Gateway Technical College
Procedures to Ensure Quality Distance Learning

Introduction

Gateway Technical College is entering a new and exciting era of education that infuses new technology into course delivery and provides the means to offer quality education through the options of distance learning. This distance-learning option crosses the boundaries of traditional education since it offers high quality learning experiences that potentially are not bound by time and place. This uniqueness of flexible-educational boundaries offers many instructional design challenges since all distance-learning courses must provide the same curriculum and competencies to the students using a variety of delivery techniques provided by the new and emerging technologies. Some of the major instructional design challenges facing distance learning are

- Attempting to maintain a feeling of personal touch when the face-to-face contact of traditional courses might be replaced with e-mail, chat room and phone contact.
- Implementing and evaluating the different standards for course delivery used by various distance-learning technologies.
- Providing up-to-date training in the new and ever-changing technologies used in distance learning.

Gateway is currently offering a small number of distance-learning courses from a variety of programs. Taking advantage of the new educational delivery technologies, the number of courses offered through distance learning is expected to increase at Gateway, especially those using the Internet. This increase in distance-learning courses will enhance the educational options for students and reach new markets of potential students.

Distance Learning Curriculum Delivery Definitions

Interactive Television (ITV)

ITV is a synchronous curriculum delivery method where students interact in person through TV monitors that deliver both audio and video communications. The students attend class in one of the ITV equipped rooms on the Gateway campuses, another ITV equipped room at another Wisconsin Technical College campus, or any other satellite location equipped to send and receive ITV signals. Curriculum delivery is very similar to traditional campus courses besides the infusion of technology better equipped to work within the ITV framework. Learning resources are typically delivered to and from students through FAX, intercampus mail, or U.S. mail.

Internet

Internet is an asynchronous curriculum delivery method where students receive and respond to instruction through computer systems connected through the World Wide Web. Students and faculty typically interact with each other using e-mail, chat rooms, phone, and fax. Curriculum delivery is very different from traditional campus courses since most, if not all, instruction depends on electronic technology and little, if any, face-to-face contact takes place. Learning resources are typically delivered to and from students through Web, e-mail, FAX or U.S. mail.

Videotape

Videotape can be an asynchronous delivery method if students have their own tapes and view them on their own time schedule. If the video tape is viewed through a cable or TV network, then the delivery method is closer to synchronous since students can only view the programming at predetermined times. Students and faculty typically communicate with each other by phone or mail, but videotape courses often have a campus component where face-to-face contact is established. Curriculum delivery is similar to traditional campus courses since many of the assessment tools used within the course require an on-campus, proctored arrangement. Learning resources are typically delivered to and from students through FAX, intercampus mail, or U.S. mail.
Quality Standards for Curriculum

All distance learning courses will meet or exceed these minimum quality standards for curriculum.

- All appropriate Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education (WICHE) standards are met.
- All appropriate Wisconsin Technical College System Virtual Campus standards are met.
- All appropriate Gateway Technical College distance-learning standards are met.
- All competencies and performance standards existing for traditional campuses are met.
- All new courses (not existing courses redesigned for distance learning) intended for distance learning follow the normal Program District Curriculum Committee approval process.
- All distance-learning courses must be approved by the Vice President/Provost-Open Learning Campus and the Distance Learning Committee.
- All existing distance-learning courses have until January 2002 to ensure quality standards are met.
- All distance learning courses will have a maximum enrollment of 35 students.
- Internal certification courses in distance learning are offered to faculty in the following four areas: Core Distance Learning Skills, Internet Delivery, ITV Delivery, and Multimedia Infusion into Traditional Courses.
- Deans, assisted by the Distance Learning Committee, will ensure that all distance-learning courses under their responsibility that have been approved and delivered continuously meet all appropriate distance learning quality standards.

Quality Standards for Support Service

Distance-learning students will receive the same quality support services provided campus students, but the delivery methods of these services may be different.

- All appropriate student services will be available online.
- All appropriate learning resources will be available online.
- All appropriate bookstores services will be available online.
- The Testing Center will be used for on-campus testing where a proctored environment is required.
- Developers of distance learning courses should examine all methods of course assessment and try to select assessment methods that do not require on-campus proctoring.
- If proctored testing is the best (not the easiest) method of course assessment, the course developer must present justification to the Distance Learning Committee for approval of on-campus proctored testing.

Note: This may be an issue of academic freedom with the GTEA.

- All necessary systems, hardware, software, and support needed to house a quality distance-learning environment will be provided.
- All appropriate software, videotaped programs, etc. necessary to develop and deliver distance learning courses will be available for faculty home use through the Gateway site licensing or purchasing agreements.
- WebBoard software and server support will be available for all courses.
- Training on effective uses of distance-learning methodologies, as well as the hardware and software needed to deliver these methodologies, will be provided.
- Technical and instructional design support will be available to faculty.
- Technical support (7/24) will be available to students and faculty.

Quality Standards for Instructional Design

The following minimum requirements for instructional design must be met by each distance-learning course offered at Gateway Technical College. In all cases, competencies and performance standards are the same as campus courses. In additional, these general guidelines must be met:

- Instructor contacts all registered students at least once by U.S. mail, e-mail, or phone prior to course beginning.
• Instructor provides all registered students with the necessary instruction to access the distance learning course prior to the course beginning.
• Instructor and students maintain appropriate contacts with each other using U.S. mail, e-mail, phone, or WebBoard throughout the course.
• Instructor provides timely feedback on all assignment assessments.
• Instructor provides timely feedback on all U.S. mail, e-mail, phone, and WebBoard contacts.
• Instructor keeps students informed on their progress in the course.
• Students will complete a distance learning feedback instrument at least twice during the course.

Interactive Television (ITV)

ITV courses will meet all the same instructional design standards as the Internet, except those that are exclusively restricted to Internet technologies. In addition, the necessary infusion of appropriate technology for broadcast distribution must be of high quality to maximize instruction and learning integrity.

Internet

• Appropriate Gateway Technical College identification
• A course syllabus section(s)
  o Attendance procedures and policies
  o Calendar of events and due dates for all assignments and WebBoard discussions
  o Contact information (mailing addresses, FAX numbers, phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and Web addresses)
  o Competencies
  o Core Abilities
  o Description
  o Grading plan/assessment strategies
  o Instructor contact information
  o Instructor introduction
  o List of prerequisites
  o Prerequisites (if any)
  o Special needs services
  o Textbook and materials
• Virtual office hours
• A campus support section(s) or link to Gateway site
  o An Assignment section(s)
  o Competencies and outcomes
  o Description of learning activity
  o Due dates (define time)
  o Guidelines for assignments
  o Helpful links to other web sites
  o Related instructor notes
  o Required readings and research
  o Student introduction requirement (WebBoard)
• Course navigation section(s)
• Hardware and software section(s) listing specifications specific to the course
• Student attributes of successful on-line learners section(s)
• Technology support section(s) (when it exists)
• Student section(s) with e-mail and telephone* listing (*with permission)
• WebBoard section(s)
  o Netiquette statement
  o WebBoard integration into course

Note: The above information can be designed into an Internet course in different ways. What is important is that the information is present in an easily understood and accessible format.
Videotape

Videotape courses will meet all the same instructional design standards as the Internet, except those that are exclusively restricted to Internet technologies. In addition, the necessary infusion of videotape technology for personal VCR or TV broadcast distribution must be of high quality to maximize instruction and learning integrity.

Process for Distance-Learning Course Approval

The following course approval process must be followed before a distance-learning course will be offered by Gateway.

- New courses (not existing courses redesigned for distance learning) developed exclusively for delivery through distance-learning technology must follow the normal Program District Curriculum Committee approval process.
- Existing courses redesigned for delivery through distance-learning technology or new distance-learning courses approved by the District Curriculum Committee must be approved by the Vice President/Provost-Open Learning Campus and the Distance Learning Committee.
  - If there is disagreement on course approval between the Vice President/Provost-Open Learning Campus and the Distance Learning Committee, the decision will be referred to the President’s Administrative Council (PAC). The Distance Learning Committee will be represented at the PAC meeting.
  - If more than one faculty member requests to redesign the same course for delivery through distance-learning technology, the faculty members will be requested to work cooperatively on the course redesign.
- Courses approved for development for distance learning will be referred to the appropriate Campus Provost/Vice President for allocation of curriculum development funds.
  - Curriculum development compensation is according to the current Collective Bargaining Agreement.
  - All course development compensated by Gateway is the property of Gateway.
  - Courses developed without compensation from Gateway are the property of the developer, but still require all appropriate approvals before they will be offered by Gateway.
- Courses approved for development for delivery through distance learning are under the jurisdiction of the Vice President/Provost-Open Learning Campus, assisted by the Distance Learning Committee, until development is completed and all appropriate distance-learning quality standards are met.
- Once distance-learning courses are approved for delivery by Gateway, the appropriate dean, assisted by the Distance Learning Committee, will ensure that all distance learning courses under his/her responsibility continue to meet all appropriate distance-learning quality standards.
- If a program begins to offer its diploma or degree program primarily through distance learning technology, the program must notify the Vice President/Provost-Open Learning Campus so that NCA can be notified.

Note: If a program or the district sees a need for specific distance learning course(s) and cannot find a qualified and/or willing contract faculty member to develop the course(s), the district could assign the work to a qualified adjunct or developer.