

Bluegrass Community and Technical College

Effective Online Best Practices

Revised April 2015

Teaching online is less about the mechanics of technology and more about what makes for an effective educational experience, regardless of when, where, or how it is delivered.

Definition: The term online learning is faculty-delivered instruction via the Internet. Online instruction includes real-time (synchronous) and anytime, anywhere (asynchronous) interactions.

The guidelines in this document were developed by the Distance Learning Advisory Committee with the input from experienced online instructors and the Academic Standards and Admissions Committee. It is intended to offer guidance, not policy, for first time online instructors as they prepare courses for the virtual classroom. It covers:

- Developing an Online Course
- Launching an Online Course
- Managing an Online Course

Faculty members who need assistance with any of the guidelines in this document should contact an online facilitator, an eMentor or the Coordinator of Technology Training and Distance Learning Support listed on the **Distance Learning Directory** included with this document.

Definition: An eMentor is an experienced online instructor who has volunteered to mentor new online instructors in the preparation of courses, instructional uses of Blackboard to meet learners' needs, and ongoing support during the process of managing an online course.

Definition: An online facilitator is an appointed faculty member who supports the work of the Distance Learning Director, the eMentors, and new online instructors.

The planning of your online course begins months before the opening day of the course. This will require a considerable amount of time, but it will be worth the time and effort and almost always insures a well-designed, trouble free course. Getting trained to effectively use your Learning Management System is the first step in becoming an online instructor. Blackboard training is provided by the Distance Learning Office. Once you have completed your Blackboard training, you are ready to begin developing your course.

Definition: A Learning Management System describes the software use to facilitate online instruction. KCTCS has adopted Blackboard as its primary LMS.

Developing an Online Course

- Instructional Design
- Syllabus Preparation

Effective online instruction provides an environment of interaction and communication that allows students to feel safe, welcomed, and connected to their fellow students and instructor. Online instruction provides opportunities for students to share experiences, ideas, and resources that reinforce the learning of others. This environment begins with a student friendly, clearly communicated **instructional design** and a well-organized **syllabus**.

Definition: Instructional design is the process of developing well-structured instructional materials including related teaching strategies, systematic feedback, and assessment instruments intended to produce the skills, learning, and behaviors as set out in the course objectives.

Instructional Design

Instructional design requires thorough instructional and audience analysis. An online course needs to reflect a clear understanding of the learner and learning needs of the course so as to incorporate diverse learning and assessment strategies which will meet the learning outcomes and goals of the course curriculum.

A popular student-friendly Blackboard design is one in which the course is organized in **units** or modules which may include:

- Unit introduction
- Unit objectives
- Unit activities and lessons
- Unit due dates
- Unit resources
- Unit feedback
- Unit assessments

Definition: A unit or module is the breaking of ideas into small “chunks” or distinct instructional components.

A **unit** is a small but well-organized part of the course content. Depending on the discipline, units can be composed of thematic sections (i.e. the roaring twenties, the depression) or chapter groups (i.e. Unit One – Chapters 1-6) or a multitude of other ways. The purpose in dividing the course into some type of sequential order has many effective purposes. Units establish the process of the course as you continue to use the pattern throughout the semester. Units contain all the information and materials needed for each section. Units aid the students’ ability to find the information quickly and consistently and provide easy navigation of the website.

The **unit introduction** presents a brief overview of the tasks (work) required including the objectives of each assignment, due dates and time deadlines, additional resources and assignments and assessment measures and criteria.

Example: *This course is divided into four units (module). Each section has chapter readings from the required text, additional readings (links provided), an online lecture, an online discussion, and a unit test. The test for unit one is a timed objective exam. The duration of each unit is approximately four weeks.*

There are a variety of ways to organize the structure of an online course. Chunking the curriculum in an orderly manner (units) which you repeat during the semester will keep the students aware of what is expected during the semester. Students may need to be reminded that although online learning is anytime learning, it does not mean anytime submissions. Using clearly defined units which include most of the categories (or some form of them) will alleviate learner confusion about what is expected and when. The more the initial instructional design is repeated, the less time will be spent answering emails and questions about the course.

Course Introduction and Navigation

Information and instructions to the students should be included in in a **Getting Started** area. This area should include instructions about how the course is set up or suggestions for successful course navigation. Describe your course layout. Are all the activities in the modules or units? Should students access assignments within the module or directly? This will essentially be a description for the students of your basic course design. The more guidance you can give to the students, the easier it will be for them to get involved in the course.

Contact information

Although this is typically part of the syllabus, it is convenient to have a separate document listing your contact information. You should include your office number, office hours, specific times set aside for the online course, preferred method of contact, phone number(s) and any guidelines for times when phone calls are acceptable or other details you want to include. Real-time communications with students is an important aspect of any online course. This is easily accomplished by telephone and/or online chats. Specify the times and places learners can depend on contacting you. If you cannot be available at your stated time, give an alternate time when you will be available.

Example: *If you need to call or email me, my office hours are on Monday and Wednesday mornings from 9-11:00 and on Fridays from 1-3:00.*

Syllabus Preparation

Although the online syllabus contains the standard requirements of the in-class syllabus, it also needs other information that pertains to the online environment. Students frequently feel disoriented without the standard face-to-face explanations of the traditional classroom. As such,

the online syllabus must be more detailed than the classroom syllabus. To limit the size of the syllabus document, you can write many of these extra elements as separate policies.

Recommended Syllabus guidelines are provided on the BCTC Web site:

[Suggestions for Online Syllabi](#)

Path: Academics >> Distance Learning >> Faculty Resources >> Syllabus Checklist

Some of the more important details needed in an effective online syllabus are:

Online Class Procedures

Any special procedure and process used in the online course – i.e. how to proceed each week for the class activities and tasks, how to label assignments, how to post assignments, the requirements for assignments.

Online Class Participation

A clear description of what constitutes expected participation in class (i.e. students should participate in weekly class discussion and post an original discussion question three times during the semester). Also important is adding a clear description of what constitutes attendance. The College defines attendance for “no show” reporting as a graded assignment within the first week of class. Be sure your policy reflects this requirement. Including a statement that “logging into the course does not constitute participation for attendance purposes” is good practice.

Example: *Since regular and active participation is an essential aspect of this online class, I expect you to log on three times out of every seven days. Or, I expect you to log on Mondays and Wednesdays to read the announcements.*

Preferred Method of Communication

Preferred method of communication is a way to let students know how you want them to contact you and what time frame they can expect a response in. This can include email, phone or even texting, if you prefer, and the length of time, and exceptions to the length of time, they should reasonably expect a response.

Example: *If you need to contact me my preferred method of communication is by email at **email address**. I will read email every week day before 11:00AM unless it is a weekend. I will respond to email within 48 hours unless it is a weekend in which case it may be longer. I will not be responding to email during Spring break.*

Example: *If you need to speak to me call me at **Office number** during office hours or email me for a phone appointment.*

Specific Due Dates

Due dates have to be specific to avoid confusion. Avoid using dates like week one, week two. The more specificity the less confusion so add as much as possible to the due dates. Due dates should allow flexibility for learner’s work schedules, and permit some alternatives for situations

that may interfere with the learner's ability to interact. Many students find having a weekend between the posting of an activity and its due date to be beneficial.

Example: *Assignment #1 must be posted before midnight, Friday, March 20, 2010, EST.*

Late Work Policies

A late work policy should be provided if you have specific due dates. The policy should provide for technical problems that can cause down-time.

Technical Requirements

Hardware and software requirements of the course including external website or publisher site access. Give them information about the location of equipped computers on the campus.

Technical Support

During the semester, technical problems should be expected. Include a guide to technical assistance with phone numbers, links, and emails that will allow students to contact technical or administrative support. In the event the students cannot post on a published date, a contingency plan is also a good idea.

Example: *For 24/7 help with technical problems, contact: KCTCS Help Desk at (866) – 590-9238. If the system is down when a test or posting is required, I will notify you about a new posting deadline when the system is working.*

Testing Procedures

If proctored exams (maximum of two per semester) are a part of the online testing procedures, the manner, places, and times of those exams should be stated in the syllabus.

Example: *This online section requires proctored exams which may be scheduled to an on-site location (be as specific as possible).*
http://bluegrass.kctcs.edu/Academics/Proctoring_Center.aspx

Web Etiquette

Because students are unable to see and hear verbal cues from the members of the class, it is best to inform them of the level web etiquette at the onset of the course.

Example: *Our online discussions are open class discussions so I will expect the same respect you would show each other in the regular classroom. Being polite does not mean you cannot disagree with a class member or the teacher but be sure to do it in a polite manner.*

Withdrawal Policy and Procedure

Along with the standard college and system policy for withdrawing from a class during the semester, withdrawing from online courses may have a different procedure for dropping or withdrawing from class. Directions for withdrawal are available from the college Web site: Path: Academics/Distance Learning.

ADA Policies

Online courses must be designed so that learners with vision, hearing, and mobility impairments can access the information, complete the assignments, and take the required exams. Check with your coordinator about current ADA policies.

Expectations

You should state your expectations of your students. These could include:

- How often do you expect the student to log in each week?
- If you have specific due dates, emphasize this.

Example: *Although this is an asynchronous course, it is not self-paced. Each assignment, test and quiz will have a due date associated with it. Tests, quizzes and assignments will not be accepted late (or only one-week late with a 10 point deduction).*

You can also let students know what they can expect from you.

- How often will you check in on the course?
- Time frame for responding to e-mails (within 24 or 48 hours)
- Time frame for grading (generally within 1 week or 2 weeks)
- Will you be available when assignments are due?

Example: *Assignments, quizzes and exams are generally due on Sunday night. It is unlikely that I will be checking the course on Saturday and Sunday. Therefore, I will not be available for last minute help. For technical difficulties, contact the Blackboard help desk.*

Accommodating Time Extensions. Accommodating time extensions is one common issue confronting online faculty. A time extension gives Disability Support Services (DSS) students additional time to take a test. Blackboard has tools to provide exceptions for extended time with in the test options.

Time extensions only apply to tests and examinations. Time extensions do *not* affect the due dates of special projects, essays, and other long term assignments.

Making the Course Available

Definition: Availability is the process of making your online course available for students to access.

The online course opens officially the same day as the face to face class. However, it is possible to send information to your online learners before the first class day. Posting the textbooks for the course early is a good idea. Students may not be in the same city as a college bookstore and extra time may be need for them to locate the texts. Another positive aspect of making the course available opening the website before the opening day is that you can send a welcoming message to your students. This is a good opportunity to build the **learning community** essential to online learning.

To make the course available, go to Customization → Properties → Set Availability → Make Course available and set the radio button for yes. If you want to not allow students to have access to the course after the end of the semester, go back and set the No radio button.

Course Design and Organization

- The Learning Community
 - Faculty to student interactions
 - Student to student interactions
- Instructor Presence
- Communication

The Learning Community

Definition: A learning community is an environment in which individual learners support and contribute to an emerging pool of knowledge of the group and the instructor.

In an environment where instructors and learners do not meet face to face, and where students do not see or meet their peers in a physical setting, developing a sense of community is a challenging necessity. This environment is considered a valuable key to positive and successful learning. Providing an environment that fosters positive interactions with the instructor while working cooperatively with peers on course materials gives the course the presence of the teacher, social group, and teaching.

Faculty to student interaction begins the minute you launch your course. The use of the *Announcement* function is an effective way to begin building the learning community between you and your students. Your first announcement will open the course but it is also a good opportunity to make yourself “real” and “approachable” to your students. You could introduce yourself to the class – both professionally and personally. For a first day activity, require the students to do the same.

Example: *I am including a photo of myself with my lab, Guss. I have provided you with a discussion forum for you to follow my lead and introduce yourself professionally (maybe academically – your progress and goals) and personally. Feel free to include a*

photo of yourself or your favorite dog, car, or some other item we can use to remember you!

Online anxiety might be a problem for some of the students. The opening announcement might also be a good time and place to “smooth their fears” with a few words of encouragement.

Example: *For those first time online learners, don't be afraid to ask questions about Blackboard and the course. If I don't know the answer, some of our seasoned virtual learners will help us both learn.*

Frequent communication in regular announcements (students will soon recognize the importance and frequency of the announcement feature) and responding in a timely manner to group or individual questions, will make your presence known to the online learners and this keeps the learners motivated and connected. Decide if you want to send each announcement as an email or keep that feature for particularly time-sensitive items. Part of your requirements can be to check announcements daily or twice per week, or at some frequency you determine meets the needs of your course.

Student to student interaction is another important aspect of the online learning community. In any classroom, learning is enhanced when students have the opportunity to connect with each other about the academic tasks. Again, for the online instructor, initiating and managing activities which makes students interact with each other can be challenging. There are several ways to encourage students to get to know each other in a more intimate way.

Allowing students to have student to student communication to get answers and to share resources is an effective use of the **discussion board** or **blog** features of Blackboard. **Student to student** interactions do not require the instructor to respond to every posting but do require some commentary and guidance. Encouraging the use of a general discussion area for questions about the course also will allow the instructor to eliminate the need of answering multiple emails asking the same question.

Limiting the size of the discussion group to four or five students works well in encouraging students to connect with one another. Each group can decide upon a name for the group and the instructor can use the group name in commenting to the entire class.

Pairing students for the purpose of peer response is another useful strategy that serves as a vehicle for students to get to know one another as well as a way to share ideas and comments.

Regardless of the strategy, structuring opportunities in your online course where students connect with one another is an important aspect of the online environment. Developing the means to promote student to student interactions is just as important as in any classroom situation. Even though the class is in cyber space, it is composed of real people. Students will be able to see names and faces if you dedicate a section of your website for students to post pictures and short biographies of themselves.

Instructor Presence

Definition: Instructor presence is revealed in the verbal cues (words) that students interpret to understand and judge the classroom climate and the instructor.

In the virtual classroom, the instructor and students do not have the use of the visual cues of face to face communications. Virtually all the cues that the instructor and students use to judge success are written words. Written words shape the climate of the course so the tone of the class communications is important. Since attitude comes through in writing, word selection is important. Students will decide the kind of instructor you are by the way you respond to them in the written form. Frequent, meaningful, and timely interaction is encouraged for maximum student motivation and involvement in online learning. Are you sounding mad, impatient, disgusted? Are you sounding helpful, patient, reinforcing?

Using multimedia is another way to establish a real teaching presence in an online course. Posting images and video helps create a visual sense of instructor presence.

Communication

Once the learning community and teacher presence has been established, the means to maintain them are with ongoing communications. Blackboard provides multiple ways for you to communicate with your students during the semester. The more you communicate, the more your students will communicate. Besides the announcement feature, you can communicate using some of the following other features:

- Discussion Boards
- Podcast
- Bb Messages (internal emails)
- Bb Collaborate
- Grading feedback
- Blogs
- Voice Messages
- Bb Messenger
- KCTCS email
- And others

The key to good communication is not which way you communicate, but that you communicate consistently and clearly. In your course description, your communication expectations and strategies need to be clearly stated. In general, in the online course, the more you communicate the more your students will feel you are engaged with them.

Example: *I will send an announcement when all the papers have been read and graded. Or, we will have one chat room for each unit of the course. Or, I will read every discussion but I will only give a summative response to the class responses.*

The visual aspects of your website communication, including documents, page layout and messages may also communicate to your audience. Graphics, emotive icons and colors should

be used sparingly and the use of all caps should be avoided so as to avoid unclear or misinterpretation of the message. Visually, the use of all caps is difficult to read.

During the semester providing a Student FAQ can ease anxiety and increase student communication. The discussion board is a good place to reinforce the type of collaboration you expect from your students.

Sensitive communications should be sent through private emails. Threaded discussions are for group communications not individual criticism.

As you begin your online teaching, you will want to experiment with the features of Blackboard and select those that work best for your learning outcomes and student needs.

Gradebook

The gradebook allows the students to keep track of their progress in the course. It also gives the students an alternative way to find due dates. The gradebook should be organized in a way that makes sense to the students. Two common methods of organization are by category and by due date. When you enter an assignment or other graded activity, Blackboard places it at the end of the gradebook. You can rearrange the order the items appear by going to Column Organization and moving items to where you want them to appear.

Managing an Online Course

Online courses do not run on auto-pilot. The courses are instructor directed and teacher presence is an essential part of the course. Your willingness to “stay alive and aware” of what is going on in the course will help you manage the academic integrity of the course and the success of the student learning.

Academic integrity is a subject that should be addressed in your syllabus and reinforced throughout the semester. Your syllabus needs to state the institutional policy on cheating. Early on in the course, you may find that asking students to explain what the policy means to the success of their academic career or in your course (discussion or blog feature) will be a worthwhile assignment. If necessary, you might want to include a short lesson on “avoiding plagiarism” or the consequences of cheating at the beginning of the course. No matter how an instructor approaches the subject, it is far better to talk it over with the class before there is a problem.

Using multiple methods of **assessment strategies** is effective means of avoiding some of the cheating issues while at the same time, accommodating different learning profiles.

Different forms of Assessment include:

- End of the semester paper
- Weekly tests
- Group projects

- Case study analysis
- Reading journals or blogs
- Reading responses
- Chat room responses
- Threaded discussions participation
- Midterm and final exams

Definition: Assessment is the evaluation of the tests, tasks, projects and other assignments used in the course to measure the pre and post results of the learners' skills, knowledge and behaviors as stated in the learning outcomes.

Addition: The online environment should provide an opportunity for students to assess their eLearning readiness before the class begins. The instructor should provide a list of eLearning materials which are needed to be successful in the class. An example: Headset, Microsoft PowerPoint, a flash drive, or other types of software needed within the course.

The online environment, like any academic course, requires appropriate assessment strategies (quizzes, short and long papers, testing that requires the application of a theory or concept, etc.) that will measure the success of the learning experience. These strategies should have announced time-periods, be responsive to the learners' needs, curriculum goals and outcomes. All evaluations need to be returned to the learner in a timely manner and provide the learner with constructive feedback. Blackboard facilitates evaluations with a variety of testing features and the can be employed to ensure the academic integrity of your course.

Additional Note: The course should include multiple assessment activities which are directly related to the course objectives or learning outcomes.

Here are some strategic samples of connecting assessments to learning outcomes.

It is simple enough; courses are offered so that students can learn. The success of any course is measured by how well students have learned what skills and knowledge have been selected as the important goals of the course. Assessment is the opportunity to discover whether students are learning what we think they should and where they are not learning make changes in either the content or teaching method in the course so they can more successfully meet the learning outcomes of the course.

Tests

Tests are still effective ways to determine whether students have mastered the course content. Tests are a feedback system that let students know their own strength and weakness in the course; tests, of course, serve as an incentive for students to work at mastering the expected information or skills. Tests can also be an effective instrument for assessing the course. It is important to have specific questions tied to the key outcomes identified in the course syllabus. Most faculty have some key areas that they believe almost all students should have mastered and other areas of competency which while important may serve to discriminate between the best students and others. Analysis of student performance on the key areas of expected outcomes can

provide useful information about whether or not students are mastering those key areas. Students in an Introduction to Linguistics course could all earn better than 80% on a final and yet most students could still have difficulty analyzing the grammar of a sentence. Despite the overall key score, the section in the course on grammar might need to be strengthened.

Where there are multiple sections of the course, it can be useful to embed some common questions in exams for all sections, even if the rest of the exams might be different. An analysis of how students did on those embedded question would provide a measure of how effective the multiple sections would be in achieving the core objectives for the area. For example, if the same question about the effect of raising the prime rate on the rate of economic growth were asked in all Macro Economics courses, it would provide a consistent measure of how well students in economic courses understood this key concept.

Portfolio Assessment

Portfolios, discussed under capstone assessment, can also be useful for assessing courses where students need to produce a body of work. Portfolios of student work can be collected and all or a random sample can then be assessed based on an established rubric. They can be evaluated either by the faculty member or by someone else, such as another faculty member. For example, in a photography course, students might need to produce several photographs demonstrating a number of techniques. Evaluation of portfolios might show that too high a percentage of portfolios showed difficulty in adjusting the aperture appropriately for extremely bright lighting conditions.

Where there are multiple sections of the course, portfolio assessment can be very useful. For example, where there are multiple sections of writing, random samples can be collected from each section and these can then be rated based on an established rubric. Obviously multiple raters would be needed. This process would make certain that all sections are achieving the same outcomes expected of the course. Evaluate how well those outcomes are being achieved, and identify whether there are weakness across all the course or in any particular course. Further, the very process of portfolio assessment can be a great learning experiences for participants who can see different ways of achieving the same outcomes, match their expectations with those of their colleagues, and identify their own strengths and weaknesses in achieving specified outcomes in comparison to the norm.

Pre and Post Project Assessment

Students come to us with differing levels of preparation. In some cases pre and post assessment instruments can be a part of the course and used for assessment. In a speech class, the video tape of the first oral presentation by students can be compared with the final oral presentation by students. Using the same rubric, the early and final speeches can be assessed to provide a measure of the gains by students in the areas targeted by the course.

Where there are multiple sections of a course, the same pre and post performances can be included across the sections and then randomly sampled results can be evaluated based on one rubric. This would provide a good measure of where across the course section there or are not the expected gains in student performance.

Final Projects or Papers

Final projects or final papers can be designed so that they synthesize the expectations of the course. It is important for assessment purposes that the project or paper represents the course objectives and course learning in a conscious way. A course on preparing lesson plans for secondary education would not be well assessed by a research paper on some problem in the secondary education curriculum. Though the project may be valuable, it provides no measure of the core learning in the course. Clearly the best assessment for the course would be for students to prepare a sequence of lesson plans in their area, perhaps with either a written or oral explanation of the rationale for the plans. Such plans could then be assessed by a rubric.

In traditional liberal arts colleges, end of term papers are often used to assess students. However, such papers may not demonstrate much about how well students met the outcomes expected of the course. If a history course wanted students to be able to explain the key factors leading to the American Revolution, a research paper on the strategic problems at the Battle of Bunker Hill, while demonstrating the ability of the student to do secondary research on an historical issue, would do little to assess the ability of students to explain the multiple causes of the American Revolution. However, if one of the goals of a course in American Movies was to have students be able to apply the concepts and language of film criticism to interpret and evaluate movies, then a paper which asked students to write an evaluation of a movie not covered in class would be a ready vehicle to assess whether students learned the necessary skills and language.

Surveys

Effectively targeted surveys which ask about specific features of a course or teaching method can often be a useful way to determine student perceptions of a course. While such surveys do not assess actual student learning, they can be a vehicle for determining student perceptions about their learning. In anonymous surveys students can sometimes be frighteningly candid, admitting to not doing the assigned reading or to finding a particular assignment too easy. Surveys can also often be the only way to measure affective goals of a course, such as increasing a student's likelihood of attending a paper in the future.

Authentic Assessment

Authentic assessments require students to create some kind of unique product to demonstrate what they have learned in the class. Examples include completing a project, creating a web site, a course essay developing and sharing a PowerPoint presentation, or recording a video narrative. The idea behind "authentic assessments" is that students create a product that is not easily replicated by other students. Assigning authentic assessments is an excellent way of promoting academic integrity in your class.

Blackboard Protections against Cheating

Blackboard provides a number of features that can be employed to reduce cheating in online objective tests and essays. Consider adopting one or more of these features when administering assessments:

Test Banks. Blackboard allows instructors to create a bank of questions and draw randomly from that bank when creating a test for students. For instance, a Math exam might offer three questions for solving a factoring problem. Students taking the exam would be randomly assigned one of the three problems.

Scramble the order of questions and answers. Blackboard can randomize the questions when they presented to students. Blackboard can also scramble the order of multiple choice and matching answers.

Limit Test Windows. Instructors can limit the duration that a test is active. Please use this feature with care and remember that many students have variable work schedules.

Limit Test Durations. Blackboard allows faculty to time tests. Blackboard can also restrict students' access to other portions of the test, preventing a student from going back to examine prior answers. When using these features, please allow students a reasonable time to answer the assigned question.

Use SafeAssign. Safe Assign is a Bb add-on that checks papers and essays submitted to Blackboard for possible plagiarism.

Proctored Exams

Proctored exams require students to take an examination in a controlled location under the supervision of a proctor. This allows instructors to assign closed book and closed note examinations. Instructors who assign a proctored exam upload exam passwords to a central database; students at BCTC schedule their exams over the Internet. Directions are available from the Distance Learning page of the college Web site (Path: Academics/Distance Learning/Proctored Exams).

Many courses which rely heavily on objective tests may benefit from requiring one proctored exam per semester; please keep the following in mind if offering a proctored exam:

Limit the Number of Exams. Most instructors find that a single, ~~final~~ proctored exam meets their course needs. Courses which require more than two proctored exams during a semester should be offered as “hybrid” and not “online” classes.

Avoid Paper Copies. Proctored exams should be taken entirely online. If paper copies are absolutely necessary, please contact the Distance Learning Office about making special arrangements.

Provide Student Feedback While Protecting Test Bank Integrity

For quizzes and midterm exams, it is good practice to provide students with feedback on their incorrect answers, and Blackboard can provide this feedback very efficiently. Instructors, especially those using test banks and quizzes that will be used in future semesters, should take care to preserve the integrity of their tests in order to limit future test sharing. Here are some steps faculty can take:

Limit Access to Incorrect Answers only. Blackboard can be configured to show the score at the completion of the exam and the correct answers after all exams have been graded.

Employ Test Banks. Using a test bank means that each student receives a slightly different test.

Discuss Test Errors Individually with Students. Contact students individually in order to share the kind of information a student got incorrect but not the exact answers to specific questions.

Rely on a Final Proctored Exam. Questions and answers to final proctored exams would be extremely difficult for students to share.

Rotate Exam Questions. Do not rely on the same exam questions semester-to-semester. Periodically update your exams.

Conclusion

At first, the online environment can seem intimidating. But like with other modes of teaching, training and practice can remove your fears. Like the students, learning to use the features of Blackboard and adapting to the technology of today, is participating in a learning community. You will have the opportunity for professional training sessions, peer helpers and experienced eMentors for support. The earlier you begin preparing your course, the sooner you will feel confident and the sooner you will be teaching in cyber space!