

## Needed Skills for Online Instructors

Adapted from the NEA Guide for Online Teaching

*Note: To maintain quality and consistency, courses at NSCC are developed by Lead Instructors. The Master course is used as the default template for each course. Only the Lead Instructor may modify a course. Exceptions would be instructor information on the Syllabus and open/due dates for Course Content, Forums, Assignments and Tests.*

In hiring, evaluating, and supporting online instructors, administrators should establish certain expectations. Online instructors should be expected to demonstrate the following skills, and administrators should know how to recognize the mastery of those skills:

Skill	Skill Description	Example
<b>Understand the language of online education</b>	Online instructors should be familiar with online tools and online infrastructure, including Learning Management Systems (LMS) and Content Management Systems (CMS), and they should understand the appropriate uses of each system to support online course design and delivery.	Online instructors should understand how to use the grading features within the online course platform.
<b>Revise/write course documents in LMS/CMS</b>	Online instructors should be able to make appropriate use of the LMS/CMS platform's features, producing documents that are well organized for use by students, and that are kept up-to-date during course delivery.	Instructors should have sufficient facility with LMS/CMS to revise course documents to meet students' learning styles and needs.
<b>Use LMS/CMS tools effectively to facilitate course design</b>	Online teachers should be familiar with the full range of LMS/CMS tools, and be able to select the appropriate elements while designing and teaching online courses.	Online teachers should know when, how and what types of discussion areas to use to foster student-to-student interaction during online course delivery.

<p><b>Design, evaluate and deliver online course to appropriate online design and content standards.</b></p>	<p>Online teachers should be familiar with online design and content standards, have the ability to determine which standards are appropriate for their course design and delivery needs, and be able to demonstrate use of design and content standards in course-document creation and course delivery.</p>	<p>Online teachers should be aware of Section 508 requirements that online learning materials be accessible for people with disabilities, and should assure that the design and delivery of online courses include appropriate text explanations of online course videos, audios, and graphics.</p>
<p><b>Use technology to support course design.</b></p>	<p>Online teachers should be able to demonstrate an ability to use multimedia, as appropriate, in course materials, in ways that comply with Section 508 requirements.</p>	<p>Online teachers who use a video clip to demonstrate a scientific principle should be able to incorporate the clip into the online learning platform in such a way that students may easily access the clip without long download times. In addition, the clip should be accompanied by a textual explanation that meets Section 508 compliance requirements.</p>
<p><b>Revise course documents to maintain accuracy and currency.</b></p>	<p>During course design and course delivery, online teachers should be able to revise course documents to keep them up-to-date and accurate.</p>	<p>Online teachers should be adept at revising online course documents and at maintaining up-to-date Internet links in online course documents. Online teachers should review course documents at least once a semester during course delivery to make sure Internet links still point to active URLs.</p>
<p><b>Incorporate Internet resources into course documents.</b></p>	<p>Online teachers should be able to demonstrate an ability to search and use Internet sites so that links to them can be incorporated into course</p>	<p>Online teachers should be able to incorporate website links into course documents instead of simply copying and</p>

	<p>documents. They should be able to employ CMS features to use and appropriately reference web sites, and have the Information Literacy skills to determine which sites are legitimate and of sufficient merit for inclusion.</p>	<p>pasting material from the website into a given course document. Moreover, they should know how to give appropriate copyright reference in online course documents.</p>
<p><b>Communicate an appropriate online tone during course delivery.</b></p>	<p>Because online communications may lack the full array of visual and oral cues that help listeners interpret speakers' messages, it is important that online teachers be sensitive to problems of misinterpretation, and that they are careful to use an appropriate online tone in course design and course delivery. Moreover, they should be able both to model an appropriate tone, and to guide students toward an appropriate tone when they stray.</p>	<p>Online teachers should know how to use emotions in online communications, so that students are not confused when teachers make a joking reference, and should quickly intervene if online dialogue turns disrespectful.</p>
<p><b>Foster student-to-student discussion.</b></p>	<p>Online teachers should foster student-to-student discussion during course design and delivery. During the design phase, online teachers should build in course discussion as a feature of student assessment. Their instructions for when, where, and how students participate in online discussions should be clearly communicated. During course delivery, online teachers should facilitate course discussions by intervening appropriately when discussions are either not occurring or are inappropriate.</p>	<p>Online teachers should facilitate online course discussions during course design by writing leading questions to jump-start student discussions.</p>

<p><b>Foster student-to-student collaboration.</b></p>	<p>Online teachers should foster student-to-student collaboration through the use of online discussions, group projects, team activities, and instructional style. They should demonstrate skill at facilitating discussions, and be reliable guides to student learning.</p>	<p>When student discussions stray from the topic, online teachers should be able to intervene appropriately to return the conversation to the appropriate issue.</p>
<p><b>Provide appropriate and timely feedback to students.</b></p>	<p>Online teachers should monitor student learning, and provide students with feedback on their performance. Teachers should be adept with the various platform features so that they can provide students the opportunity to submit their work online. They should review submitted work in a timely fashion (usually within one week of submission), and should provide students with feedback.</p>	<p>Online teachers should provide clear instructions to students on how to submit a research paper online, provide rubrics on how the paper will be graded, follow the rubric when grading, and return the paper with comments to the student in a timely manner.</p>
<p><b>Participate and be present in an online course, meeting student needs and school expectations for teacher presence.</b></p>	<p>Although it is an important advantage of online instruction that students may sometimes interact with Internet materials and complete assignments at times of their own choosing, it is vitally important that online teachers be active and regular participants in their classes. They should take part in class discussions, review submitted work promptly, respond to student questions on a regular and consistent basis, and schedule online meeting times, as needed. One appropriate expectation of online teachers is that they should attend their online class on a</p>	<p>Online teachers should log into the course every day, review student questions and respond to them, review student discussions, and review and provide feedback to students on work submitted since the previous day.</p>

	daily basis, and respond to student questions expeditiously.	
<b>Intervene appropriately when students misbehave online.</b>	Online teachers should foster appropriate online student behavior, model an effective and respectful online tone, guide discussions' tone and substance, and address problems with inappropriate online behaviors such as "flaming."	Online teachers should be prepared to respond to postings from students that belittle the opinions of others, asking that the posts be modified.
<b>Communicate appropriately with students in one-on-one and group settings.</b>	Online teachers should demonstrate the appropriate use of both synchronous and asynchronous communications with students, using one-on-one communications when needed, and fostering and guiding group discussions.	Online teachers should establish private discussion areas for each student, so that student and teacher may discuss concerns that need not be part of more public discussions—concerns about grades, personal matters affecting course performance, or other matters that they do not wish to share with their classmates.
<b>Communicate with students, parents, school administrators, and other teachers via a variety of online and traditional means.</b>	Online teachers must be able to communicate with a number of other stakeholders through a variety of methods, some online, some not.	An online teacher might communicate with the parents of a particular student via email or telephone, and with the administrators and teachers of the student's school through the use of the online grade book, email, or website.
<b>Provide course materials to students in a timely manner.</b>	Online teachers should be able to provide course materials to students in a timely manner, so that students have all course materials when needed. These include physical materials that may be mailed to students at school or at home, or	Online teacher maintains currency of course materials.

	electronic materials in the form of reference works or Internet links.	
<b>Track whether students are registered/enrolled in the course.</b>	Because the online environment poses unique challenges, online teachers must pay particular attention to the course enrollment process, be able to determine which students are enrolled in the online course, and know how to add and drop students from the course. The same software used for enrollment procedures is often useful in structuring activities for the course.	At the beginning of the course, teachers should review the online enrollment/registration system, determine how many students are enrolled in the course, and then use that information to form online teams of students for some activities.
<b>Keep track of student participation in online course.</b>	Online teachers should have the facility to track student participation in the course, viewing course logs, student postings in the discussion area, and student assignments.	Online teachers should regularly review and grade student participation in course discussions, and base a portion of a student's grade on the level and quality of student participation in course discussions. Some teachers will post student discussion grades for students to review.
<b>Provide students with basic technical support services, recognizing which issues should be forwarded to technical support teams.</b>	Online teachers should be able to answer student questions on certain technical issues, including posting to discussions, submitting assignments, using the Internet, and viewing online grades.	Online teachers instruct students in submitting their online assignments, assisting students with difficulties by clarifying the instructions, or providing support by phone or email. They should determine whether a technical problem is more appropriately forwarded to technical support personnel.

