

## Expectations for Online Instructors

To ensure a high-quality online learning experience, the following guidelines were developed by an Atlantic Cape faculty taskforce specifically pertaining to instructors of online (OL) courses. Additionally, refer to [Blackboard Guidelines](#) and follow all applicable department-specific policies and guidelines.

### **Prior to the beginning of the term:**

1. It is recommended that online courses should be fully developed, or nearly so, at the start of the term so that the instructor may focus on course facilitation and interaction.
2. The instructor should practice universal design principles with all course material and utilize the necessary tools, either through Blackboard or other software, to ensure consistency and ADA compliance. The College requires that all course-related materials be fully accessible and adhere to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA standards.
3. It is recommended that the following be available as of the date students have access to the course:
  - a. “Welcome” video, email, or announcement introducing yourself and providing instructions on how to navigate the course (i.e. due dates, messages, syllabus, course content, etc.);
  - b. instructor contact information (including office hours);
  - c. course textbook and materials information;
  - d. what students may expect regarding instructor response time;
  - e. uploaded syllabus, and
  - f. course outline/schedule

### **During the semester:**

1. As required by the contract for TLC members, instructors must be electronically accessible to their online students a minimum of five days per week. The College ensures this by expecting instructors to log in a minimum of five days per week. Logging in should be considered making a meaningful contribution to the course content and to your students.
2. Instructors are required to initiate and engage in substantive interactions with students on a predictable and scheduled basis.
  - a. According to the [Department of Education](#), substantive interaction is defined as engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and also includes at least two of the following –
    - i. Providing direct instruction;
    - ii. Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework;
    - iii. Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency;
    - iv. Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency; or
    - v. Other instructional activities approved by the institution's or program's accrediting agency.

3. Communication Expectations:
  - a. Provide clear and consistent instructions on how students should communicate with the instructor (e.g., email, Blackboard messages, text, Zoom, phone, etc.) and how the instructor will communicate with students.
    - i. Instructors must respond to student messages within a reasonable amount of time (24 to 36 hours is suggested). Instructors should include a statement in the course syllabus regarding response time so students know what to expect. Remember, the more responsive you are, the more “real” you will seem to students.
  - b. Communicate weekly with your students, preferably through Blackboard Announcements, to outline tasks, due dates, and other relevant reminders.
4. Provide clear and detailed instructions on how students should turn in assignments. This includes any relevant instructions for using Turnitin, Honorlock, publisher content, etc. Be consistent with due dates to minimize confusion on the part of the students. For example, make each discussion thread have a due date of Tuesday by 5pm so that students remember a pattern.
5. Instructors should provide substantive and detailed feedback in grading, based on the expectations outlined in the syllabus. Grading should show students what they got wrong and how they can improve their work. Instructors should encourage students to ask questions to ensure understanding of missed content.
6. Instructors should grade assignments in a timely manner (one week is recommended as a reasonable turnaround time). Instructors are encouraged to let students know the expected turnaround time for grades.
7. Instructors must continually utilize the Ally course tool to ensure all content posted meets accessibility requirements.
8. Instructors are required to utilize online proctoring software, as per Academic Affairs guidelines.

**After the semester ends:**

1. Submit final grades and attendance records if needed in a timely manner.