

NOVA | ONLINE

Memorandum of Understanding for Faculty Teaching NOVA Online Courses

To ensure that our students have the greatest opportunity to succeed in their distance learning courses and meet the intended learning objectives, NOVA Online has developed expectations of faculty that are based upon nationally-recognized best practices in online instruction. This document outlines these expectations, providing timelines where relevant.

All faculty assigned to teach NOVA Online courses will be required to acknowledge receipt of these expectations annually by digitally signing where indicated. Should you have questions or concerns about these expectations, please contact our faculty mentors Will Hatheway and Nillab Pazhwak at onlinequalityassurance@nvcc.edu.

Before Class Begins

- *Follow ID team instructions in the “For Instructors Only” module for updating course site with session-specific dates (due dates and critical dates). The critical dates for each session of each semester are posted on the NOVA Online website at <http://online.nvcc.edu/sessions.htm>. Be sure you do not use the college calendar for these dates – campus dates often differ, slightly or significantly, from NOVA Online dates.*
- *Enter late work policy and other additional policies in the “Grading, Withdrawals and Incompletes” section of the syllabus. (While some course policies are set in advance, several are left as placeholders so faculty can use their own personal policies in these areas.) Make sure to make this item available in student view (if it’s unavailable in the course copy you receive).*
- *Change the “Welcome: Meet the Faculty Page” by filling in the template with your name, contact information, photo, academic and professional background, and office hours (and by what means you are available during office hours, such as phone, Zoom, Canvas Inbox Tool, office location on campus, by appointment, etc.). We encourage you to also include some personal information here, such as outside interests, to help develop your social presence with your students.*
- *Update/delete all temporary placeholders (including those calling for instructor photos or instructions for instructors to fill in certain types of information throughout the course site).*
- *Publish the Canvas site to make the course available to students three days prior to the start date. (For example, publish by Friday morning for a class beginning on Monday morning.) Do not publish any earlier than this date.*

During the Class

- *Enter the course site at least five days per week, during which time you will demonstrate an active presence by posting announcements, grading and giving private feedback via the Grade Book, taking part in discussion forums, answering open forum questions, etc.*
- *Post at least one announcement every week. Announcements can include reminders about due dates and upcoming critical dates, tips and additional resources, motivational messages, and so on. Instruct your students to turn on the *Notification for Announcements* so they will get a copy via*

email. Remember that the Canvas Inbox tool works as email so you can send messages to all/individual students in the class which they will receive via their Canvas Inbox tool. We strongly recommend that any class emails be posted as announcements (not sent exclusively by email), as many students do not check email as often as they log into Canvas. Posting as an announcement also prevents any student claim that they were unaware of critical information you have shared about deadlines, withdrawals, etc.

- *Respond to student emails and phone calls and answer student questions in the Open forum/Ask Your Professor forum within 24-48 hours.* Questions posted in the forums but best answered privately should be responded to privately via NVCC email, but make a note in the forum that you have done so if that is the case.
- *Respond personally to each student introduction post* within the discussion forum itself rather than in the Grade Book in order to establish faculty presence in the course.
- *Be an active presence in all discussion forums.* Some ideas include posting numerous (publically appropriate) replies to individual students, giving a general response to the whole class, asking probing follow-up questions where the discussion needs them, providing additional resources, etc.
- *Grade all completed assignments no later than seven days from the due date, providing grades and feedback sooner when possible.* Grading and offering feedback sooner will be especially critical when subsequent assignments are directly linked to the previous assignment, and in any accelerated (less than 16-week) course where students need to move through the material quickly. All late work must be graded within seven days of its submission date.
- *Provide substantive, individualized feedback on all graded work via the Grade Book.*
 - It is best to offer critical feedback with an encouraging tone; keep in mind that the student cannot see your facial expressions or hear your voice, so written feedback can be interpreted more harshly than you might have meant it if not worded carefully.
 - When students do poorly, provide specific details and guidance about how they can improve their work on future assignments, what topics they need to re-study, etc. This applies to all gradable items including quizzes, when no auto feedback is available. Use built-in rubrics when available, or you may add your own grading rubrics to ensure consistent grading across the board.
 - If a student did well, your feedback can focus on why they did so, to help them continue on that path.
 - Proctored exams cannot be provided to students in a format they can keep (either in their entirety, or specific questions and answers) to ensure exam security. However, you should provide general feedback using the “General Feedback” comment box on topics/skills the student struggled with and can offer a one-on one meeting to go over the exam in detail.
 - Remember to use the “Assignment Comments” box. Students cannot view the “Additional Comment” boxes since they are unable to reenter the exam.
- *All interactions, whenever possible, should take place within the course site* but, when an email is called for, use only your NOVA faculty email to contact students via their VCCS email or use the Canvas Inbox tool available within the online classroom. Remind your students to click on the Inbox to see your messages.
- *Report NVRKs (administrative deletions) promptly by submitting form 125-034, “Withdrawal Initiated by Instructor - Never Attending Student (NVRK),”* online via the [NOVA Forms Library webpage](#) according to college and NOVA Online policy.

- *Model effective communication* by employing a grammatically correct writing style that is also polite, respectful and constructive.

After the Class Ends

- *Post final grades in the Canvas site and VCCS Student Information System (SIS) within two days of the course end date*, per College policy. If some work has not yet been received, post all grades that you can by that date and return later to submit the rest. (Note that grades for SSDL students must be submitted all at once.)
 - Note that you need to follow specific policies and procedures if you wish to grant students an extension/Incomplete grade. You can find these policies and procedures both in the syllabus and sent in each end-of-session reminder email from NOVA Online staff.
 - Remember that many NOVA Online classes require that students pass all (or a certain number of) proctored exams in order to pass the course, regardless of points earned through other coursework. Please be sure that you know how this policy applies to your course (the policy should appear in the course syllabus) and apply it consistently. Do not alter students' proctored exam grades by adding additional points or grading on a curve so that more students can pass. This policy is in place to meet the Federal Higher Education Act and SACS Accreditation requirements that we verify student identity in online courses.
 - Do not give exam access codes to anyone. This will compromise the test for all sections.
 - If you need to change a final course grade after you have submitted it, contact your Dean or Associate Dean. Provide the course number and section, semester, student name (and EMPL ID if you have it), assigned grade, grade you want this changed to, and reason for the grade change. You do not need to fill out a form – just provide this information in an email.
- *Make the course site unavailable to students*. This should be done after final grades have been posted and students have had reasonable opportunities to review your final feedback – usually about one week after the course ends. Instructions on how to change student access will be emailed to you towards the end of the semester from NOVA Online staff.

Additional Expectations

- Reach out to students who are performing poorly or not participating, and provide appropriate assistance and referrals as needed (e.g., NOVA Online Student Success Coaches, [Early Alert on the NOVA Online Website](#), Tutor.com online tutoring services, IT help, etc.). Note, however, that when it comes to the material in your course you, as the teacher, are expected to deliver subject matter help yourself on an individualized basis; pointing students to search for videos online instead of re-explaining the concept yourself, for example, is not appropriate.
- Notify NOVA Online in advance of a prolonged absence from the course due to illness, planned vacations, family situations, etc. Faculty who are aware of circumstances that will interfere with teaching duties should reconsider accepting a teaching assignment until circumstances are more manageable. You should not accept a teaching assignment scheduled for a time during which you plan to be on vacation. You are expected to be actively teaching your course for its entire duration aside from unforeseen circumstances.
- Carefully read policy e-mails, announcements, and reminders from the NOVA Online administrators or staff, notify us of questions or problems, and follow through with tasks and solutions.
- Respond promptly when contacted by staff about student problems or complaints.

- Save course records, including exams and e-mails, for at least one year. Faculty are responsible for maintaining the integrity and security of these records.
- Expect that NOVA Online staff and SSDL Liaisons may be present in your course at any time as a function of carrying out work responsibilities.
- Use the Instructor Feedback feature found under the “For Instructors Only” module in your course site to record your ideas for improving the course when it is next revised or redesigned.
- If you identify problems in your course that require an immediate fix (typos, incorrect content, broken links, etc.), contact NOVA Online ID Help (onlineidhelp@nvcc.edu) so that we can assist with resolving them and ensure the problem is fixed in all sections of the course.
- Check to ensure that the point value listed under the Total column in your Grade Book is consistent with the grading scale in the Grading, Withdrawals, and Incompletes section of your syllabus. Let NOVA Online ID Help know if you find any inconsistencies with this, or if you find duplicate columns in the Grade Book, but do not make any changes yourself.
- Remember to always assign a zero “0” score for a missing assignment rather than leaving it blank. This is important for proper grade calculation.
- Do not make changes to the course design, especially to proctored activities, without explicit permission. Contact NOVA Online ID Help (onlineidhelp@nvcc.edu) regarding any changes you wish to make.