Organizing an Online Course

The high standards the College of Justice & Safety sets for students are well known. Because of this, the content, assignments, tests, and other activities are challenging. Our students are able to rise to these high expectations to achieve their full potential. But just because the course content is challenging, this doesn’t mean that finding that content and the assignments has to be challenging for the students.

The way a course is organized can have a great effect on a student’s ability to understand the material and complete assignments. If a student has to spend time trying to figure out what to do and where an assignment is, then they have less time to focus on the content.

In a traditional face-to-face, course, it’s easy for students to know what to do and when to do it: You simply tell them! In an online course, however, depending on how the course is designed it can be a struggle for students to figure this out.

What’s the solution? Just tell them! The J&S Office of Distance Education recommends the use of a common template for organizing online courses to ensure that students know what to do and when to do it.

Consistent with best practices, we recommend developing and organizing the course into a series of lessons, with one lesson for each week of the course. The lessons contain a list of specific tasks that students must complete during that week. When students log into a course, there is no question about what they should do. They always start in the lesson for that week.

The list of tasks for a lesson might include a reading assignment, video lectures to watch, instructions to respond to discussion board questions or details about an assignment. Since interaction is an important component of any online course, nearly every lesson typically includes discussion board questions. One single discussion board for a class would get very long and confusing. That’s why we recommend organizing the discussion boards just like the lessons: For each lesson there is a corresponding discussion board.

Likewise, we recommend organizing the assignment page in the course in the same way, using a folder for each lesson in the course. That folder contains all assignments that must be completed during the week. Anything that counts for a grade is listed here in the lesson folder.

The only assignments not in one of the lesson folders are the ongoing assignments such as group activities and research papers that span more than a single week.

Our office would like to work with you to help organize your online courses to enhance the online experience for students. To see what a difference this method of organization can be, take a look at the J&S Demo Course that should be on your Bb homepage. If you’re ready for us to work with you on your course contact our office today.

For more idea on how to organize your online course, check out the Faculty Tip Sheets on our website at http://www.justice.eku.edu/odems/newsletter.asp.

Tip Sheet topics include:

- Course Development Checklist
- Email Tips for Online Courses
- Using Discussion Boards
- Assessments in BlackBoard
- Encourage Student Participation
- Using Groups
- Video Tips
Safe Assignments in BlackBoard

The Safe Assignments feature on Blackboard provides a proactive tool against plagiarism, and when an instructor employs this feature, the students will be less likely to plagiarize. Instructors may also find that students’ learning as well as their writing improves with the use of this feature because students are truly accountable for their own work and they learn more from articulating their own thoughts rather than lifting them from an Internet site (and usually a bad one).

This tool saves instructors the time involved in tracking down a dubious paper. Instead of spending an hour doing Google searches for word strings, the instructor can require Safe Assignment submissions for every writing assignment, and the feature scans the Internet for duplication. This scan includes not only Internet sites, but also every student’s paper that has already gone through the Safe Assignments check.

Checking Students’ Papers

There are two ways of checking the scans:

Grade book: Safe Assignments will automatically appear in the course grade book. When a student submits a paper for the Safe Assignments scan, a red exclamation point will appear in your Gradebook. If you want to see results of an individual student’s paper, click on the red exclamation point.

Course Tools: To see results from the entire class, go to the Course Tools section of the Control Panel and click Safe Assignments.

1. Select the appropriate assignment to be checked
2. The percentage next to each student’s name indicates the portion of the paper that shows up somewhere else on the Internet or in previous Safe Assignment submissions from students throughout all Blackboard registries.
3. Select view in the fifth column to see exactly which parts of the student’s paper were detected elsewhere.
4. Determine if the student has actually plagiarized the lines marked in the Safe Assignment report. The student may have quoted from a publication that happens to appear on the Internet somewhere and may have documented the source properly.

Students should be told that they will be submitting their written work through the Safe Assignment feature. The point of the assignment is not to catch someone cheating but to ensure students’ learn the content on their own.

Interpreting Safe Assignment Scores

Sentence matching scores are the percentage probability that two sentences have the same meaning. For example, a score of 90% means that there is 90% probability that these two sentences are the same, and about 10% probability that they are similar by chance (not because of plagiarism).

Overall matching score is basically an average of all sentence scores, weighted by the length and “commonness” of the sentence. This score does not have a simple statistical definition. It is just very highly correlated with the probability that there is some text matching other documents in the paper and with the amount of matching text in the document. Please note that matching (highlighted) text should not be considered plagiarism by default.

In most cases, scores below 15% do not require any further analysis, and there is no evidence of plagiarism in the report. Papers with scores between 15% and 40% can contain plagiarism or can have just too much quoted material. Scores over 40% indicate there is high probability that the paper contains some text copied from elsewhere or contains excessive cited material.

Setting Up a Safe Assignment

1. Go to the Control Panel in your course
2. Click on Assignments
3. From the pull-down menu near the top right corner, select Safe Assignment (note: the default setting is Learning Unit)
4. Click the Go button next to the drop-down menu
5. On the next screen, give the assignment a title and a point value.
6. Set the options:
   a. Available: Select your preference to allow students’ access to your submission page.
   b. Availability dates: unless you have an open time span for submission, choose a beginning and/or ending date.
   c. Draft: Allows students to submit drafts of their papers
   d. Students Viewable: this feature allows students to see the results of the scan.
   e. Re-submittable: Allows students to submit the assignments as many times as they want until the due date.
   f. Urgent Checking: Enables real-time originality report generation
7. Click Submit.
Title: Library Resources for Online Students

Most online students are unaware of the wealth of valuable online resources that lie at their fingertips through EKU Libraries. Electronically locating and accessing journal and magazine articles, even entire issues of particular journals, has never been easier for students and faculty.

EKU Libraries subscribes to a multitude of electronic journals obtainable through databases readily available to on- and off-campus users. Off-campus users will have to use their EKU e-mail login and passwords to gain access to the databases.

Sample Titles
- American Journal of Criminal Justice
- Criminal Justice
- Criminal Justice and Behavior
- Criminal Justice Ethics
- Criminology
- Journal of Criminal Justice
- Women & Criminal Justice
- Journal of Criminal Law & Criminology
- Theoretical Criminology
- Corrections Management Quarterly
- Corrections Professional
- Juvenile Justice Digest
- Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice
- Journal of Safety Research
- Occupational Health & Safety
- Professional Safety
- Risk
- Safety
- Safety Management
- Fire Chief
- Fire Engineering
- Fire Safety Engineering
- Fire House
- Journal of Applied Fire Science
- Journal of Fire Science

For assistance e-mail Betina Gardner at betina.gardner@eku.edu or call 859/622-1798.

How to Access Online Library Resources

Accessing the resources available from the EKU library is a simple process:

1. On the EKU home page, click on the LIBRARIES link.
2. Next, click on the Find Articles link.
3. Under the heading Frequently Used Databases, click Justice and Safety Databases. A pop up menu on the right hand side of the screen will give you a concise list of the databases most commonly used by faculty and students in the College of Justice and Safety.
4. Choose a database and think of the most important words that describe your topic and type those into the search boxes and click the search button. A list of citations may appear.
5. Click on the title of the article to get more information. Many articles are full text, meaning that the entire article is available at your fingertips in either HTML or PDF format.
6. If the article is not available in full-text, click on the Get More button which should appear near the end of the citation. Click on the link if it is available. If it is not,
7. Click on Search Library Catalog, the second option, to see if EKU Libraries has the article in print format. Students enrolled in Distance Education classes may request that a print article be delivered to their homes. If EKU Libraries does not have the article in print, click on the fourth option, Request this Article from Interlibrary Loan. Interlibrary Loan will send the article to your home if you are a Distance Education Student.

EKU Libraries databases also provide students and faculty with access to entire issues of particular journals electronically. You simply need to click on the FIND ARTICLES link from the EKU Libraries’ webpage. Then click on the link FULL TEXT JOURNALS. Type the name of the journal you would like to view in the search box. If the title appears, simply click to begin browsing an issue. The titles listed to the right are samples of the Criminal Justice, Corrections and Juvenile Justice, and Loss Prevention and Safety journals available online in full-text from EKU Libraries.

Start Planning NOW to Have Your Course Online for Fall 2006

Are you considering offering your course online during the fall ’06 semesters? Now is the time to start planning it.

The first place to start is with our Course Development Checklist. The checklist is available on our website and will give you an overview of BlackBoard and some ideas to think about as you begin to plan your course.

If you’re not ready to teach your course completely online next semester, perhaps you’d like to start your venture into online learning with a blended course. A blended course is a course that meets in a traditional face-to-face setting that is supplemented with additional resources and assignments that students access through BlackBoard outside of class.

In a blended course you can also replace some of the face-to-face meetings with online assignments and discussions. This can keep you from missing classes when you have to be away from campus at meetings or conferences.

Please contact our office now to start the process for either a fully online course or a blended course. We will help you set everything up and also be there to assist you throughout the semester as well.

www.justice.eku.edu/odems/docs/courseDevChecklist.pdf
Quality Feedback in the Online Classroom

Many instructors have struggled with the best ways to provide similar feedback and grading in an online environment. In reality there is a very simple method to overcome this obstacle. In Microsoft Word there is a function called Track Changes that not only makes this type of feedback easy and viable, but it also allows instructors to be very responsive and constructive with their guidance.

While it takes a bit of practice to get comfortable with the tool, once it is mastered it saves a tremendous amount of time, and facilitates learning in a way that is highly desirable for students and instructors.

The typical scenario is as follows:

1. The student submits his paper directly in the Blackboard course site under the specific assignment. Assignments, especially written papers, should always be submitted in Blackboard, and NOT sent as yet another email independent of the course site.

2. The instructor then downloads the paper and reviews it. Using the “Track Changes” tool in Word, he or she can then insert comments directly into the electronic copy. For example, the instructor may make a grammatical change that enhances a student's sentence structure or the instructor may want to make suggestions about additional areas for the student to explore to enhance their paper, all he or she has to do is choose a location to insert feedback, select the Tracking Changes key, and then add your comments or suggestions in the Comments textbox.

3. Once the changes have been made, the instructor would then upload the document in the students’ assignment areas. This is similar to the instructor passing back the graded paper to students in the classroom setting.

4. The student would then download the paper with the instructor’s feedback, review, and revise as needed.

This procedure reinforces one of the best practices that research has demonstrated to be important to online students, namely getting quality and timely feedback from their instructors on their submitted work.

For a demonstration of how to use “Track Changes” to provide feedback to students, visit our website:

www.justice.eku.edu/odems/newsletter.asp

Five Ways to Use BlackBoard in a Face-to-Face Class

1. Post your syllabus. Is your syllabus pushing 20 pages? Time to think about making it available on-line. Only the students enrolled in your class can see and print it.

2. Post documents, graphics or URLs for access during class. Use Blackboard as your “overhead projector.” Post items you want to display in class. When in class, access Blackboard. All your items are in one place and available for students after class as well. Less need for copying handouts.

3. Distribute a reading list that is linked to sources. If you have a list of journal articles that you want students to read, post the list in Blackboard and create links directly to the articles. Gives access to the material 24-7.

4. Host an online expert. Ask an expert in your field to answer questions generated on the Discussion board by your students. Expert opinion that is easy on the expert.

5. Email your whole class with one click. Use the email function in Blackboard to send a message to the whole class at one time.

Want more ideas:
http://www.dwc.edu/library/blackboard/top10.shtml