Adjunct Teaching & Learning Guide - 2017

White Mountains Community College

"Creating the Optimum Learning Environment for our Students"

Adjunct Teaching & Learning Guide

Introduction

The heart and soul of WMCC is our community of students and faculty members. The purpose of this **Teaching and Learning Guide** is to supply faculty with course resources and strategies that will foster and support excellence in teaching, which in turn will lead to student success and graduation.

This guide brings together required basic procedural guidelines for faculty, as well as examples of best practices and research to support highly effective delivery of WMCC courses. This document serves as the nucleus for capturing, creating, teaching, and developing courses for the college.

Please note that an Adjunct Faculty Handbook is also available to you online, at http://www.wmcc.edu/academics/adjunct-faculty-handbook . This document addresses the details of how things get done at the College. If you need more information about topics raised in this document, you may find that in the Handbook.

Thank you for your commitment to the highest standard of teaching and learning at WMCC and empowering our students to meet their educational and career goals.

WMCC – A Culture of Caring

WMCC is a diverse organization. We offer many courses, in varying modalities and in various locations. Although diverse, we do have one aspect of our organization that is consistent: our WMCC Policy. We care about our students and colleagues and provide a level of instruction that is unmatched. Excellent service to both internal and external customers is expected. As a professor, you are working directly with our students to help them to achieve their educational goals. It is important that you support the WMCC culture of caring and make excellent service to your colleagues and students a priority.

Fostering an Engaging Classroom Environment

Part of your mission as an educational professional for the college is to foster student learning in your online or onsite classes. An engaging and collaborative educational environment is key to achieving that mission. As instructors, we pledge to deliver engaging experiences that meet the needs of diverse and geographically dispersed students. This will broaden student learning and help them achieve their long-term personal and career goals.

How can you connect with and assist your students?

- Get to know your students personally – both in class and in online discussions.
- Use your students' names – always; in labs, in discussions, and in course activities.
- Develop a deep understanding of who your students are and what their goals are.
- Work with your students when problems or concerns arise, and recognize they have other commitments outside of the classroom.
- Track student progress, and communicate this regularly so that students recognize their own development through your course.
- Provide timely, personalized assessment feedback.
- Make students aware of the many resources available to them, including the Library, Academic Success Center, and WMCC tutoring services

Creating an Engaging Online Environment

Faculty members should create a strong social, cognitive, and teaching presence. In both online and blended classes, discussions should be a vibrant exchange between students and professors.

Social presence

Social presence is communicating with your students in a way that:

- Is relatable and professional
- Uses social cues such as encouragement
- Addresses individuals by name
- Describes personal experiences/stories

Cognitive presence

Cognitive presence is helping students construct meaning/knowledge by guiding discussions to

- Help them identify the idea or issue
- Exchange ideas or information
- Connect and apply ideas

Teaching presence

Teaching presence is the professor's facilitation of social presence and cognitive presence in the classroom and online. Teaching presence can be supported with:

- Peer facilitation;
- Student-led activities; and
- Varying levels of professor interaction (Campbell, 2014).

Quality Expectations of Classroom Management

Research supports the following strategies for successful teaching in blended and online modalities. We encourage you to incorporate these into your classroom management.

- If you can reach out to students before the course begins, emphasizing specific tasks to be completed before Week 1 (Lowenthal & Parscal, 2008).
- Respond to student questions promptly (Fredricksen, Pickett, Shea, Pelz, & Swan, 2000).
- Establish clear, regular schedule for management activities, such as grading assignments, availability hours, etc. (Rock, 2013; Thiele, 2003).
- Establish a variety of pathways (phone, email, Q&A discussions, etc.) for frequent, open communication with students (Mupinga, Nora, & Yaw, 2006; Fredricksen, Pickett, Shea, Pelz, & Swan, 2000).
- Share your own experience and knowledge by responding to discussion prompts yourself with personal and professional stories (Lowenthal & Parscal, 2008).
- Build relationships by having "conversations" with students, not by simply responding with feedback and grades (Rock, 2013; Lowenthal & Parscal, 2008).
- In addition to posting announcements in the course shell, send email messages with the same information (Savery, 2011).
- Provide technical instructions for accessing, downloading and submitting course materials and deliverables to reduce technical anxiety and the sense of transactional distance (Hauser, Paul, & Bradley, 2012).

Expectations That Foster Quality for *Online* Discussions

- Ask students to introduce themselves in Week 1 to build a sense of community. Respond to each student to make him or her feel welcome. Use student names in responses to engage personally and help to build a sense of belonging (Owens, 2009).
- Plan to connect with your students often in the online discussions to create a vibrant classroom community. It is essential for geographically dispersed students to engage in each other's learning process. Students must interact with each other and the course material at deeper levels for internalization of knowledge rather than just rote memorization (Owens, 2009; Nandi, Hamilton, & Harland, 2012).
- Kick off each week's discussion by posting before the students enter. Your leading post can establish the tone, learning goals, and expectations for how students should participate in the discussion (Nagel & Kotze, 2012).
- Show your engagement in the course by posting to online discussions frequently. Your meaningful contributions that respond to and build upon students' posts enhance teaching effectiveness (Nandi, Hamilton & Harland, 2012).
- Ask high-quality questions to establish an intellectually responsible and challenging tone and expectation. Students benefit when they spend more time on learning tasks by thinking, comparing, contrasting, and communicating (MacKnight, 2000).
- Respond to students' posts with feedback, additional information, and opportunities for application. Prompt students to provide clarification, explanation, additional supporting information, and reflection (MacKnight, 2000).
- Encourage students to share current technologies, research models, and leading-edge approaches.
- Share your knowledge, expertise, and current technologies of a particular topic to ensure courses are current and align with trends in your academic discipline.
- Recognize that each student brings a unique set of experiences and learning. Sharing

through online discussions provides enrichment for others and helps the student expert clarify his/her own knowledge on the subject (Raleigh, 2000; Baran, Correia, & Thompson, 2011).

- Try to connect one student's thoughts, interests, and beliefs to another student's contribution. Relate experts' knowledge on a topic to students' personal experiences and careers. Peer examples are often both relevant and realistic for other students (Younghee, Herrington, Agostinho & Reeves, 2007).

Group Projects

Group projects offer students opportunities for collaborative learning. Exploring topics together leads to deeper understanding and broader application of content. When a course is designed to include a group project, students should be supported in the group formation process. As the session progresses, special care should be taken to ensure that group dynamics are positive and supportive to student learning.

Group projects are usually described in the course syllabus. To ensure equity in group projects, include both individual and team accountabilities. Use a group project grading rubric that outlines these accountabilities. Rubrics for group projects often contain language specifying that lack of participation by an individual student may impact that individual's grade.

Group projects are most effective when these best practices are considered:

- Notify students "up front" about consequences for not participating.
- Consider having a team charter or contract where the group agrees on methods for communicating with each other, handling disagreements and how to handle members who do not perform.
- Share phone numbers and emails in the first week of the group project.
- Conduct conference calls with the groups to check in periodically and consider using a product like Zoom, Google hang outs, or Adobe Collaborate to facilitate the calls.
- Keep in contact with team leaders to ensure the project is going smoothly.
- In blended (or "hybrid") classes, allow time during class for groups to meet.
- Request periodic progress reports.

Presentations

Student presentations are an integral part of the college experience. As students make presentations to fellow classmates, peer-to-peer learning takes place. Instructors should create opportunities for students to present their projects and assignments in an appropriate way for full class engagement. Student audience members should participate in question and answer sessions and should provide constructive feedback if the assignment is conducive to interaction. In capstone courses, student presentations constitute a major component of the course grade. Professors should ensure that the presentation experience is well-planned.

In blended classes, it may be appropriate to allow students to invite a colleague and/or family member to a formal presentation.

WMCC faculty and students have access to various applications of the Adobe Connect /Zoom virtual meeting software. This technology is designed to support effective delivery of online student presentations and to make up blended classes missed due to holidays and weather-related or other closings. It is important that you become familiar with and proficient using this software.

Interactive Labs

Courses designed with lab components may include specialized hardware, software, or technology platforms. The following are guidelines to assist you when teaching a course that contains a lab.

Lab Guidelines:

- Log in before the course begins and develop an understanding of the lab environment, including the platform, required software, and course-specific applications.
- Verify that lab instructions and links are correct in Course Home and for each week that a lab is present; this is most effectively accomplished by completing each lab's steps and verifying the links.
- Direct students having problems accessing their lab platform to the Help Desk.
- Help your students properly use the lab applications in their course.

Active Learning

Active learning can be approached as a theory about how students learn. Following this theory, students actively learn (1) behaviorally, by employing resources, (2) cognitively, by constructing knowledge in a personally meaningful way, and (3) socially, by interacting and collaborating with others (Drew & Mackie, 2011). Active learning can be administered in all teaching methods, and faculty are encouraged to understand the basics of this effective instructional strategy.

Active learning is also considered a pedagogical method or teaching strategy. These methods include introducing student activities during class (Prince, 2004), using the flipped classroom method where class time is reserved for guided application of concepts (Wilson, 2013), and using the Jigsaw Classroom method (Crone & Portillo, 2013).

Research has shown that students value active learning approaches more than traditional lecture and cooperative learning techniques (Machemer & Crawford, 2007). Traditional classroom lectures can be delivered with active learning techniques to engage students.

Lectures that include a high degree of participation and interaction, have a clear structure, and are facilitated by a passionate and enthusiastic instructor are considered valuable by students. Both students and faculty indicate that lectures are most effective when delivered with active learning techniques. Breaks for individual and group activities are recommended. A well-designed lecture that includes elements to inspire students is recommended (Revell & Wainwright, 2009).

Examples of Active Learning Techniques

The Socratic Method

One active learning method is Socratic questioning. Using Socratic questioning engages students who may be hesitant to speak out in a face-to-face class. In online discussions, Socratic questioning serves as a way to guide students through a learning process. As foundational concepts are mastered, students are prompted to discover greater extension and applicability of the knowledge. Even students who participated minimally in a Socratic style class discussion indicated they were engaged in the material, formulating responses to the questions posed by the instructor and peers, even when these responses were not shared (Obenland, Munson, & Hutchinson, 2012).

The Flipped Classroom

Another active learning technique is the flipped classroom. This model moves the transmission of information or knowledge (typically conveyed through lectures) outside of the classroom. The application of that information or knowledge (traditionally considered homework) is moved into the classroom (Wilson, 2013). To make the flipped classroom approach effective, students must engage in acquiring content knowledge before coming to class. Some professors use content videos, reading activities, and/or quizzes in the online component of the course to ensure that knowledge transmission has been successful (Wilson, 2013).

There are multiple ways to approach the application element of the flipped classroom. In-class activities might include students working in pairs to solve problems and then reflecting on the relevance of the course material or presenting it to the class. To illustrate the ubiquity of statistics, for example, one professor asked her students to find articles in the newspaper that include statistics. Students identified the scale of measurement and determined whether the variable was discrete or continuous (Wilson, 2013). This material could then be presented to the class through discussions or in-class presentation.

The Jigsaw Classroom

The jigsaw classroom is an active learning method sometimes used in blended course delivery. Students are presented material at one class meeting. At the end of the class meeting, students are given a specific set of concepts to explore further. At the second class meeting, students meet with others who were assigned the same concept. These groups are referred to as expert groups. Experts meet for 10 minutes to discuss and combine their knowledge. Then, the experts return to their larger jigsaw group; experts of one set of concepts meet with experts who were assigned different concepts at the previous class meeting. Jigsaw groups meet for 60 minutes. As this method was used throughout a course offering, students who participated in jigsaw groups rated higher confidence in their ability to teach others than students who did not participate in jigsaw groups (Crone & Portillo, 2013).

The jigsaw classroom can be used in online courses. Students can be divided into groups with focused assignments to gain expertise in some area of a course topic. Professors may organize weekly discussions to support student sharing of information with the group. This opportunity for peer-to-peer learning may be especially helpful in a mixed group of students with varying levels of experience.

Resources for Managing Your Class

Effectively managing your classroom is one of the keys to success in online, face-to-face, and blended courses. Clarifying expectations so that your students know what they can expect from you as well as what you as a professor expect of them is critical. Properly preparing your course will help establish a strong foundation from the start. Keeping open lines of communication and providing high quality feedback will ensure that students know they are supported and how they are progressing in your course.

Preparing your Online Course Shell

Whether you teach an online, face-to-face, or blended course, you will receive a course shell in the College's Learning Management System (currently "Blackboard") several weeks before the semester.

Place your contact information in the Blackboard shell:

- Name and CCSNH email address
  - For IT security reasons, please use your college email for all communication associated with the College, including with students.)

- Office location, hours and phone numbers
  - This information lets students know when and where they can find you.
  - Professors are required to post office hours each week and be available for phone calls during that time and to answer college email.
  - Professors must post a phone number.
  - If you wish to provide alternate phone numbers, email addresses, and/or other contact information, include these in your biography. Do not include email addresses from other entities (such as gmail, yahoo, or other colleges).

- Photograph
  - Upload an appropriate, professional picture.
    .
- Biography
  - Write your relevant personal biographical information in 1st person.
  - Let students see something of the person behind the professor title.
  - Provide your degree and certification information.
  - Please do not include content that advertises or promotes personal or other businesses or universities.
  - You may include links to your website or online portfolio, but all linked information must be appropriate and professional.

Sharing your Documents

Each Blackboard course shell includes repositories for sharing documents and web resources. Please review these sections to ensure that all links are working and that all documents, especially study guides, are set to the appropriate access levels. We encourage professors to make the course content more customized and robust for your students by adapting the provided resources and by contributing your own resources during the course.

Make the Blackboard shell available to students!

This is an easy step to forget. When your Blackboard shell is initially created, students in your course cannot view it. Once you have the shell sufficiently set up, you must open the shell for students. You only need to do this once, at the start of your course, and you may continue to make changes in Blackboard after opening the shell.

Gradebook Review

Your Blackboard shell includes a Gradebook. Students can view their own information there, and some basic capacity is provided for calculating final grades. Even if you maintain a paper gradebook for your own use, please use the Blackboard Gradebook for the benefit of your students. As a first step, make sure that the course deliverables and points stated in the syllabus match the Gradebook.

Customizing Your Course

With the goal of maintaining the quality and consistency of the student experience in courses taught in multiple modalities and in many locations, while also allowing our expert faculty the freedom to customize courses to best meet their particular students' needs, we must establish and adhere to certain guidelines.

Library

The WMCC Fortier Library on the Berlin campus has tremendous resources for student learning and success. The library provides full-text periodical databases, print and electronic books, and reference services in-person and via phone, email and chat. Library staff are available to come into classes to offer customized research instruction. The Library also hosts a wide range of information literacy tutorials. Promote library research and learning! Research can support online discussion posts, enhance student writing, and deepen student insights on course concepts.

Please visit the Library at http://www.wmcc.edu/student-services/fortier-library

Textbook Access

If you require a textbook for your course, communicate this to the WMCC Bookstore, which is located on the Berlin Campus. They can have copies of the text ready for student purchase at the beginning of the semester.

Students can order inexpensive printed copies through the Bookstore. Additional instructions for accessing eBooks are also available at the Bookstore.

Communicating with Your Students

Personal, one-on-one engagement with your students has a tremendous impact on student learning, success, and persistence. Your relationship with your students is the foundation for helping students through learning obstacles. Your connection also puts you in the best position to communicate with others to ensure the students receive the support they need. You have access to many means of communication.

Formal Class Communication

Use the announcement function in the Blackboard course shell to provide students with relevant, current and specific course information. Announcements appear on the first screen students see every time they log in to the course. However, you should also communicate announcements by College email, as students may check their email more frequently. Blackboard gives you the option of emailing announcements to students.

Here are some examples of appropriate information to put into announcements:

- Welcome announcements can set expectations and guide students to a successful first week of class.
- Information about SafeAssign and plagiarism reminds students about academic integrity. Safe Assign is a comprehensive, cloud-based system that helps students and faculty by providing personalized feedback on content originality and possible plagiarism. Safe Assign provides guidance on the importance of students using their own original work.
- Grading status updates let student know when to look for scores and feedback.
- Due date reminders help with time management.

Assisting At-Risk Students

When you see students in your course struggling with the material or not participating in class, it is important that you reach out to provide assistance. Students may need tutoring or study skills support. Notify the Academic Success Center, which can provide students with support services.

You may also wish to contact the student's Advisor, who can reach out to the student and see what we can do to help the student be successful. Once you have alerted the Advisor, he/she will contact the student and then will follow up with you.

Tutoring Resources

If your students have questions regarding the course content or their assignments, you are the first line of support. If you see the student is struggling and could benefit from a tutor, direct them to the tutoring resources WMCC offers through the Academic Success Center (Room 104 on the Berlin campus).

WMCC also provides a virtual tutoring service called Smarthinking. With Smarthinking, students can chat with a live tutor about challenging subject areas. Students may also submit a question for later response or submit papers for in-depth review. Students can contact Smarthinking via the Student Resource tab located under Course Home in their Blackboard course area.

Expectations in Assessment and Providing Feedback

Students value and learn from constructive and frequent feedback from their professors (Nandi, Hamilton, & Harland, 2012). Provide grades and quality feedback in a timely manner, emphasizing what was done well and what can be done to improve.

Grading

Timely grading and constructive feedback on submitted work helps students to improve and build upon their earlier learning. Grading feedback is most helpful when it is offered soon after students submit their work. Given our fifteen-week class schedule, professors should strive to return online discussion grades, post assignment grades and provide any **additional feedback early in each week of the course**. This allows students to learn from the professor's feedback and make adjustments before their next week's submissions.

Though the type of assignments will impact the timeliness of grading, in general, we recommend these as grading best-practices:

- Assess assignments based on clear rubrics that have been shared with the students in advance.
- Provide specific and personalized feedback that provides individualized comments about strengths and opportunities for improvement.
- While some assignments will require extensive review, short multiple-choice assessments should be returned quickly.
- Keep the Gradebook on Blackboard current.

Exams

Formal assessments may include examinations, given throughout the fifteen-week course and/or at the end of the semester.

Professors should help students prepare for exams with study materials and be available to answer students' questions prior to the exam.

When grading students' submitted exams, be alert for academic integrity issues. Evaluate students' performance based on the course objectives. Return exam grades with appropriate feedback within five days after submission. **Objective, multiple-choice exams are often reviewed more quickly and can be returned to students within two to three days after submission.**

Exam grades and feedback should be posted on the course Gradebook in Blackboard. This offers opportunities for students to ask questions and gain additional understanding from returned assessments of all types. To protect students' privacy, never share grades via email or voicemail.

Note: Please take measures to protect the security and integrity of final exams.

Mid-term Grades

During Week Seven you will need to post mid-term grades using your Student Information System (SIS) account. At this point, SIS and Blackboard do not communicate with each other, so you must enter grades manually in SIS. This process will alert students of their grading path. Please reach out to students with failing grades.

Final Grades

At the end of each fifteen-week session, faculty must perform several tasks to wrap up the course and enhance student success. Important responsibilities include completing grading and submitting final grades, assisting students who may need more time to finish their work, and submitting grade changes as needed.

Students will also need their final course grades processed in a timely manner so that they can demonstrate completion of prerequisites for courses they will take in their next session.

Incompletes

Incompletes may be granted when students are unable to complete some coursework within the established timeframe because of unusual circumstances beyond their personal control. A request for an incomplete must be initiated by the student, not the professor.

Here is the process for approving a request for an incomplete:

1. The student completes and submits to the professor a Request for Course Incomplete form prior to the regularly scheduled time for the final exam. The request must show that the need for the incomplete is a result of circumstances beyond the student's personal control.
2. The professor verifies that the student has made satisfactory progress toward completion of the coursework up to the point of requesting the incomplete.
3. The student and professor concur that the student is capable of completing the make-up work by the end of Week 4 of the next semester.
4. The professor approves the Request and passes it to the appropriate administrator for approval.

Here is the process to record an incomplete:

1. Enter a grade of zero (0) for the “incomplete” component in the Blackboard Gradebook.
2. Enter a course grade of “I” in SIS.
3. Once the student completes the work and you have graded it, update that assignment grade component in the Gradebook.
4. Submit a Grade Change form. If you need assistance with obtaining or completing the form please contact your academic administrator.
5. Incomplete work must be completed by the approved deadline unless written approval granting a further extension has been obtained from the appropriate administrator. .

Grade Changes

Under certain circumstances a grade change may be necessary. Grade changes may be needed for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to the following:

- Students completed incomplete work prior to the deadline
- Final exam extensions
- Academic integrity decisions
- Grade appeals

To process a grade change, please contact the Academic Affairs Office for assistance.

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