

# A Policy Development Toolkit for Online Learning

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# Table of Contents

1.	BACKGROUND.....	1
2.	INTRODUCTION.....	3
3.	WHY IS POLICY IMPORTANT FOR ONLINE LEARNING? .....	4
3.1	What is Policy?.....	4
3.2	Policy and Online Learning .....	4
3.3	The Bimodal College .....	4
3.4	Policy and Organizational Change .....	5
4.	GETTING STARTED IN POLICY DEVELOPMENT .....	7
4.1	The Elements of Policy.....	7
4.2	The Policy-Making Process .....	8
5.	DEVELOPING A COMPREHENSIVE INSTITUTIONAL POLICY.....	12
6.	DEVELOPING A SERVICE DELIVERY FOR ONLINE LEARNERS POLICY .....	16
7.	DEVELOPING AN INSTRUCTOR DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT POLICY.....	18
8.	DEVELOPING A UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR ONLINE LEARNING POLICY .....	20
9.	CONDUCTING A POLICY AUDIT .....	23
	REFERENCES.....	25
	APPENDICES.....	27
	APPENDIX A – SAMPLE ONLINE LEARNING POLICY .....	28
1.0	POLICY STATEMENT .....	28
2.0	RATIONALE.....	28
3.0	SCOPE.....	28
4.0	DEFINITIONS .....	28
5.0	PROCEDURES .....	28
6.0	RESPONSIBILITY .....	29
7.0	RELATED POLICIES.....	30
	APPENDIX B – SAMPLE SUPPORT SERVICES FOR ONLINE LEARNERS POLICY .....	31
1.0	POLICY STATEMENT .....	31
2.0	RATIONALE.....	31
3.0	SCOPE.....	31
4.0	DEFINITIONS .....	31
5.0	PROCEDURES .....	32

6.0	RESPONSIBILITY .....	34
7.0	RELATED POLICIES.....	34
APPENDIX C – SAMPLE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT FOR ONLINE INSTRUCTORS POLICY .....		35
1.0	POLICY STATEMENT .....	35
2.0	RATIONALE.....	35
3.0	SCOPE.....	35
4.0	DEFINITIONS .....	35
5.0	PROCEDURES .....	36
6.0	RESPONSIBILITY .....	37
7.0	RELATED POLICIES.....	37
APPENDIX D – SAMPLE UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR ONLINE LEARNING POLICY.....		38
1.0	POLICY STATEMENT .....	38
2.0	RATIONALE.....	38
3.0	SCOPE.....	39
4.0	DEFINITIONS .....	39
5.0	PROCEDURES .....	39
6.0	RESPONSIBILITY .....	40
7.0	RELATED POLICIES.....	40
8.0	RESOURCES.....	40

# 1. BACKGROUND

In 2010 Bow Valley College completed two related research projects that will set the bar for improved learner support services for distributed learners. First, the *Successful Practices in Supporting Students in Distributed Learning* (Shimoni, Barrington, & Wilde, 2010) report (*Successful Practices*) was the result of a collaborative research effort that involved eight eCampusAlberta member institutions (Bow Valley, Lethbridge, NAIT, NorQuest, Northern Lakes, Olds, Portage, and Red Deer) and was funded through the Alberta Advanced Education and Technology Access to the Future Fund. The purpose of the project was to explore successful practices in distributed learning and the organizational and administrative policies, procedures, and supports that are behind these best practices.

Second, the *Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners Engaging in e-Learning* (Shimoni & Barrington, 2010) project (*Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners*) interacts fully with the larger study and focuses on the specific needs of diverse student populations engaged in online learning. It was funded by eCampusAlberta and designed across a two-year time frame. The project has two phases. Phase I assessed the needs of diverse learners and developed recommendations for the provision of quality online learning to diverse students. An interim report, summary report and executive summary are available from eCampusAlberta.

The goal of Phase II of the project, as determined by the joint Steering Committee for the *Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners* and the *Successful Practices* studies, is to support colleges/institutes in developing new policies and/or adapting existing policies that are consistent with institutional commitments to providing diverse, distributed learners with learner services that are equivalent to the services provided to on-campus learners. This goal is based on two assumptions. First, the delivery of a best practice level of service by colleges/institutes requires a policy framework to ensure institutional support for these service levels. Second, enhanced services for online and off-campus learners will increase learner retention, academic achievement, and satisfaction.

The project was designed to do the following.

1. Develop tools and processes for conducting policy reviews, revising existing policies, and developing new policies, including:
  - a. Identifying policy issues related to distributed learning;
  - b. Formulating policy statements, rationales, and procedures making use of best practices and research findings; and
  - c. Linking new e-learning policies with existing related institutional policies.
2. Utilize these tools and processes to develop a sample comprehensive institutional online learning policy and sample policy statements in three areas: universal design for learning, instructor development and support, and service delivery for online and off-campus learners (drawn from the two research studies).

3. Upon the request of a college/institute Vice-President, Academic (VPA), the Project Lead will work with personnel from three pilot institutions to support e-learning policy revision/development.

The project deliverables include:

1. A toolkit designed to support institutional policy revision/development related to the delivery of services to online and off-campus learners with particular emphasis on diverse learners. The toolkit will contain information about identifying policy issues; formulating policy statements, rationales, and guiding principles; stating regulations; and measuring policy performance.
2. A sample comprehensive institutional policy about the delivery of services to online and off-campus learners, with particular emphasis on diverse learners.
3. Three sample institutional policies about universal design for online learning, instructor development and support, and service delivery for online and off-campus learners.
4. Revised policies and/or new policies from four institutions that chose to be pilot sites for policy work.
5. A report including information about project background and rationale, goals, processes, the deliverables, and participants' observations and reflections. This report will be made available to participating institutions, other CampusAlberta institutions, government ministries, and educational organizations in Alberta. It will also be deposited with appropriate educational databases.
6. An evaluation report including an assessment of the utility of the sample policies and the pilot institution policies as well as a developmental evaluation of project processes.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

This toolkit is designed to be a resource for college personnel undertaking policy development and revision in support of online learning. The contents can be broken down into six elements: the nature and impact of policy, the process of policy development, suggested content elements for four policies, and the process of conducting a policy audit. The sixth element is made up of four sample policies that faculty and administrators from the participating colleges developed by utilizing the processes and resources presented in this toolkit.

There is nothing prescriptive about the contents of the toolkit. It is designed to provide examples and suggest processes that will save research time and stimulate discussion and consideration.

Using the language of the *Roles and Mandates Framework for Alberta's Publicly Funded Advanced Education System* (Alberta Advanced Education and Technology, 2007), the institutions participating in this project include seven comprehensive community institutions and one polytechnical institution. For the sake of brevity, the term *college* is used throughout this document to refer to all eight institutions.

The Project Statement for Phase II focuses on online and off-campus learners, recognizing the similarities of experiences for students who enrol in online courses from their homes or learn in small group, face-to-face cohorts at a satellite campus. Neither group has in-person access to main campus services and their institutions face similar challenges in meeting their needs. Again, for brevity, the term *online* is used throughout the document.

## 3. WHY IS POLICY IMPORTANT FOR ONLINE LEARNING?

### 3.1 What is Policy?

From the perspective of higher education institutions, “Institutional policies are formal, general statements of intent, goals, and objectives that guide the activities, behaviour, and attitudes of an institution and its staff” (Bottomley & Calvert, 2003, p. 3). While other core documents such as mission, mandate, and value statements as well as strategic plans set direction for an institution, it is policy that expresses the principles from those documents in a manner that directs the operations of the institution. Stated another way, policies set the ground rules for individuals and departments to follow as they carry out their work.

### 3.2 Policy and Online Learning

The *Successful Practices* and *Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners* studies documented the potential policy can play in supporting the development of online learning in Alberta’s colleges. First, the *Successful Practices* study pointed to “a need for a paradigm shift in the post-secondary system to incorporate a full commitment to distributed learning as opposed to the current view as an add-on to routine practice” (Shimoni, Barrington, & Wilde, 2010, p. 3). The findings, conclusions, and recommendations of both studies pointed to policy as central to the paradigm shift: “policy development [is] needed to ensure that post-secondary institutions offer the services required to support not only distributed learners in general but more diverse learner populations ... as well” (Shimoni & Barrington, 2010, p. 34). The concept of best practices behind the best practices points to college “policies, strategies, and structures” that ensure that best practices in service delivery to online learners, in this case, are developed and implemented (Shimoni, Barrington, & Wilde, 2010, p. 3). In addition, it is important to recognize that policy development and revision to support online learners will have a very positive indirect benefit for on-campus learners. The emphasis on systematic planning, quality assurance, and learner focus that are required for effective online learning become reference points for changes in face-to-face delivery and services.

### 3.3 The Bimodal College

There are a number of references in the literature (Bottomley & Calvert, 2003; Hope, 2005) to the concept of bimodal institutions, which suggests the importance of policy in relation to institutions’ increasing commitment to distributed learning. The concept of bimodal or dual mode refers to institutions that offer both face-to-face and distributed learning and are committed to providing both groups of learners with instructional delivery and learner services that are equivalent. When an institution is a single mode—either distributed or face-to-face—institution, all of its instructional and

service processes and policies reflect that mode. Athabasca University, for example, is first and foremost a distance education institution, and its instructional and services models reflect that mandate. Alberta's colleges, along with eCampusAlberta, are moving from one mode—face-to-face—to two modes. Some policies and practices may serve the second mode as well as the first mode, but many have to be adapted to the new bimodal environment. In some cases, the degree of change could be relatively minor, and in other cases it will be substantial. When an institution has made a strategic commitment to becoming bimodal, policy becomes the lever for making organizational change.

### 3.4 Policy and Organizational Change

Policy-making to support online learning is also about organizational change. Policy may direct, but best practices are only operationalized for learners when departments change their service delivery practices. As a result, meaningful organizational change has to be built upon change in individuals' and groups' attitudes and role performance. The concept of a bimodal institution, for example, represents a cultural change for a college that has focused on the campus experience for full-time students for more than 40 years. Colleges now have an expanded mission to serve both learners on campus and learners at a distance, regardless of locale and time of day. This new venture can challenge individuals' and groups' identities, sense of purpose, and their understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Policy development then has to be accompanied by organizational development processes that provide individuals and groups with the opportunity to personally redefine their understanding of the institution and their roles in relation to an expanded mission.

De Freitas and Oliver (2005) conducted a case study at a British university of the relationship between policy change and organizational change in relation to online learning. Their comments about top-down and bottom-up organizational change and the importance of personal meaning making are relevant to this project

One way of describing . . . [e-learning implementation] organisational changes, in terms of internal institutional development is through *top-down* or *bottom-up* development. Top-down approaches are characterized by policy and strategy development instigated by members of upper management and then propagated throughout the organisation; these organisational changes are expected to lead to pedagogic change. In contrast, bottom-up approaches are characterized by pilot and individually funded projects often instigated by innovative practitioners in a rather more uncoordinated way. Changes in pedagogy may eventually be reflected in organisational development, which may eventually become confirmed in policy. Both approaches have significant flaws: the one is not consultative and inclusive enough, and the other creates pockets of excellence and areas of inactivity. These approaches also fail to describe the complexities of organisational shape and reflect a regressive hierarchical model of organisations that is increasingly challenged in practice. Instead most organisations would benefit from a combined approach to e-learning development mixing top-down and bottom-up policy, strategy and activities, interacting and informing one another. (de Freitas & Oliver, p. 86)

Answering the question of whether e-learning policy drives change clearly depends upon the way that change is being conceptualized. What this article has demonstrated ... is that policies can drive change, both in terms of organisational divisions of labour and pedagogic practice ... the analysis suggests that there will be resistance to change whilst its impact upon practice is debated and made sense of. This was certainly present within this case, but given the need for individual meaning-making as part of the process of engagement with change, a degree of resistance seems inevitable. Moreover, opportunities for collaboration and discussion are consistently identified as being helpful within the change process. This is likely to be the case in any area of policy, although unfamiliar practices such as e-learning may provide the most acute examples. (de Freitas & Oliver, p. 93)

## 4. GETTING STARTED IN POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The eight regional accrediting commissions in the United States have produced a document entitled *Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs* (The Higher Learning Commission, n.d.), which provides an important context for this policy project. These statements focus attention on the core elements of an institution’s mission regardless of mode of delivery:

- that education is best experienced within a community of learning where competent professionals are actively and cooperatively involved with creating, providing, and improving the instructional program;
- that learning is dynamic and interactive, regardless of the setting in which it occurs;
- that institutional programs leading to degrees having integrity are organized around substantive and coherent curricula that define expected learning outcomes;
- that institutions accept the obligation to address student needs related to and provide the resources necessary for their academic success;
- that institutions are responsible for the education provided in their name;
- that institutions undertake the assessment and improvement of their quality, giving particular emphasis to student learning; and
- that institutions voluntarily subject themselves to peer review.

### 4.1 The Elements of Policy

While there is no set formula for a policy document, the following outline captures the basic elements contained in most institutional policies.

1. Title	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The title should be short and descriptive.</li><li>• Avoid acronyms and specific terminology.</li><li>• Use widely understood concepts.</li></ul>
2. Policy statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The policy statement is no more than two or three sentences long and sets out the college’s position, course of action, or desired state on a particular topic or issue.</li></ul>
3. Rationale/principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Why is this policy needed?</li><li>• What problem is being solved/prevented?</li><li>• What opportunities will be created?</li><li>• What values are being addressed?</li><li>• What benefits will result?</li></ul>

4. Scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To whom and to what processes does this policy apply? E.g., instructors, the recruitment and selection process, academic services (name the services in parentheses), student services (name the services in parentheses)</li> </ul>
5. Definitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognizing that policy statements are public documents within the institution, and sometimes beyond, define terms that readers will need to understand the policy.</li> </ul>
6. Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Procedures indicate how the policy should be implemented. They are more concrete than the policy statement but are not detailed. They indicate responsibilities at a conceptual level but do not detail actions. E.g., Core academic services including the library, learning assistance centre, and program advising will develop an annual operational plan for the provision of services to online learners. This plan will be reviewed by the Vice-President, Academic, and the College Distributed Learning Strategy Committee.</li> </ul>
7. Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who is responsible for the implementation of the policy? Typically this is an executive officer or dean/director.</li> </ul>
8. Related policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>List related policies by name and number.</li> </ul>
9. Dates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify when it was approved by the board of governors.</li> <li>When is it scheduled for review?</li> </ul>

## 4.2 The Policy-Making Process

Developing institutional policy is a complex process involving many members of the college community and many steps along the way. First and foremost, institutional policy making occurs in a policy environment circumscribed by federal and provincial legislation, government policy, and the institution's mandate and strategic plan. The four major groups within the college—administration, faculty, staff, and students—bring perspectives reflecting their experiences and their roles within the institution. Similarly,

each group is made up of people who may have varying perspectives on the particular policy area. Real-world constraints such as finances, technology, and staff time have to be taken into consideration in policy making. The following outline contains the basic elements of the policy-making process, bearing in mind that the process is never as linear as the outline suggests.

<p>1. Who are the institutional stakeholders?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In this case, it is important to cast the net widely. Identify all the departments/units within the college who, in their perceptions, have an interest in the policy.</li> <li>• To what extent are their representatives included in the policy development team? Is there a consultation process that gathers their input prior to drafting and gives them an opportunity to review the draft?</li> </ul>
<p>2. Who should be on the policy development team?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is necessary to balance expertise, positional authority, and the interests of stakeholders with the need to work efficiently. Perhaps four or five people are an optimum number for research and writing. Others can be involved in a variety of consultation processes.</li> </ul>
<p>3. What is the desired purpose of the policy?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why is this policy needed? What is the evidence from research? Best practices? Other institutions? Reports and recommendations from government and professional organizations?</li> <li>• What are the linkages to the college's mandate, core values, strategic plan, and comprehensive institutional plan?</li> </ul>
<p>4. What is the scope of the policy?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a policy-writing team, brainstorm all the elements you would like to see included in the policy. Group these under headings. Identify linkages among the groupings.</li> <li>• What will be included in the policy? What is outside the scope of the policy?</li> <li>• What are the relevant existing policies?</li> <li>• What factors will influence policy development? E.g., institutional mandate, fiscal realities, information technology infrastructure, and board priorities.</li> </ul>

<p>5. What is the policy statement?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By linking together ideas about scope and purpose, draft a two- or three-sentence statement of policy.</li> <li>• Review the draft statement in relation to the defined scope. Is the zone of authority for the policy clear?</li> <li>• For example: The College will create an environment conducive to expanding the provision of high-quality online learning to adult learners in Alberta and beyond. The College will integrate and align policies, technology management, administrative processes, learner services, and instructional services with the needs of online learners.</li> </ul>
<p>6. What is the rationale for the policy?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List all policy justifications that have been identified in the process to date.</li> <li>• Group these and develop four or five single-sentence statements that reflect the evidence and linkages from the scope section above.</li> <li>• For example, Grant MacEwan University (2009) Academic Residency Requirements Policy C1015 states “This Policy requires students to complete a significant portion of their courses at the University to ensure the <i>integrity of its curriculum</i> and to foster <i>high quality standards</i> as documented in academic policies” (emphasis added).</li> </ul>
<p>7. What terms need to be defined?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizing that policy statements are public documents within the institution, and sometimes beyond, define terms, such as bimodal and learning management system, which are necessary for a clear understanding of the document.</li> </ul>
<p>8. What procedures need to be identified?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is responsible for doing what?</li> <li>• For example, Grant MacEwan University (2009) Policy C1015 states “The Office of the Registrar is responsible for administering this Policy, particularly as it relates to monitoring graduation requirements.”</li> </ul>

<p>9. Who will be executive officer or middle manager responsible for policy implementation and monitoring?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Specify position or positions.</li></ul>
<p>10. What existing college policies are related to this policy?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify these by name and number.</li></ul>

## 5. DEVELOPING A COMPREHENSIVE INSTITUTIONAL POLICY

Section 4.2 laid out a process for developing policy with a series of prompting questions and some examples. This process is stated in generic terms applicable to any of the sample policies this project is developing or any other policy area. The next four sections of the toolkit do not repeat the process, but identify elements that might be considered for each particular policy area. They have been gleaned from the *Successful Practices* and *Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners* studies, *elearning Rubric: A Resource for Quality Online Curriculum Creation* (eCampusAlberta, n.d.), *A Quality Scorecard for the Administration of Online Education Programs* (The Sloan Consortium, n.d.), research literature, and institutional policies. The goal is to provide a comprehensive list of elements from which choices can be made. Each content element will likely be reflected in a procedure that is not an operational plan but a statement of direction and responsibility.

<p>1. Distributed learning strategy, vision, and values</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While policy is an important lever for achieving best practice standards of delivery and service, a strategy statement can address the overall place of distributed learning within the institution and address issues such as program delivery priorities, niche opportunities, inter-institutional collaboration, resource allocation, and administrative structures.</li> <li>• A policy can require the development of a distance learning strategy, including vision and values articulated with institutional mandate and values.</li> </ul>
<p>2. Coordinating or strategic committee</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because distributed learning touches all areas of the institution, the policy may direct that there be a campus-wide committee responsible for operational and/or strategic matters.</li> <li>• The procedure could identify that the committee is chaired by the Vice-President, Academic, for example.</li> <li>• Its mandate could include developing an annual operational plan and/or updating the strategic plan, coordinating interdepartmental initiatives, and filing an annual report with the President.</li> </ul>

<p>3. Information technology infrastructure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the policy mandate that there also be a complementary information technology infrastructure and management policy?</li> </ul>
<p>4. Quality assurance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What standards and processes are needed?</li> </ul>
<p>5. Code of good online practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A code of good online practice adapts and interprets general principles of service delivery to this modality with the goal of establishing a high-quality teaching and learning environment.</li> <li>• A procedure could mandate the creation of such a code by a group such as a coordinating or strategic committee.</li> </ul>
<p>6. Learner services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While the toolkit includes a separate sample learner services policy, a comprehensive policy needs to include a statement about learner services—academic and support services—as a core element of an all-inclusive policy. The procedures could reference a commitment to appropriate services for online learners, specify which services are included in that mandate, and specify a planning process and a responsible administrator.</li> </ul>
<p>7. Diverse learners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What additional statements need to be made regarding support for the four groups—rural students, ESL students, Aboriginal students, and students with disabilities—identified in the findings of the <i>Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners</i> study? The learning needs of each group are identified on pages 34-35 of the report.</li> </ul>

<p>8. Instructor development and support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While the toolkit includes a separate sample instructor development and support policy, a comprehensive policy needs to include a statement about instructor development and support as a core element of an all-inclusive policy. The regulation could reference a commitment to providing essential services, identify which services are identified in that mandate, and specify a planning process and a responsible administrator. Some policies specify training standards—pedagogical and technical—that must be met before an instructor can teach online.</li> </ul>
<p>9. Administrative structures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutions provide online learning through numerous centralized, decentralized, and mixed administrative models. A procedure could spell out the relative roles of, for example, the academic units, the distributed learning coordinating department, the courseware development unit, and the information technology department.</li> </ul>
<p>10. Courseware development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Courseware development for online delivery is a rigorous process involving instructional design and technical expertise over and above the content and classroom delivery expertise of instructors. A procedure could spell out the development services provided, the administrative responsibility, and the quality assurance process.</li> </ul>
<p>11. Student assessment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some policies address the added challenges of student assessment associated with online delivery. What are the institutional standards for establishing student identity, managing invigilation, and ensuring examination security?</li> </ul>

<p>12. Student readiness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a need to specify a minimum standard of technology that a student must be able to access? Should there be a requirement for students to demonstrate a minimum level of technical proficiency before enrolling in an online course?</li> </ul>
<p>13. Program evaluation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While online delivery does not constitute a program, best practices suggest a need for systematic evaluation of online delivery in a rigorous way paralleling existing program review policies that typically focus on campus delivery. At the same time, online delivery of a program is a subset of the institution's delivery of a particular program in all modalities. For this reason, evaluation of online delivery programs is also one part of the total program evaluation.</li> </ul>
<p>14. Excluded Items</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which items are outside the scope of this policy? Instructor workload is a matter for collective bargaining. Intellectual property issues surrounding distributed learning are most likely dealt with in an omnibus policy and possibly in collective bargaining. An institutional policy can call, in the procedures, for a review of an existing policy in relation to the development of distributed learning at the college.</li> </ul>

## 6. DEVELOPING A SERVICE DELIVERY FOR ONLINE LEARNERS POLICY

One of the challenges of providing a best practice level of service is the number of services that fall into this category. Within institutions, these services can be organized into numerous units spanning several major divisions of a college. The table below provides lists of these services as a starting point.

Some process suggestions for policy development in this area might include the following.

- Develop a policy statement using the process in Section 4.
- Identify the services to be provided (e.g., counselling, technical support, and tutoring).
- Identify general principles of service delivery for online learners.
- Identify the responsible service unit and the responsible administrator (dean/director or vice president).
- Each service area/unit can be reflected in its own procedure.

SchWeber (2008)	Shimoni, Barrington, and Wilde (2010)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course evaluations – What is the procedure? Who is responsible? Are additional questions needed?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Admissions and registration – What services will make a college truly bimodal?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examinations – What are the standards around security and student identity? What is the administrative process for exams? What forms of assessment are approved?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment, academic advising, and orientation – What are the services to be provided? The responsible areas?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learner technology skills and access – Are minimum technical skills needed before enrolling?</li> <li>• What hardware and software are required?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial awards and aid – What are the services to be provided? The responsible areas?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advisement – What service levels and what delivery processes are consistent with a bimodal institution?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical support – What services will be provided?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Library services – What are the service levels? What are the hours of service? Are services for online learners also available for on-campus learners?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic and tutorial support services – What services are to be provided? The responsible areas?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical Support – What services will be provided? What service standards?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bookstore services – What business processes will provide a bimodal level of service?</li> </ul>

SchWeber (2008)	Shimoni, Barrington, and Wilde (2010)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication management – How will the institution actively provide necessary communications to learners? Do online students have additional communications needs? How will these be addressed?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Library Services - What services will make a college truly bimodal?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career counselling and career services – What services are to be provided? The responsible areas?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal counselling – What services will be provided?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diverse students – What additional services are needed to meet the needs of learners with disabilities, Aboriginal learners, English as a Second Language learners, and rural learners? What are the responsible areas?</li> </ul>

## 7. DEVELOPING AN INSTRUCTOR DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT POLICY

At least seven elements should be considered in a policy statement about instructor support and development.

1. Course development process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Effective online delivery requires a systematic course development process including instructional design expertise and technology expertise to support decision making about hardware, software, and delivery systems. In addition, there need to be provisions for copyright clearance and production of online materials processes.</li></ul>
2. Class size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The procedures need to recognize how decisions are made about class size for online delivery, paralleling the decision making process for on-campus delivery. Such a procedure would not specify class size numbers but refer to an existing collective agreement, policy, or practice.</li></ul>
3. Intellectual property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The procedures should also recognize the institution’s policy about intellectual property for online materials created by the instructor. Again, this is a case of recognizing an existing collective agreement, policy, or practice.</li></ul>
4. Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The institution is committed to providing appropriate technologies to support online delivery and upgrading of technologies as changes occur. In addition, instructors should be provided with a help desk that provides ongoing technical and instructional design expertise.</li></ul>

<p>5. Professional development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The college will provide all instructors, including contract instructors, with appropriate pedagogical and technical training before they undertake online delivery. Similarly, the college will ensure that ongoing professional development is available.</li> </ul>
<p>6. Evaluation of online delivery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While course evaluation by students and institutional program evaluation policies and practices should apply to online delivery, there may be a need for a formal or informal evaluation process that provides an opportunity for instructors, students, and supporting professionals to provide feedback about elements that are unique to online delivery.</li> </ul>
<p>7. Services for students</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A key finding of the <i>Successful Practices</i> study is that instructors are often the primary point of contact with the institution for online learners. As a result, instructors need to have a comprehensive package of information about the services available to learners and the contacts for those services. The instructors' role is one of referral, but they need resources in order to do that effectively. A procedure could identify this need, define it succinctly, and assign responsibility for providing it.</li> </ul>

## 8. DEVELOPING A UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR ONLINE LEARNING POLICY

Over time, post-secondary institutions have become more responsive to the needs of diverse learners by providing accommodations to compensate for particular disabilities or disadvantages. Universal Design represents a very different model: design and produce facilities, products, and services to maximize accessibility rather than developing after-the-fact accommodations. Automatic door openers, for example, increase accessibility for people with mobility challenges, but also are very helpful for individuals carrying packages or pushing strollers.

Universal Design originated in the 1980s at the Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University. Its central message is “design products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design” (Connell et al., 1997, p. 1) and has been extended to education as Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Instructional media, processes, and services should be “conceived, designed, developed, and validated to achieve results for the widest spectrum of students, including those with disabilities, without the need for subsequent adaptation or specialized design” (Hitchcock & Stahl, 2003, p. 48).

A number of authors have pointed out that the proactive design process is more efficient and cost-effective than providing accommodations. With particular reference to online learning, Burgstahler (2010) said “that applying UD as distance-learning courses are being developed can be easier and therefore less expensive than quickly developing accommodation strategies each time a student that requires accommodation enrolls in a course” (p. 2).

The original principles of UD developed at North Carolina State University have been adapted for instruction at the DO-IT center at the University of Washington.

- Class climate. Adopt practices that reflect high value with respect to both diversity and inclusiveness.
- Interaction. Encourage regular and effective interactions between students and instructors and ensure that communications methods are accessible to all participants.
- Physical environments and products. Ensure that facilities, activities, materials, and equipment are physically accessible to and useable by all students, and that all potential student characteristics are addressed in safety considerations.
- Delivery methods: Use multiple instructional methods that are accessible to all learners.
- Information resources and technology. Ensure that course materials, notes, and other information resources are engaging, flexible, and accessible for all students.
- Feedback. Provide specific feedback on a regular basis.

- Assessment. Regularly assess student progress using multiple accessible methods and tools and adjust instruction accordingly.
- Accommodation. Plan for accommodations for students whose needs are not met by the instructional design (Burgstahler, 2009, pp. 2-3).

The table below presents the core elements that could constitute an institutional policy on UD for online learning.

1. Web design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What design principles will make the college’s website accessible to the broadest audience possible?</li> </ul>
2. Print and electronic communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which text and display formats maximize learner accessibility to college print and electronic publications and online communications?</li> </ul>
3. Online course materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What design standards will maximize accessibility for materials developed by the college?</li> <li>• What design standards will be used in the selection and acquisition of materials developed by others?</li> </ul>
4. Online communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What strategies will increase the range of learner accessibility and participation in synchronous or asynchronous discussions?</li> </ul>
5. Alternate formats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What alternate formats will be provided and how will learners access them?</li> </ul>
6. Accessibility services and assistive technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While the implementation of UDL principles will reduce the number of accommodations required for individual learners, what services will be provided to online learners?</li> <li>• How will learners be made aware of those services and how will they request access?</li> <li>• What assistive technologies can be provided to online learners? How will learners access these technologies?</li> </ul>
7. Learner assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What forms of assessment are the best match of course requirements and the needs of diverse learners?</li> <li>• What exam accommodations can be provided in an online environment?</li> </ul>
8. Professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will instructor and learner services specialists receive the training needed to support diverse learners?</li> </ul>

<p>9. Instructional design</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What UDL training is needed by college personnel developing online courseware and services? What specialist services will be provided to the developers?</li> </ul>
<p>10. Design of instructional spaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What design standards will guide the development of new facilities and the retrofitting of existing facilities to ensure access, comfort, and safety for learners? (While many online learners complete their studies from their homes, they may need or want to access campus facilities.)</li> </ul>
<p>11. Information technology</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What information technology capacity is needed to support the delivery of UDL-based instruction and services?</li> </ul>

## 9. CONDUCTING A POLICY AUDIT

While developing new policy is an important way to advance online learning within an institution, existing policies may be unintentionally limiting the development of online learning services. The concept of bimodal institution reminds us that institutions developed policies when they were almost exclusively campus focused. In the context of the new world of online learning, each policy needs to be reviewed to determine its fit with a bimodal mission.

A starting place for such a review is a policy audit, defined as “a structured, systematic review of an institution’s existing policies to find any contradictions, redundancies, omissions, and outdated items” (Bottomley & Calvert, 2003, p. 4). An audit can, in the context of this project, serve five functions:

- Examine how each existing policy applies to on-campus and online learning.
- Identify areas where no policies exist, but where policies are now needed for online learning.
- Review activities and publications (electronic and print) to identify how existing policies and procedures are carried out in relation to online learning.
- Identify outdated policies.
- Review policy-mandated procedures and guidelines to ensure they meet the needs of a bimodal institution (adapted from Bottomley & Calvert, 2003).

Shulock and Ballard (2007) studied the impact of California state finance policies on the goals of the community college system using a policy audit framework. Based on their work, policy audits can play three roles in relation to online learning in Alberta colleges. A policy audit can:

- draw the attention of institutional leaders to problems that, while known to faculty and staff, might escape focused attention in planning and budgeting;
- foster consensus within an institution about the need for change in policies and practices; and
- point the way to solutions to identified deficiencies in service delivery. (adapted from pp. 22-23)

From a process perspective, an audit would likely have these elements:

- a clear statement of mandate and process approved by an executive sponsor,
- a task team broadly representative of the units/departments engaged in online learning,
- an inventory of all current policies relevant to online learning,
- a systematic review of each policy using guiding questions, and
- a structured report to the executive sponsor with identified gaps and contradictions and recommended changes.

Some guiding questions might include:

- What specific aspects of this policy are relevant to online learning?
- What effects (positive, negative, or unintended) does this policy have on online delivery?
- From the perspective of online learners and instructors, can they see equal commitment to on-campus and online learners in the policy?
- What needs to be changed or added to achieve a best practice level of services as identified in the *Successful Practices* study?

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# APPENDICES

# Appendix A – Sample Online Learning Policy

## 1.0 POLICY STATEMENT

Xxx College is committed to providing instructors and students engaged in teaching and learning outside the traditional classroom with equitable access to services and supports. Consistent with this commitment, an Online Learning Strategy Committee will develop and steward the college's online learning strategy and an Online Learning Operations Committee will coordinate the development of college functions and services related to online learning.

## 2.0 RATIONALE

- 2.1 Xxx College has identified online learning in its [mandate, business plan, strategic plan, and/or academic plan] as a core component of its commitment to meeting learner and community needs, expanding access, and supporting lifelong learning.
- 2.2 Online learner retention, success, and satisfaction are directly related to the quality of instructional and service delivery.
- 2.3 The effective development and delivery of online learning requires the continued integration of many departments and functions in order to address the unique and specific needs of learners, instructors and staff.

## 3.0 SCOPE

This policy applies to all program areas offering online courses and programs as well as service units which are involved in supporting the development and delivery of online instruction.

## 4.0 DEFINITIONS

**Online learning** includes the delivery of instruction and learner services, utilizing the World Wide Web and Internet technologies, to learners who, in most cases, are at a distance from the institution and do not have face-to-face interaction with their instructors and the college's service.

## 5.0 PROCEDURES

- 5.1 The mandate of the Online Learning Strategy Committee will be the development of a vision for the delivery of online learning and services consistent with the college's business plan and the coordination of the college's online program delivery and enrolment goals with the development of the college's information technology and learner services infrastructure. The committee will develop its terms of reference for approval by the Executive Committee.
- 5.2 The Strategy Committee will be chaired by the Vice-President, Academic and include the Vice-President, Student Services, two deans, the registrar, the director of student

services, the director of information technology, two department chairs, two online instructors, and the director of educational technology/curriculum development. Committee members will be appointed by the Executive Committee. [An alternate model could include both vice-presidents as co-chairs.]

- 5.3 The mandate of the Operations Committee will be communication and planning among the functional areas, coordination of instructional and learner services delivery, and the resolution of emergent challenges. The committee will develop its terms of reference for review by the Strategy Committee and approval by the Executive Committee.
- 5.4 The Operations Committee members and the chair [dean/director level] will be appointed by the Vice-President, Academic and the Vice-President, Student Services and will include representatives from functional areas including, but not limited to, admissions and registration, curriculum development, faculty development, educational technology, online instruction, network management, library, bookstore, online payment, technical support services, financial aid and awards, program advising, tutorial services, learning assistance and disability services, career services, program review, and marketing and student recruitment. [Committee membership should reflect a mix of specialists, program heads, and deans/directors as well as the institution's member of the eCampusAlberta Operations Committee.]
- 5.5 Within the first four months of operation, the Operations Committee will conduct a review of online learning business processes. The review will utilize the higher education student life cycle model as well as recognized best practices standards such as *Best practices for electronically offered degree and certificate programs* (The Higher Learning Commission, n.d.) or *A quality scorecard for the administration of online education programs* (The Sloan Consortium, n.d.). Subsequent reviews will be conducted on an as needed basis as requested by the Strategy Committee.
- 5.6 Once an initial or a subsequent business process review has been completed, each of the departments responsible for the functional areas will develop goals and an operational plan. The Operations Committee will create a coordinated college-wide operational plan for review by the Strategy Committee.
- 5.7 Each committee will conduct a year-end review of its operations and progress toward goals. These reports will be submitted to the Executive Committee and Academic Council.

## 6.0 RESPONSIBILITY

Vice-President, Academic and Vice-President, Student Services

**7.0 RELATED POLICIES**

List any related policies

# Appendix B – Sample Support Services for Online Learners Policy

## 1.0 POLICY STATEMENT

Xxx College is committed to learner support services as a critical component of student success. The services provided to online learners will reflect the same principles of timeliness, applicability, and accessibility as those services provided for on-campus students.

## 2.0 RATIONALE

- 2.1 The mandate of learner services in a college environment is to respond to students' individual needs and support their personal goals and success in their program of studies. While these goals are the same for all learners regardless of instructional modality, Xxx College recognizes the need to provide equitable services for online learners in light of the unique challenges they experience.
- 2.2 In an online environment, effective instructional and service delivery requires a collaborative cross-functional approach coordinated with the academic division's distributed learning plan.
- 2.3 In light of the impact of technology on students' lives and its power to enhance services, the college recognizes that services provided to online learners may be appropriate for and accessible to on-campus learners.

## 3.0 SCOPE

This policy includes, but is not limited to, the following services and departments: recruitment, admissions, registration, and student records; financial aid and awards; assessment, advising, and orientation; personal counselling; career services; bookstore; library; disability services; learning assistance and tutoring; and examinations.

## 4.0 DEFINITIONS

- 4.1 **Online learners** utilize computer networks to access courses and programs that have been designed for online delivery utilizing the World Wide Web and the Internet. In most cases, they are at a distance from the institution and do not have face-to-face interaction with their instructors and the college's services.
- 4.2 **Push technology** refers to software systems that provide periodic distribution of information to clients or learners based on their profiles in the student information system or self-identified interests.

- 4.3 **Multimodal** delivery of instruction and services includes varied modes of presentation to and interaction with and among learners including face-to-face, videoconferencing, audioconferencing, and online delivery. Varied modes of delivery are necessary in order to provide flexibility to learners and respond to their needs and interests.
- 4.4 A **learning management system** is a software application designed to support the delivery of online instruction. A system can create and manage records, organize and deliver content to learners, and facilitate communication among learners and with the instructor.
- 4.5 **Virtual learning communities** are made up of learners interacting with each other utilizing online technologies. While separated by distance, learners create social communities as a part of a learning process which is interactive, supportive and collaborative.

## 5.0 PROCEDURES

- 5.1 The Vice-President, Xxx, is responsible for the overall management of this policy.
- 5.2 The College's services for online learners will be guided by an annual plan developed in coordination with the academic division's distributed learning plan. The services plan will include departmental plans which will be integrated into a comprehensive learner services plan by [position, department, or committee].
- 5.3 Each of the learner services departments identified below will utilize the following principles in the development of its operational plan.
- Online courses will be identified with a unique identifier in the student information system (or course registration system) to facilitate the delivery of appropriate communications and services.
  - Service departments will develop a systematic and automated process to initiate timely communications, utilizing push technologies, to all online learners along with communications customized to particular programs and learner demographics. These communication processes will be coordinated in the learner services plan.
  - Each service department will maintain timely and relevant information about its services for online learners on the college's website.
  - Each department will develop response time standards appropriate for learners and the particular service.
  - Learner services should be distributed, wherever possible, utilizing the modality or modalities which reflect the nature of the service and the needs of the learners.
  - Services should be inclusive and support virtual learning communities.

- Instructors are frequently the most immediate point of contact for online learners; therefore, the identified service departments, under the direction of [position] will provide instructors with a toolkit of current information about college services and contacts in order to support the instructors' role in facilitating learner access to those services.

5.4 The core learner support services functions will include, but will not be limited to,

**1. Recruitment, Admissions, Registration, and Student Records**

- a. Ensure student information and communications systems support these business processes.
- b. Collaborate with program areas to assist students with program planning and course selection.
- c. Provide learners with a clear statement of computer skills required along with the software and hardware needed for each course prior to registration process.
- d. Identify and assess learner readiness for online learning.
- e. Identify service needs of learners and make appropriate referrals.

**2. Financial Awards and Aid**

- a. Research funding options for online learners.
- b. Push targeted financial aid and award information to online learners.
- c. Advocate with appropriate agencies for changes to funding eligibility for online learners.

**3. Assessment, Placement, Academic Advising, and Orientation**

- a. Provide services in multiple modalities and push out information to learners through an effective communication plan.
- b. Ensure close collaboration with application, admissions, and registration areas to ensure smooth transition to referral services.

**4. Personal Counselling**

- a. Provide relevant synchronous or asynchronous workshops on topics such as time management and goal setting.
- b. Provide counselling via telephone or other appropriate technologies.

**5. Career Services**

- a. Provide synchronous or asynchronous workshops on topics such as career and job search.
- b. Provide job postings online.
- c. Provide one-to-one career and job search advising via telephone or other appropriate technologies.

**6. Bookstore**

- a. Develop an online store for the purchase of texts and course materials.
- b. Develop distribution processes for online orders.

**7. Library**

- a. Provide library assistance by telephone or other appropriate technologies.
- b. Develop distribution systems for loaning and mailing general circulation books to learners.
- c. Provide synchronous or asynchronous tutorials about library skills.
- d. Ensure online learners have remote access to databases.

**8. Disability Services**

- a. Facilitate an online mechanism for self-identification of disability.
- b. Provide individual assistance via telephone or other appropriate technologies.
- c. Develop, coordinate and communicate accommodation and service plans with online learners and instructors via mail or other allowable mechanisms.
- d. Provide training for equipment and software via telephone or other appropriate technologies.

**9. Learning Assistance and Tutoring**

- a. Provide synchronous and asynchronous workshops on core academic skills such as essay writing.
- b. Provide individual assistance by telephone or appropriate technologies.

**10. Examinations**

- a. Provide online learners with invigilation processes and exam locations.
- b. Provide examination information to learners via telephone or other appropriate technologies.
- c. In conjunction with instructional departments, develop appropriate information toolkits (e.g., proctoring declaration forms, proctor instruction sheets).

5.5 The xxx department will develop a learning management system course shell which will identify core services, from a learner’s perspective, and include links to each of those services.

5.6 The information technology department, working in collaboration with the learner services division, will develop and distribute a service delivery plan outlining the technical support services provided to online instructors, learner services personnel and learners.

**6.0 RESPONSIBILITY**

Vice-President, Xxx

**7.0 RELATED POLICIES**

List any related policies

# Appendix C – Sample Professional Development and Support for Online Instructors Policy

## 1.0 POLICY STATEMENT

Xxx College supports online learner success by fostering faculty success in facilitating learning in an online environment. This will be achieved by providing instructors with ongoing professional development as well as course development, pedagogical, and technical support focussing on the unique aspects of online learning.

## 2.0 RATIONALE

- 2.1 Xxx College recognizes the differences inherent in the lived experience of online and classroom instructors and students.
- 2.2 Research (*Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, 2010) demonstrates that online learners' satisfaction is directly related to their instructors' proficiency in providing effective online learning.
- 2.3 In an online environment, course design and delivery require collaborative work on the part of instructors, technology specialists, course designers, and learner support specialists.
- 2.4 Professional development for online learning focuses on teaching and learning in this modality in addition to professional development in instructors' content disciplines.
- 2.5 Online instructors who do not have access to the college's main campus will be provided with development and delivery support equivalent to that provided to on-campus instructors. Similarly, equivalent support will be provided to full- and part-time instructors.

## 3.0 SCOPE

This policy applies to all online instructors and program leaders at XXX College as well as the faculty development unit and those departments engaged in online development, delivery and support.

## 4.0 DEFINITIONS

**Professional development and support services for online instructors** – In the context of this policy, the following items are included in the definition:

- Pedagogical and technical training in preparation for course development and for course delivery,
- Instructional design and technical assistance during course development,

- Pedagogical support as well as web-based and help desk technical support during course delivery,
- Systematic collection and review of feedback data from learners, and
- Ongoing professional development related to online teaching and learning, best practices, and emerging technologies.

Professional development includes both formal and informal learning opportunities. The former should include online opportunities to ensure flexibility for instructors and just-in-time access. The latter can include learning communities and communities of practice.

## 5.0 PROCEDURES

- 5.1 The Vice-President, Academic is responsible for the overall management of this policy.
- 5.2 The college's professional development and support program for online instructors will be guided by an annual plan developed by . . . [name of committee, department or position]. This plan will ensure instructors can acquire needed development and delivery competencies in a timely manner and provide for the coordination of training and support services in relation to the development and delivery cycles of the academic year.
- 5.3 In order to maximize learner success, the academic and learner services divisions of the college will undertake joint professional development activities as well as joint planning for the coordination of learner services with instructional delivery.
- 5.4 Instructors are frequently the most immediate point of contact for online learners; as a result, instructors require current information about college services and contacts in order to facilitate student access to those services. The . . . [position or department] will compile an annual inventory of services and contact information for the use of instructors.
- 5.5 The Vice-President, Academic will lead the development of guidelines for good online instructional practice including, but not limited to, instructor role, response time standards, virtual office hours, course expectations, communication norms, the nature and timing of instructor feedback to individual learners, opportunities for learner-instructor and learner-learner interaction, the creation of learning communities, and technical support for learners. These guidelines will be reviewed on an annual basis.
- 5.6 Recognizing the importance of utilizing human and financial resources in an effective and efficient manner to provide appropriate professional development and support services for instructors, Xxx College will encourage interdepartmental initiatives as well as collaborative initiatives with other institutions.

## **6.0 RESPONSIBILITY**

Vice-President, Academic

## **7.0 RELATED POLICIES**

List any policies which are directly or indirectly related.

# Appendix D – Sample Universal Design for Online Learning Policy

## 1.0 POLICY STATEMENT

Xxx College is committed to providing access and supports for diverse learners. Consistent with this commitment, universal design for learning principles and methods will be utilized in the development and delivery of online courses and services.

## 2.0 RATIONALE

- Xxx College has made a commitment, in its . . . [mandate, business plan, strategic plan or values statement], to increasing diversity among its student body and removing barriers for students wanting to access post-secondary education.
- The college’s commitment to Universal Design for Online Learning (UDL) principles includes recognition of the importance of maintaining quality programming and academic and non-academic standards as well as affirming students’ responsibilities for demonstrating mastery of program requirements.
- The effective utilization of UDL integrates instruction and learner supports requiring collaborative work on the part of instructors, learner support specialists, technology specialists, and course developers.
- Online instruction is technology intensive and online learners may not have face-to-face access to college services; as a result, it is important to ensure appropriate UDL principles guide the development and delivery of online learning and services to ensure that technology is utilized effectively in relation to learners’ needs.
- The Alberta Human Rights Act “recognizes that all people are equal in dignity, rights, and responsibilities” and establishes the duty to accommodate in post-secondary education defined as “making adjustments or alternative arrangements in the educational environment to ensure it does not have a discriminatory effect on a student because of the student’s disabilities.”
- The utilization of UDL principles and methods maximizes learner accessibility and reduces, but does not eliminate, the need for specific accommodations for individual students or groups of students.
- The application of UDL principles and methods to the development of online learning is more efficient and cost effective than developing accommodations once students have identified a learning challenge.

### 3.0 SCOPE

This policy applies to all program and learner support departments at Xxx College as well as the faculty development unit and those departments engaged in the development and delivery of online instruction and learner supports.

### 4.0 DEFINITIONS

**Universal design for learning** refers to the deliberate design and delivery of instruction and learner services to meet the needs of the widest spectrum of learners possible and the specific needs of diverse learners. The principles of universal design and universal design for learning are identified in the resources section of this policy. The methods of universal design for learning include varying print and electronic formats, incorporating assistive technologies, utilizing multiple instructional approaches in relation to learning styles, reflecting appropriate technical standards in the design of electronic media, and designing instructional spaces to support learner mobility and success.

**Diverse learners** include individuals who may experience learning barriers as a result of physical, emotional, cognitive, linguistic, socio-economic, cultural and geographic conditions. The process of universal design for learning anticipates diverse learners' needs and proactively designs and delivers instruction and services rather than reactively providing accommodations.

### 5.0 PROCEDURES

- The Vice-President, Academic and the Vice-President, Student Services are responsible for the overall management of this policy.
- A college-wide Universal Design for Online Learning Committee will guide the implementation of UDL. It will prepare its terms of reference and develop an annual operational plan in conjunction with the . . . [names of departments/units], carry out integrating and coordinating activities, and provide an annual report to the Vice-President, Academic, the Vice-President, Student Services and Academic Council.
- Committee membership should include one dean from the academic division, one director from learner services, the coordinator of disabilities services, the director of educational technology, the director of information technology, the faculty development coordinator, two instructors, and two persons from the learner services division. Committee members and the chair are appointed by the Vice-President, Academic and the Vice-President, Student Services.
- The Universal Design for Online Learning Committee will lead the development of UDL standards for web design, print and electronic communication with applicants and registered students, the design of electronic and print course materials including alternate formats, assistive technologies, communication with learners about accessibility services, learner assessment, captioning and in-person or electronic interpretation, the design of instructional spaces, and synchronous communication. These standards will be jointly reviewed and approved by the Vice-President,

Academic, the Vice-President, Facilities, and the Vice-President, Student Services. The UDL Committee will conduct an annual review of the standards.

- The Faculty Development department, working in collaboration with the Universal Design for Online Learning Committee and the Disability/Access Services department, will ensure that professional development opportunities are provided in an integrated manner utilizing a team mentoring approach for instructors and learner support specialists.
- The Curriculum Development and Educational Technology departments will support instructors and learner services specialists with the design and development of courses and services consistent with the college's UDL standards.
- The Information Technology department, working collaboratively with the Universal Design for Online Learning Committee, will identify the technical standards necessary for online program and service delivery and will ensure that those standards are in place.

## **6.0 RESPONSIBILITY**

Vice-President, Academic and Vice-President, Student Services

## **7.0 RELATED POLICIES**

List any related policies.

## **8.0 RESOURCES**

The following seven Universal Design principles were developed at the Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University. These principles can serve as the foundation for the design of facilities, services and products in order to maximize accessibility.

### Principle One: Equitable Use

The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.

### Principle Two: Flexibility in Use

The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.

### Principle Three: Simple and Intuitive Use

Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.

### Principle Four: Perceptible Information

The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.

### Principle Five: Tolerance for Error

The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.

### Principle Six: Low Physical Effort

The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.

### Principle Seven: Size and Space for Approach and Use

Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility.

(North Carolina State University, The Center for Universal Design, 1997).

These seven principles have been adapted by the DO-IT Center at the University of Washington to apply to instruction.

1. Class climate. Adopt practices that reflect high value with respect to both diversity and inclusiveness.
2. Interaction. Encourage regular and effective interactions between students and the instructor and ensure that communications methods are accessible to all participants.
3. Physical environments and products. Ensure that facilities, activities, materials, and equipment are physically accessible to and useable by all students, and that all potential student characteristics are addressed in safety considerations.
4. Delivery methods. Use multiple, accessible instructional methods that are accessible to all learners.
5. Information resources and technology. Ensure that course materials, notes, and other information resources are engaging, flexible, and accessible for all students.
6. Feedback. Provide specific feedback on a regular basis.
7. Assessment. Regularly assess student progress using multiple accessible methods and tools, and adjust instruction accordingly.
8. Accommodation. Plan for accommodations for students whose needs are not met by the instructional design.

(University of Washington, DO-IT, 2009).