At the Curricular Affairs Committee’s Meeting of October 24, 2011, the CAC agreed to the following guidelines for Online and Blended Course Development. These were approved by vote of the Faculty Senate on November 17, 2011

I. Definitions

A. Online Course: 75-100% delivered online; typically has no face-to-face meetings (except proctored exams).

B. Blended Course: 25-74% delivered online: There is a reduction in seat time; requires some face-to-face meetings.

C. Web-Enhanced (aka Supplemental): Less than 25% delivered online with limited or no reduction in seat time.

II. Standards of Quality in Online & Blended Course Development

A. Learning Outcomes are determined and in line with the learning outcomes of the Department.

B. Course Design

1. Basic Information:

   a. Comprehensive Syllabus and Schedule with explicit expectations and requirements

   b. Orientation to the course and its online components (explanation of site layout/navigation, participatory/interaction elements, how to get started, what to do next, etc.)

   c. Meaningful and consistent organization; section and document titles designed to organize and convey information about the activities, content, and structure of the course.

   d. An introduction to each course module (as appropriate).

   e. Detailed and clear instructions for each learning activity: expectation, timeframe, navigation, etc.

   f. On-campus (f2f) activities are not required for online courses; however, some online courses may include proctored f2f exams.

   g. Blended courses will have a clear schedule of required, f2f attendance established prior to the beginning of the course.

2. Interactivity:

   All course sites should provide ample opportunities for interaction with the instructor and with others in the course, as well as the course content as appropriate to the subject matter and learning outcomes.
C. Teaching and Learning

1. Feedback on assignments should be provided in a timely manner.

2. Discussion and questions of a general nature (those one would ask openly in a classroom setting) are better addressed in a discussion forum.

3. Also essential to the quality of an online course is communication that contributes to the atmosphere and community in the online environment.

D. Accessibility

1. The University will be responsible for acting in a timely manner to make instructional materials and/or other resources used in an online or blended course available to students with disabilities. An exception to this is when doing so would significantly alter the nature of the instructional activity.

2. Print Material Alternatives include Braille, large print, audiotape, and digital sound files.

3. The Online Environment Developers should make course content usable (understandable and navigable). This includes making language clear and simple as well as providing understandable mechanisms for navigating within and between pages, areas, or tools. Providing navigation tools and orientation information will maximize accessibility and usability.

4. Not all users can make use of visual cues such as image maps, proportional scroll bars, side-by-side frames, or images (graphics) that guide sighted users. Users also lose contextual information when they can only view a portion of a page, either because they are accessing the page one word at a time (speech synthesis or Braille display), or one section at a time (small or magnified display).

5. Without orientation information, users may not be able to understand very large tables, lists, menus, etc.

III. Copyright, Intellectual Property and Ownership

A. Course development relies on original work of the faculty member. Whenever or wherever copyrighted material is incorporated, it is the faculty member’s responsibility to secure permission to use the copyrighted work, and to abide by the copyright policies set forth by the University of Rhode Island.