MEMORANDUM

TO: Academic Senate Steering Committee
FROM: Committee on eLearning, Kevin Kolack, Chairperson
SUBJECT: eLearning Guidelines of the College for presentation to the Senate
DATE: March 5th, 2019

Dear Members of the Senate and the academic community:

Per its Bylaws charges, the Senate standing Committee on eLearning voted unanimously at its February 21st, 2019 meeting to accept the eLearning Guidelines (attached), which the Committee has developed over the past several years in collaboration with faculty, staff, and administration.

As is noted in the Conclusion section of these Guidelines, "The Academic Senate standing Committee on eLearning welcomes input on these Guidelines which have been drafted as a work in progress to be reviewed and updated by the end of each Spring semester for publication and implementation each Fall. Throughout the development of these Guidelines, the Committee has endeavored to produce a document which respects the academic freedom of faculty and the administrative freedom of department Chairpersons while at the same time offering guidance to insure a uniform and superior learning experience for Queensborough Community College students."

We thank everyone involved in the development and delivery of eLearning classes on the QCC campus, and look forward to the smooth implementation and subsequent refinement of these Guidelines in the Fall 2019 semester.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Committee,

Kevin Kolack, Ph.D.
Chair, Committee on eLearning

eLearning Guidelines

Introduction

Queensborough Community College is dedicated to academic excellence and rigor and to providing an affordable, high-quality education to pre-college, college, and lifelong learners. Our faculty and staff are committed to the holistic development of today's students in a nurturing and diverse environment that prepares them to be successful in a dynamic workforce. The College affirms its open admissions policy and its strong support of critical thinking, intellectual inquiry, global awareness, civic responsibility, and cultural and artistic appreciation.

As several academic programs seek national accreditation and as we prepare our Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) self-study, the College's eLearning program has reached a point of scale that necessitates the establishment of clear, published eLearning guidelines. The College looks to the Senate Committee on eLearning (with support from Kathleen Landy of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and Denis Bejar from the Office of Educational Technology) to investigate best practices and peer institutions' policies (within and beyond CUNY) to inform the formal articulation of a comprehensive set of eLearning Guidelines.

Whereas the College is committed to engaging all stakeholders in the spirit and practice of shared governance, these Guidelines concerning eLearning at the College have been collaboratively written with the participation of students, faculty, and staff to:
- ensure that Queensborough students have access to high-quality, pedagogically sound online learning experiences which leverage best practices and technological solutions for degree completion in a nurturing and diverse environment committed to academic excellence and rigor;
- support faculty with curricular innovation in designing online and partially-online courses for students which align with baccalaureate programs and the demands of a dynamic workforce;
- assist faculty in designing and delivering fully-online (FNET) and/or partially-online (PNET) courses of the highest quality which promote critical thinking, intellectual inquiry, global awareness, civic responsibility, and cultural and artistic appreciation;
- support academic departments and department Chairpersons in the assessment of online and partially-online course designs;
- demonstrate the College's commitment to CUNY's strategic goal of expanding high-quality online educational offerings (as cited in _Connected CUNY_);
- demonstrate compliance with the standards and best practices for online education articulated by accrediting bodies (e.g. NYSED, MSCHE) and nationally recognized organizations (e.g. _Quality Matters_);
- maximize space utilization and minimize confusion throughout the registration process.

Accordingly, the College acknowledges the following guidelines with regard to the following facets of our design and delivery of online education: _1. Governance, 2. Course Delivery Method Definitions, 3. Operational Structure, 4. Section Planning and Development, and 5. The Student Experience._

1. Governance
    a. Academic Senate Committee on eLearning
       The eLearning Committee is tasked with:
        i. Designing, reviewing and updating these Guidelines;
        ii. Reviewing and approving the College's netiquette policy (every 3 years);
        iii. Making recommendations regarding the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) and Office of Educational Technology (OET) calendars and resource allocations regarding eLearning;
        iv. Maintaining a record of eLearning-certified faculty and eLearning-certified courses and sharing this information with Academic Department Chairs and the Office of Academic Affairs;
        v. Handling all requests for exemption from online instructor certification;
        vi. Designing guidelines for faculty peer course observers regarding how to summarize observation/conference discussions;
        vii. Reviewing and updating the College's academic integrity policy to ensure there is language concerning online learning environments; and
        viii. Approving/revising the Blackboard (Bb) course templates for online and partially online courses.
    b. Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) and Office of Educational Technology (OET)
       CETL and/or OET are tasked with:
        i. Blackboard administration;
        ii. Management of educational applications and vendors;
        iii. Delivery of associated workshops and faculty development;
        iv. Administrative support for faculty development (scheduling faculty development opportunities; liaising with department chairs, OAA, and faculty; coordinating compensation for faculty as needed);
        v. Designing and delivering the curriculum of the eLearning Institute for faculty certification;
        vi. Reviewing applications for the eLearning Institute; and
        vii. Coordinating eLearning mentors for Institute participants.
    c. Academic Department Chairs
        i. Consistent with the College's encouragement of SoTL (Scholarship of Teaching & Learning) and the pursuit of innovative pedagogies to promote student success, department Chairs may encourage their faculty to pursue eLearning faculty development and certification.
        ii. The College's Office of Educational Technology and/or the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning are available to offer assistance to department Chairs as they decide if an online course section and instructor should be certified (Section 4, below).

2. Course Delivery Method Definitions - CUNY/Local
   a. Courses will be classified as one of three categories: FNET (fully online, 100%), PNET (30-70%), or traditional face-to-face (including web-enhanced). Other categories exist in CUNYFirst but are not used at the College.

Course Type	% of Class Taught in Person	Room Assignation
Traditional	100% in person (includes web enhanced learning experiences)	Traditional room assignment
PNET	30-70% in person	⅓ or ½ room assignment (per request of department)
FNET	0%	No room assignment **Note**: Course sections that are taught primarily online, yet require midterms and/or final exams to be completed in-person, are *not* fully online and will be considered PNET courses.

   b. eLearning class sections will be designated in the course catalog as PNET or FNET. For classes with multiple online sections of a course running in the same semester, the Registrar may designate such sections PNT1, PNT2...PN10, PN11, etc. and FNT1, FNT2...FN10, FN11, etc.
3. Operational Structure
   a. Online Teaching Load
      i. In order to ensure manageable and high-quality experiences for both faculty members and students, it is strongly recommended that faculty and department Chairs observe the best practice of not exceeding 8 online contact hours per semester. **Note**: To be perfectly clear, for faculty who teach at multiple locations, the 8-hour rule is a cumulative total out of the entire teaching load, and **not** per campus.
   b. LMS Designation
      i. The only learning management system (LMS) formally supported by CUNY is Blackboard.
   c. Office Hours
      i. The same expectations that exist in traditional classroom settings with regard to faculty accessibility (office hours) apply in virtual environments. Accordingly, it is recommended that instructors' office hours match the modality of instruction:

Modality of Instruction	Modality of Office Hours
Traditional (Face to face)	Face to face (set day/time)
PNET	Face to face (set day/time) and online (synchronous *and* asynchronous)
FNET	Online (synchronous *and* asynchronous)

d. Course Observations

   i.   Consistent with the QCC Faculty Handbook, "all non-tenured or non-certificated members of the teaching staff, except adjuncts with ten (10) semesters of service, must be observed each semester" (QCC Faculty Handbook, *Observations*). Accordingly, all PNET and FNET sections should be observed with specific attention to their virtual components.

   ii. More specifically, all PNET and FNET sections should be the subject of peer observations conducted by a departmental colleague who has successfully completed the eLearning Institute. (If a department does not have an adequate number of qualified peer observers, the Senate Committee on eLearning can assign one to assist in the observation by a department member if requested by the department Chairperson.)

   iii. If an instructor routinely teaches a combination of traditional and PNET or FNET sections, it is expected that the PNET/FNET sections will be the focus of peer observations with similar frequency as the traditional course sections.

   iv. The peer observer must have access to the course site.

   v.   The instructor will self-assess their course using the QM rubric available from the Office of Educational Technology.

   vi. The online instructor will meet individually with the peer observer to review the instructor's self-assessment of the course and offer an orientation to the online learning environment.

   vii. The self-assessment and associated conference should be summarized/documented using the existing Peer Observation Form. The actual QM self-assessment form should be included with the peer observation form. Guidelines for peer observers regarding how to summarize observation/conference discussions are available in Appendix A.

   viii. These guidelines apply equally to partially online courses (PNETs), as the observation is intended to evaluate the entire course design and the entire range of student learning experiences.

e. Course Assessment

   i.   All PNET and FNET course sections must be included in any ongoing departmental effort to conduct program review and the associated assessment of student learning. Consistent with the MSCHE's *Interregional Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education (Online Learning)*, comparative analyses of online and traditional/face-to-face sections should also be conducted.

4. Section Planning and Development

a. Queensborough certifies both instructors and PNET/FNET courses at the section level.

b. Faculty Certification

   i.   Faculty who successfully complete Queensborough's eLearning Institute are certified as online instructors

   ii. Experienced online instructors may become certified to teach online at Queensborough via alternative pathways by submitting one or more of the following:

      ○ ePortfolio documenting instructional practices (for example, an existing Blackboard online course)

      ○ Prior certification from another institution

      ○ Letter(s) of recommendation

- Grandfather clause, whereby requests for exemption (including department chair signature) are submitted to the Office of Educational Technology and reviewed by the Senate Committee on eLearning
  c. Course sections are certified if they score 85% or higher on the Quality Matters rubric available from the Office of Educational Technology
    i. Quality Matters (QM) is a nationally recognized, faculty-driven peer review process used to ensure the quality of online and partially-online course design. The Quality Matters Higher Education Rubric is a set of standards used to evaluate the design of online and blended courses. These standards were developed and revised based on research and established standards in the fields of instructional design and online learning.
    ii. A set of eight General Standards and 42 Specific Review Standards used to evaluate the design of online and partially-online courses. Annotations explain the applications of the Standards and their inter-relationships. The Rubric has a scoring system used by the mentor or self-evaluator to determine whether a course meets the standards.
    iii. The eight General Standards of this Rubric are:
      - Course Overview and Introduction
      - Learning Objectives (Competencies)
      - Assessment and Measurement
      - Instructional Materials
      - Learning Activities and Learner Interaction
      - Course Technology
      - Learner Support
      - Accessibility and Usability*
      *Meeting QM's accessibility Standards does not guarantee or imply that specific country/federal/state/local accessibility regulations are met. It is recommended by QM to consult with an accessibility specialist to ensure that accessibility regulations are met.
  d. Timeline for Course Section Certification:
    i. Spring- faculty apply for eLearning Institute
    ii. Summer- eLearning Institute & instructor certification
    iii. Fall- section development with eLearning Institute mentor
    iv. Fall (end of October)- faculty QM self-assessment and section certification
    v. Spring (year 2)- section implementation*
      *New online sections can only debut in the Spring semester. It is presumed that courses planned for the Spring in the previous semester will be certification-ready. If a section is not ready, it may still be taught as a face-to-face section or may be taught online as a closely-monitored development extension (pending department Chair approval).
5. The Student Experience
  a. Students should have the same expectations for PNET or FNET course sections that they have for traditional, face-to-face courses. The modality of course delivery cannot impact the efficacy of instruction or academic support that students receive. Likewise, all expectations with regard to student preparedness, comportment, and performance apply.

b. All students are expected to complete the eLearning Readiness Program upon enrolling in their first PNET or FNET course, for which they will receive a digital certificate of completion that may be shared as evidence of completion in future courses. The readiness module is embedded in the Queensborough Bb Template.

Conclusion

The Academic Senate standing Committee on eLearning welcomes input on these Guidelines which have been drafted as a work in progress to be reviewed and updated by the end of each Spring semester for publication and implementation each Fall. Throughout the development of these Guidelines, the Committee has endeavored to produce a document which respects the academic freedom of faculty and the administrative freedom of department Chairpersons while at the same time offering guidance to insure a uniform and superior learning experience for Queensborough Community College students.

Appendix A – sample eLearning Observation Report

Instructor: _____

Course & Section: _____

Observer: _____

Observer given access to course site?   Yes   No

Instructor self-assessment QM rubric score   _____

Observer concurs with self-assessment score?   Yes   No

Total number of online contact hours taught by instructor this semester (all campuses)   _____

Observer comments concerning online portion of course:

_____

_____

_____

Observer comments concerning traditional portion of course (for PNET):

_____

_____

_____