Mercy College of Ohio
Distance Education Division

Best Practices Handbook
2013 -2014
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**Distance Education ◊ Mercy College of Ohio**

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## Contact Information

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**D2L Technical Support**  
1-877-325-7778 – Available 24/7
Fall 2013

Dear Online Faculty,

Distance education here at Mercy College has experienced tremendous growth, over the past several years. Through all of this, it has been the efforts and dedication of you, our faculty, that growth and successes have been made possible. Although, there may have been bumps along the road, with the collaborative efforts of the DE staff and with you, Mercy College has persevered and forged ahead in the area of distance education. For that, I thank you!

In an effort to continue down this path toward growth and quality in online education, the DE staff has created a series of protocols, procedures and documents, to assist faculty to maintain and build upon their online courses. The intention was to offer superior support to faculty, while minimizing duplicated efforts, creating efficiencies for the DE staff, while maintaining consistency and quality for our students. Isn’t that what we all want?

As you review the Distance Education Best Practices Handbook, I hope you will agree the suggestions and best practices offered are aligned with the goals all of us strive for, as educators of quality online education. The documents and procedures within have already been utilized by the majority of our online faculty, as they created and facilitated their online courses. It was our intent to package and consolidate the best practices witnessed by our faculty and DE staff, in an effort to create consistency and quality.

As we move forward and prepare for Fall 2013 and all future semesters, I ask that you review the procedures and documents included in this handbook, and feel free to ask any clarifying questions you have. As we all get comfortable and utilize this document, I am confident; the benefits will be experienced both by faculty and the DE staff.

I thank you all, once again for you continued support and efforts for the Distance Education Division and for your support of this handbook.

Wishing you all a GREAT Academic Year!

Daniel W. Hoppe, Jr.
Associate Dean of Distance Education
Distance Education Faculty Think Tank

Open Lab Hours: Monday thru Friday 10AM to 4PM
Technical Resources

**D2L Helpdesk**
The D2L Helpdesk is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for both faculty and students. Please contact the D2L Helpdesk for both technical support and general questions regarding the system. 1-877-325-7778.

**Blackboard Collaborate Technical Support**
Elluminate Live Conferencing is now owned by Blackboard Collaborate. Distance Education has three Collaborate rooms which faculty may utilize. To reserve a room, compose an email to Christina.Siegfried@MercyCollege.edu and include the date, time, and duration of your live session. If you or your students require technical support while on the Collaborate system, call Blackboard Collaborate directly at 1-866-388-8674.

**Turn It In**
Mercy College subscribes to Turn It In, the plagiarism reporting portal. Turn It In is administered by The Writing Center. If you would like an account, or need assistance, contact Clayton Chiarelott at 419-251-1479 or via email at Clayton.Chiarelott@MercyCollege.edu.

**VoiceThread**
VoiceThread is an asynchronous collaboration tool that allows students to upload a presentation, utilize a whiteboard, and post audio commentary. VoiceThread is only available to Distance Education instructors, as we utilize a subscription service. There is no additional fee for students. For more information on VoiceThread, compose an email to London.Weathers@MercyCollege.edu.

**Films on Demand**
Films on Demand is a service provided by the Mercy College Library. You must have a library barcode to view videos available from this service. To ensure that students also have access to troubleshooting and technical information, please work with your assigned Instructional Technologist if you would like to add one of these videos into your online or hybrid course. For more information how to obtain your library barcode, contact the Mercy College Library at 419-251-1700.

**CHP Helpdesk**
The CHP Helpdesk provides assistance with your Mercy College email, your network storage, and your network login for computers on campus. In addition, the CHP Helpdesk provides access to copiers and printers on campus. The CHP Helpdesk does not provide assistance for educational technologies such as D2L. Contact the CHP Helpdesk at 1-800-498-1408.

Distance Education Services

**D2L Guidebook**
The D2L Guidebook is produced by Distance Education and contains preferred settings and best practices for building content within D2L. Nearly all questions regarding the system can be answered by referring to your D2L Guidebook.

**Semester Preparation Deadlines / Timeline and Module Start Date Restrictions**
This two page document is distributed prior to the start of each semester. *Semester Preparation Deadlines* communicate to faculty the dates for submission of new materials and materials part of a major revision, as well as the deadline for readying your upcoming semester’s course section. The *Timeline and Module Start Date Restrictions* page details the dates for each module to open, as well as a list of dates the college is closed for breaks and holidays. Faculty are to abide by these dates and set Module Start Date Restrictions accordingly.

**D2L Training**
Aside from yearly training at the beginning of the school year, the Distance Education division, through the Think Tank, is available for D2L assistance year round.

**Distance Education Workshops and Professional Development Opportunities**
DE will distribute various flyers and internal communications to all Mercy College instructors announcing upcoming workshops, professional development opportunities, and technology showcases.
Proctored Testing

Proctored Testing for midterms and/or finals is the preferred method of assessment in distance learning courses and is recommended by the Department of Education and the Higher Learning Commission for student identity verification. Faculty who prefer to use their final exam as an opportunity to meet their students in person at the end of the term can proctor their own exam at a designated time in our facility. Otherwise, students can schedule their exam time Monday through Friday during normal business hours. Extended hours may be offered if a need is identified.

DE Staff facilitates the distribution and site verification of proctored exams on behalf of DE instructors for students who find it inconvenient to take their exam in the Toledo area. This service eases the burden on both the instructor and student, allowing the student to enjoy the benefits of receiving their education at a distance from Mercy College while not being inconvenienced by returning to the Toledo campus for their exam. If you are interested in DE’s facilitation of your proctored exam, or would like more information, please contact London.Weathers@MercyCollege.edu.

Think Tank & Video Studio

The Think Tank is a special lab reserved for Faculty and contains three work stations, a video studio, and a collection of books on various subjects regarding the use of technology in teaching and learning. Coffee and tea are available throughout the day. Faculty may stop by and work on their D2L course, Add a Syllabus, Upload Course Files, or set up a Gradebook with help nearby.

Student Expectations and D2L Procedures

These expectations and procedures are provided to students in various locations throughout the learning management system. Faculty should familiarize themselves with these procedures and consider adding the expectation information to their syllabus.

Students should not use Desire2Learn to verify course registration. Contact the Office of Student Records if you believe your account data is incorrect.

Course access opens and closes based on dates set by the Empower system. Students will not have access to their Desire2Learn course materials after the class has ended. Therefore, students should consider saving any copies of their work that may need to be referenced at a later date outside of Desire2Learn.

Official grades are provided to students in the Empower system. The Desire2Learn gradebook is provided for student convenience only and is not an accurate representation of official grades. Contact your instructor, or refer to the Empower system, if you have questions regarding your course grade. Midterm and Final grades are released only by Empower. An on-going calculation of your grade will not be displayed in D2L.

Students are strongly advised to backup any assignments intended for delivery to a Desire2Learn dropbox or discussion forum before submitting. In the event of a power flicker, a frozen computer, or lost Internet connection, having a copy of your submission on your own computer will be very helpful to you.

Students are strongly advised to save each question one at a time on Desire2Learn quizzes to reduce the risk of error or lost data in the event of a power flicker, a frozen computer, or lost Internet connection.

Only your course instructor can answer questions regarding access to date-restricted content in Desire2Learn. All requests for re-access to quizzes, dropboxes, or discussions must be initiated by the instructor. No requests of this type from students can be honored by the D2L Helpdesk or Distance Education staff.

Students who encounter a technical issue that, for any reason, prohibits the student from submitting a graded assignment within the Desire2Learn system before the assignment’s due date are to call the Desire2Learn Help Desk at 1-877-325-7778. Students must submit a request for this 3rd party-verified ticket, which will verify the date, time, and technical specifics surrounding their issue. The D2L ticket will then be forwarded to the course instructor, who will use the information provided by the D2L Help Desk to make an informed decision regarding: accepting the assignment, reopening an assignment, or extending time on an assignment.

After calling the D2L Helpdesk, the student will then compose an email to their instructor containing 1) a screenshot of the issue they have encountered, 2) a description of the issue they have encountered, 3) the ticket number provided by the D2L Helpdesk.

PLEASE NOTE: Instructors have the right to refuse late assignments from a student who did not obtain a D2L Help Desk ticket number.
Instructional Design Procedure and Assessment

Distance Education Terminology

*Course Developer* – A subject matter expert, typically a full time or adjunct Mercy College of Ohio faculty member. The Course Developer may or may not teach all sections of the course being developed for Distance Education depending on the needs of the college.

*Learning Management System* – A website that hosts online course materials. Currently the LMS used at Mercy College of Ohio is Desire2Learn.

*Instructional Designer* – Initial point of contact for course development, is responsible for assisting the Course Developer in the design, layout, and technology selection for the assignments and activities within the course. The Instructional Designer also assists in the ongoing, continuous assessment of quality within the Distance Education course.

*Instructional Technologist* – Is responsible for assisting the Course Developer in the development of multimedia content within the Distance Education course and providing technical assistance to faculty and students who use those materials.

Design Process

*Initial Consultation*
*Begins no later than 90 days before the course goes live*
The Course Developer will initially consult with an Instructional Designer to determine the best approach to conducting their specific assignments, projects, and assessments in the online environment. Any pre-developed materials used in traditional, land-based courses should be presented at this initial consultation as well as any textbook publisher supplements and web resources.

The Course Developer and Instructional Designer will determine how to divide up the work load for creating the course. The Course Developer will be given a flash drive with a modular template for course development and folders for storing worksheets, handouts, articles, etc.

In addition to the initial consultation with the Instructional Designer, the Course Developer will meet with their assigned Instructional Technologist. In this meeting, multimedia needs will be determined and a timeline developed for completion. The Course Developer is expected to return on an as-needed basis for guidance, clarification and assistance.

*Course Design Review*
*Begins no later than 30 days before the course goes live*
All learning materials, with the exception of multimedia pieces in development, should be built and loaded in the Learning Management System no later than 30 days before the course is available to students. The Instructional Designer will begin a review of the course using current research-based best practices. The Instructional Designer, Instructional Technologist, and the Course Developer will make any changes based on recommendations from all parties involved.
Final Consultation

Begins no later than 2 weeks before the course goes live

The Course Developer will meet with the Instructional Designer for a final consultation no later than 2 weeks before the course is available to students. The Course Developer and Instructional Designer will review any additional training of new tools used outside of the Learning Management System. Additionally, the Course Developer will receive hands-on training with the Learning Management System, tailored to the tools utilized within their specific course.

The Course Developer, Instructional Designer, Instructional Technologist, Associate Academic Dean and the Associate Dean of Distance Education will sign off on the course materials and permit the course to go live.

Course Development Workload/Stipend Considerations

Full-time Faculty: Development of new online-delivered courses will be built into the Course Developer’s workload, in consultation with the appropriate Associate Academic Dean. Any compensation will be paid in accordance with the faculty workload policy.

Adjunct Faculty: Course Developers under an adjunct contract will be paid for development of online-delivered courses in the form of a stipend, using a project-based fee structure. Compensation to adjuncts will be paid upon completion of the course design process, and only when all signatures have been obtained through the final consultation.

Compensation for course development will be paid from that Academic Program’s divisional budget.

Quality Assessment

To be completed at the end of the semester after a course has been taught for the first time

The Course Developer, Instructor (if different from the Course Developer) and Instructional Designer meet for a quality assessment, including:

- Student course evaluations,
- Discussion Forums (Virtual Office, Threaded Discussion),
- Communication notes (e-mails, instructor notes, etc.).

The Course Developer/Instructor will alert the Instructional Designer to any changes that had to be made while conducting the course, opportunities for further clarification for the benefit of students, and assignments that worked well or did not work well. The Instructional Designer will assist the Course Developer in making the recommended changes to the course.

The Associate Dean of Distance Education will then review and approve the course, permitting the course to be taught again.
Continuous, Ongoing Assessment
To be completed as scheduled or when problems arise

Peer Review
Begins week of course midterm
A Mercy College peer also teaching within the Distance Education Division will join the Course Developer for a peer review of the course materials. The peer will review the course content to ensure that materials, student expectations, and assignment descriptions are clear and concise. The peer should also use this time as an opportunity to share their teaching materials and methods, or new technologies they have discovered.

Semester Evaluations and Feedback
Student course evaluations will be collected and reviewed by Distance Education, the Course Instructor, and the appropriate Academic Division. A Faculty Feedback Form will be distributed to all Course Instructors (when different from the Course Developer) and will assess the effectiveness of:

- Assignment expectations, directions, and rubrics;
- Appropriateness of supplemental materials, handouts, and additional readings;
- Distribution of point values for assignments, rubrics, and the course grading scale;
- Appropriateness of the technology tools selected for each assignment, ease of use, and effectiveness of directions provided;
- Preparedness to conduct the course with the materials, training, and tools provided.

Yearly Course Audit
The Course Developer, or an appointed Course Instructor (appointed by appropriate dean), will revisit the course materials. It is expected that the faculty member reviewing the course will make the appropriate updates to videos, research articles and other course materials that are no longer current or have since become unavailable. Recommendations based on Course Evaluations and Faculty Feedback will be compiled by the Instructional Designer and designated Instructional Technologist.

Once completed, the appointed Developer/Instructor, Instructional Designer, and Associate Dean of Distance Education will sign off on the revised course materials and permit them to be taught again

Three Year Course Cycle
Each Academic Division will strategize a three year course revision cycle for their faculty. It is expected that the course will be revisited for a Major Revision of the materials after three academic years, including but not limited to: Reevaluation of the course textbook, Reviewing course and module level objectives for alignment to course learning (as well as program and college outcomes), Exploring current teaching and facilitation methods, Reviewing current literature and research-based best practices in teaching and learning, and Rewriting course assessments and major course projects to deter academic dishonesty and unauthorized distribution or sharing of course materials.
Faculty Discovery Zone
Did you know that there is a place in D2L that you can go to access information about the Faculty Think Tank, Guidebooks and Publications, and learn about DE services, view past workshop materials, AND share with other faculty about teaching and learning? It’s the Faculty Discovery Zone (FDZ)!

How to Access the FDZ
Log into Desire2Learn.
Click on Faculty Discovery Zone! under Faculty Help on the left side of the page.

What’s Available?

1) Faculty Think Tank
   a) About
   b) Guidebook and Publications
   c) Lending Library

2) Faculty Discovery Zone
   a) Faculty Share Area (Discuss, share, and explore with other faculty members here!)
   b) Workshops and Share & Learn Session
   c) DE Services and Examples
   d) Learning Object Repositories

3) Sizzling Summer Technology Training
   a) Summer 2012 Workshops
   b) Summer 2013 Workshops

4) Lights! Camera! Action! on Display
   a) Faculty Showcase
   b) Discussion
The following is a brief, but not exhaustive list of general expectations of Distance Education Faculty. Refer to your academic division for additional expectations as they pertain to your specific program.

**D2L Training and Technology Confidence**  
*Instructors demonstrate successful mastery of skills needed to teach in the online environment*

Instructors developing a course for the first time, undergoing a major revision, or utilizing a new technology with the assistance of Distance Education Staff will receive hands on, one-on-one training based on the specific tools used to conduct the course. Instructors will demonstrate successful mastery of the skills received during the one-on-one training session.

It is expected that faculty will use these skills, along with the D2L Guidebook (produced by Mercy College), to update and maintain their course in future semesters. Faculty should not rely on DE Staff to update and maintain the materials for them, nor should they submit requests of this kind. This includes: Copying between Courses; Start Date Restrictions; Creation of New Quizzes, Dropboxes, and Discussions; Revisions to the Gradebook; Setup of Groups; Addition of New Assignments utilizing the same or similar technologies.

After having not taught in the online environment for some time, should an instructor need a refresher training opportunity, this should be scheduled well in advance of the deadline for having materials loaded and ready in D2L. Contact a member of the DE Staff to arrange this type of training opportunity.

**Professional Development Opportunities and Workshops**  
*DE hosts a variety of workshop opportunities promoting best practices in online teaching and learning*

DE Staff will distribute and make known a list of professional development opportunities and workshops to promote best practices in online teaching and learning. DE instructors should make a reasonable effort to participate in professional development opportunities offered by the Distance Education Division and through professional organizations that focus on online teaching and learning.

**Multimedia Use, Revisions, and Copyright Expectations**  
*These expectations help ensure a quality experience for our students through the appropriate use of multimedia*

All changes to Multimedia (videos, PowerPoints, podcasts, lectures, etc.) should be submitted to your assigned Instructional Technologist well in advance of the start of the semester. Faculty will utilize their Instructional Technologist for the development of pedagogically sound and professional quality multimedia pieces.

Mercy College has selected a limited number of acceptable file formats, settings, file sizes, and dimensions for multimedia delivery. This ensures that students can view our multimedia in a flexible format on a variety of computers without installing multiple players and plug-ins. All multimedia must be approved by DE Staff and changes will be made to formats as deemed necessary.

Instructors are responsible for being in compliance with all copyright laws and educating themselves appropriately. Please utilize Distance Education Staff and/or Mercy College Library Staff as appropriate when you have a question regarding copyright and fair use. Materials not created by the instructor, or Mercy College, should be cited appropriately in APA format.
Instructors should utilize their official Mercy College email account for correspondence with both the college and students. As of March 8, 2013 forwarding your Mercy College email to another account has been disabled by CHP. The use of third party email addresses for course correspondence with students is prohibited.

**Communication Expectations**

*These minimum expectations ensure that our students feel a connection with our Distance Education Faculty*

Instructors should provide contact information and a short biography on the *Course Overview* page. Photos are also encouraged and highly recommended.

Instructors should post a weekly message to the News component on the Course Home tab. This message should offer encouragement, a reflective quote, or reminders of upcoming projects.

Instructors should respond to email inquiries, voicemail inquiries (if provided to students), and discussion postings directed towards the faculty within 48 hours. This excludes holidays but includes weekends. Notify students when you are not available (at a conference or on leave) and direct students on how to receive assistance (D2L Helpdesk, Program Chair, etc.) if needed.

Instructors should return graded assignments within 72 hours after the assignment due date has closed on the dropbox, quiz, or discussion.

Instructors are expected to be available for, at a minimum, 2 hours of “live office hours” per week. Availability should be posted in the syllabus. Changes should be announced 48 hours in advance. Live Office Hours can be conducted through Blackboard Collaborate, by phone availability, instant messaging, or another medium of choice. Some instructors choose to set up a “polling” opportunity for students to vote on the most appropriate time to hold the office hours. Please contact Distance Education if you are unsure whether the method you are considering would be appropriate.

**Weekly Wrap-Up of Discussion Activity**

*Wrap-Ups are a research-based best practice for student success, satisfaction, and validation of their learning*

The instructor will provide a summary of the previous week’s discussion activities in the form of either a News Item on the course home page or within the next week’s module in their medium of choice (plain text, audio, or video). The wrap-up will specifically address topics and perspectives discussed by the students and validate student learning, allowing students to review key points brought up during the discussion. This practice provides an opportunity for the instructor to offer their insight and professional opinions. Students have indicated on course evaluations that a wrap-up of the previous week is helpful in their learning. Note: A wrap-up of a discussion should never appear within the discussion forum, as students are not likely to return to a previous week’s discussion. Always proceed *forward* with your students, do not send them back to a previous week’s module.

**Measureable Learning Objectives**

*Learning Objectives provide a way for instructors and students to measure and assess learning*

Instructors will provide a list of module-level learning objectives, to be placed in each module’s descriptive introduction. The learning objectives should be written in a manner which is considered measureable and easy for students to understand. Align your module-level learning objectives to the activities, assignments, and assessments within your course. Review your course-level, program level, and college level objectives/outcomes on a regular basis to help ensure that you are not drifting from the objectives over time.
DE asks that instructors follow policies set forth by Student Records pertaining to Midterm and Final Grades

DE Instructors will treat feedback on final exams and final projects much the same as a landbased class. Instructors wishing to provide feedback of this kind should do so via email or during office hours. Distance Education course sections will not be reopened nor dates extended to allow students to retrieve an assignment grade or feedback after the semester has ended. Course access opens and closes based on dates set by the Empower system. Students will not have access to their D2L course after the class has ended.

D2L does not display a “total grade” for students. Students can see the individual grades received for each assignment and potentially use a calculator to do the math themselves. The Office of Student Records asks each semester that instructors do not publish the students’ final total grade in D2L. Students should use Empower to receive their final grade for your class. Students who owe an outstanding balance to the college must pay their bill before receiving grades.

**Classroom Experiences and Lectures**
*Replicating the classroom experience provides students with the benefit of the instructor’s expertise*

Instructors are responsible for producing custom Audio, Video, or Interactive Learning Objects, reviewed each time the course is taught, in a format best suited for the materials being presented. Course content and classroom opportunities must be equivalent to those in a landbased course. Specific technologies used must be adapted to the environment in which the course is being delivered and must maximize achievement of learning outcomes in those environments.

Examples of Audio, Video, or Interactive Learning Objects include, but are not limited to, an audio-only “podcast”, a professionally-produced video lecture, a PowerPoint with voice-over, or a presentation with computer simulated interactivity. Additional tools and opportunities are available; please contact your Instructional Technologist.

**Student Assessment**
*These minimum expectations promote academic integrity and accurate assessment of student learning outcomes*

It is expected that instructors will use a variety of assessment techniques to assess student learning in the online environment. The use of multiple-choice only assessment is strongly discouraged by Distance Education. While multiple-choice questions certainly have their place, faculty are responsible for taking appropriate measures which will assist to deter academic dishonesty. These include the following:

- Combination of multiple choice and critical thinking essay questions weighted appropriately.
- Randomization of both question order and question answer options through a question pool.
- Use of Distance Education’s Proctored Testing Facility and site verification/distribution services.

It is expected that when using multiple choice questions as an assessment method (excludes short self-assessment opportunities at the end of a chapter) instructors will use the Randomization features to their fullest potential. Quiz Submission Views should not display all graded questions or answers to your students.

**Program Assessment Strategizing**
*Each Academic Division will strategize a variety of assessment methods to accurately assess student learning*

A combination of Proctored Testing and Project-based assessment methods will be mandatory at strategic points in each distance learning degree program and strategized by their Academic Division. Proctored Testing for midterms and/or finals is the preferred method of assessment in distance learning courses and is recommended by the Department of Education and the Higher Learning Commission for student identity verification.
Course Management Expectations

These minimum expectations help ensure that our students have a quality Distance Education experience.

Instructors will preview every page, link, quiz, discussion, dropbox, and all appropriate settings and restrictions before the module opens to students. It is suggested that instructors add a reminder to their calendars in the middle of the week to thoroughly inspect the upcoming week’s module and correct any errors they find. If you encounter an issue that you cannot resolve on your own, please refer to your D2L Guidebook first and then contact D2L Support. Nearly all of our student calls to the D2L Help Desk could have been resolved had the instructor double checked their module before it opened.

Due to an increase in documented incidents of academic dishonesty, faculty will use discretion in reopening assignments to students in the event of technical issues and consult DE Staff to retrieve the student’s D2L Help Desk Ticket as appropriate. Instructors have the right to refuse late assignments from a student who did not obtain a D2L Help Desk ticket number. Students are to call for D2L Support when they are unable to complete an assignment due to a technical issue which prevents them from meeting the posted due date. While it is expected that faculty will use good judgment in providing a reasonable accommodation in the event of a technical issue, technical issues are not a valid excuse for a student who did not complete their work. By calling D2L Support, the student’s issue may be resolved on the phone and/or a ticket will be generated and sent to the instructor and DE Staff verifying the time, date, and circumstances of student’s call. This will allow the instructor to make a more informed decision as to determining the student’s need.

Instructors will release only one unit of learning, or Module, at a time. Modules typically last one week (with the exception of some continuing education courses) and everything the student needs to complete their assignments will be contained in that week’s module. Mercy College Distance Education does not offer “correspondence courses” of any kind, but rather keeps students on pace together to facilitate a learning community through discussion and collaboration. Instructors will not make available the entire course at once nor allow students to work ahead of the rest of the class.

Instructors will follow each semester’s Timelines and Module Start Date Restrictions distributed by the Distance Education Division, which lists Start Date Restrictions for each week’s materials. Instructors will not “end” their class a week early and/or have assignments due on holidays or days the college is closed for break. (Continue reading for more information.)

Semester Preparation Deadlines

Distance Education Staff will distribute and make known a list of Deadlines for submission and setup of materials in Desire2Learn. These deadlines are set based on the number of courses scheduled and the amount of overtime DE Staff worked during the previous term in performing the routine course audits.

The Semester Preparation Deadline allows a very brief window of time for DE Staff to make updates to the code and links within your course based on changes to D2L’s system during their routine maintenance upgrades, Hot Fixes, and upgrades to newer versions of the Learning Management System. DE Staff continuously monitors tickets from both the D2L Help Desk and interdepartmental communications in regards to technical glitches and discrepancies in navigation and display of materials.

DE Staff will also use this time to check for common instructor errors in the setup of your course, clean up any formatting or coding issues to maintain a professional appearance within your pages, and add your End of Course Evaluation.

The audit period is vital to preparing for a successful semester and reducing the number of student calls to the Help Desk due to instructor errors in the setup of course materials.
Below is a list of common errors found in course materials during DE Staff’s audit period:

- **Module Date Restrictions**  
  Content Tab – Incorrect dates provide modules to students out of order, resulting in student calls to Help Desk

- **Quiz Date Restrictions**  
  Quiz Tab - Locks students out of exams which expired the semester before, resulting in student calls to the Help Desk

- **Quiz Submission View**  
  Quiz Tab > Edit Quiz > Submission Views – Provides students with an answer key upon submission which can be shared

- **Dropbox Date Restrictions**  
  Dropbox Tab – Dropboxes locked and expired from the semester before, resulting in student calls to the Help Desk

- **Discussion Date Restrictions**  
  Discussion Tab – Disables posts to discussions which expired the semester before, resulting in student calls to the Help Desk

- **Old Groups**  
  Edit Course > Groups – Locks current students out of materials, resulting in student calls to the Help Desk

For your convenience, a one page *Checklist* of common tasks for preparing your course for a new semester is provided on Page 23.

**Instructors Missing Deadlines**

If your course is not ready by the setup deadline, DE Staff will copy the most recent version of your course and add Module Start Date Restrictions only for purposes of loading your End of Course Evaluation.

DE Staff will not assign new due dates nor will they make any additional changes to date tables, syllabi, assignment date restrictions, etc.

Your course will not receive a further audit of your materials.

The appropriate Academic Chair and/or Associate Dean will be contacted regarding the instructor’s inability to meet the deadline.
Timelines and Module Start Date Restrictions

Distance Education Division ♦ Mercy College of Ohio

DE will provide a **Timeline** for 5 week, 8 week and 16 week classes (and summer semesters). These timelines indicate each academic week and when modules should open, as well as a guide for when the last assignments for that week should be due. The timeline helps keep the entire Distance Education Division on the same schedule, across all degree programs, as well as continuing education and college electives. Distance Education students taking multiple classes at a distance will always have the same start and end dates for each week and this will allow your course to run more smoothly and alleviate confusion or late assignments. It is to the instructor’s benefit to keep on pace with the rest of the division.

Modules will always open on a **Sunday at 12:01 a.m. Eastern Standard Time**. Due dates, no matter what day of the week, should be at **11:59 p.m.** The 12:01 / 11:59 distinction serves to alleviate confusion as to midnight at the start of a new day or the end of a previous day.

Example of a Fall second 8 week Timeline:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Module Opens</th>
<th>Start Date Restrictions</th>
<th>Represents Week Of</th>
<th>Week Ends / Assignments Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Open by Default</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>Wednesday, October 17</td>
<td>Tuesday, October 23 at 11:59 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>October 21</td>
<td>12:01 a.m.</td>
<td>Wednesday, October 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>October 28</td>
<td>12:01 a.m.</td>
<td>Wednesday, October 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>November 4</td>
<td>12:01 a.m.</td>
<td>Wednesday, November 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>November 11</td>
<td>12:01 a.m.</td>
<td>Wednesday, November 14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Academic Week Shifts for Fall Break from Wednesday to Monday**

| Week 6 | Sunday | November 25 | 12:01 a.m. | Monday, November 26 | Sunday, December 2 at 11:59 p.m. |
| Week 7 | Sunday | December 2 | 12:01 a.m. | Monday, December 3 | Sunday, December 9 at 11:59 p.m. |

**End of Course Evaluation, December 9 at 12:01 a.m.**

| Week 8 | Sunday | December 9 | 12:01 a.m. | Monday, December 10 | Sunday, December 16 at 11:59 p.m. |

**Course Ends Sunday, December 16 at 11:59 p.m.**

Notes are provided regarding breaks or shifts in the academic week, but Modules still open on Sunday.

It is to the instructor’s benefit to have consistency in assignment due dates. For example: a chapter review is always due on Thursdays so the instructor can provide feedback before Sunday’s quiz. You may find that the Fall schedule causes conflict after Thanksgiving break, as the academic week shifts from “Wednesday” to “Monday” during the 8wk2 term. If you choose to also follow this shift, make your students aware of the change to routine due dates at least one week in advance. Most of our Distance Education students are working adults who may need to arrange time around work and family in order to complete their course assignments. An unexpected change in routine causes anxiety and confusion among students.

In consultation with the College Registrar, modules within the Fall 16wk Term will remain open for students to work online Monday and Tuesday of Fall Break. **Much like the week of Spring Break, DE will observe a week off for Thanksgiving Break.** This break will be outlined in the Fall 16 week Timeline each academic year.

Instructors will use the Timeline to set the **Start Date Restrictions** for each Module. The “Week Ends / Assignments Due” column should be used as a guide for setting your own due dates.

For examples of Module Start Date Restrictions and Assignment Due Dates, continue to the next page.
**Module Start Date**

Click directly on the date provided to change your Module Start Date. SUNDAYS AT 12:01 AM

**Content Item Due Date**

The **Due Date** is used by D2L to populate the calendar feature. Start and End dates are not used on individual content items. **Due Dates set for 11:59 pm**

**Quizzes – No Dates Under Content Tab**

Due Dates, Start Dates, and End Dates are never applied to a quiz on the Content Tab. Apply your Start and End dates to quizzes from the Quizzes Tab only. NOTE: It would be wise to use the Title of your quiz to state which dates the quiz is available so your students still see this information displayed on the content tab.

**End of Course Evaluation Module**

Students can’t access the last module of your course until passing through the Course Evaluation. **You cannot change the Start Date Restriction on the last module after your Evaluation has been set up by DE Staff.** Instructors cannot access the Course Evaluation screen to change this date. Attempting to do so will lock students out. Contact DE Staff if you need to make a change to this date.
Distance Education Staff have created templates for each type of page or assignment a student might encounter in your course. The templates contain additional information, directional, and support information to reduce the number of student calls we receive. If you have questions regarding the information DE Staff have added in your course, please ask for clarification before removing this type of information.

Pages within your D2L course have a uniform look and feel because of a Stylesheet applied by DE Staff to your HTML page code. This is what makes some text appear light blue, have an underline, etc.

```html
<html>
<head>
<title>Assignment One</title>
<link href="/shared/Logos_and_Stylesheets/stylesheet_v10/v10stylesheet.css" rel="stylesheet" type="text/css" />
</head>
<body>
</body>
</html>
```

Always format your text within D2L. Avoid formatting first in a program like Microsoft Word and then copy/pasting into D2L. Word is not a webpage editor, and when you paste from Word it brings over a lot of conflicting residual code that you cannot see. This causes a host of other problems and can sometimes corrupt your pages in D2L so they no longer display properly or allow you to edit them.

Change text formatting using the **Format** menu, *not* the numerical **Font Size** menu.

When a new course is created, or undergoes a major revision, DE Staff will conform to these templates while working with your course materials. If you included new assignments or resources yourself to a course that you are teaching again, DE Staff will make template updates on your behalf during the routine audit that occurs in the **two week time frame before the course opens**.

The following section contains examples of Distance Education course page templates. If you make revisions or add new assignments *after your course opens to students*, please attempt to conform to these templates yourself or contact a member of Distance Education staff if you need assistance.
This is the first page students encounter under the Content Tab. Course Overview is a new feature in D2L version 10 and provides a place for students to locate everything they need to get started in your course. A link to your syllabus and virtual office is displayed on this page, as well as a welcome message from the instructor.

Editing the Course Overview is different from updating other types of content in D2L.

Click Edit Course in the upper-right corner of D2L
Click the Manage Files icon
Click COURSE OVERVIEW AND SYLLABUS folder
Click the down arrow on COURSE OVERVIEW.html
Choose Edit File

Welcome to ABC 111
Full course title here

Instructor's Name
email
Phone: 419-000-0000

Important Links
- Course Syllabus
- Virtual Office
- Other course link
- Other course link

Welcome!
Instructor bio here

Each week a new module will open on Sunday at 12:01 a.m. Eastern Standard Time. Access for dropboxes, discussions, and quizzes will close at 11:59 p.m. on the due date listed in each module's introduction.

All students are enrolled in the D2L Student Tutorial. A link will appear in your list of courses upon logging into the system. It is advised that all students also complete the D2L Student Tutorial during the first week of this class. Student Resource boxes appear on both the D2L Home Page and the Course Home Page. There you will find information on getting help with D2L and recommended downloads to optimize your system for the D2L platform.

Course Syllabus and Virtual Office links appear here
The instructor will provide a short biography and introduction. Including a photo or video is strongly encouraged.

The two paragraphs at the bottom of the screen are provided by Distance Education Staff.
Faculty will utilize the same syllabus template as their academic division. The syllabus will be provided in Desire2Learn as an HTML page or in PDF format, not Microsoft Word. Word documents become stuck in pop-up blockers in the student view when loaded directly under the Content Tab. (Word, PowerPoint, and Excel documents should be linked on a page, never added as a stand-alone piece of content.)

Distance Education requires that the following also be included in your course syllabus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedicated &quot;live office hours&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students who encounter a technical issue that, for any reason, prohibits the student from submitting a graded assignment within the Desire2Learn system before the assignment’s due date are to call the Desire2Learn Help Desk at 1-877-325-7778. Students must submit a request for this 3rd party-verified ticket, which will verify the date, time, and technical specifics surrounding their issue. The D2L ticket will then be forwarded to the course instructor, who will use the information provided by the D2L Help Desk to make an informed decision regarding: accepting the assignment, reopening an assignment, or extending time on an assignment.

After calling the D2L Helpdesk, the student will then compose an email to their instructor containing 1) a screenshot of the issue they have encountered, 2) a description of the issue they have encountered, 3) the ticket number provided by the D2L Helpdesk.

PLEASE NOTE: The instructor reserves the right to refuse late assignments from a student who did not obtain a D2L Help Desk ticket number.

Notice of any scheduled proctored exams and a statement that the instructor will, at their discretion, require that students are to have their exams proctored if academic dishonesty is suspected in the class.

The online classroom is a special environment in which students and faculty come together to promote learning and growth. It is essential to this learning environment that respect for the rights of others seeking to learn and respect for the professionalism of the faculty are maintained. Student conduct which disrupts the teaching/learning process shall not be tolerated and may lead to disciplinary action and/or removal from the class.
A brief introduction to these materials appears at the top of the page, including how the materials assist student learning.

Readings will include the name of the textbook and edition number, as well as the chapter and/or page numbers.

Presentation and Lecture material will include directions on secure/nonsecure items and the “Need Help with Your Player?” information.
The discussion question students are responding to appears here.

Provide information on expectations for posting (post by Friday, reply by Sunday). A discussion rubric needs to be provided, explaining how the posts will be graded.

A link to the posting area appears at the bottom of the page and should open in a new window so students can refer back to the original question as needed.
The assignment instructions should include all expectations and directions for completing the assignment in one place. Instructors should never refer students back to the syllabus to locate instructions for completing the assignment.

The Assessment section contains expectations, point value, and a rubric (optional). This area should also include a brief reminder for commonly forgotten tasks. (Example: Don’t forget to include the names of everyone on your team!)

A link to the dropbox area appears at the bottom of the page and should open in a new window so students can refer back to the assignment as needed.

Any supplemental materials, such as PDFs, Microsoft Word Documents, Web Links, etc. will be included on the same page. Microsoft Office documents needed to complete the assignment will also include instructions for saving the file to the student’s computer. Microsoft Office documents get caught in pop-up blockers when in the student view.

Also note that a dropbox can receive multiple files for the same assignment, such as a paper written in Word and a presentation composed in PowerPoint.
NOTE: Instructors **should not** add a start date restriction under the Content tab.

This page describes the quiz and includes information regarding materials covered, availability and time limits.

A statement describes expectations for student behavior, the Mercy College Policy on Academic Integrity, and an explanation of allowed materials.

A link is provided on this page to the quiz. Start and End Date restrictions must be applied under the **Quiz Tab**.
Instructor’s Checklist
Distance Education Division ◊ Mercy College of Ohio

Instructors will complete this checklist prior to the start of each semester. Refer to Semester Preparation Deadlines distributed by DE Staff.

Copy Course
☐ Starting in new, empty course: Edit Course (on right) > Import, Export, Copy Components

Content Tab
☐ Course Overview contains a link to an updated Syllabus, your Virtual Office, a Welcome Message, and a photograph
☐ Modules open on Sundays based on Timeline and Module Start Date Restrictions distributed by DE Staff
☐ Due Date restrictions on individual assignments within Modules
☐ Module Description areas – weekly date range updated
☐ Links to all websites and videos still work
☐ Links to old Course Evaluations have been deleted

Dropbox Tab
☐ Any old End Date Restrictions have updated for new semester
☐ Dropboxes connected to gradebook

Discussion Tab
☐ Any old End Date Restrictions have been updated for new semester
☐ Topics connected to gradebook

Quizzes Tab
☐ No quizzes listed as “inactive”
☐ Quiz connected to gradebook
  For multiple choice: ☐ allow auto export to grades ☐ allow attempt graded immediately
☐ Date restrictions set for each Quiz
  Time limit set: ☐ Enforced ☐ Show clock ☐ Auto submit attempt
  Submission Views: ☐ Dated after quiz closes ☐ Show questions answered Incorrectly only please!

Groups
☐ Student names in group descriptions have been updated
☐ Discussion forums, if used, are restricted by Group

When Finished
☐ Compose email to Teri.Thomas@MercyCollege.edu for course review, course evaluation links, and setup of Mercy College student resources by dates listed within Semester Preparation Deadlines. Include requests for Collaborate sessions (Date, Time, Duration, and Corresponding Module) or student access for VoiceThread.