Department of Public Administration Online Teaching Best Practices

Public Administration online teaching best practices reflect our recommendations for teaching online courses in our department. The focus is on instruction time, synchronous audio/visual interaction with students (a comparatively media-rich modality to foster student participation and connection with the material, the professor, and each other), and course organization. Each individual instructor has different strengths and models of teaching. The best practices are not intended to interfere with academic freedom or faculty individuality, but to improve course consistency and learning outcomes.

1. Faculty provide approximately 200 minutes of instructionally-facilitated teaching/learning methods per week (150 minutes under semesters) roughly equivalent in time to the face-to-face classroom. This includes lecture (by videoconference or video) and various types of student activities (small group discussions, weekly assignments, weekly quizzes). This does not include readings, student practice which is not reviewed by the instructor (e.g., study guide questions and on-your-own activities) or papers, and projects to be completed individually by students.

2. As a general guide, at least 20% of that time (40 minutes per week under quarters or 30 minutes under semesters) are recommended to be instructor-led, synchronous audio/video instruction by Zoom or its software equivalent. Because Zoom sessions may be sporadic rather than weekly, and the material may be varied, instructor-led time may vary on a week-by-week basis (for example, an instructor may teach a one-hour synchronous session every two weeks or a two-hour synchronous session every four weeks). We recommend using this synchronous-interaction time to facilitate discussions rather than present new material.

3. As a general guide, at least 20% of that time (40 minutes under quarters or 30 minutes under semesters) consists of instructor-led video lectures, preferably broken into short lectures.

4. Instructors offer appropriate alternative arrangements for students who cannot participate in the live sessions in such a way that these synchronous "full class" sessions are well attended. (The alternative often results in low student turnout and flagging student enthusiasm.)

5. All courses require one hour of "office hours" per week.

6. Instructors are prompt in their grading, when providing feedback to student work and when responding to student inquiries. The most frequent criticism of instructors (in all instructional modalities) are about response time to inquiries and grading.

7. Student-Student engagement: Online classes have media-rich mechanisms for students to engage with each other beyond posting reports or assignments.

8. Learning goals/outcomes are listed either in the syllabus or on Blackboard, along with corresponding assignments that will assess the learning goals. A clear grading system is maintained in Blackboard Gradebook, Excel or equivalent.

9. All classes are - to the extent possible - accessible to the differently abled. Blackboard Ally and ATI consultants can assist in evaluations.

10. Best Practices include a welcome video from or synchronous first class meeting with the instructor, a menu or syllabus item with links to university help resources, and a specification of technology needs.

11. We recommend instructors:

(1) Ask ATI for a review of your class site and suggested improvements;

(2) Consult the Quality Matters Guidelines for best practices Online Class https://www.qualitymatters.org/sites/default/files/PDFs/StandardsfromtheQMHigherEducationRubric.pdf; and

(3) Review the Cal State System/QLT utilizes this rubric from Chico https://www.csuchico.edu/eoi/_assets/documents/rubric.pdf