Online Learning Best Practices at Curry College
with Links to Online Resources

If you are considering teaching a blended course, this document will get you started with best practices for designing and delivering your course.

What are the Best Practices for Building and Teaching a Blended/Online Course?
Two step process:

a. *Design and Develop Course:*
   a. Start with the end in mind, by answering the following questions:
      i. What are the course learning outcomes, how will they be assessed, and do they map to the Program Outcomes?
      ii. What are the weekly learning outcomes, how will they be assessed, and do they map to the course learning outcomes?
      iii. Are your outcomes specific and measurable? Click here to view Bloom's Taxonomy for a list of measurable action verbs: Blooms Taxonomy.
   b. Design a variety of learning experiences; for example: include individual and group work, web links, readings, case studies, tests, papers, discussions.
   c. Set clear expectations; for example: explain what you expect students to accomplish during the online weeks, as well as the in-class meetings.
   d. Chunk materials into manageable segments; for example:
      i. By week.
      ii. By module or unit and break those into individual weeks.
      iii. Click on this link to learn more about Chunking Information.
   e. Use Course Files to upload files to your course, then link them in your course from "Browse Course."
   f. Include various media in your course; for example: audio, video, and graphics, especially for the online weeks. Examples:
      i. Audio - Audacity (Free), Blackboard's Audio Tool for uploading .mp3, .wmv files.
      ii. Video – Panopto, Narrated PowerPoint.
      iii. Graphics - Copyright Free Images, SnagIt (Free Trial) for capturing images on your screen.
   g. Create collaborative experiences for both the online and face-to-face weeks; for example: group exercises, group discussion boards, wikis, or group projects. Here is a link with resources on Team-Based Learning.
   h. Create assessments that measure the stated learning outcomes.
   i. Seat-time equivalency: Demonstrate that students' time on task spent during the online part of the class is equal to the time spent in class, not including homework. For example: if your class is three hours long, the time students spend listening to videos, reading, participating in discussions, etc. should be three hours. Refer to this Table as a guide: Quantifying Online Learning Seat Time.
   j. Syllabus – This is the contract between you and the student. It needs to be adapted to include the best practices cited in this document. Here are some examples of Curry Hybrid Syllabi: MCJ, MBA.

b. *Deliver Course:*
  a. Faculty presence is important:
     i. Deliver concise lectures for the online weeks. If creating a video, keep it to about 15 minutes. It is better to have two 15-minute videos than one 30 minute video.
     ii. Tell students the best way to communicate with you during the online part of the course; for example: email, phone, or discussion board.
     iii. Tell students when you will respond to their questions; for example: within 24 or 48 hours (no longer than 48 hours.)
     iv. Give timely feedback on discussion board posts, assignments, exams, etc.

  b. Link the In-Class and Online weeks:
     i. Include a "What's Next" in your Blackboard course telling students what you will be covering the following week and how (in-class or online).
     ii. During the in-class week, prepare students for what will be coming up next in the online week.
     iii. Use both the in-class and online weeks to review any concerns about the previous week's work, and/or to include remedial assignments or additional resources.

  c. Student Support:
     i. Set student expectations regarding the technical skills they will need to participate successfully in the blended course.
     ii. Provide an introduction to the Blackboard Course in the first face-to-face meeting.
     iii. Provide a tour of the Blackboard Course either face-to-face or through a video in the course.
     iv. Show students where they can find Help in the Blackboard Course and in Atomic Learning.
     v. Use face-to-face or virtual office hours to assist students with Blackboard questions.
     vi. Use an "Ask the Professor" discussion board forum for student questions about Blackboard.
     vii. [Writing Center](), [Speaking Center]()

10 Tips for New Blended Learning Faculty:

1. Start early.
2. Keep your design student-centered and focused on the learning outcomes.
3. Plan and design your entire course before beginning to teach it.
4. Attend a workshop and work with a mentor or instructional designer.
5. Let technology serve as a tool versus a prescription for how and what to teach.
6. Set student expectations during the initial in-class meeting.
7. Be present in all components of your class.
8. Be sure your instructions are specific and clearly written.
9. View your course from a student perspective.

10. Use the standard template for your program, if it exists. This supports consistency and avoids reinventing the wheel.

Online Resources:
1. [Penn State Faculty Self-Assessment: Preparing for Online Teaching](#)
   Penn State has created a free *Faculty Self-Assessment* for preparing to teach in an online environment. To take the assessment, click on the link above and enter your first name, last name, and email address. There is no need for a password and there are no right or wrong answers. When you've finished, you will receive a report with helpful commentary and links based on your answers. The assessment takes about 10-15 minutes.

2. [Blueprint for Building Your Course](#)
   The above link provides a one-page overview for building a blended course. It also includes a map to assist you in aligning your assignments and assessments with your weekly and course outcomes.

3. [Blended Learning Toolkit](#)
   The Blended Learning Toolkit link above provides a step-by-step task list for building a blended course along with some helpful templates and checklists.

4. [Quality Matters Rubric](#)
   The Quality Matters Rubric is a set of standards used to measure the quality of a blended or online course. Once you have your course built, this is a helpful guide to evaluate the quality of your course.