

Chaminade University Distance Education (DE) Guidelines

The Chaminade University Distance Education (DE) Guidelines provide standards for designing a DE course. Refer to the annotations under each guideline for further information and examples.

DE Guideline 1: Course Overview and Information

1.1 The course has a course overview and clear instructions on how to get started.

- Establish instructor presence, set the tone, and model professional interaction.
- Explain how students are to proceed when they first access the course. Provide direction to ensure students will get off to a good start in the online course.
- For example:
 - Send a welcome email or Canvas Announcement to students before or on the first day of instruction. A welcome message provides context for what students will be learning, setting a tone for success from the start of the course.
 - Encourage students to check Canvas Announcements and their CUH email account daily.
 - Create a “Start Here” module in Canvas to guide how to get started in the course.
 - Create a short screencast video tour/orientation of the course, showing learners how to navigate the course, the structure of the learning modules, and how to locate and access materials and assignments.
 - Host a live online course orientation via web conferencing with screen sharing.

1.2 The course has an instructor self-introduction.

For example: a self-introduction video, forum post, email, or infographic.

1.3 The course has the instructor, division, and program contact information listed.

Instructor, division, and program (if applicable) contact information are easy to find.

1.4 The course modality, including any required synchronous sessions, is indicated and explained.

Indicate the course modality (i.e., asynchronous, synchronous, or hybrid) and explain what student participation entails for that modality. For example, if the course is DE Synchronous include the dates/times of synchronous sessions.

1.5 The course has a syllabus and course schedule that is online and printable.

- Course information provided in advance, helps students keep on track and alleviates the possibility of problems and obstacles.
- The syllabus is in an accessible format available for online download and printing. ([Syllabus template](#))
- A course map or calendar helps visualize the course modules' sequence, objectives, topics, activities, assignments/assessments, and due dates.

1.6 The course includes the mandatory Chaminade University syllabi information and campus policies.

Policies need to be communicated to students, with links to associated student services offices at the institution. Links should bring the student to:

- The policy, in clear language.
- Guidelines on the policy, including how the policy is enforced.
- Contact information for policy-related offices and personnel.
- Where to go for additional resources.
- Campus policies should address student conduct and academic integrity.

1.7 The course policies are explained.

- A clear explanation of course policies is provided and easy to understand.
- Course policies may include:
 - Grading policy
 - Late work submission

- Student conduct
- Communication

1.8 The course provides access to campus resources (e.g., technical help, orientation, tutoring).

For example:

- Campus resources for Distance Education students
- Information about online readiness:
- Chaminade Client Services for technical help
- Canvas's Help link found at the left of any Canvas page

1.9 Communication methods and expectations are explained.

Instructor and student communication methods and expectations are clearly stated.

- How will your students communicate with you?
- What is your preferred way for students to contact you?
- What is your response time?
- How will students communicate with each other?
- Netiquette

1.10 Course outcomes and learning objectives are easily located, clearly stated, measurable, and written from a student's perspective.

- Outcomes/Objectives should be measurable and express some level of mastery that students will need to demonstrate as a result of participating fully in the course.
- All course content, learning activities, interactions and assessments should align with these objectives/outcomes.
- Outcomes/Objectives for the course and/or modules are easy for students to locate in the course.
- Objectives are written from a student's perspective to make it easy for students to understand.

1.11 The course provides an opportunity for students to do self-introductions.

For example: self-introduction video, forum post, shared class slide deck, or infographic.

DE Guideline 2: Course Technology and Tools

2.1 Technology and tools used in the course support the learning objectives/outcomes.

- The technology and tools are used purposefully and actively engage students with the course material and/or facilitate student-to-student and student-to-instructor interaction to help students achieve the learning objectives/outcomes.
- The technology and tools used in the course are current and varied to support diverse ways of learning.

2.2 Technology skills and minimum technology requirements are stated.

Any hardware, software, or technology applications that are required for successful participation in the course need to be introduced along with resources that support a full range of learner mastery. This information needs to be communicated to students early on and reinforced throughout the term.

2.3 The course has orientations/tutorials for technology skills required for learning activities.

Personalized or custom tutorials are created by the instructor and/or links to existing tutorials are provided.

2.4 The course has links to the course tools' privacy policies.

- Students entrust the university with their personal information and expect that information to be protected. Web-based applications and other technology tools may be collecting data in the background, and students need to be advised and know that their data is safeguarded.
- Provide the links to privacy policies for all external websites and services used in the course that require students to create a username and password.

DE Guideline 3: Design and Layout

3.1 The course is well-paced, organized, and easy to navigate.

- Recommended: Create a course map to help you plan, organize, and pace the course.
- Layout is logical, consistent, and uncluttered. Students can easily progress through a logical sequence and pace.
- A structure for each module (i.e., week, unit, lesson, or topic) provides organization and consistency. For instance, you may consider including a: short introduction to the module, list of the module-level learning objectives, detailed descriptions of the learning materials to review, activities and assignments/assessments to complete, and synchronous (live) session dates and times, if applicable. Recommended: Request to use a [Chaminade Online Canvas course template](#).
- All assignments/assessments are submitted by students through the appropriate tools in Canvas. All assignments/assessments include due dates and grading policy (e.g. point possible, pass/fail).
- Information is divided and organized into manageable sections or “chunks.”

3.2 Instructions are written clearly and unambiguously.

- Clear instructions help students to function in the online environment without having to repeatedly ask for clarification.
- Instructions can be communicated in many different forms in an online course. For example: orientations, introductions, announcements, guidelines, Q&A, and rubrics.

3.3 Text is easily readable.

- Recommended: sans-serif, 12 pt or larger font used.
- Ensure text can be zoomed.
- Ensure enough contrast between text and background.
- Utilize white space for better readability in reducing the amount of text seen at once.

3.4 If tables are used, simple tables are used to display information.

- Ensure all tables have a title and description.
- Ensure table header rows and columns are assigned.
- Avoid using merge-cells or complex tables.

3.5 The course materials are accessible to meet the needs of diverse learners.

Some best practices include:

- All videos are captioned, or text transcripts are available.
- All text (on webpages, documents, PDFs, images, etc.) is readable by a screen reader.
- Alt tags, captions, and transcripts are provided for all non-text content.
- All text, graphics, and images do not use color as the only means of conveying meaning.
- All text with titles, headings, and styles are formatted for accessible reading.
- Avoid flashing or blinking text.
- Use descriptive hyperlinks - Avoid “Click here.” Instead, identify the destination in the text. (e.g., [Chaminade University](#) is a great school.)

3.6 All links, files, videos, and URLs are active and working.

Ensure that all links do not provide an error message, and ensure that each link takes students to the desired location.

3.7 [Manage Course Navigation links](#)

- Unused Canvas tools are hidden from the Course Navigation menu.
- Reorder Course Navigation links.

DE Guideline 4: Content and Activities

4.1 The instructional materials contribute to the achievement of the learning objectives/outcomes.

- Instructional materials may include: Open Educational Resources (OER), publisher- and/or instructor-created materials, etc.
- Instructional materials are current and varied to support diverse ways of learning.

4.2 The learning activities are aligned with and promote the achievement of the learning objectives/outcomes.

- Activities actively engage the learner with the course content to provide reinforcement and mastery.
- Activities help learners develop higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Activities emulate real-world applications (i.e., authentic learning, problem-based learning, case studies, etc.).

4.3 The course has a variety of activities and resources that facilitate communication, collaboration, learning, and engagement.

- Students benefit more from activities than from simple presentation of content. External readings, assignments, discussions, interactive websites, and online assessments (formative and summative) should all be connected clearly to mastering course concepts and aligned with the module, course, and program objectives.
- Relevancy to the course content is clear to students. Students need to know why they are required to read, review, discuss or create materials in the course. They will be more engaged when they know the reasoning behind what they need to complete.

4.4 The course content and resources use proper citations, copyright, permissions (including fair use), and licensing information (including Creative Commons).

Ask a librarian for guidance on how to properly cite and use licensed materials.

DE Guideline 5: Interaction

5.1 All instructor interaction and feedback are explained.

The course provides students with information on instructor response times, which include, but are not limited to: discussion postings, feedback on assignments, and grades. This information is easily accessible to students.

5.2 All student interaction expectations are explained.

A clear explanation of the instructor's expectations and requirements of student interaction is provided to students (e.g. frequency, length, response time, content, etc.). This includes, but is not limited to: discussion postings, assignments, peer evaluations, self-assessments, group projects, etc.).

5.3 The course has opportunities for regular and substantive interaction (RSI) between the instructor and student.

[Chaminade University's RSI Statement](#) aligns with WSCUC and [federal](#) definitions of RSI. Regular interaction engages students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, on a predictable, regular, and proactive basis appropriate for the length and structure of the course. These expectations are present in the course overview and easy to find.

Substantive interaction includes at least two of the following:

- Providing direct instruction;
- Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework;
- Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency;
- Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency

5.4 The course has activities and/or opportunities that build community.

- Activities and/or opportunities that foster social presence (i.e., a sense of belonging and feeling comfortable to participate/interact and respect opposing views), promote student engagement and open up avenues for communication.

- For example: ice breaker/ self-introduction discussion forum where instructor and students participate and engage with each other, students share their insights and opinions about an article or course topic, study groups, team/group projects, “cyber cafe” discussion forum or virtual meeting/chat space where students and the instructor can meet informally to chat about course-related (or other) topics.

5.5 The course has opportunities for student-to-student interaction.

- Instructor as facilitator, moderating and evaluating the quality and quantity of interaction between students.
- Group and peer-review assignments support social, teaching, and cognitive presence in the online space.
- Collaborative exercises enabling more advanced students to help other students to maximize their abilities, and help construct new knowledge together.

5.6 The course has learning activities that promote interaction and support active learning.

Active learning involves students engaging by “doing” something, such as discovering, processing, or applying concepts and information. Active learning entails guiding students to increasing levels of responsibility for their own learning.

DE Guideline 6: Assessment and Feedback

6.1 The course assessments measure the achievement of the learning objectives/outcomes.

Assessments measure learner progress and mastery of course and module objectives.

6.2 The course assessments are sequenced, varied, and appropriate.

- Assessments are sequenced and/or scaffolded and provided at regular intervals throughout the term.
- Formative assessments help lead to summative assessments.
- Assessments are varied to provide multiple ways for students to demonstrate progress and mastery.
- Assessments are appropriate for the course level.
- Consider including opportunities for self-assessment. Self-assessment plays a role in learner self-efficacy, fosters learners’ abilities to construct meaning, and promotes metacognition. By asking students to check their skill mastery levels, or reflect on their own work, they learn to examine their own reasoning and decision-making process.

6.3 The course has clear assessment criteria for assignments.

Rubrics are recommended as a best practice for communicating criteria and achievement levels for assignments in online courses. They:

- Make learning targets clearer;
- Guide the design and delivery of instruction;
- Normalize the assessment process; and
- Give students self- and peer-assessment guidelines.

6.4 The course has an online gradebook for students.

By providing easy access to an up-to-date gradebook, students have the ability to check in on their progress continuously throughout the term. The added functionality and reporting features enable the instructor to review and analyze the gradebook, as well as create reports on student progress and course completion.

6.5 The course has at least one opportunity for feedback from students on all aspects of the course.

This may include but is not limited to the course evaluation via Course Evaluation System (CES).

The “Chaminade University Distance Education (DE) Guidelines” were based on recognized best practices from:

- [Quality Matters](#)
- [SUNY Center for Online Teaching Excellence](#)