

Minutes of the CAS Online Faculty Discussion Group
November 29, 2007
3:00 PM

Attendees:

Eric Blazek, Jane Bowerman, Patrice Brink, Karen Cozart, Sandra Dickinson, Victoria Hoge, Betsy Martens (*via video-conferencing from Tulsa*), Yanrong Qi, Cheryl Walker-Esbaugh, Tammara Williams-Dias, Amanda York.

I. Introductions. Attendees introduced themselves. Williams-Dias hosted the meeting.

II. Academic Misconduct

- A recent problem with academic misconduct in the online program brought to light some misunderstandings about the proper procedure for instructors to follow. The University of Oklahoma Provost Office website has an entire section devoted to the issue with information for both instructors and students:
<http://www.ou.edu/provost/pronew/content/integritymenu.html>.
- According to the Provost's website, "It is a faculty member's responsibility to support integrity and to follow the Academic Misconduct Code's procedures for either admonishing the student or filing a complaint of misconduct **before** imposing any penalty for misconduct.....a student may be accused of academic misconduct whenever a faculty or staff member believes, after reasonable investigation where necessary, that academic misconduct has occurred and that the student has some responsibility for it. The professor who believes misconduct has occurred may either give the student an admonition and grade penalty or file a complaint of academic misconduct" [RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THE ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT CODE, UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA NORMAN CAMPUS (EXCLUDING LAW)].
- Tammara Williams-Dias said that it is a good idea to file an admonition the first time you find cause for it. This can have one of two possible positive consequences. One, it may nip a inclination to plagiarize or cheat in the bud before it becomes an academic career-killing habit, or two, it may bring to light an already existing problem for a student who needs further judicial action. Unfortunately, sometimes charming students have the ability to regularly get away with behaviors which effectively undermine both the integrity of the education process and the work done by honest students and that must not be ignored.
- The form for filing an Academic Misconduct admonition on the Provost's website is an Adobe Acrobat PDF. This form cannot be saved on a local machine without the proper software. If you need the form in MS Word format so that you can save a copy of the admonition for yourself and/or to attach in an email for the student, you can email Patrice Brink in the CAS Online Program (pbrink at ou dot edu) and she will send it to you.
- Karen Cozart will be including a Plagiarism Unit for her online class in the first week to ensure that her students know the rules and the consequences of ignoring them, and encouraged other online instructors to follow suit.

- Williams-Dias mentioned that the University Honor Council has an Honor Code which can be included as part of your syllabus. It can be found on their website here: <http://www.ou.edu/honorcouncil/files/brouchure06.pdf>.

III. Faculty traveling or living outside of the United States

- If you will be traveling or living outside of the United States and wish to carry your university laptop (including software) and/or any university-owned photographic equipment, you will need to carry along with the item(s) a letter from the Export Control Officer in the OU Office of Technology Development, currently Gretta Rowold. She can be reached via email (growold at ou dot edu), in person at One Partners Place, Suite 1510, 350 David L. Boren Boulevard, Norman, Oklahoma, 73072 and her phone number is 325-3800. If you do not obtain the appropriate letter, you risk possibly permanent confiscation of the equipment.

IV. CAS Online Faculty Forum

- Williams-Dias announced that the requested CAS Online Faculty Forum is currently being created and will be rolled out at the start of the Spring 2008 semester. The forum will be a place where online faculty can log into at their leisure and will address and provide discussion and instructor interaction for such topics as tools in D2L, online course design, use of media in online courses, best practices applicable to different disciplines, courses and faculty. Williams-Dias solicited “wish list ideas” for content areas, and welcomes ongoing communication containing suggestions for topics. The forum, which will be monitored Monday –Friday, will be available in D2L by request only. All faculty will be contacted soon with the opportunity to be added to the forum.

V. Designing learner-centered documents and course sites

- Online learning requires a much more learner-centered approach in document writing than is generally necessary in the traditional face-to-face (f2f) classroom. In f2f classes, elaboration happens as needed when questions come up or when the instructor can tell by looking at the students that they may not understand the topic. Obviously this is not possible in the asynchronous online environment. Instructors must anticipate students’ questions and use the documents to convey all necessary information, policies, and course procedures.
- Documents should be written in as clear and specific language as possible, should be drafted with consideration for the reader’s possible interpretations at every step, and should address likely questions or concerns accordingly.
- Use font size and bolding to emphasize important information.
- Use the News Item feature in D2L to broadcast important or updated information to the entire class. Students are bombarded with emails and they can be ignored or easily overlooked.
- Course documents should be revisited every semester, not just to revise dates, but also with an eye toward improving their clarity based on prior experience and student feedback.
- Templates and suggestions for best practices related to learner-centered documents will be part of the Online Faculty Forum.

VI. Online Course Design and Development

- If you need some support with regard to the design and development of your course, contact us. That's why we're here.
- Jane Bowerman asked about using an external website for a course. Cozart answered that they are not encouraged because they have caused problems in the past for instructors and led to confusion for students. Instructors have paid outsiders to build websites for them, and then found out they could not maintain what had been initially done. Williams-Dias added that it is problematic to require students to "go hither and yon" for information about their courses. They should be able to log into D2L and find all basic course information (aside from assigned outside reading) there. They should be able to access the syllabus, the content page, the assignments, the discussion board, the drop box, quizzes and exams, and their grade page from within D2L. The official position of Dean Bell is that if faculty members wish to use external websites for their courses, they must be built within the OU domain and faculty members must have built the websites themselves and be able to maintain them. The CAS Online Program staff cannot provide training for "software and web development." We are about pedagogy and best practices in online learning. Our advice is to remember that technology fails and that technological projects can get very difficult and confusing very quickly. It is best to stay simple, be flexible, and get completely proficient just using all the things D2L has to offer before going beyond it.

VII. Using the Quiz library

- Are you using the Quiz library in D2L? It is useful and not too difficult. The variety of question types (both objective and subjective) also improves the usability of the D2L quiz function for various exam formats. Information and suggestions will be available in the Online Faculty Forum.

VIII. Changes in evaluation process

- The evaluations for online courses are no longer being done within D2L. They are now being handled through Kelly Damphousse's office using eValuate (<http://eval.ou.edu>). The questions asked of students are consistent with the questions being asked for f2f classes. For future evaluations, if you would like to have course-specific questions added to your course evaluation, just ask. For Spring 2008 courses, contact the CAS Online Program office **before March 1st** with your list of specific questions and we will arrange to have them added to the evaluations.

IX. The next CAS Online Discussion Group meeting is tentatively scheduled for 2/28/08.

X. The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.