

VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY

# eTuition Course Design Preparation Guide

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The eLearning Department will work with the Faculty Course Developer in the design, development and/or customization of all eTuition courses. The eLearning Department will contribute to the course design and application of online instructional tools so that each course meets the Quality Matters standards.

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## VSU eLearning

The eLearning Department (formally Distance Learning) will work with in the design, development, and customization of all eTuition courses. The eLearning Department will contribute to the course design and application of online instructional tools so that each course meets the Quality Matters standards.

## BlazeVIEW

eTuition courses are developed and hosted with the VSU BlazeVIEW course management system. eLearning provides various Professional Development Workshops to assist the developer to meet technical competency. Please note the workshops below are highly recommended for successful completion of course design. Your department may have additional workshop requirements.

Professional Development Workshops include: Introduction to BlazeVIEW, Advanced BlazeVIEW, Gradebook, Introduction to Wimba (Communication Tools), Quality Matters Training, Accessibility, and Gradebook

Online course content within BlazeVIEW is built using web pages with additional course tools for student interaction. Content pages, lecture notes, course syllabus, and other course documents should be provided in a 'web-friendly' format. Microsoft recommends not using Word documents in a web site. Word documents can be converted to a web-friendly format by saving as Web Page Filtered or in PDF format. If a stand- alone document is created, save as a PDF (portable document format). The eLearning Department can assist you with appropriate web formats for your course documents (see eLearning Guide on Word document conversion). Please Note: Forms or templates to be submitted by students may be left in Word format since they are attached to course components like the assignment and discussion tools. If PowerPoint files do not have many graphics that are vital to concepts, then convert to "Notes View, 3 slides per Page" PDF.

Please make sure to save back-up copies of all your work. Good ideas include saving your work onto your V: drive here at VSU, an external hard drive and a flash drive or CD.

## Quality Matters

As an eTuition Faculty Course Developer, the faculty member has agreed to develop an online course to meet the national standards in distance learning established by Quality Matters (QM), and to take the completed course design through the QM peer review process. The eLearning Department facilitates the QM process. The Course Developer should:

- Attend the QM Applying the Standards Workshop (contact the eLearning Department for workshop opportunities)
- Obtain the Quality Matters Standards from eLearning to use as a guide for the development of the course or visit: <http://qualitymatters.org/Rubric.htm>.
  - Select 'forty specific elements' in the first paragraph.

The remainder of this guide correlates the Quality Matters Rubric with BlazeVIEW Course Tools and services provided by the eLearning Department. The eLearning Department located in the

Odum Library, Room 2619, 229-245-6490, is available Monday thru Thursday, 8:00 – 5:30pm and Friday, 8:00 – 3:00pm.

The eLearning Department assists all faculty members in all facets of the design and development of the eTuition course. Additional resources include help sections for faculty in BlazeVIEW. The first is 'Faculty Help Resources-BlazeVIEW for Faculty' followed by 'Intro to BlazeVIEW-Sandbox' and 'eTuition Project-eTuition Template'.

## Getting Started Module

Students may log into the course for the first time and question, "What do I do and how does this work?" The Getting Started module is a great place to answer these questions and set the stage for the semester. As a Faculty Course Developer, eLearning has provided you with an eTuition course template. Consider using Wimba Voice tools to record an Audio Introduction.

Elements of the Getting Started Module may include:

1. A 'Welcome' Announcement (QM Standard 1.4)
  - a. Tell the students a little bit of yourself including areas of expertise and interest.
2. Learning Outcomes (QM Standard 2.1)
3. Syllabus (QM Standard 1.2)
4. Class Policies (QM Standard 1.2)
5. Protocols (QM Standard 1.3)
  - a. Etiquette expectations ("netiquette") for online discussions, email and all other forms of communications
6. Technical Requirements (QM Standard 1.7)
7. What the professor expects from the students (QM Standards 1.2)
8. What the students can expect from the professor (QM Standards 1.2)
9. Mail Assignments (QM Standard 1.2)
10. Ask Course Questions (QM Standard 1.2)
11. Course prerequisite and competencies (QM Standard 1.6)

## Communicating with Student(s)

BlazeVIEW provides the opportunity for the faculty member to communicate with students within the context of the course shell (QM Standard 1.2). Faculty members should consider the following options:

- Provide a guide that informs students how to communicate with you. Include office hours and availability to deliver feedback (QM Standard 1.2) Set specific days/times when you will be checking communication inside the course and any other forms of communication.
- A Course Questions area can be created using the BlazeVIEW Discussion Tool where students post questions and faculty and their peers can assist. Compose a statement in the Getting Started module that informs students how to do so.
  - Example instructions: "If you have questions, the first thing you should do is review the syllabus and course schedule. After checking these items, if you continue to have questions please post them to the Course Questions discussion area (be specific). Feel free to help your peers with the answer. I will also review your questions and provide assistance. Please Note: For concerns of a private

nature (such as grades and feedback), please use the Mail tool in this course to discuss your issue.”

## Syllabus

The Syllabus (QM Standard 1.2) is provided online for the convenience of faculty and students and helps save class time for distribution and paper! The link provided below is from the Valdosta State University Office of Academic Affairs, <http://www.valdosta.edu/academic/Syllabi.shtml>. If the faculty member's department provides a syllabus template, additional information can be added in a Getting Started section even if the faculty member addressed some of these items earlier in other areas of the Getting Started module. It may be desirable to reiterate, especially on critical issues. A detailed syllabus helps both instructors and students. Points to include:

- Logging In
  - A statement that informs students that the course uses BlazeVIEW, the Blackboard course management system.
- Attendance Requirement
  - A statement informing students to log into the course on a regular basis.
- Technical Support
  - A statement similar to, “Issues with technology will not be used as an excuse for not submitting assignments or completing assessments. If an issue should arise, take the time to contact the IT Helpdesk (<http://www.valdosta.edu/helpdesk/>, 229-245-4357 (HELP)) to resolve the problem. Accommodations will be made when there are system wide errors or issues that affect the entire class (QM Standard 7.1).”
- Accessibility
  - The course being developed should meet the standards of the American Disabilities Act (ADA). Accommodations statement should comply with the institution's accessibility and/or disability policies and procedures (QM Standard 8.1). Include a link to VSU's Access Office, <http://www.valdosta.edu/access/facresources.shtml>.

“Students requesting classroom accommodations or modifications due to a documented disability must contact the Access Office for Students with Disabilities located in room 1115 Nevins Hall. The phone numbers are 229-245-2498 (V/VP) and 229-219-1348 (TTY).”

- Academic Integrity: Instructors should provide a statement explaining their expectations for academic integrity and detailing how incidents of cheating and plagiarism will be handled in the class.

From VSU's Academic Integrity Code (the full code is available at <http://www.valdosta.edu/academic/AcademicHonestyPoliciesandProcedures.shtml>):

“Academic integrity is the responsibility of all VSU faculty and students. Faculty members should promote academic integrity by including clear instruction on the components of academic integrity and clearly defining the penalties for cheating and plagiarism in their course syllabi. Students are responsible for knowing and abiding by the Academic Integrity Policy as set forth in the Student Code of Conduct and the faculty members' syllabi. All students are expected to do their own work and to uphold a high standard of academic ethics. “

- Netiquette
  - Classroom demeanor or conduct: Instructors should provide their expectations of students' behavior in the classroom and/or in situations outside of class or in online environments (QM Standard 1.3, i.e., use of electronic devices, classroom courtesy, etc.).

## Course Schedule

A course schedule (QM Standard 1.2) should be made available in the syllabus. This schedule will provide due dates for all assignments, assessments, and interactions (AAI's). The schedule can be placed in a separate document; however direct the students to this separate location.

## Syllabus Quiz

As part of the orientation to the course, you may wish to set the course up so that students have to take a syllabus quiz before they can access the course content. Once the student successfully completes the quiz, the Unit 1 Module and any other modules will be turned on (QM Standard 1.1).

## Introductions

Building a sense of community is important for online classes to prevent students from feeling isolated (QM Standard 1.5). For example, in the Getting Started module, you may ask students to introduce themselves using the Discussion Tool. An example question to pose in the Discussion area:

*Introduce yourself and include your major, why you are taking this course and provide three statements of information as it relates to you. Two of these statements are true and one is false. Respond to at least three other students and try to guess which of their statements is false. If you see a student's post that has not received a response, choose that student's Introduction first. Post your answer by Day 5 at 11:59pm / EST of Unit 1. Respond to at least three other students by the end of the unit, Day 7 at 11:59pm / EST.*

At this point, essential QM standards 1.1 – 1.7 found in the Getting Started module should be complete. You may wish to add other elements to customize the student orientation for your course.

## Course Content

Content supports the completion of assignments and the achievement of outcomes. All outcomes and assignments should be supported with content. Content and assignments should be aligned with the course content (QM Standard 4.1). Students often become overwhelmed when given too much information at one time. Unit or Learning Modules and Course folders are an effective way for students to navigate the course content (QM Standard 6.3). It is best to avoid organizing by textbook chapters since textbooks are continually updated with new editions. Unit or Learning Modules may include learning objectives for the unit, measurable outcomes, content, and instructions for all AAI's (Assessments, Assignments, and Interactions) (QM Standard 4.1 and 4.2).

## Learning Objectives

Course learning outcomes describe are measurable (QM Standard 2.1). Measurable course learning outcomes precisely describe what students are to gain from instruction, and then guide instructors to accurately assess student accomplishment. Outcomes should describe student performance in specific, observable terms. If this specificity is not possible (e.g., internal cognition, affective changes), check for clear indications that the learning outcome is meaningfully assessed. Each unit or module begins with learning outcomes.

These learning outcomes describe objectives that are measurable and consistent with course-level objectives. This manner of design clearly conveys what students will learn and how to demonstrate skill mastery. All unit content, activities, assignments, and assessments should be aligned to the unit objectives (QM Standard 2.2).

## Copyright Laws

It is the responsibility of the Faculty Course Designer to ensure the accuracy and authenticity of the course (QM Standard 4.4). The University System of Georgia and Valdosta State University have provided resources to assist you. The University System of Georgia Legal Affairs has a link to the 'Guide to the TEACH Act', [http://www.usg.edu/legal/teach\\_act/](http://www.usg.edu/legal/teach_act/).

The Technology, Education and Copyright Harmonization (TEACH) Act was enacted in November 2002 as an amendment to the Copyright Act of 1976. Found in section 110(2) of the Act, it covers distance education as well as face to face teaching which has an online, web enhanced, transmitted or broadcast component. It exempts from liability the transmission, including over a digital network, of a performance or display of a copyrighted work by an accredited non-profit educational institution to students officially enrolled in a course or a government body to officers or employees of government as a part of their official duties or employment. *It does not cover making textual materials available to students.*

The University System of Georgia also provides a revised checklist based upon the Copyright Advisory Office at Columbia University's "Fair Use Checklist", [http://www.usg.edu/copyright/fair\\_use\\_checklist/](http://www.usg.edu/copyright/fair_use_checklist/).

The University System of Georgia Copyright Policy on the Use of Copyrighted Works in Education and Research may be found at <http://www.usg.edu/copyright/>.

VSU's Odum Library provides resources on how to cite electronic resources, <http://www.valdosta.edu/library/learn/howto.shtml>

## Resources and Materials

The course content should contain comprehensive instructional material that allows the student to achieve the course objectives and learning outcomes (QM Standard 6.1). When designing an online course, provide the purpose of any technologies used (i.e. websites, videos, podcast, tutorials, etc.) and cite each source properly. Technology should be used to support student engagement and guide the student to become an active learner (QM Standard 6.2). The use of technology should be readily available and easy to navigate.

## Audio

Consider recording audio clips of course concepts. To meet ADA standards, provide a text alternative.

- Contact the Odum Library Media Center at 229-333-5863 for assistance
- Convert audio to MP3 format
- Decide whether Podcasting is a good choice

## Video

Is there a selection of videos for the course?

- Make sure that links to external websites are working properly
- Contact the Odum Library Media Center to digitize video clips (To ensure accuracy, Odum Library offers Copyright and Fair Use Tutorials ([http://www.valdosta.edu/library/media/copyright\\_tutorials.shtml](http://www.valdosta.edu/library/media/copyright_tutorials.shtml))).
- Consider using Screen capture software such as Camtasia or Captivate to demonstrate hard to understand concepts.

## Assignments

Learning activities should align the course content to the learning objectives by engaging students in activities that promote higher order and critical thinking skills. Activities may be varied to provide reinforcement and mastery in multiple learning styles (QM Standard 3.1).

## Safe Assign

Safe Assign provides technology services to detect and prevent cases of Internet plagiarism. Safe Assign is a tool within BlazeVIEW. For more information and/or workshop schedule, please contact eLearning, 229-245-6490 or [blazeview@valdosta.edu](mailto:blazeview@valdosta.edu).

## Rubrics / Grading Forms

Grading policies should be clearly stated in the syllabus and again in the assessment. A grading rubric is an excellent tool that supports grading criteria (QM Standard 3.3). The eLearning Department will assist faculty developing rubrics for the course.

A project with many parts may begin early in the course and conclude towards the end while continuously building on material learned. Clear expectations are stated by the professor for the student using a grading rubric.

- How much time will it take students to complete each assignment?
  - Estimate how much time it will take to complete each assignment
- Give specific file format type for assignment (example: PDF, doc, rtf, etc.)
- Is the assignment for students to complete individually, as a group, or do you desire that the whole class be able to see submissions and review each other's work?
  - If students are to submit independently (for your eyes only), use the Assignment Tool.
  - If students are to submit as a group or class assignment, use the Discussion Tool or make the assignment publishable.
- Written assignment instructions should be *very specific*.

- If the assignment requires that students submit with Assignment Tool, then specify if students are to type a message in the assignment text box or attach a document.
- Clarify the naming convention for each assignment (example: Name your document for Project 1, Part A as 'JDoe\_Project1PartA.doc'. Replace 'JDoe' with student's first initial and last name). Choose a Due date for your students (example: Due Day 7 of Unit 1 by 11:59PM/EST).
- Do you accept late assignments? If you accept late assignments, what is the cutoff date? Do you penalize late assignments? If so, what are the penalties?

## Assessments

Just like an assignment which assesses the student's knowledge, assessments including exams should vary in the course and correlate with objectives and activities for the unit (QM Standard 3.1).

- Utilize publisher test banks and/or assessments to increase the number of questions included in an assessment.
- Configure online assessments to include question sets and adjust properties to randomize the question numbering and answer ordering (where appropriate).
- When appropriate, adjust assessment properties

Online assessments should be viewed as open book tests or home assignments, and are not recommended to be weighted heavily.

Pitfalls to avoid include designing a course with no assessments due until the end of the semester. Other pitfalls are assessing students' knowledge with only one type of test and also not providing a rubric (QM Standard 3.1).

## Group Work and Discussions

Group and partner assignments can increase student performance. The Group Manager and Discussion Tool are a great way to help students collaborate (QM Standard 5.2).

The Discussion Tool is an excellent tool for students to submit their work for the whole class (or group) to see. Class members can respond to their post.

- Create discussion assignments that require students to respond with a personal reflection (avoid those that are only factual). Include instructions that require students to read all the other student submissions and respond to 1-3 of their peers. An example set of instructions may include:
  - Make your initial postings before 11:59 p.m. U.S. EST/EDT on Day 5, and then review your classmates' postings. After Day 5, respond to at least one of your classmates' postings. Make your final postings before 11:59 p.m. U.S. EST/EDT on the last day of this unit. Discussion postings should always be thoughtful and courteous and include some references or direct evidence from the unit's content, readings, or assignments to support your statements.

A grading rubric is strongly suggested when evaluating a student's overall skills in the Discussion area (QM Standard 3.3). Did the student post and respond to the appropriate number of Discussions each week? Were the posts clearly written and grammatically correct?

Were the thoughts and opinions conveyed matched with material read inside the course or supported by outside sources?

## **In Closing**

Teaching an online course can be exciting and rewarding for both the student and professor if designed in a meaningful way. The eLearning Department will work with each professor to ensure that the Quality Matter Standards are met and the transition from face to face instruction to online be a positive experience.