



Minnesota State University
MANKATO

Academic Affairs

Faculty Resource Guide

Table of Contents

Part 1:

Faculty Support	3
1. Introduction	4
2. Labor Relations	4
3. Academic Calendars and Schedules	5
4. Academic Policies and Procedures	5
5. Teaching and Learning Responsibilities and Resources	6
6. Advising Resources and Responsibilities	12
7. Scholarly Activities and Research Resources	13
8. Service Opportunities and Responsibilities	14
9. Parking and Transportation	14
10. Other Important Documents	14
11. Contact Information	15

Part 2:

Online Teaching and Learning	16
1. Minnesota State System Distance Education Definitions	17
2. State Reciprocity and the Role of NC-SARA	17
3. Responsibilities of an Online Instructor	17
4. Online Course Quality Standards	18

Part 1:

Faculty Support

Faculty Support

1. Introduction

Welcome to Minnesota State University, Mankato! This resource guide is designed to provide faculty with essential information about campus policies, procedures, and resources. As you engage your work at MSU, you will find support at multiple levels from colleagues, to chair, to dean, to the Office of the Provost as well as across the institution. We aim to support faculty in their roles and contribute to a positive and productive work environment. Throughout the document, additional information is available by clicking the purple links.

- A. [Accreditation](#) - The University is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC).
- B. [Mission, Vision, and Values](#) - The University's mission, vision, and values articulate its purpose and commitment to students, faculty, staff, and the broader community.
- C. [University Organization Charts](#) - The various organization charts that show the hierarchy of leadership throughout Minnesota State University, Mankato are linked here.
- D. [Strategic Directions](#) - This strategic planning document provides guidance and direction for our work at the University.

2. Labor Relations

The [Inter-Faculty Organization \(IFO\) contract](#) outlines the terms and conditions of employment for faculty members. Key elements include:

- A. **Employment Terms**
 - **Contracts and Appointments:** Details on types of appointments, contract durations, and renewal procedures.
 - **Workload and Responsibilities:** Information on teaching loads, office hours, and service expectations.
 - **Evaluation and Promotion:** Criteria and processes for faculty evaluations, tenure, and promotions.
- B. **Compensation and Benefits**
 - **Salary:** Pay scales, salary increases, and additional compensation.
 - **Benefits:** Health insurance, retirement plans, and other benefits.
 - **Leaves:** Policies on sabbatical, medical, and other types of leave.
- C. **Rights and Responsibilities**
 - **Academic Freedom:** Faculty rights to academic freedom and responsibilities.
 - **Grievance Procedures:** Steps to resolve disputes and grievances.
 - **Professional Development:** Opportunities and support for professional growth.
- D. **Shared Governance**
 - **Representation:** Faculty participation in university governance through the Faculty Association.
 - **Committees:** Roles and responsibilities of various faculty committees.

Faculty Support

3. Academic Calendars and Schedules

The link to view [Academic Calendars and Schedules](#) provides a list of academic calendars, due dates for PDP/R and tenure and promotion documents, faculty duty days and other important calendars for University operations.

4. Academic Policies and Procedures

A. [Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Policies and Procedures](#)

B. Minnesota State University, Mankato, [Policies and Procedures](#)

C. Faculty Association [Committees](#)

D. FERPA

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that limits access to a student's educational records. Most relevant to faculty, FERPA restricts the sharing of personally identifiable educational records with anyone but the student and school officials with "legitimate educational interest."

FERPA prohibits the sharing of student educational records with a student's parents or other students. Students may allow individuals (such as their parents) access to their educational records by providing electronic authorization permitting the access.

Implications for teaching:

- Student grades (and other educational records) cannot be discussed or displayed in the presence of others, including during online class sessions, in Zoom or during office hours.
- Student grades, enrollment status, and work product should be collected and posted only in FERPA-compliant and university-approved platforms. Any third-party software or applications should be approved through official university processes.
- Recorded Zoom sessions qualify as educational records for FERPA, because student names and images are displayed. Consequently, Zoom class recordings cannot be shared by the instructor with anyone not enrolled in the course.

E. Copyright

Copyright and online learning are governed by the Technology Education and Copyright Harmonization Act (TEACH Act) and other copyright law elements, which allow for some exceptions to copyright restrictions for educational purposes.

▪ TEACH Act

This Act allows for the limited use of copyrighted works in online learning, such as reasonable portions of dramatic and audiovisual works. The Act also allows for the digitization of some analog works and the retention of transmitted content for a short period of time.

▪ Educational institution policies

Educational institutions must have policies in place for the use of copyrighted materials and must provide students and staff with information about copyright.

Faculty Support

- **Technological controls**

Schools must use technological controls to prevent students from downloading or distributing copyrighted materials and to ensure that only enrolled students can access them.

- **Fair use**

Generally, it's best to use less than 10-15% of a copyrighted work and to attribute the work properly. If you need to use more, you can get permission from the rights holder(s), or link to the content instead of embedding it.

- **Classroom use exemption**

In-class viewing of copyrighted works is permitted under the Classroom Use Exemption if you're in a nonprofit educational institution, in a classroom, and engaged in face-to-face teaching.

5. Teaching and Learning Responsibilities and Resources

Faculty members are expected to contribute to the university's mission through teaching, research, and service. Much of this information is based on the [IFO contract](#).

A. Academic Responsibilities

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system maintains and encourages full freedom of inquiry, teaching, and research. Faculty members are protected maintains and encourages full freedom of inquiry, teaching, and research. Faculty members are protected from discrimination based on political activities or views as long as these do not interfere with their job responsibilities. Faculty members have the right to discuss relevant course subjects in the classroom without limitation. They must avoid discussing matters unrelated to the educational intent of the course persistently and must not represent themselves as speaking on behalf of the institution unless designated to do so. Faculty members are entitled to full freedom in research and publication of results, provided they fulfill their academic duties.

Faculty responsibilities include student advising, engaging in professional development, contributing to student growth, evaluating student performance, engaging in scholarly activities, and service to the University, community and discipline, in addition to teaching and class preparation. "A faculty member's teaching load shall not exceed 14 undergraduate credit hours per semester or 24 credit hours per academic year."* (Faculty overload can be approved by the President/designee.) Faculty are to hold 10 (student success hours) office hours each week to support student learning and growth.

Library and media faculty, counseling center faculty, student teacher supervisors, and others involved in specific roles have a workload that includes maintaining professional expertise, committee assignments, research, and community service.

* [IFO contract](#).

B. Evaluation and Review

The Professional Development Plan, or PDP, is crucial for faculty growth. Faculty members prepare their PDP in consultation with their immediate supervisor, outlining objectives, methods, and expected outcomes. Emphasis is placed on alignment with university goals

Faculty Support

and closing educational equity gaps. [Watermark](#) is a cloud-based suite of tools for higher education institutions to gather, report, and track faculty and student progress.

At the end of the evaluation period, faculty submit a Professional Development Report, or PDR. This report highlights progress towards the PDP objectives and includes evidence of efforts to close educational equity gaps. Peer and supervisor feedback play a key role in this process. The PDR and subsequent documentation and review are to be submitted via the [RTP module in Watermark](#).

Tenure and promotion evaluations are based on teaching effectiveness, scholarly achievements, continuous professional development, student engagement, and service. Activities that support educational equity are highly valued. The tenure and promotion materials are to be submitted via the [RTP module in Watermark](#).

The IFO contract ensures that faculty members are supported and evaluated comprehensively, promoting a culture of continuous improvement and equity. Timelines and submission deadlines can be viewed at the link for [Tenure Calendars](#).

C. Course Syllabus

A well-structured syllabus sets the tone for your course. It acts as a roadmap, guiding both you and your students by clearly outlining learning objectives, expectations, and assessment methods. This helps students manage their time effectively and reduces anxiety. All teaching modalities present unique opportunities, including maintaining engagement and effective communication without immediate feedback and non-verbal cues. A well-crafted syllabus can mitigate challenges by promoting transparency, organization, and accountability, and by including guidelines for virtual communication and participation. Syllabus must include the officially approved learning outcomes for the course. For more information on syllabus content please visit CETL's "[What Information Should Be Included In a Syllabus?](#)" page.

Ultimately, the syllabus enhances the overall learning experience by addressing the specific needs of student learning.

D. Accessibility and Access to Campus Resources

The office of [Accessibility Resources](#) coordinates accommodations for students with disabilities and serves as a resource for faculty, staff and the university community in an effort to assure equal access to learning for all.

In order to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, students must be provided with access to course materials and reasonable accommodations to successfully complete course work and be members of the Maverick community. Accessibility resources including [interpretation and transcription](#) are available through this office.

To fulfill our commitment to accessible digital content for our students software has been deployed in the [D2L Brightspace](#) classroom management system. This provides guidance on how to improve accessibility issues in digital content such as PDF's, mobile devices, and assistive technologies.

- **Get An ID Card (MavCARD):** Everyone employed by the University should obtain a University ID card, referred to as the [MavCARD](#). The MavCARD is required to utilize various university services (including the Library), to obtain certain discounts, as well as provide access to certain campus facilities. In some cases, you may need to have a

Faculty Support

MavCARD to access the facility where you will be working. You can obtain a MavCARD at the [MavCARD office](#) located on the main floor of the Student Union, phone [507-389-1707](#). Please bring your state ID with you to verify your identification.

- **Access [StarID](#), E-mail, and University Systems**

New to Minnesota State Mankato: You will need a STAR ID to access University systems such as [E-services](#), [Workday](#), [Minnesota State University e-mail*](#), [D2L Brightspace**](#) and Employee Home. If you already have a STAR ID, even if it is from another institution, that is all you need! To reset your STAR ID password, please visit <https://starid.minnstate.edu>. Follow the instructions on the [IT Solutions Help & Support](#) page.

NOTE: *[Mavmail](#) is the official communication method for Minnesota State University, Mankato. Official university notifications regarding your employment and university events will come to you through email. Check Mavmail at least once every 24 hours for critical university information and updates.

****D2L Brightspace** is our campus learning management system (LMS). For faculty, D2L Brightspace is used to share course materials, collect assignments, keep your gradebook, give tests, and more.

NOTE: New faculty will not have access until after your official hiring documents have been completed and you are listed as the official teacher of record of a course. Contact your department chair about this.

How can I learn more or get assistance? Navigate to the campus [D2L Brightspace information site](#) for information on [getting started](#), FAQs, and more! Visit or call in to a [D2L Drop-in hour](#) or contact the [IT Solutions Center](#).

- **Building Keys, if Applicable**

Obtain building keys by having your dean or unit director complete the [online form](#) which will automatically send a request to [Security](#). You will then need a photo ID to pick up your keys in 222 Wiecking Center, phone [507-389-2111](#). Some spaces are accessed with your MavCard and access to those spaces can be given by completing the same form.

Iron Range: Iron Range Engineering (IRE), located in Virginia, MN, uses keycards/ access cards for office doors, which are programmed by one of their facilitators. Faculty should contact the [Coordinator of Facilities for IRE](#).

- **State of Minnesota Employee Self Service Website**

The Employee Self-Service website lets you view/print your pay stub, enroll in insurance benefits (if eligible), enter your direct deposit and W4 information, and access other payroll functions. After your employment data has been documented in the personnel and payroll systems, you will receive an email with your User ID and password. This will be different from your StarID and password which is used to login to MavMail, D2L, Workday and other software for day-to-day work functions and operations. Check out the following link to familiarize yourself with the Employee Self-Service website and its functions.

[INTRODUCTION TO THE EMPLOYEE SELF SERVICE WEBSITE](#)
[GO TO THE EMPLOYEE SELF SERVICE WEBSITE](#) 

Previous state employees already have a User ID (employee ID) and password. If you are unfamiliar with using the Self-Service website, you may wish to review the

Faculty Support

introduction page listed above. You will continue to use the Self-Service website throughout your employment at Minnesota State Mankato to update your direct deposit, W4, benefits, and various other functions.

- **[Maverick Diversity Institute](#)**

The Maverick Diversity Institute offers challenging and unique workshops and programs that will help you to become knowledgeable on inclusivity, access, and equity in your workplace and classroom environment.

- **[Travel and expense reports and requests](#)**

- **When Will I Receive Pay?**

The [Human Resources Calendars](#) provide Pay Period End dates, Pay Days, and what Holidays are available per your bargaining unit's agreements. You can also find more information in [Workday](#), a cloud-based software company that supports human capital management, resource planning, and financial management for the University. You will want to enroll in direct deposit when you complete other hiring documents.

- **[ART of Equity](#)**

The [ART of Equity Initiative](#) is a campus-wide effort focused on improving student success and reducing drop/fail/withdrawal (DFW) rates through inclusive, data-informed teaching strategies. This initiative brings together faculty, staff, and administrators to co-create solutions that foster equity and belonging in our classrooms.

E. Final assessments and exams

According to the information shared in Meet and Confer during the 2023-2024 Academic Year, beginning Fall 2024 the Final Exam Schedule will mirror the regular course meeting schedule except for MATH 112, BIOL 100, MATH 098, and CIS 121. Those exams will be held on Wednesday and Thursday evenings.

- **[Final Week Options](#)**

No university or college policy, procedure, or standard shall govern the content of a final week for a course. An instructor may use the final week period for a variety of pedagogically appropriate options including a written exam, an oral exam, presentations, a poster session, a Socratic session, reflective discussion of the course, and other creative opportunities. Student concerns about faculty completing a course before the final week of the term may be brought to the appropriate academic dean.

- **Common Exam**

Common Exam for multiple sections of a course is acceptable. A Common Exam day and time must have approval from the appropriate academic dean, must be scheduled with the Registrar's Office before the term starts, and must be documented in the course schedule and course syllabi.

- **Two-Exam Limit and Student Conflicts**

Students are not required to take more than two exams on any day. A student with three (3) or more exams in one day as scheduled by the University may appeal to any of the instructors to reschedule one of the exams. Should the instructor(s) be unwilling to reschedule, the appropriate academic dean(s) shall decide a remedy.

Faculty Support

Students with reasonable conflicts (e.g., scheduled athletic events, conferences) are responsible for making appropriate arrangements with the instructor as soon as their schedule is determined.

- **Office Hours (Student Success Hours)**

Teaching faculty are expected to have scheduled office hours during the final week. Because of the changing schedule of the final week, faculty will publicize their final week office hours.

- **Limits on Administration**

Administration recognizes support for students is the main priority for faculty and academic advisors during Finals Week. With only rare exceptions, University Administration will refrain from scheduling meetings or assigning additional tasks involving faculty or academic advisors during Finals Week.

F. Instructional resources and professional development

- **Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL)**

The mission of CETL is to support faculty members' personal growth in ways that advance social justice and racial equity. We help faculty develop effective teaching practices and support their ongoing professional development.

The Center offers year-round support for teaching and learning professional development and key teaching and learning resources. This office leads New Faculty Onboarding, the New Chairs Academy, and other programming to advance anti-racist and equitable teaching practices. Specific support in this area can be found through the **Action Research Team (ART) of Equity**.

- **IT Solutions**

The purpose of IT Solutions is to engage faculty in the use of technology and innovative, evidence-based practices to further student success through effective teaching and learning practices.

- **Desire to Learn Bright Space** - D2L Brightspace is the official learning management system (LMS) at Minnesota State, Mankato.
- **Zoom** - Zoom is a web-based video conferencing tool with a local, desktop client and a mobile app that allows up to 500 attendees to meet online, with or without video.
- **Microsoft 365** - Students and employees* at Minnesota State University, Mankato get five FREE downloads of Microsoft 365 for use on work machines, personally owned computers, and mobile devices.
- **Qualtrics** - Qualtrics is a web-based software that allows for a creative, collaborative and highly customized user response collection.
- **MediaSpace** - MediaSpace is our statewide media management system that uses Kaltura products. You can think of it as a private YouTube for our college and university system.

- **Library and Learning**

We build relationships among key, University-wide teaching and learning programs to provide academic services focused on retention and completion.

- **Center for Academic Success**

The Center for Academic Success supports students through scheduled online and

Faculty Support

face-to-face appointments, walk-in peer tutoring, and advising for select Maverick Success Program students. The Writing Center supports writing for all undergraduate and graduate courses. The Tutoring Center provides walk-in and virtual tutoring for general education and most 100/200 level courses. MavPASS offers a peer-facilitated academic support system for students in historically difficult courses. The Maverick Student Success Program provides advising, coaching, and mentoring for students admitted via appeal.

- **Honors**

The Honors Program provides motivated undergraduate students with exceptional learning opportunities, mentoring relationships, and a supportive community that fosters their personal, academic, and professional development. The program is grounded in three competencies: leadership; research, scholarly and creative activity; and intercultural engagement. The Program provides university-wide support for Presidential Scholars who have obtained the most prestigious University scholarship, and it supports motivated students as they [apply for prestigious national and international scholarships and fellowships](#).

- **Learning Communities**

The Learning Community Program supports first- and second-year students as they transition to college and strive for academic success. The program encourages students to engage in co-curricular opportunities and organized study sessions and to meet with faculty outside of the classroom. It creates connections with others in their major, with like interests, or with like characteristics to build a sense of belonging in the University.

- **Library Services**

Library Services promotes learning through the direct support of academic programs. We provide point-of-need research help; offer instruction in information literacy and using library resources; develop resource collections to support the research, curricular, and leisure needs of a wide variety of students, faculty, staff, and community members; and maintain physical spaces designed to encourage study and relaxation for all users. The work we do to support our community occurs both through visible interpersonal interactions and through developing effective behind-the-scenes workflow processes to acquire and maintain our collections and provide our patrons easy access and discovery paths. Students who receive library instruction, use library resources, and receive research help from a librarian have higher retention rates and are more successful than their peers.

- **TRIO Programs**

TRIO is a federally funded organization committed to providing educational opportunities nationwide for all Americans, regardless of race, ethnic background, or economic circumstance. TRIO programs are designed to help low-income and first-generation Americans enter college, graduate and move on to participate more fully in America's economic and social life. The University is home to three Federal TRIO programs: [Educational Talent Search](#), [Student Support Services](#), and [Upward Bound](#).

Faculty Support

- **MavPASS**

As the University's supplemental instruction service, MavPASS offers a peer-facilitated academic support system for students in historically difficult courses.

- **Undergraduate Research Center**

Undergraduate Research Center: The Undergraduate Research Center (URC) nurtures and supports mentored research, scholarly, or creative activities for all undergraduate students. The URC promotes research as an opportunity to engage in a community of scholars to enhance students' academic experience and readiness to succeed in the future.

6. Advising Resources and Responsibilities

Advising relationships are a key factor in academic success. Each academic college has an advising center. When students are new to the University, they work with advising teams in **college/school advising centers**. First-year students are assigned to advising teams in those centers for their first year at MSU. Advising centers use that time to provide foundational information about the tools and resources students use for degree progress and completion. Students in Allied Health, Humanities & Social Sciences, and Science, Engineering & Technology are transitioned to faculty advisors at the conclusion of their first year. Students in Business, Education and Nursing continue to be assigned to advising teams until they are admitted to majors in those areas, when they are transitioned to faculty advisors. Transfer students generally are assigned to faculty advisors as they matriculate, given progress they've made toward their majors. If students begin their first semester as undecided, they are assigned to the **University Advising Center**.

Students progressing in their majors are assigned to faculty advisors to support their academic success. Faculty should meet with students (graduate and undergraduate) to provide support and guidance on their academic journey. You can find a list of your advisees on **eservices**. There you will also find their Degree Audit Report (DARs) which will show academic progress. Advisors support students using **Navigate 360 (MavConnect)** to track student success, recommend support or resources, and help students schedule meetings during office or student hours. Faculty advisors are encouraged to participate in the **Student Success Advising Academy**, showcased by **CETL**, and facilitated by University Advising.

A. **Academic Catalog**

The academic catalog provides specific information about academic program requirements and policies for each area of study. The catalog year corresponds with the year the student begins their program and details the curriculum and degree requirements that a student must fulfill in order to graduate.

B. **E-services**

E-services provide vital services for faculty, including viewing course rosters and accessing degree audit reports (DARS). Faculty should log in to E-services for these essential functions. For access, visit the E-services portal at **www.mnsu.edu/eservices**.

C. **Navigate 360 (MavConnect)**

Navigate 360 (MavConnect) serves as the University's student success platform, designed to bring students, faculty, advisors, success coaches, and other staff together

Faculty Support

in a coordinated and collaborative network. This platform supports students with their academic progress and degree completion. Faculty can find more information on the transition and future implementation phases through the Navigate 360 resources page.

D. College of Graduate Studies and Research

▪ Graduate faculty status

The [Graduate Faculty Status policy](#) reflects the philosophy that graduate education can flourish only in a climate in which faculty scholarship and professional activity are expected. To sustain a graduate culture requires a genuine commitment to scholarship and professional activity in all its forms, as well as effective teaching and advising. Graduate faculty appointments at Minnesota State University, Mankato are intended to signify active involvement in one or more graduate programs. Thus, only faculty with Graduate faculty appointments may teach graduate courses, mentor graduate students as they develop capstone projects, direct graduate-level independent studies, and advise graduate students in developing programs of study.

Check the status of your [Graduate Faculty Application](#).

▪ Graduation requirements

All students in the graduate college are expected to be familiar with and adhere to graduate college policy and graduate course requirements throughout their learning career.

The Dean of Graduate Studies enforces established graduate policy, administers the affairs of Graduate Studies, and reports to the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs. The Graduate Curriculum and Policy Committee is consulted on all proposed graduate policy changes at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

View the [Graduate College Policy & Course Requirements](#).

▪ Assistantships

Many graduate students are seeking financial support. There are a variety of graduate assistantships available throughout the University. Available opportunities are provided online. To request a graduate assistant and funding to support this position, contact your dean.

E. Gold Folder for Emergencies and Resources

On every University issued computer and laptop is a Gold Folder. This Gold Folder provides a list of resources to support students based on the level and urgency of the need.

F. [Course Schedule](#)

The course schedule found on this site will provide information about course offerings for upcoming semesters to support student advising.

7. Scholarly Activities and Research Resources

A. [Center for Excellence in Scholarship and Research \(CESR\)](#)

CESR offers a wide variety of services to help faculty, staff, and advanced graduate students publish their original research. Contact [staff](#) if you need our assistance with any

Faculty Support

research tasks or if you have questions regarding CESR [services](#), including manuscript editing, research design and data analysis, and authorship disputes.

B. [Research and Sponsored Programs](#)

The mission of the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (RASP) is to promote learning through encouraging and assisting faculty and staff in their pursuit of external funding for research, scholarship, services and creative endeavors.

RASP provides support to faculty and staff with interpreting grant agreements, contract terms, advice on project revisions (budget reallocations, no-cost extensions, etc.) and award close-out.

- [Internal Funding](#)
- [External Funding](#)

8. Service Opportunities and Responsibilities

- **[Faculty Association committees:](#)** There are a variety of committees on campus that allow you access to information and provide opportunities to be engaged in shared governance on our campus. To participate on committees, you must be an [IFO](#) member.
- **[Department and College Committees:](#)** Most departments and colleges have meetings to support shared governance on our campus. Contact your department leadership and [dean](#) to learn more about committees, their charge, and how you can be involved.

9. Parking and Transportation

- **[Parking Guidelines:](#)** Faculty must adhere to the parking guidelines set by the university. The Parking and Transportation Advisory Committee provides oversight and recommendations on parking policies, fees, and services.
- **[Parking Permits:](#)** Faculty can purchase parking permits through the Parking Portal www.mnsu.edu/parking.
For parking emergencies or special arrangements, contact Parking Services at 507-389-2111 or email security@mnsu.edu.
- **[Bus Services:](#)** Minnesota State University, Mankato, offers a comprehensive busing program in collaboration with the City of Mankato. Faculty can use their MavCARD for free bus services.
- **[Security and Safety:](#)** The university prioritizes safety in parking areas with investments in lighting, cameras, emergency phones, and patrols. Faculty are encouraged to report any suspicious activities.

10. Other Important Documents

Faculty should also be aware of the following documents, which provide additional guidelines and information:

- [IFO Contract](#)
- [Academic Affairs Policies](#)

Faculty Support

- [Human Resources](#)
- [Faculty and Staff Resources](#)
- [Student Conduct Policies](#)
- [Employee Code of Conduct](#)

11. Contact Information

- [Parking Services](#): 507-389-2111 | mnsu-parking@mnsu.edu
- [Accessibility Resources](#): 507-389-2825 | ar@mnsu.edu
- [Campus Hub](#): 507-389-1866 | campushub@mnsu.edu
- [Human Resources](#): 507-389-2015 | hr@mnsu.edu
- [Academic Affairs](#): 507-389-1333 | provost@mnsu.edu
- [Facilities Services](#): 507-389-6931 | [Staff Directory](#)

Part 2: Online Teaching and Learning

Online Teaching and Learning

1. Minnesota State System Distance Education Definitions

Minnesota State System [Operating Instruction 3.36.1.2](#) outlines the delivery method for courses, emphasizing the flexibility and accessibility of online education. An online [academic program is defined](#) as one that is offered entirely or almost entirely over the internet. While most of the program is delivered online, there may be instances where face-to-face instruction, professional practice, or applied activities are necessary due to pedagogical requirements.

The Minnesota State System of colleges and universities recognizes two types of online academic programs: Online Exclusive and Online Plus. Online Exclusive programs are offered solely online, with no face-to-face components. In contrast, Online Plus programs are primarily online but include options for face-to-face instruction for one or more courses, providing additional flexibility for students. MSU engages in both approaches to ensure that Minnesota State can meet diverse educational needs while maintaining high standards of academic quality.

2. State Reciprocity and the Role of NC-SARA

The State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) facilitates a state-level reciprocity process that aligns educational standards to allow member institutions like Minnesota State University, Mankato to enroll students in their online courses and programs from any member state. Additionally, the university is required to report annual distance education enrollment data to [NC-SARA](#).

Minnesota State University, Mankato must inform students who live outside of Minnesota and are interested in applying for a program (especially an online program) leading to professional licensure whether the program meets licensure requirements in the state where the student resides or where the student intends to work after graduation. This ensures transparency and helps students make informed decisions about their educational and professional pathways. The university regularly update its [Licensure/Certification Disclosure](#) page in compliance with U.S. Department of Education requirements.

3. Responsibilities of an Online Instructor

As an online instructor at Minnesota State University, Mankato, you play a crucial role in delivering high-quality education and fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Your responsibilities encompass several key areas, including providing a clear set of course expectations and outcomes, maintaining online course quality, ensuring regular and substantive interaction with students, and upholding accessibility standards. Additionally, you must adhere to FERPA regulations to protect student privacy, comply with copyright laws, and provide robust support to online students. By fulfilling these responsibilities, you contribute to the success and well-being of our diverse student body, ensuring they receive an engaging and equitable educational experience.

A. Communicating Technological Requirements to Students

Clearly communicating technological requirements is crucial. A well-defined list of required tools and software ensures students are prepared and can access all necessary resources from the start. This is particularly important in an online environment, where technical issues can disrupt learning and cause frustration. Providing detailed instructions

Online Teaching and Learning

on using these technologies helps students navigate potential challenges and reduces anxiety. Clear communication about technological requirements promotes a smoother, more efficient learning experience, allowing both you and your students to focus on the course content and objectives.

B. Ways the Online Environment Differs from the Face-to-Face Environment

The online learning environment differs significantly from face-to-face settings. Online courses offer unparalleled flexibility and accessibility, allowing students to learn from anywhere at their own pace. However, they lack the immediate personal interaction and dynamic engagement found in traditional classrooms. This can make it challenging to maintain student engagement and provide real-time feedback. Additionally, online communication often lacks non-verbal cues, making it harder to gauge student understanding and participation. By understanding these differences, you can better tailor your teaching strategies to meet the unique needs of online learners, ensuring a more effective and engaging educational experience.

C. Characteristics of a Successful Online Course

Certain characteristics are essential for a successful online course. High-quality online courses are well-organized and clearly structured, with defined learning objectives that guide students through the material. They incorporate interactive elements, such as discussions and group projects, to foster engagement and collaboration. Effective online courses also provide timely feedback and support, helping students stay on track and feel connected. Additionally, they use a variety of multimedia resources to cater to different learning styles and keep the content engaging. By focusing on these elements, you can create an online learning environment that is both effective and enjoyable for your students. Learn more with our [collection of online teaching resources](#).

4. Online Course Quality Standards

A set of agreed upon online course quality standards was one of the outcomes of the recent HLC Quality Initiative, whose goal was “To enrich the student experience, improve online teaching effectiveness, close equity gaps, and increase student success and belonging in online courses offered at Minnesota State University, Mankato.”

A. The [Online Course Quality Standards](#) approved Spring 2024 are:

- Online courses are designed to meet the [QM Course Design Rubric Standards](#) (7th Edition) leveraging self-review and consultation to enhance areas for improvement.
- Online courses are aligned with the Peralta Online Equity Rubric to minimize biases that might negatively impact online learners.
- All instructional materials in online courses are designed and delivered with accessibility in mind, and each course receives a passing score using the University adopted accessibility software.
- All online courses adhere to the Department of Education’s current standards for ensuring regular and substantive interaction, which involves meaningful engagement between instructors and students to facilitate active learning, foster a sense of community, and provide necessary support throughout the course.
- Online courses undergo regular peer feedback through a structured peer-review program.

Online Teaching and Learning

B. Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI)

An institution **MUST** ensure regular interaction between a student and an instructor or instructors by:

- Providing the opportunity for regular and substantive interactions (as defined below) with the student on a predictable and scheduled basis commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course or competency; **AND**
- Monitoring the student's academic engagement and success and ensuring in substantive interaction with the student when needed on the basis of such monitoring, or upon request by the student.

Engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and also includes **AT LEAST TWO** of the following:

- Providing direct instruction (synchronous only);
- Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework;
- Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency;
- Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency; or
- Other instructional activities approved by the institutional or programmatic accrediting agency.

C. **RSI in Practice (Examples)**

To count as regular and substantive, interactions need to be started by you.

What counts:

- You post a discussion question and actively facilitate the ensuing conversation.
- You ask a student to visit you during office hours or to schedule a phone call or virtual meeting with you.
- You provide personalized comments (in any medium) for an individual student's assignment.

What does not count:

- A student happens to drop in during your regularly scheduled open office hours.
- You add numeric grades to the course gradebook.
- A student submits a quiz that is automatically graded.

Interactions with each student should be reasonably frequent and consistently repeated throughout the course. At a minimum you should seek to interact with each student at least once each week and you should log in to the course every 1-2 days.

What counts:

- You routinely post announcement or send messages that you have written specifically for the course section.
- You actively facilitate a required online discussion for every course unit.
- You hold a required one-hour online review session every other week.

Online Teaching and Learning

What does not count:

- You send a welcome message during the first week of class and a mid-semester message around week eight.
- You encourage students to participate in an optional, one-time online review session before the final exam.

Interactions should be connected to the subject of the course and contribute to the students' progress toward course and program learning outcomes.

What counts:

- You send a message or create a video previewing concepts introduced in the next unit and listing questions for students to have in mind when reading the textbook chapters.
- You post an example from last night's game or recent event in the course's 'Real-World Application' discussion to illustrate the concept currently under discussion.

What does not count:

- You rely on the syllabus to communicate all course policy information.
- You post an upcoming assignment deadline.

**We hope this guide provides a helpful starting point as you navigate your role,
and we look forward to supporting your continued success as
a valued member of our academic community.**

