



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report fits under Charge 3 of the council which states the need to review processes and procedures to ensure the University is efficient and effective in responding to external opportunities. The current eLearning standards are old and were never put through the MOA process. They are available at <https://wmich.edu/sites/default/files/attachments/u878/2016/elearning-standards.pdf>. A complete rewrite was in order and the Extended University Programs (EUP) Council recommends approval of the attached eLearning standards as a possible MOA. Given the dynamic and complex nature of eLearning, these standards will be reviewed by the EUP Council in one year.

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RATIONALE

Establishing and implementing institutional eLearning standards is an indicator of an institution's commitment to developing and delivering high-quality online courses and programs. The Extended University Programs (EUP) Council recommends approval of the attached eLearning standards as an MOA. The elements of these standards are derived from and recognized as best practices by accrediting agencies and professional organizations. These standards establish the minimum levels of support and service that must be provided to or by WMU students, faculty, staff and stakeholders. Given the dynamic and complex nature of eLearning systems, instructional technologies and the methodologies used for instruction and student support, these standards will be reviewed by the EUP Council in one year.

RECOMMENDATION

The Faculty Senate Extended University Programs Council (EUPC) recommends Extended University Programs implements the eLearning standards defined here. Annual review of the WMU eLearning Standards will be conducted jointly by the EUPC and the Faculty Senate Academic and Information Technology Council.

Proposed Western Michigan University eLearning Standards: Institutional Quality Assurance Standards

1. All online courses will be designed and developed in a manner that is compliant with Federal legislation and accreditation requirements.
2. For the initial offering of a course, the primary course development will be completed prior to the course/term start date.

3. Departments will establish evaluation standards and evaluation processes for eLearning.
4. Instructor and student satisfaction surveys to measure satisfaction with delivery of services and support will be administered and reviewed annually.
5. To ensure consistency and sound pedagogy, courses must comply with the instructional design checklists and any departmental checklists prior to the course start date.[URL:04 Checklist for Elearning Course-level Criteria 11_01_18 (fillable form) (1).pdf]. To be eligible for awards, courses must meet/follow the instructional design requirements, eLearning course-level criteria, and all applicable checklists.
6. WMU will provide adequate budget and financial planning for distance education programs and courses.
7. Distance education course instructor appointment will be identical to traditional course instructor appointment and is assigned by the academic departments.
8. Continuous improvement of distance education courses and programs will be accomplished through consistent communication and collaboration with Extended University Programs.
9. Extended University Programs will offer regular in-person and online instructor development workshops, instructional design and technology support services that emphasize achievement of learning outcomes, assessment of learning, as well as instructional technologies to enhance teaching and learning. A training and workshop schedule is available at <https://wmich.edu/elearning/instructors/instructor-training>

Course Development Standards

1. All distance education courses will be designed and constructed using the WMU instructional design process.
2. A distance education online course typically takes a minimum of three months to develop. Course development shall be completed according to the agreed upon timeline, and incomplete courses may be subject to cancellation. In cases where the course development is not meeting the agreed upon timeline, EUP will work proactively with the faculty member and, if necessary, the department chair, to resolve any issues so as to avoid cancellation of the course.
3. Instructors developing distance education courses will be provided with an instructional design orientation manual containing best practices and available resources.
4. Instructional strategies, outcome assessment strategies, and learning object development will be based on the appropriate inclusion and distribution of Bloom's Levels of Learning (Taxonomy).
5. Distance education courses and all integrated learning objects (collections of content, practice and assessment items) will be constructed to address multiple learning preferences.
6. Student and instructor expectations will be clearly defined and available for the course and each assignment.
7. eLearning course capacity will be determined by the pedagogical requirements of the course. As such, eLearning courses will be designed and developed accordingly.
8. eLearning courses will contain information about library resources, technical support acquisition options, academic support services, and practices for being successful in a distance education course.
9. eLearning courses will contain information on how to contact the instructor. Expected response times and office hours will be present.
10. Special course hardware and software will be specified prior to registration and immediately upon course entry in the form of an announcement or prominent content item.
11. Distance education courses will adhere to the Institutional policies for the use of third-party copyrighted material or evidence of appropriate copyright clearance is available.
12. Mechanisms to collect student feedback will be present in order to improve the course during the current term.
13. Appropriate instructional strategies will be identified during the course storyboard/design document phase and learning objects and course tools will be constructed and/or organized accordingly.
14. Opportunities for student self-evaluation will be present throughout each course.
15. Learning objects will be designed and constructed in compliance with Section 508 and any other federally mandated accessibility regulations.
16. eLearning courses and fully online programs will have a consistent, uniform, and intuitive navigational structure.

Instructor Support and Training Standards

1. Instructor training and orientation opportunities will include, at a minimum, one-on-one, group, online, and print.
2. Open training sessions will occur at least one time during:
 - the fall semester,
 - the spring semester,
 - the summer one and summer two semesters.
3. Self-paced online training will be available.
4. Access to and training for hardware and software used in the development of eLearning content is available to all instructors.
5. Support for converting instructional materials to appropriate accessible formats will be provided to instructors during and after the course development process.
6. Instructors developing eLearning courses must successfully complete the eTeaching endorsement program.
7. At a minimum, instructors will be trained on:
 - the most effective and appropriate use of instructional technologies,
 - how to utilize the course management system,
 - how to develop outcomes-based online course content,
 - and how to manage online courses.

Student Support Standards

1. Online orientation materials will be provided to all students participating in an online course. Students are informed on how to gain access to these materials the evening they register.
2. Online students will have equivalent access to all on-campus support services.
3. All instructional materials such as books and supplemental readings will be available to online students worldwide through vendors and/or the WMU library. Instructors will consider the instructional material format options when selecting a textbook and/or course pack.
4. Proctored exam support and guidance is available.
5. Student service support will be designed to promote and maintain a collaborative virtual learning and support community for students.
6. Students will be notified in advance of any scheduled system downtime.

Learning Management System and Technical Support Standards

1. Extended University Programs and the Office of Information Technology shall coordinate and address all learning management system and technical support standards.
2. The course management system will be compliant with and in support of:
 - federal legislation
 - national accreditation standards
3. The layout and navigational structure of course shells will be customizable to meet instructor, student, program, departmental, college, and/or institutional requirements.
4. The system must comply with Section 508 of the United States Workforce Rehabilitation Act guidelines and any other federally mandated accessibility regulations.
5. The system must support the IMS Global Learning Consortium's content package, Learning Tools interoperability (LTI) and Shareable Content Object Reference Model (SCORM) standards for content import and export.
6. The system must be able to integrate with the institution's enterprise student information system for course shell creation, course enrollment management, mid-term and final grade submission.
7. The system will not require significant web browser configuration for end-users; additional plug-ins and codecs will be easily attainable at no additional cost.
8. The system will provide traditional and contemporary content item types, tools, and learning objects.
9. The system will support the integration of third-party teaching and learning plug-ins and APIs as well as academic integrity monitoring.
10. The system will be compatible with current identity verification applications to comply with student verification regulations.
11. The system will support learning object repositories and centralized management of distributed content.
12. The system will support mobile devices so users can fully participate in the course.

13. The system will support single sign-on from WMU Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems and sub-systems.
14. The system will provide functionality to share, collaborate, and manage learning objects.
15. The system will be kept current with the most recent security patches and updates.
16. The hosting infrastructure will provide a system uptime of 99.99%.
17. System backups will be performed every 24 hours or less.
18. Data retrieval and/or restoration will occur within the institutionally defined recovery times.
19. A change management team will review and approve all potential system changes.
20. Scheduled system downtimes will be coordinated and shared with all stakeholders to minimize disruption to users.
21. System upgrades, bug fixes, etc. will be deployed and thoroughly verified in a test environment prior to deployment in the production environment.
22. Course content and data deletion will follow institutional data retention policies.
23. Technical support for students, instructors, and staff is available 24/7 via phone, email, and/or chat.
24. A “frequently asked questions”/technical support knowledge base will be available online. This tool will be available prior to system authentication and is available at <https://wmich.edu/elearning/instructors/faq>
25. Monthly help desk reports will be provided to WMU stakeholders for review and feedback.