New Mexico State University Alamogordo
Online Delivery Standards

What defines NMSU-A's online learning experience for students? The design will be defined by the Standards of the Quality Matters Rubric; however, the delivery of that well-designed course must also be defined. Instructors must actively participate or demonstrate presence in the course on a consistent basis, multiple days per week.

The desire is for faculty to model engagement expected of students. Students are more successful when they actively participate in any course. When students see their instructor actively engaged, the students are, in turn, more likely to engage with the instructor, the course activities, and their peers. Thus, faculty should plan to model engagement in the course that is expected of their students. Students have the right to know that their instructor, an expert in the discipline, is teaching the course in which they are enrolled.

Presence in the online classroom must include general communication to the class as a whole along with timely feedback to the individual student.   At NMSU-A presence means:

- delivering the instruction personally, not simply from outside resources such as the textbook, publisher created material and external websites;
- giving meaningful feedback by completing a rubric with specific comments; and
- engaging in real-time interaction with students within the course.

The student must absolutely know there is an instructor teaching the course and directing the learning.

In an effort to ensure these criteria are met, to help create an interactive environment like the one found in a face-to-face course, and to ensure NMSU-A students know and benefit from strong instructor presence in their online courses, delivery standards have been identified.

In order to achieve this best practice, the instructor will:

- **Delivery Standard 1 - Provide meaningful, instructor-initiated feedback weekly in Canvas on assignments. This feedback should include formative assessment measures that lead to summative assessments (Response time provided in Standard 2).**

  Individual feedback will be given on every assignment unless multiple assignments are given in a week and then individual feedback will be provided on at least one assignment.

  When publisher material (ALEKS, LabSim, WebAssign, SAM, Mastering, Coursemate, MyLAB, etc.) is utilized, the faculty member needs to provide individual feedback to each student based on the work that occurred in that publisher LMS. For example, if you are using WebAssign for student assignments, each week you will give feedback in Canvas to every individual student based on specific performance. NMSU-A students should know that there is an instructor in the course and that they are being taught by that instructor instead of the publisher material. Although, these excellent tools provide instant feedback for the students, teacher presence and feedback are also necessary.

  In any course, it is detrimental for students to work on projects or course content that has summative components without having feedback from their instructor on earlier work. For instance, a mid-term or final exam is generally precipitated by earlier assignments and/or discussions.

Students should receive feedback so they can make appropriate changes as they prepare for summative projects.

- **Delivery Standard 2 - Provide feedback within 1 week of an assignment due date.** This time should be adjusted in a short-term course*.

  Timely feedback is important in order for students to progress through a course.

  Exception: Not all assignments can be graded in a single week; this is dependent upon the size of the class and the complexity of the assignment. However, an instructor can give meaningful feedback in a timely manner which may include announcements on how grading is progressing, reasons for delayed grading, and general feedback to the entire class explaining when to expect individual feedback.

- **Delivery Standard 3 – Demonstrate an active presence in the class by attending on multiple days per week and by communicating information of an academic nature to the entire class weekly.** This time should be adjusted for a short-term course*.

  Best practice in online instruction supports engaging and ongoing communication between the instructor and an entire class. It is not always necessary to communicate elaborate information weekly, but some consistent communication should come in the form of weekly announcements or regular class updates.

  This communication must demonstrate that the instructor is communicating live and not using pre-recorded or pre-written communication. Communication should be current and relevant to each course. This communication can include general course information, but to meet the HED standards, it must also include information of an academic nature.

  Examples acceptable to use in your course:
  - *Weekly announcements or overviews of important information and concepts that will be covered*
  - *Summarizing the discussion board weekly*
  - *Posting weekly instructor tips on the help forum*

  Examples that do not meet the communication standard:
  - *Pre-recorded lectures or overview videos (although extremely important for the course)*
  - *Announcements that have been imported from previous courses*
  - *Simply reminding students of upcoming due dates and not including other relevant academic information*

- **Delivery Standard 4 - Respond to student email within 48 hours during the scheduled workweek for a full-term course or within 24 hours for any short-term course*. NMSU email or Canvas Conversations (Inbox) should be used for all correspondence.**

  It is understood that faculty have non-traditional work hours, especially adjunct faculty. The goal of this standard is flexibility, but consistency. It is within acceptable practice for an instructor to "work" Tuesday through Saturday, for instance, as long as an instructor's workweek is clearly defined for students.

If an email is received on a Friday, then a response is expected by Monday of the following week. If an instructor has an alternate schedule, which provides for a nontraditional workweek, this should be clearly explained to students at the beginning of the semester.

- **Delivery Standard 5 - Utilize a help forum by encouraging student use. Respond within 48 hours or 24 hours during any short-term course*.**

Best practice for online instruction encourages the use of "help" forums, "question and answer" forums and other forms of open, threaded discussion. These forums can be helpful for both students and instructors, as often students answer questions for each other. Regular participation in a "help" discussion by the instructor can mediate many forms of course questions as well as notify an instructor when something in the LMS has not worked as expected. This equates to in-class question/answer sessions. Students ask open questions to an instructor and all students have access to that question as well as the answer. It can also help with community-building in the course by supporting a student-centered approach.

It is imperative the instructor encourage participation in these help forums. Make sure to subscribe to the forum and even if another student answers the question, the instructor should also comment to verify the accuracy of the response.

Examples:
  - *If a student emails a question that is general in nature, copy and paste to the help forum with your response so all students can take advantage of the information.*
  - *Require students to post to the help forum about a topic that was unclear. This gets them to post, which will hopefully then lead to more postings.*
  - *Give extra credit points to students who posted in the help forum and to those who respond to the postings of others to provide help.*

- **Delivery Standard 6 - Encourage regular interaction between students.**

It is impossible to replicate the kind of interaction students experience in a face-to-face class in an online environment; however, attempts should be made to create student-to-student interaction. Interaction among students can support learning objectives, create meaningful exchange of ideas, and provide an enriched experience for students as they work through course material. Student-to-student interaction can come in the form of threaded discussion, peer review, team projects, and open forums. Student-to-student interaction activities cannot be optional.

If discussions are provided in the course for student-to-student interaction, responding to the postings of classmates is not optional and must have meaningful point value. Students typically do not participate when the activity is optional or does not have weighted value.

The instructor must take an active role in encouraging students to participate. Some examples of this include:
  - *talking about discussions in weekly announcements,*
  - *writing discussion summaries, or*
  - *using synchronous course tools.*

- **Delivery Standard 7 – Grades must be kept in the LMS (Canvas) and updated weekly.**

  Online students should have access to their grades at all times. Since the course is housed in the LMS, the grades must be posted in the LMS. If outside publisher resources are used and assignments are scored on the publisher site, then either integrate so the grades automatically post to Canvas or move the grades from the publisher LMS to Canvas weekly. If not already given, the individual feedback required in Delivery Standard 1 should also be provided.

- **Delivery Standard 8 - Communicate in a constructive and supportive manner.**

  Constructive and supportive communication can be provided in discussion forums, in open help forums, in announcements, in NMSU emails, as well as in feedback given to students. Best practice encourages multiple forms of communication within a course, and this communication should be professional, constructive, and supportive.

Now that you have been introduced to the delivery standards, it is important that you can see that the delivery standards work together holistically in ensuring instructor presence and a high-quality learning environment for students.

Standards can and should be used together. For example, an announcement can provide a weekly interaction with the entire class while encouraging student-to-student interaction, providing substantive academic information, and connecting learning.

NMSU-A's delivery standards will help ensure instructor presence, engagement, and provide quality online instruction for our students.

*Short-term course would include any course 8 weeks or less. Anything that occurs weekly in a full-term course needs to be adjusted to 3 to 4 days for an 8-week course and 2 days for a 5-week course.

Biography

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