minimum of one semester is required to develop a new course.
4. Course is designed and built.
5. Course is reviewed by the Office of eLearning for compliance with design and build standards and recommendations are provided.
6. Course is reviewed and approved by School/unit.
7. Course is offered.

*This procedure assumes that any new online course that is also a NEW college course has been approved through the normal faculty governance approval process.*

**Online Program Development and Approval**

When considering offering new or existing degree programs fully online (all or most of the courses are available online), a school or department must take into account many important issues. For example, when a unit determines the percent of a program to be online, all potential online courses that a student may count toward the degree must be included, such as core web courses and eCore. Many programs may already be very close to meeting 50%-online threshold. Many other aspects should be considered, such as market, needed resources, available faculty, scheduling, and time for course development and external approvals or notifications. Substantive Change of a program requires approvals by the USG BOR (http://www.usg.edu/academic_affairs_handbook/section2/C731/#p2.3.7_external_degrees), SACSCOC (http://www.sacscoc.org/SubstantiveChange.asp), and often, by discipline- accrediting agencies. All approvals must be secured prior to the beginning of instruction.

**Procedure**-

1. School/Department determines a program is to be offered 50% or more online through School procedures.
2. Notification of Intent to Offer a Program Online Form is submitted to the VPAA, the Office of eLearning, and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. Notification generally should be made at least 10 months in advance of desired approval.
3. Internal approval is determined by the VPAA in consultation with the respective dean/chair.
4. Online program is approved according to College and faculty governance procedures.
5. Determination of needed external approvals and notifications is made; approvals and
notifications are secured as needed

6. Program Design Team (School/unit leads, faculty, eLearning staff, and others as needed)
determine timeline, resources, marketing, new courses, faculty training, program policies, and
other needs for implementation

7. New courses are developed and offered according to new course development policies

Course Review and Improvement Process
All new online/hybrid courses, as a part of the design process, will be reviewed based on adopted design
standards and rubrics (such as Quality Matters) and approved for instruction before students are given
access. This design and review process relates to design and build of the online course and not to the
content, which is under the purview of the academic unit. All new and existing courses will be
submitted to a course review and improvement process on a cyclical basis. The review process will
engage the appropriate faculty member(s) and the Director of eLearning. This process will take into
account Student Evaluation of Instruction (SEI), formative evaluations, and the course design rubric.
Exemplary courses should be recognized and used as examples for further course development.

Course Design Standards

It is important that online courses adhere to minimum design standards. These standards will be
evaluated by a peer group (the faculty members of the eLearning Advisory Council and the Director of
eLearning) and judged against a local set of standards to be developed and/or an adopted rubric such as
Quality Matters. These design standards should include but not be limited to the following:

1. All courses should be designed around learning outcomes of the course. These learning
   outcomes are determined by the instructor and academic unit and become the basis for the
course design in consultation with eLearning. The course design should align learning outcomes
with assessments and activities designed to ensure that learning outcomes are achieved.

2. Given the unique nature of online/hybrid courses, it is important that the designs of such
courses include formative and summative evaluation that focus on the efficacy of the design,
not the content. Formative evaluations may take on many forms as determined by the design
team (appropriate faculty member(s) and the Director of eLearning), but shall include
opportunities for students to give feedback on the course design and delivery, activities,
assessments, and other aspects of the course. Some formative assessments should be
completed by the mid-point of the course. Summative assessments will include the current
adopted Student Evaluation of Instruction for all courses as determined by the appropriate
faculty process. Whether as part of this SEI or other evaluation, courses should be evaluated at
the end of the instructional period to determine the overall effectiveness of the course design,
student perception and satisfaction, and other factors as deemed necessary for course
improvement.

3. Course design should include activities that enhance student-student, student-content, and
student-instructor interaction in an environment that promotes interactive and collaborative
learning. As much as possible and dependent upon the discipline, courses should not rely heavily

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on simple reading-and-recall methods of delivery. Activities and assessments that require higher-level thinking and that are authentic in nature should receive focus. Online quizzes should not be a major learning or assessment strategy for most courses.

4. Courses should adhere to standards determined by the design team. Not all courses necessarily fit into a standard structure; however, the goal is to create course designs and structures that create reliable expectations for students. These standard interfaces shall be developed by eLearning, reviewed by the ELearning Advisory Council, and applied as appropriate to specific courses by the design team. The standard interfaces should include (but not limited to) standard options for modular organization (time or topical based, for example), home-pages and navigation menus, colors, graphics, and other design and visual elements to enhance learning. Courses should not rely on extreme colors, graphics, or other overly personal aspects of design. Courses will include the minimum requirements and policies as set forth below.

5. Required course elements such as standard statements, student orientation modules, attendance verification, and other standard course components will be included in course shells. Instructors should be cautious about substantively altering these elements.

6. All courses shall be designed with accessible content as outlined in Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act (refer to Accessibility section). Content shall be accessible by assistive technology such as screen readers. Videos and other multi-media must include necessary accessibility requirements.

7. Courses must adhere to the USG policy regarding copyrighted material and in consideration of “Fair Use” for instructional use of copyrighted materials.

8. Efficient and pedagogically sound use of LMS tools and other online services is required of all courses. As much as possible, most or all assignments should be submitted online. Any face-to-face activities such as proctored exams must be included in the course syllabus.

Minimum Course Requirements and Course Policies

To ensure consistency, communication of requirements, and quality of experience for all online students, each course shall include the following policies as a minimum. These policies shall be included in the course build and/or the syllabus as appropriate. Model syllabi that include all required policy statements will be made available for use in course design.

1. Courses syllabus shall meet requirements for all other course syllabi but must also include specific information related to online delivery. The syllabus shall include any special requirements and other activities, costs, and special information such as face-to-face requirements, online services, and technology requirements.

2. Course documents/materials must be in a format easily accessible to most students. HTML is the standard format for all courses except where PDF or Word files are required by the assignment or particular nature of the content. Multimedia elements should generally be located outside the LMS on media streamers.

3. Course material should be arranged in weekly modules or other sequences that clearly relate to the course's expected learning outcomes. Content may be arranged by topic or other elements if more appropriate to the content being presented.
4. Each course will include a standard Student Orientation with information and tutorials related to utilizing the LMS as well as specific information for successful completion of the course. Each course must have a “Getting Started” or “Start Here” module to orient the student to online learning and the course.

5. All courses shall include “Getting Help” information that identifies the technical and student services available to students as well as academic help such as tutoring or extra assistance from the instructor.

6. Each course shall have stated communication and grade-return policy to include acceptable methods for communication (email, phone, discussion posts, and so on.) and an expected response time from the instructor for communications and posting grades. In most cases, the response time for communications should not exceed 24 hours or 48 hours over weekends.

7. All courses will utilize a means for attendance verification that includes a reasonable amount of activity during the first days of classes. To establish their presence, students must login and participate in the course by completing at least one post in an Introduction/Attendance Verification discussion board or some other easily verifiable assignment. Students not completing this task should be reported to the registrar as non-attending.

8. All online and blended courses shall utilize the adopted college LMS as the repository of student grades and artifacts. Other services deemed necessary and appropriate for the course shall adhere to FERPA guidelines and campus security and privacy policies.

9. A technology policy shall be included and specify all technical requirements for the course such as computer equipment, webcams, headphones, Internet access, required software, and other services. The policy should also state the instructor’s policy regarding missed work due to technical issues and any allowances for making up work in those cases.

10. Each course shall include the following copyright statement regarding student work:

   Students are required to comply with all local, state, federal, and international copyright laws and College policies regarding the use of copyright-protected materials. Whenever copyright-protected works are used and fair use does not clearly apply, students must obtain written permission from the copyright owner. For more information, see http://www.usg.edu/copyright/

11. Each course shall include the following accessibility statement:

   The College of Coastal Georgia is committed to accessibility and to providing accommodations for all persons with disabilities. Students enrolled in online and blended programs needing course accommodations must contact the instructor as soon as possible to speak confidentially about the needed accommodation. Students must also contact the Office of Disability Services to obtain approval for and coordination of reasonable accommodations and services for courses. Please note that students who need accommodations must be registered with Office of Disability Services before requesting accommodations from the instructor.
12. Any course that requires proctored exams must include this information in course policies and the syllabus. One face-to-face meeting in addition to one proctored exam is acceptable for a course designated as Blended.

13. The course shall include information regarding the formative and summative evaluation processes for the course.

14. Instructors shall hold office hours as required by college policies. A suitable number of non-face-to-face office hours (online or by phone, for example) shall be posted in the course.

15. The College’s Academic Integrity Policy shall be included in each course.