FASC Online Course Requirements

Course overview & introduction

An online course MUST include:

- explicit instructions for students on where and how to get started, prominently placed on the course home page
- an introduction page
    - include information about instructor, how to navigate the course
- a syllabus including:
    - measurable course learning goals/objectives
    - academic integrity and disability services information
    - how to contact tech support (OIT, Sakai/eCollege support)
    - explicit communication policies, including email and discussion expectations
    - grading policies (including rubrics where appropriate)
- a specific course schedule including all assignment due dates and times
- a course-wide forum topic for General Course Questions, open from the first day of class or earlier (sometimes labeled "virtual office")
- consistently-organized "modules" for each week (or shorter units for condensed courses) presenting all student materials
- General Education courses must be identified and include course learning objectives and theme

Course structure

Organization and consistency is critical to student success; the student should never feel lost ("What am I supposed to be doing now?").

In most cases, each weekly unit should include:

- explicit, measurable learning goals that are consistent with course learning objectives
- readings (clearly designated as required or recommended)
- original lecture material, generally augmented with external resources that are appropriately cited (including images, videos, etc.)
- assessments, including class discussions, tests and quizzes, writing assignments, projects, homework, etc. (note that high-stakes assessments should not take the form of machine-gradable exams in online courses)

Tackling large assignments in an online class can be a challenge. Large projects should be chunked into smaller pieces; each piece should give the student an opportunity to receive feedback from the instructor and receive an appropriately weighted score.

- example: a large research paper might be broken down as such:
    - research topic due Sept. 20 by 11:59pm (5 points)

- o annotated bibliography due Nov. 1 by 11:59pm (15 points)
- o rough draft due Nov. 21 by 11:59pm (25 points)
- o final draft due Dec. 14 by 11:59pm (100 points)

Course interaction & engagement

Ideally, an online course promotes the development of an interactive "community of learners" and motivates student participation with frequent, low-stakes assessments, including:

- introductions during the first week, shared among students and instructor
- regular announcements to the class, from the instructor, with updates, introduction of new units, general class feedback on performance, etc. (minimum: 2 announcements per week)
- weekly, interactive, graded discussions among students, with meaningful contributions by instructor
- weekly, low-stakes assessments with timely feedback. In addition to discussions, these could include computer-graded reading-check quizzes, regular homework assignments, short writing assignments, etc.
- grading must be completed quickly so that students receive motivating feedback (for instance, weekly discussions should be graded within 24 hours of close)
- the General Course Questions forum should be monitored regularly by the instructor (check and respond to questions every day or at least 4 times per week)