



MOREHEAD STATE UNIVERSITY
College of Business
Faculty Best Practices: Getting Started
Online MBA Program

Taking a course online may seem like an overwhelming task, but it can be simplified with helpful hints. We've all been there. The practices listed below are only suggestions and are offered in the spirit of helpfulness and collegiality. Good luck.

Practice 1: *Instructors should provide clear expectations for students.*

- Complete syllabus with objectives of the course
- Grading scale
- Types of Assessments
- Guidelines for participating in the class:
 - Expectations and schedule for chat room and discussion board participation
 - How to contact you: preferred email address and/or instant messaging address
 - Ethics and consequences of plagiarism
 - Where to find chapter notes, links, and other materials, including Library resources
- Enter the Faculty Information area of Blackboard and upload your information and a picture. Require the students to introduce themselves to you and their colleagues through the Edit Your Homepage in Blackboard.
- Use the Announcements page to provide other expectations as the course progresses.

Practice 2: *Instructors should specify a back-up plan for technology failures.*

- Specify who to contact.
- Use Alert DL Staff link on Distance Learning page: <http://distance.morehead-st.edu>.
- Assist students to expect technology challenges; one sentence in the syllabus may be enough.

Practice 3: *Instructors should make course content easily accessible for the online environment.*

- Learn Blackboard; get one-on-one training from Distance Learning (783-2082); see examples of online courses.
- Use word pictures.
- Use graphics, slides, Web sites, and Web pages.
- Be aware of bandwidth; some graphics and files are memory hogs.
- Know copyright laws and guidelines for electronic use:
<http://www.publishers.org/home/abouta/highered/copy.htm>

Practice 4: *Instructors should provide clear guidelines for interaction with students.*

- Develop policies describing the types of communication that should take place using various channels.
- Post on the Announcements page of the Blackboard course site(s) **and** under the Course Information section what the appropriate questions are to ask; e.g., make students aware that you will not answer technical support type questions, but you will provide the contact information for technical support. (See Practice 2.)

Practice 5: *Instructors should set standards for timeliness for responding to messages.*

- Provide general guidelines for the amount of time it “usually” will take to respond to student messages or specific days/times that the faculty member will respond to email messages.
- Specify the preferred email address and/or virtual office hours.

Practice 6: *Instructors need to provide differing forms of feedback: information and acknowledgement.*

- Consider posting answers to questions or general comments to the entire class. This may help reduce the number of messages at the beginning of the class. Faculty may prefer to open a “café” in the Discussion Board where students can post questions and get feedback from either you or their colleagues.
- Use appropriate personnel (graduate assistant, workshop, etc.) to provide students with acknowledgement feedback.
- Provide feedback to let the student know his/her assignment has been received. Many students are hesitant about submitting assignments, papers, exams, etc. electronically. This should lessen student fears and avoid potential problems if the faculty member falls behind in grading. (Example: Instances have occurred where students have alleged to have submitted work on time, but the faculty member never received the work through the Dropbox. This practice should reduce these types of incidences.)
- Provide general guidelines for the amount of time it “usually” will take to grade and return assignments, papers, exams, etc.

Practice 7: *Online courses should have deadlines for assignments, projects, etc.*

- Set deadlines to help keep students on task and avoid procrastination. Although online education is designed to be somewhat flexible to accommodate the schedules of working professionals, keeping students on track will help them set their schedules and avoid faculty having massive amounts of work to grade at the end of the course.
- This should also prohibit students from becoming “lurkers” in the class, since they will be required to interact with faculty on a regular basis.
- Provide a list of assignments with due dates to assist the faculty and the students to keep on track, since all parties appear to get busier as the semester progresses.

Practice 8: *Instructors should provide clear testing procedures for online courses.*

- On-site proctored tests: Strong pedagogical advantages exist for conducting tests in a setting where students gather at the same place and/or at the same time to take written exams.
- Off-site proctored tests: Good practice dictates that taking an online course allows students the flexibility of taking proctored tests at another location and another time; for example, Sylvan Centers (at student’s cost); a community college professor (arranged by the student and agreed to by the instructor); at another MSU center (Ashland, West Liberty, Prestonsburg, Hindman); or other secure arrangement agreed to by the instructor and the student.
- Blackboard: Using the Blackboard assessment feature for objective or subjective testing.
- Uploaded documents: In essence, these become take-home exams.

Brief List of Resources

Books:

- Draves, W. A. (2000). *Teaching Online*. River Falls, WI: Learning Resources Network.
- Palloff, R. M. & Pratt, K. (1999). *Building Learning Communities in Cyberspace*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Palloff, R. M. & Pratt, K. (2001). *Lessons from the Cyberspace Classroom: The Realities of Online Teaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- White, K. W. & Weight, B. H. (2000). *The Online Teaching Guide*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Journals:

OnlineLearning
Technology Training
T H E Journal
Syllabus

Web Sites:

- www.worldcampus.psu.edu (Penn State)
- <http://www.worldcampus.psu.edu/facdev101/> (Penn State Faculty Development 101)
- www.blackboard.com
- <http://www.gactr.uga.edu/webid/internet/development.html>
- <http://illinois.online.uillinois.edu/online/course1/reid.htm>
- <http://illinois.online.uillinois.edu/>
- <http://www.users.csbsju.edu/~tcreed/>
- <http://www.dlrn.org/educ/course.html> (Distance Learning Resource Network)
- <http://www.fgcu.edu/onlinedesign/> (Faculty Development and Support-FL Gulf Coast University)
- <http://www.eCollege.com/> (eCollege)
- <http://fcae.nova.edu/~burmeister/idlinks.html> (Links Related to Instructional Design)
- <http://www.lern.com/> (Learning Resource Network)
- <http://www.geteducated.com/vugaz.htm> (Virtual University Gazette--a free e-newsletter)
- <http://www.usdla.org> (The US Distance Learning Association)
- <http://www.utexas/world/lecture> (World Lecture Hall)
- <http://www.umuc.edu/virtualteaching> (University of Maryland, University College)