

Gearing up to Teach Online

The following information offers guidance and support to Kwantlen faculty, deans, and associate deans to assist them when shifting from classroom-based curriculum development and learning environments to partially or fully online curriculum development and learning environments.

Technical Requirements and University Equipment

Moodle is Kwantlen's learning management system. To use Moodle effectively from home or other off-campus locations, minimum technological requirements are as follows:

- broadband Internet access (Cable, ADSL, or satellite);
- a current version operating system; and,
- a current version Internet browser--Firefox is recommended.

See Appendix A for a detailed list of system requirements and recommended plug-ins. The Information and Educational Technology (IET) department can supply and will support a laptop or notebook computer only if an authorized request is received from the appropriate dean. Provisioning of equipment is based on budget availability. If approved, allow at least 12 weeks for processing and delivery of equipment.

Preparation for the Online Learning Environment at Kwantlen

Developing and delivering online or partially online blended courses requires many of the same skills as traditional, classroom-based courses, but research¹ strongly suggests that there are unique competencies for designing effective online learning environments.

These competencies include not only a good working knowledge of the specific tools required to create and deliver content and learning activities online, but also an understanding of elearning pedagogy and of how engagement and community is fostered in an online environment.

Minimum requirements for faculty considering a move from classroom to online learning environments include the following:

- experience with online learning from a student's perspective (take an online course or workshop);
- familiarity with basic computer tasks such as file management, web browsers and common plug-ins (such as Adobe Acrobat) and how they work;
- competency with applications students will use (for example Word, Excel, Powerpoint etc.);
- knowledge of the opportunities and limitations of the online environment;
- appreciation of the requirement to re-think a course to map learning objectives and outcomes to appropriate online tools and activities;
- recognition that the development of a blended or online course demands considerable experience with Moodle (Experience using Moodle to augment classroom or lab-based courses is a recommended prerequisite for online course development);
- consultation with and mentoring from instructors experienced with online learning environments;
- knowledge of relevant Kwantlen policies on student conduct and technology usage and the need to effectively communicate this information to students;

¹ See: Smith, T. (2005). Fifty-one Competencies for Online Instruction: <http://www.distance-educator.com/dnews/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=13981>

- and, knowledge of IET service agreements for technical support / incident reporting during and after regular business hours and the need to effectively communicate this information to students.

Guidelines for Quality E-Learning Environments

As part of its commitment to quality learning environments, Kwantlen has adopted the guidelines developed by Clayton R. Wright of Grant MacEwan College. These guidelines have been approved by a diverse group of e-learning specialists from across Canada, including educators from Athabasca University, Royal Roads University, Memorial University and the University of Calgary. These guidelines provide criteria for evaluating the quality of online and partially online blended courses and can be used as a framework for course development. See Appendix B for a summary of these guidelines. The complete document is available on the Moodle Faculty Community.

Curricular and Teaching Support

The Centre for Academic Growth coordinates regular scheduled training for Moodle, from a basic “getting started” level, to more advanced levels for tools like quizzes and gradebook. The Centre also facilitates a wide range of development workshops for effective teaching practices that can be applied to online as well as classroom learning environments.

Department or discipline specific training can be arranged through the Centre. Individual consultations for online or partially online blended course development can be arranged through the Centre or through the IET Service Desk.

The Centre’s Learning Technologies group facilitates an online Moodle Faculty Community where faculty can access video tutorials, hand-outs from workshops, survey tools, a selection of templates, and a growing assortment of resources, tips, and tricks. The Community includes a forum where faculty can ask questions and engage in discussion with other Moodle users. All faculty members who request Moodle courses are included in this community.

Contact the IET Service Desk if you are not a member and want to join.

The community is at: <https://elearning.kwantlen.ca/courses/course/view.php?id=373>

Technical Support

The IET Service Desk provides technical support for faculty and students using Moodle. Service Desk hours are from 7:30 AM to 8 PM, **Monday through Friday**.

After hours, students and faculty can report problems by leaving a voicemail message at 604-599-2116, by reporting the problem through the IET Service Desk block which can be enabled in all Moodle courses, or by emailing servicesdesk@kwantlen.ca. Priority telephone messages can be left in the event that a critical system is unavailable. After hours priority messages are relayed to the IET manager on call who will attempt to resolve the problem as quickly as possible.

Logistics and Development Time

Moodle sites are automatically created for all courses scheduled as online or partially online in Banner. IET generates these courses approximately 1 month prior to the start of the semester. Notification is sent to faculty Kwantlen email accounts.

Faculty members are responsible for backing up and restoring their own course content from semester to semester. Instructions are available on the Moodle Faculty Community and drop-in sessions are scheduled on all campuses the first week of classes to assist with this process.

To work on a course prior to it being scheduled in Banner, faculty members request a development site through the Online Self Service Faculty menu. Course content can be moved from the development site to the “live” Moodle site using the back up and restore process.

It is strongly recommended that faculty allow at least one semester for the development and thorough testing of a new online or blended course. Advice and consultation on course design and development is available through the Centre for Academic Growth.

Appendix A: Minimum Requirements for Moodle

The requirements listed below are *minimums*. In general, your personal computer should exceed these requirements; most computers less than 3 years old should be adequate.

	Windows	Macintosh
Operating System	Windows XP or Vista	Recent version of Mac OS MacOS 10.4 or later
Processor	Pentium 1GHz	PowerPC G4 1GHz
Memory (RAM)	512MB	512MB
Internet Browser	Firefox v2.0 and pass our Moodle Browser Check	Firefox v2.0 and pass our Moodle Browser Check
Internet Service	Broadband Internet Access (Cable/ADSL)	Broadband Internet Access (Cable/ADSL)
Display	1024x768	1024x768
Add-ons	Java Runtime Environment (Verify) (Download) Macromedia Flash Player A PDF reader Adobe Acrobat (41M) Foxit Reader (small, fast, clean)	Java Runtime Environment Macromedia Flash Player

Appendix B: Guidelines for Quality E-Learning Environments

As part of its commitment to quality learning environments, Kwantlen has adopted the guidelines developed by Clayton R. Wright of Grant MacEwan College. These guidelines have been approved by a diverse group of e-learning specialists from across Canada, including educators from Athabasca University, Royal Roads University, Memorial University and the University of Calgary. These guidelines provide criteria for evaluating the quality of online and partially online blended courses and can be used as a framework for course development.

The guidelines address the general categories listed below. The complete document including detailed criteria is available on Kwantlen's Moodle Faculty Community:
<https://elearning.kwantlen.ca/courses/course/view.php?id=373>

- **General Information:** At the beginning of the course, are learners provided with general information that will assist them in completing the course and in understanding its objectives and procedures?
- **Accessibility:** How accessible is the course material? Can learners find information quickly?
- **Organization:** Is the material organized in such a manner that learners can discern relationships between parts of the course?
- **Language:** Is the level of the language used appropriate for the intended audience?
- **Layout:** Does the layout facilitate learning?
- **Goals and Objectives:** Are goals and objectives provided to outline learning expectations at the beginning of the course and, where appropriate, at the beginning of each module?
- **Course Content:** Is the content appropriate, given the subject matter and the learners' backgrounds and abilities?
- **Instructional or Learning Strategies and Opportunities for Practice and Transfer:** Do the instructional or learning strategies enable learners to learn effectively in a variety of ways and to engage in activities that promote practice and the transfer of skills?
- **Learning Resources:** Are the learning resources accessible, appropriate, and accurate?
- **Evaluation:** Are the evaluative activities feasible, relevant, accurate, and congruent with the objectives, content, and practical applications of the content?
- **Overall:** Has the course been piloted and reviewed? Is there a plan for updating and revision?