

Online Instruction Information

This section shares instructional best practices; federal regulations related to student privacy and engagement; teaching and lead designer responsibilities; sharing course content; faculty hiring, training and compensation; and helpful resources.

MTSU online and hybrid courses are taught within a professor's course load. Faculty can see the populated classlist within the learning management system (Desire2Learn-D2L) as students register. Students have access to their online courses five days before class begins.

Faculty Lead Developers

Faculty who develop online courses or who redesign existing online courses are considered to be **faculty lead developers** and are responsible for maintaining/updating their approved online and hybrid course content and for sharing the approved content with faculty (full-time and adjunct faculty) teaching sections of their courses during the three-year contract period.

Faculty Lead Developer Responsibilities:

- work with the department to schedule the course.
- update the content in the master shell each semester as necessary;
- upload the approved course for sectional instructors;
- each semester meet with professors new to the instruction of the course to familiarize them with the content and assist in updating the welcome page, contact information, and calendar;
- work with department to obtain textbooks and other course materials.

Note: These services should be provided by the faculty lead designers for sectional faculty even if they are not teaching their own courses during the semester.

Instruction by Adjunct Faculty and Non-course Developers

- Faculty (adjuncts or full-time) teaching sections of online courses developed by others must meet with the lead developer to review course content and to revise the welcome page, calendar and faculty contact information. **Approved online course content must not be changed by faculty teaching sections of an approved online course.**
- Since students have access to their online courses five days before the semester begins, approved content must be uploaded into the semester shell and the revisions noted above are complete.
- Required training for new online instructors:

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- complete an online training developed by MTSU Online Instructional Designers. This course is available in the Self-Registration tab of your main D2L homepage. Faculty are required to complete it prior to teaching.



Email ePortfolio Support ▾ Self Registration

- D2L bootcamp training sessions are also recommended and are offered prior to and at the beginning of each semester. A self-registration, online D2L orientation is available in D2L.
- adhere to and support MTSU's [Information Technology Resources Policy](#) and encourage students to do the same.
- review [copyright resources](#) as they pertain to online instruction. The Walker Library provides [copyright and fair use resources](#) for faculty teaching online.
- maintain up-to-date computer virus detection software and operating system updates.
- provide student access instructions and detailed descriptions of how the material will be used in conjunction with required D2L activities and assignments if external/ePublisher content is used in online and hybrid courses to enhance student learning.
- New MTSU Online instructors may be assigned an Online Faculty Mentor (OFM) to assist them during their first online teaching experience if requested. This assignment is made by MTSU Online and is outside the instructor's discipline. If you would like one assigned, please contact [MTSU Online](#).

Course Access and Instructional Expectations

- Access course(s) in D2L via QuickLinks D2L on the MTSU homepage or directly at [elearn](#).
- Login to class on the first day
- Login to class at least three times per week
- Respond to student emails and discussion postings within 24 to 48 hours
- Assignment feedback and grades should be posted as soon as possible, and within one week of the assignment submission, depending on the nature and length of the course and assignment type.
- Create a high level of interaction between students and instructor.
- Submit final course grades by MTSU end-of-semester deadline.
- Review the [Student Attendance Reporting and Unofficial Withdrawals Tutorial](#) and complete the attendance report for non-participating students.

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- During the first week of class, faculty may identify students who have not participated in a course, and email the names to [Teresa Umphrey](#) with MTSU Online Faculty Services. Teresa will try to contact the students to confirm that they are still enrolled in the course and to offer access assistance.
- When it is evident that a student is falling behind in his/her work, faculty should email him/her immediately to offer assistance.
- Instructors should insure that their policies on accepting late work are clear. If late work is not allowed, instructors should communicate this to the class at the start of the semester.
- Communicate with students via D2L email, discussion boards and only MTSU-supported email accounts.
- Take into account university holidays and academic schedules when establishing course assignment due dates.

Course Instruction and Best Practices

Faculty Readiness for Online Instruction

Faculty who wish to assess their readiness for online instruction may ask themselves these questions

Will I be able to:

- Project my presence in an online?
- Cope with delayed feedback?

Do I know:

- What I'm trying to achieve with my instruction?
- What knowledge, skills and attitudes need to be taught?
- How much content I need in my instruction?
- What resources and strategies I can/will use?
- How I'll structure the content?
- How to assess whether students have met the objectives of the course?

Do I have good writing skills?

- Can I communicate clearly and effectively through email?

General Criteria To Assess Class Discussions

(1) Content Mastery: Students must evidence an understanding of the fact, concepts, and theories presented in the assigned readings and lectures. This ability is the basis

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for all higher-level skills and must be made evident by comments and/or response to questions.

(2) Communication Skills: Students must be able to inform others in an intelligent manner what he/she knows. Ideas must be communicated clearly and persuasively. Communication skills include listening to others and understanding what they have said, responding appropriately, asking questions in a clear manner, avoiding rambling discourses or class domination, using proper vocabulary pertinent to the discussion, building on the ideas of others, etc.

(3) Synthesis/Integration: Students must be able to illuminate the connections between the material under consideration and other bodies of knowledge. For example, one could take several ideas from the reading or class discussions and combine them to produce a new perspective on an issue, or one could take outside materials (from other classes, personal experiences, etc.) and combine them to create novel insights. Students who probe the interdisciplinary roots of the theories presented or who are able to view the author or the materials from several viewpoints demonstrate this skill.

(4) Creativity: Students must demonstrate that they have mastered the basic materials and have gone on to produce their own insights. A simple repetition of ideas from the articles will not suffice, nor will simply commenting on what others have said. Students must go beyond the obvious by bringing their own beliefs and imagination to bear. Creativity may be displayed by showing further implications of the material, by applying it to a new field, or by finding new ways of articulating the materials, which produce significant insights.

(5) Valuing: Students should be able to identify the value inherent in the material studied. Furthermore, students should be able to articulate their own positions by reference to basic underlying values. Students must not simply feel something is wrong or incorrect; she or he must be able to state why, based on some hierarchy of values. In either accepting or rejecting a position, the operative values must be explicit.

(6) General Enthusiasm and Interest in the Class: This can be shown by regularity of discussion and bringing in outside, ancillary materials that you read or have passed along to you. The more substance students bring to the discussion, the higher their grades.

Student Engagement in MTSU Online Courses

Simply logging into a course no longer constitutes student participation in an online class. To follow federal regulations regarding student engagement and participation in online courses, MTSU “must demonstrate that a student participated in class or was otherwise engaged in an academically-related activity, such as by contributing to an

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online discussion or initiating contact with a faculty member to ask a course-related question.”

FERPA

The [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#) (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education.

Per this [Act](#), MTSU faculty must communicate with and provide course feedback (including grades) to their online students within an institutionally-assigned email account. Faculty may respond to student emails received via the D2L or MTMail accounts. All educational data (*such as class schedule, grades, GPA, academic standing, test scores, academic transcripts, student employment, class lists, and email between the student and MTSU*) and personally identifiable information (*Social Security Number, driver's license number, account number, and credit or debit card number in association with the person's name or access code*) must never be sent to or from a non-institutional assigned email account.

Requiring students to sign up for and participate in course activities via a third party (i.e. social media) site could constitute a violation of FERPA guidelines. Do not set up course discussions that will be graded or can be freely accessed by others via sites such as Facebook, Twitter, SnapChat, etc. Utilizing third party technologies is encouraged but no assessment conversations or student information may be shared. If there are questions about an app or service, please contact the [FITC](#) or [MTSU Online](#)

Student Authentication Requirements

To be in compliance with the [Higher Education Opportunity Act](#) and [SACS Distance and Correspondence Policy Statement](#), MTSU must "demonstrate that the student who registers in a distance or correspondence education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the credit by verifying the identity of a student who participates in class or coursework by using, at the option of the institution, methods such as (1) a secure login and pass code, (2) proctored examinations, and (3) new or other technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identification.”

This verification is accomplished by requiring the MTSU online student to:

- use a secure login and pass code into the MTSU-supported Learning Management System, currently Desire2Learn (D2L) **and/or**;
- use of Examity proctoring services via the D2L course **and/or**;
- sit for proctored examinations.