

About USD On-Line Course Guidelines

As you are likely aware, CE 6 is not a website, but a Learning Management System. Think of it as an empty shell or a course container which will provide you and your students a place for on-line learning to happen.

CE 6 (and other learning management systems used in higher education) is used most commonly for one or both of the following:

1. A course management tool used primarily for communicating with students
2. A course repository where professor store and make accessible course materials, often the same that have been presented in class

The third category is the most desirable, yet less frequently evidenced.

3. An integrated blended learning course (an effective mixture of on-line and face-to-face teaching and learning)

These guidelines aim initially to identify and advise on the best practice usage of the first two and subsequently further resources for the third and most complex category.

How 'On-Line' does my course need to be?

As a reflection on the universities' commitment to small class sizes and personal attention to students, these guidelines seek to provide best-practice guidance for courses with on-line components used to augment face-to-face sessions, rather than for developing fully on-line courses.

With that in mind, some professors may ask *"If I see my students several times a week, why do I even need an on-line presence?"*.

There are several answers to that question.

- *Pedagogy*: Depending on how a course is designed and moderated, there are significant benefits.
 - Students are able to interact with content and course members to discuss and build knowledge outside of class
 - On-line discussions are egalitarian: more reserved students can be 'heard'
 - Students can be mentored by instructors or other students, learn by reading other's questions/postings
 - Students can revisit material again and again vs. once in class
 - Virtual learning spaces allow learners to learn when they wish
 - Varied content caters to different learning styles
- *Access and Customer Service*:

- Students are accustomed to working on-line and expect to have access to nearly everything at their fingertips twenty-four hours a day. Their grades, course content and ability to contact each other and their instructors are not exceptions. We have the technology; there is no reason why they should not be able to access a certain minimum amount of course information. Of course, taking it further is even more desirable.

How were these guidelines formulated?

- These guidelines have been crafted from extensive best practice research on blended-learning and are underpinned by Chickering and Gamson's 7 Principles of Good Teaching (appendix I) as well as various other sources relating to teaching and learning with technology.

How do I use these guidelines?

These guidelines contain information on the minimum tools and characteristics that a CE6 blended course presence should have speaking mostly to the first two levels at USD. The additional *Taking It Further* sections are geared more towards level three. Which of these levels you choose to deploy will depend on your course learning outcomes and purpose of your on-line augmentation.

Guideline Contents

1. Course Content and Design
2. Communication and Interaction
3. General Course Appearance (Style Guide)
4. Appendix: 7 Principles of Good Teaching

Strategies and Tactics:

<p>Section 1: Content & Design</p>	
<p>Strategy:</p> <p>Provide, in an accessible, organized manner, course information necessary for student success and learning</p>	<p>Principles:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourages Contact Between Students and Faculty 5. Emphasizes Time on Task 6. Communicates High Expectations 7. Respects diverse talents and ways of learning
<p>General Course Characteristics and Tools</p> <p>Course Organization: Folders and Menu</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the WebCT template provided as a starting point • Divide and organize content in a coherent structure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Articles/documents/PowerPoints can be divided up into folders by units, projects, chapters, weeks, goals, etc., as long as you are consistent. • Course menu (left navigation) gives appropriate access <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tools that will not be used should be disabled or 'hidden' so as not to add any confusion <p>Page Organization:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pages should be uncluttered and contain no more that six (6) icons representing the different items/categories • Pages should be arranged so that all icons can be seen without scrolling • File extensions should be included as part of item title example: Basic Economics.ppt • Icons should be placement should be prioritized in order of importance, frequency used or order in which they are to be opened. (see Style Guide for additional information on layout) <p>File Manager:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Files should be located in appropriate categories in the File manager. The folder/file structure of the File Manager should match that of the interface (units, chapters, etc.) • Use standard formats (Word, pdf) to reduce access problem 	<p>Minimum Level Tactics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum - 3 icons should appear on course content page: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1- 'Course Information' contains: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Instructor Info/Bio – informal intro that establishes a tone and begins dialog. ○ Course description & prerequisites necessary ○ Specific skills required, i.e. special software, etc. ○ Textbook & materials list ○ Links to Any Plug-ins/Downloads Necessary ○ Glossary of Terms (if course relevant) ○ Netiquette/Respect Guidelines/Links ○ Rules of Engagement – your expectations/usage of WebCT ○ 2 – 'Syllabus' – teaching goals/learning outcomes clearly stated. (or these may be located with Course Information above): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Course Schedule (Due Dates on Calendar) ▪ Office hours & location (virtual or live) ▪ Course Policies – attend./participation, late work ▪ Grading Scale & Feedback Policy ▪ Academic Integrity Policy/Plagiarism information ▪ Assignments with Rubrics ○ 3 – 'Contact Information' – Instructor & tech support • If you plan to have course content materials, group the information above in one folder called "Course Information" or similar description.
<p>Taking it further: Content and Design</p> <p>Content can be made interactive by integrating tools, such as Discussions, and multimedia and organized sequentially using Learning Modules. See Resources.</p>	<p>Resources: <i>Taking Further: iTeam website, Online Course Guidelines Section</i></p>

Strategies and Tactics:

Section 2: Communication and Interaction	
<p>Strategy:</p> <p>Create a social presence where students can communicate with instructors and other students to co-construct learning by choosing and effectively using appropriate communication tools.</p>	<p>Principles:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourages Contact Between Students and Faculty 2. Develops Reciprocity and Cooperation Among Students 3. Encourages Active Learning 4. Gives prompt feedback 7. Respects diverse talents and ways of learning
<p>Minimum Tools:</p> <p>Mail Calendar Discussions Announcements My Grades</p>	<p>Minimum Level Tactics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Email is monitored often: o Calendar has the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Major dates; exams, assignments, holidays etc o Office hours o Discussion board has the following topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o "Sandbox" forum for students use to learn tool o "Chat Café" un-moderated virtual lounge forum for students to post to each other on any topic o A regularly moderated discussion general Q/A forum for student questions to instructor o Announcements are used judiciously to announce/remind/re-enforce important events or unanticipated changes and set to expire at reasonable times to avoid irrelevancy of tool o The Grade Book is kept up to date and grades; released at the discretion of the instructor o A mechanism is in place, either on-line or F2F to train the students on usage of these tools o Expectations of how these tools are to be used is conveyed, including marking (if any) and netiquette o Timely and effective instructor moderation is critical
<p>Taking it further:</p> <p>The minimum tools and characteristics barely scratch the surface. Explore the Communication and Interaction resources page.</p>	<p>Resources: <i>Taking Further: iTeam website, Online Course Guidelines Section</i></p>

Strategies and Tactics:

Section 3 Course Appearance and Style Guide	
<p>Strategy:</p> <p>Creating an aesthetically pleasing and easy to use course that encourages students to use it often.</p>	<p>Principles:</p> <p>Incorporating well-designed page layout and colors, appropriate font size, icons and images will contribute to an attractive, consistent and easy to use course.</p>
<p>Design elements</p> <p>Fonts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research shows that sans serif fonts are more easily read on computer monitors • High Contrast Colors: black text on a white background provides for easy reading (Arial, Veranda etc) • Size: Control over font size should be left to the user as a browser controlled feature. This allows users to easily increase and decrease font size from within browsers and enhances accessibility <p>Icons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Icons should be chosen to increase comprehension and to reduce clutter. Animated icons should be avoided • Each icon should contain a centered title • Icons should be the default set.* (If another set or customize set is used, use a similar style to ensure consistency) • Size: icon should not exceed 60 x 60 pixels <p>Images:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Images can add to comprehension of course material. For more information on how to add images, sound files, animations or video, please see the Taking it Further section (link) for more information <p>Page Layout:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pages should be designed to fit within a 800x600 window without scrolling • The CE6 template layout should be used if in doubt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use default WebCT tables to organize course content Avoid embedding further tables within tables to enhance the accessibility 	<p>Minimum Level Tactics:</p> <p>Fonts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Font default settings can be found within the My Settings / My Tool Options within CE6. These settings control both font size and type, and are best left at the system default values <p>Icons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From within the course’s Manage Course / Course Content Icons, the icon set named “Learning System” should be selected by default <p>Page Layout:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page Layout default selections can be found under the Build tab / Course Content / Page Options / Customize Page Display. Select Custom Layout with the following Layout Preview settings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Columns: 2 ○ Icon/Text: Icon and Text ○ Icon Placement: Above ○ Alignment: Centered ○ Table Width: Wide Finally, select: Change all existing folders to these settings and click on Apply to save settings

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Background colors are best white, without background images	
<p>Taking it Further: We have seen only a small bit of style recommendations here. To go beyond the basics, see Resources.</p>	<p>Resources: <i>Taking Further: iTeam website, Online Course Guidelines Section</i></p>

Appendix I: Chickering and Gamson’s 7 Principles of Good Teaching

<p>1. Encourages Contact Between Students and Faculty Frequent student-faculty contact in and out of classes is the most important factor in student motivation and involvement. Faculty concern helps students get through rough times and keep on working. Knowing a few faculty members well enhances students' intellectual commitment.</p>	<p>5. Emphasizes Time on Task There is no substitute for time on task. Learning to use one's time well is critical for students and professionals alike. Students need help in learning effective time management. Allocating realistic amounts of time means effective learning for students and effective teaching for faculty. How an institution defines time expectations for students, faculty, administrators, and other professional staff can establish the basis of high performance for all.</p>
<p>2. Develops Reciprocity and Cooperation Among Students Learning is enhanced when it is more like a team effort than a solo race. Good learning, like good work, is collaborative and social, not competitive and isolated. Working with others often increases involvement in learning. Sharing one's own ideas and responding to others' reactions sharpens thinking and deepens understanding.</p>	<p>6. Communicates High Expectations Expect more and you will get more. High expectations are important for everyone -- for the poorly prepared, for those unwilling to exert themselves, and for the bright and well motivated. Expecting students to perform well becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy when teachers and institutions hold high expectations for themselves and make extra efforts.</p>
<p>3. Encourages Active Learning Learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much just by sitting in classes listening to teachers, memorizing pre-packaged assignments, and spitting out answers. They must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences and apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves.</p>	<p>7. Respects Diverse Talents and Ways of Learning People bring different talents and styles of learning to college. Students rich in hands-on experience may not do so well with theory. Students need the opportunity to show their talents and learn in ways that work for them. Then they can be pushed to learn in new ways that do not come so easily.</p>
<p>4. Gives Prompt Feedback Knowing what you know and don't know focuses learning. Students need appropriate feedback on performance to benefit from courses. When getting started, students need help in assessing existing knowledge and competence. In classes, students need frequent opportunities to perform and receive suggestions for improvement. At various points during college, and at the end, students need chances to reflect on what they have learned, what they still need to know, and how to assess themselves.</p>	

Chickering , Arthur. "SEVEN PRINCIPLES FOR GOOD PRACTICE." FACULTY DEVELOPMENT AT HONOLULU COMMUNITY COLLEGE. 12 Oct 2004
 <<http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/7princip.htm>> .