> II.   **TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS**
>
> *A commitment to quality in online education is evident in curriculum and course design, instructional delivery, and practices used in the assessment of student learning in the Online Program.*

1. Curriculum and Course Design

> **II.1.a.**
> *Curriculum and Course Design are coherent in their organization, have measurable learning objectives, and are benchmarked against on-ground courses and programs, if provided by the institution.*

FCC has three Associate's **Degree** Programs "online", Business Management, General Studies and Emergency Management. "Online" means that the student can meet all requirements of the program by taking only online courses and be awarded the exact same degree as his or her on-campus counterpart. Requirements for the Degree Programs are spelled out clearly in the College's Academic Catalog in both print and online. Online course offerings eligible to meet the program requirements in each category can be accessed online.[1] All online courses are **benchmarked** as sections of the same course that is approved by the Curriculum Committee and delivered either fully on campus or as a hybrid course in either of the approved run-time formats. Online courses that do not have an on-campus counterpart are approved by the curriculum committee using the same standards as for any other course.

FCC is in the middle of a review process designed to establish time on task equivalency for all courses in all formats, see section (I.5.c.) of this report. Establishing equivalency will add to the **coherence** in course design and outcomes assessment in online courses.

In contrast to the first crop of online courses handcrafted by early adopter faculty, design and development of new courses has shifted over the years to a team approach pairing the faculty member with a course design expert. The shift became necessary for two reasons: (a) It was inefficient and uneconomical to train each faculty member individually to a level of competency where they can meet design requirements on a course by course basis. (b) Building blocks of an online course such as Blackboards functionality, the FCC course template, and publisher cartridges are ready made and accessible but they have become complex. If left to preferences of individual faculty members, complexity allows for idiosyncratic applications which the student is no longer able to recognize from one course to the next. An increase in instructional design staff in the Office of Distance Learning has helped to improve the economy of training and the desired degree of coherence among online courses. Another and major contributing factor towards coherence in the online course program has been the QM peer review process. Forty eight of ninety online courses have been QM reviewed and serve as master courses for different instructors and course formats.

Standards 2.1 and 2.2 of previous and current versions of the QM rubric required that both course learning objectives and module/unit learning objectives are measurable. The College's Curriculum Committee mandates all course level learning objects, not necessarily in a measurable format which means that the QM review reverts automatically to measurable module/unit learning objectives. All of FCC's QM reviewed online courses have met this requirement. Ten additional courses are scheduled for review in 2011/12.Both courses that have gone through an informal review (APPENDIX 6.b.) and all current master courses, model learning objectives that are measurable and meet QM Standard 2.2.

The aspect of clarity is addressed in the trend line **student satisfaction survey** (APPENDIX 11.a.). Students are asked to respond to the statement (Q22) "For each week of the course it was clear what I was supposed to learn". From 2003/04 to 2010/11 the combined total of "Agree Strongly" and "Agree Somewhat" declined somewhat from 92.1% to 88.6%, however, in the category "Agree Strongly" the decline was indicative and worth noting from 70.2% in 2003/04 to 55.4% in 2010/11. The combined total of "Disagree Somewhat" and "Disagree Strongly" rose from 7.9% in 2003/04 to 10.5% in 2010/11. The trend needs to be investigated.

[1]http://courses.frederick.edu/degrees

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> **II.1.b.**
> ***Curriculum and Course Design are designed with consideration for time and place limitations of students.***

FCC is currently conducting a review of students' 'time on task' equivalency for course formats (see section I.5.c. of this audit). The required minimum of 112.5 working task hours for a 3-credit 15-week online course establishes the baseline for considering students' time and place limitation. Specifically, the 'time on task' review is likely to generate a review of guidelines for online courses in the J-Term format which forces 112.5 working task hours for a 3-credit course into an time frame of eleven calendar days.

In more general terms, a large scale FCC/MOL study (W-Study) with more than 3300 respondents who had withdrawn from an online course has highlighted the importance of considering students' time and place limitations. The construct of 'Learning Space' was used to interpret results of the study (Executive Summary p.8).[1]The construct contrasts the 'Learning Space' provided by the institution in a traditional classroom setting with the individually generated 'Learning Space' in an online course. The online course website provides the virtual component of the online 'Learning Space', however, the website has also a physical location right in the middle of the student's kitchen, bed room or living room, or wherever they park their computer. It is that physical location that brings a wider system of interrelating social roles and responsibilities into play and determines how much time a student feels able to dedicate to course work. Results of the W-Study show that moving their 'Learning Space' into the home environment with competing time demands and social obligations creates problems for many students in this category.

The 2011 Student Readiness Report[2] includes a section called "Life Factors". Students are asked a series of questions which measure a number of factors that are external to the learner such as availability of time, appropriateness of a place to study, and resources available to the learner. While 100% represents the highest score most favorable to learning, the overwhelming majority of students (some 80%) pass the test in the 70-89 percent score range. The figures seem to suggest that on the whole problems resulting from those external factors may to some extend be limited in scope, yet they remain highly important for a limited number of students. FCC has implemented the following measures to assist students with time management problems:

- Discuss competing time demands during orientation.
- Students are required to sign the "Sufficient Time Available" pledge (APPENDIX 2.i.)
- Students are provided with an Interactive Scheduling Tool (APPENDIX 20.g.)
- Instructors use an Early Alert system to assist students' time management (APPENDIX 17.g.)

[1]http.//www.marylandonline.org
[2] http://smartermeasure.com/

►**Action Item (II.1.b):** Find ways and means for FCC to participate in the SmarterMeasure Life Factors assessment.

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> **II.1.c.**
> *Curriculum and Course Design are designed to accommodate different learning styles.*

There is an intuitive appeal to the assumption that a variety of teaching approaches could benefit students when matched to different student learning styles. That assumption is supported by a body of general theoretical discourse and learning style inventories, however, there seem to beno 'Best Practices' recommendations for course design that have crystallized from that discourse. Moreover, one reputable British study[1] " found little good evidence to suggest that teaching influenced by the idea of learning styles has a significant effect on achievement or motivation." The more recent 2011 Student Readiness Report[2] suggests that many persons do have a "dominant" learning style which defines their preferred method of learning. Distinguishing between seven styles (Social 22%, Verbal 17%, Logical17%, Aural15%, Solitary14%, Physical 9%, and Visual 6%) the report found that in between the highest (Social at 22%) and the lowest (Visual at (6%) there is a spectrum of four, almost equally preferred learning styles with a combined total of 63%. By implication, the report findings open an 80% spectrum of possibly second choices ranging from "not first preference but manageable" to "not first preference and not manageable".

FCC's online program has a range of courses such as Computer, Music, Math or lab courses that gravitate naturally toward two or three learning preferences. In the absence of a viable Best Practice bench mark, the College's instructional design team seeks to introduce variety and to design online courses which appeal across the learning preferences.

In 2010 the College purchased access to three learning object repositories (INTELECOM, Discovery Education, and DCCCD Dallas TeleLearning to enrich course activities and thus cater to a broader spectrum of learning preferences. (See also section II.2.d. in this Audit Report).

[1]Coffield et al. 2004at http://www.ncl.ac.uk/ecls/research/project/1927
[2] http://smartermeasure.com/

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> **II.1.d.**
> *Curriculum and Course Design ensure ease of use and navigationabilityin the course delivery platform.*

Standard1.1 of previous versions of the QM rubric required that "Navigational instructions make the organization of the course easy to understand." All of FCC's QM reviewed online courses have met this requirement. Ten additional courses are scheduled for review under the more stringent requirement of the new Standard 6.1(QM Rubric 2011/13 edition.) Both, courses that have gone through an informal review (APPENDIX 6.b.) as well as all current master courses, model navigation patters that are easy to follow and will meet the new Standard 6.1.Tutorial instructions (APPENDIX 14.a. page 4)geared at training individual instructors repeat QM design standards.

In the trend line student satisfaction survey (APPENDIX 11.a.) students responded to the statement (Q15) "I find the web site for this course easy to navigate". From 2003/04 to 2010/11 the combined total of "Agree Strongly" and "Agree Somewhat" declined from 95.3% to 92.6%., however, in the category "Agree Strongly" the decline from 64.2% in 2003/04 to 54.0% in 2010/11was indicative and worth noting. The trend deserves further investigation.

The combined total of "Disagree Somewhat" and "Disagree Strongly" rose from 4.6% in 2003/04 to 6.7% in 2010/11.

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II.1.e.
The institution or program has established and enforces a policy on online learning course enrollments to ensure faculty capacity to work appropriately with students.

A cap of twenty students has been maintained for all established online courses since the very beginning of the program. The cap is placed at fifteen students for first time online courses, not, however, for first time instructors of an established course. As an enrollment management tool the Office of Distance Learning offers the instructor an "over-cap" contract when a course is full, and opening a second section does not seem a viable option. The contract brings the course cap to twenty nine and pays the instructor headcount for every additional student above the regular cap of twenty. Acceptance of the contract is voluntary (APPENDIX 8.b.). Past experience shows that only about one out of ten offers of a contract were declined.

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II.1.f.
The online course site includes a syllabus, outlining course objectives, learning outcomes, evaluation methods, textbook information, and other related course information, making course requirements transparent at time of registration.

An online listing of all FCC online and hybrid courses for both the current and the upcoming semester[1] gives the student access to information about upcoming orientation sessions as well as a selection of tutorials including Blackboard 101 and a self test called "Is Online for me?" In addition, a click on the course ID opens a new window with the syllabus of that course (APPENDIX 20.a.). The syllabus contains all the needed information including course prerequisites, instructor and textbook information and a topical outline. The website for each course is available to the student in Blackboard five days prior to the beginning of the semester and features a section called "General Information" (APPENDIX 20.c.) covering FCC policies, Student Support Services, Testing Center etc.

[1]http://courses.frederick.edu

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II.1.g.
Activities, materials, and assessments are aligned with measurable learning objectives and outcomes.

The 2012/13 QM Rubric calls for the alignment of critical course components, such as learning objectives, assessments, course materials and course activities as identified in QM standards 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 4.1, 5.1, and 6.1.Previous editions of the rubric had a similar requirement linking each of the course components directly to and supporting the measurable learning objectives. Forty eight of FCC's ninety online courses carry the QM logo (APPENDIX 7.a.) and as such have passed the QM alignment review. In addition, ten online courses are scheduled for a formal QM review in 2010/2011 (APPENDIX 7.a.). As a Best Practice feature, the alignment requirement is incorporated in the creation of new master courses and stressed in faculty training and informal course reviews (APPENDIX 6.b.). Evidence of compliance with the alignment requirement in the non-QM reviewed courses is incomplete and partly anecdotal.

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> **II.1.h.**
> *The Course Design includes clearly stated instructions how to meet the course learning objectives.*

Standard 2.4 of the 2011/13 QM Rubric calls for the inclusion of clearly stated instructions as to how to meet the course learning objectives. Previous editions of the rubric had a similar requirement. Forty eight of FCC's ninety online courses carry the QM logo (APPENDIX 7.a.) and as such have passed the QM review of Standard 2.4. In addition, ten online courses are scheduled for a formal QM review in 2010/2011 (APPENDIX 7.a.) As a Best Practice feature, the requirement is incorporated in the creation of new master courses and stressed in faculty training and informal course reviews (APPENDIX 6.b.). Evidence of compliance with QM Standard2.4.in the remaining non-QM reviewed courses is incomplete and partly anecdotal.

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> **II.1.i.**
> *The program implemenst widely accepted standards for online course design, including opportunities for:*
> - *Interaction between faculty, learners, and among learners themselves.*
> - *Critical thinking, problem solving, analysis, integration, and synthesis abilities in learning activities.*

Ever since QM's formal inception in 2003 FCC has used QM course design standards for **quality assurance** purposes in reviewing courses, training faculty and bringing new courses online. In 2010/11 the college has forty eight out of ninety online courses QM reviewed or re-reviewed. In addition, ten online courses are scheduled for a formal QM review during the 2010/11 academic year. FCC's nineteen QM certified faculty peer reviewers (APPENDIX 13.a.) provide a critical mass to help move acceptance of quality design standards from paper to reality. Both previous and current versions of the QM Rubric address the value of instructor/ student and student/student interaction. All of FCC's faculty involved in QM-reviewed courses have gone through a discussion of the issue. For more details compare section (II.2.g.) in this Audit Report. Currently, FCC has 148 **general education** courses distributed across various disciplines[1]. All general education courses adhere to guidelines that align with discipline-specific and ten general education goals. Goal II states "Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills."

FCC has adopted a common **critical thinking** language stressing four components (APPENDIX 2.a.)

- differentiate among facts, opinions, and inferences.
- analyze information from various sources.
- recognize and develop alternative perspectives or solutions.
- evaluate alternatives to make sound judgments.

The language is to be used and reinforced within and across courses in an effort to help students connect learning to their development of critical thinking. Faculty is encouraged to incorporate this language as they develop and implement assignments and assessments that measure critical thinking. Forty six of ninety online courses are general education courses. Faculty in those courses are obligated to participate in college-wide efforts to promote critical thinking. Non-general education courses focus attention on discipline specific critical thinking components.

[1]http://www.frederick.edu/courses_and_programs/catalog/2011-12%20Catalog_output/web/flipviewerxpress.html (p.34/35)

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> **II.1.j.**
> *Quality instructional materials and appropriate technology are utilized to enable and enrich student learning.*

With very few exceptions, all online courses derive some instructional materials from a textbook and from online supplements that publishers provide to support online learning. As a rule, the selection of textbooks and supplements is carefully orchestrated. In many cases it is the result of teamwork among the instructors who teach the course. Overall, scrutiny of the textbook selection process was enhanced by the Maryland College Textbook Competition and Affordability Act of 2009.[1] While the stated purpose of the regulation was to reduce textbook costs to students, its implementation at FCC has led to an increased scrutiny of the quality and suitability of textbook content. As a rule, the selected textbook should be the same for online and on-campus sections of the course to accommodate students who transfer from one section to another. However, operational problems remain when a textbook decision is made too late to create or re-create a quality website for the course or when the textbook selected for an on-campus course section is not suitable for an online counterpart. To upgrade the scope and quality of instructional materials the College gradually shifted to a new model of delivering video content to online classes. The traditional model of streaming and/or broadcasting 30 minute video segments bundled to fit the format of an online course had been in place since 04/05. The model served FCC well in facilitating the transition from traditional College of the Air 'Tele'Courses to video-enhanced online courses. A number a factors suggested the change to a more effective delivery format.

- The number of online students reporting high-speed Internet access had increased dramatically.
- The main producers of video content were shifting to a new business model offering online video content in modularized format that is instructionally more effective as it allows the instructor to enhance particular learning outcomes without having the student go through 30-minute segments.
- Shifting to a new model eliminated the extra fee for students who preferred to access course content via video streaming rather than through TV or DVD.
- Shifting to the new model allowed delivery of video content to all courses, both online and F2F, for no additional licensing fees.

During 2010/11in collaboration with the Library the Center for Distributed Learning purchased access to three learning object repositories (INTELECOM, Discovery Education, and DCCCD Dallas TeleLearning. Both, instructional design teams as well individual instructors, use the repositories to enrich their courses.

[1]http://www.statesurge.com/bills/sb183-maryland-497219

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Instructor availability and response time are detailed in the mandatory syllabus as well as in the course template. Best Practice instructions stipulate that the instructor will normally respond to student email inquiries within the following timeframes

> **II.1.k.**
> *Curriculum and Course Design embody good practice in areas such as*
> - *Standards for instructor accessibility.*
> - *Effective feedback mechanisms.*

For 9 to15 week course formats within 24 to 36 hours.
For 5 to 8 week course formats within 18 to 24 hours
For up to 3 week course formats within 12-14 hours.
Instructors will notify students of any arrangements specific for weekends. Instructors will notify students if the normal response time has to be modified temporarily because of illness or other unforeseen circumstances.

The mandatory tutorial for teaching online (APPENDIX 14.a. Section B.20) provides a template for a mid-semester student feedback protocol. Most instructors welcome student's comments on what works well and not so well to consider possible adjustments in the second half of the semester. Student evaluations are required for each online course at the end of each semester. The subscription to 'EvaluationKit', a software package that serves as an integrated Building Block in Blackboard, allows us to place an access button to the evaluation form into each online course. The same button gives the instructor immediate online access to detailed results as soon as the evaluation has closed. In contrast to the manual procedure in previous years, the instructor is now able to use the student feedback to adjust course design or instructional methodology for the new semester.

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2. Delivery of Instruction

> **II.2.a.**
> *The delivery of instruction is grounded in the program's mission, beliefs, and expectations for student learning.*

FCC's current Mission Statement identifies the College as a "Learning College" with the primary goal of enhancing student learning. Within that context the Distance Learning Program serves as an "integral component of instruction that depends on web and broadcast technologies for delivery."(APPENDIX 1.a.).Ten guiding principles (APPENDIX 1.b.) detail the College's Distance Learning mission. Adopted in 2001, the principles demonstrate a commitment to quality pedagogical standards and overall quality assurance.

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> **II.2.b.**
> *The delivery of instruction is supported by research and best practice.*

A FCC document from January 2000 entitled "Web Courses: Standards of Best Practice" presented a review of the then current literature. The document identified three guiding pedagogical principles and discussed sixteen pedagogical and organizational standards of Best Practice (APPENDIX 19.d.). The document served as a baseline reference in the development of the Online Course Program at FCC. Over the years peer networks such as ITC, WCET, SLOAN and EduCause have channeled research results and have helped to update FCC's Best Practice arsenal. In addition, FCC has been directly involved in more recent research projects: the 2007 "W" Study with 100 FCC students, the MOL "W" Study with over 3000 students from California and Maryland, the development of COAT (Certificate for Online Adjunct Teaching), and the development of a rubric for instructor competencies.

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> **II.2.c.**
> *The delivery of instruction is continually refined based on assessment of stakeholders' needs.*

As an array of amorphous stakeholder "wants" do or do not transform into institutional "needs" and an array of instructional "needs" constantly change shape and priority status, five randomly selected examples may serve to demonstrate "continual" refinement in the delivery of instruction on the program level.

1. All of the College's online courses started out in a 15-week format. The Best Practice for instructor Email response time had been calibrated accordingly at 24-36 hours. When online course delivery increased in accelerated delivery formats and new instructors were coming in, the

response protocol had to be adjusted. The Office of Distance Learning convened a Faculty Task Force that reviewed the response protocol and recommended changes for accelerated course formats to guide student and instructor expectations into a common time frame. (APPENDIX 20.b.) See also section (II.1.k.) in this Audit Report.

2. Traditionally student evaluations of courses and instructors were collected at the end of each semester. The results were compiled manually in a very labor intensive and time consuming process which usually delayed instructor access to the evaluations into the first few weeks of the following semester. The 'EvaluationKit' (see section II.1.k.), a software package that serves as an integrated Building Block in Blackboard, places an access button to the student evaluation form into each online course. The same button gives the instructor immediate online access to detailed results as soon as the evaluation has closed. In contrast to the manual procedure in previous years, the instructor is now able to use the student feedback to change the course design or instructional methodology in the preparation for the new semester.

3. The development of new instructional feature from 'pilot' to 'Best Practice' or 'policy' comes in stages of refinement. The update of the mentoring requirements (APPENDIX 14.c.) for the College's 'Teaching Online' certification is a case in point(section IV.1.).The First Semester Mentoring Component was added in 2009as a requirement for the certificate. Beginning with a two semester pilot that placed a mentor into the course of a first time online instructor. The mentor signs off on a unit completion questionnaire including a statement that the instructor/mentee is or is not "ready to accept online teaching assignments. A training workshop for mentors following the pilot generated a number of suggestions for strengthening the requirements for both mentors and instructor/mentees. The recommendations were implemented.

4. Depending on their academic rank, faculty may earn one half of the credits required for promotion as Alternative Credits through educational activities other than graduate course work(Section IV.6.).The faculty member has to submit a project proposal for earning alternative credit and get approval from the College's Promotion and Equivalency Committee (PEC). Upon completion of the project PEC will decide how many alternative credits to award. The process is fraught with uncertainty that discourages faculty from using it.
Beginning in the spring of 2010the Office of Distance Learning offered three Alternative Credit packages for a maximum of six credits for professional development (APPENDIX 15.a.).The packagesare pre-approved by PEC. The purpose was to recognize and acknowledge the substantial time and effort faculty commit to when designing online courses, preparing to teach online for the first time or become a certified QM reviewer. The packages detail the professional development requirements that faculty must complete in order to receive the credit.

5. Managing student success in online courses is concerned about "W" and "F" students who either self-report never having participated in any class activity or who are identified in PeopleSoft as having withdrawn early or having received a non-academic "F". The number of students in those categories has varied over the years (APPENDIX 17.a. and APPENDIX 17.c.) but is still considered significant. The College-wide Early Alert system arrived as a welcome instructional tool to improve the course completion rate and help students to succeed. The system makes an electronic form available asking the instructor to identify concerns and indicate whether the student is likely to succeed or should withdraw. See section (V.13.f.) for details and analysis.

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II.1.d.
Curriculum and Course Design are designed to accommodate different learning styles.

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The corresponding section on course design (Section II.1.c.) suggested a general absence of Best Practice recommendations that would match course design to learning styles. The same observation holds true for Best Practice recommendations that would link the delivery of instruction to individual learner preferences. The absence of Best Practice recommendations seems to coincide with the absence of good evidence to the effect" that teaching influenced by the idea of learning styles has a significant effect on *[student]*achievement or motivation."[1]

The 2011 Student Readiness Report[2]identifiesseven learning styles with percentages of preference. The data are robust, however, they fail to suggest any immediate practical implications. Instructional delivery is left to follow instructional design in seeking to accommodate a variety of commonly assumed learning preferences in both course activities and assessment strategies.

[1]Coffield, Moseley, Hall, & Ecclestone, 2004,athttp://www.ncl.ac.uk/ecls/research/project/1927
[2] http://smartermeasure.com/

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II.2.e.
The delivery of instruction is sensitive to the cultural differences of students.

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College policy affirms that "Developing cultural competence is essential for living and working in a diverse democratic society." As part of the college's degree requirements, students must complete a class that is designated as a 'Cultural Competence' course. Cultural competence courses expose students to the knowledge and skills necessary to participate effectively in dynamic, evolving multicultural contexts. Students will not be required to take an additional course for graduation; rather, courses can double-count to fulfill an existing general education requirement as well as the cultural competence requirement. Currently twenty five courses, including six online courses, are listed for 2011/12 to fulfill the cultural competence requirement. A Cultural Competence Rubric (APPENDIX 2.c.) guides the development of new Cultural Competency courses. Instructors are encouraged to use the rubric to include cultural competency components into all of their courses.

	Course Evaluation (General Education)	03/04	Sp.11
14	Course helped understand relevance of world issues	81%*	91%*

*Approval rating combines "Strongly Agree" and "Agree"

In the 'General Education' section of the online course evaluation students seem to indicate that courses other than the ones designated as a 'Cultural Competence' courses increasingly contribute to the awareness of 'world issues'.

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II.2.f.
The delivery of instruction includes provisions for students with disabilities.

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Frederick Community College makes every effort to accommodate individuals with disabilities.(Reference sections I.7.d. and III.9.in this Audit Report)[1]
The Services for Students with Disabilities Office (SSD) will assist in reducing the impact of a disability on a student's opportunity to learn and participate in campus life. Students who self-identify and provide appropriate documentation of a covered disability are eligible for reasonable accommodations as described in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act and amendments. The SSD Office determines what kind of accommodation is appropriate and will

provide the instructor and the student with an accommodation plan. Students are required to meet with SSD staff each semester for advising and renewal of their SSP accommodations. The SSD Office will monitor student progress and determine if accommodations are successful.
            [1]http://www.frederick.edu/student_services/disability_statement.aspx

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| II.2.g. |
| *The delivery of instruction includes frequent faculty to student interaction and fosters student-to-student interaction.* |

Under 'Learner Engagement' Standard 5.2.of the 2008/10 QM Rubric states "Learning activities foster instructor-student, content-student, and if appropriate to the course, student-student interaction". The annotations to Standard 5.2 list typical interaction patterns between instructor and student: welcome and introduction messages, group emails, announcements, one-to-one emails, feedback on assignments. Forty eight of the College's ninety online courses have been QM reviewed and have met the expectations of Standard 5.2. Delivery of instruction follows course design patterns. In addition:

- A survey of initial QM review reports of twelve FCC courses (six did meet expectations overall, six did not) all twelve had met the expectations of Standard 5.2. (APPENDIX 7.b.)
- All online master courses are designed to meet the expectations of Standard 5.2
- All informal course reviews (APPENDIX 6.b.) stress the importance of Standard 5.2.
- In the trend line student satisfaction survey (APPENDIX 11.a.) students responded to the statement (Q25) "The instructor responded to e-mail promptly". From 2003/04 to 2010/11 the combined total of "Agree Strongly" and "Agree Somewhat" declined somewhat from 91.7% to 84.6%., however, in the category "Agree Strongly" the decline was indicative and worth noting from 72.5% in 2003/04 to 54.7% in 2010/11.
The combined total of "Disagree Somewhat" and "Disagree Strongly" rose from 8.4% in 2003/04 to 13.6% in 2010/11. The trend deserves further investigation.
- In the same trend line satisfaction survey students responded to the statement (Q26) "I was satisfied with the amount of contact/interaction I had with the instructor." From 2003/04 to 2010/11 the combined total of "Agree Strongly" and "Agree Somewhat" declined somewhat from 86.7% to 82.7%., however, in the category "Agree Strongly" the decline was indicative and worth noting from 65.4% in 2003/04 to 50.2% in 2010/11.The combined total of "Disagree Somewhat" and "Disagree Strongly" rose slightly from 13.3% in 2003/04 to 16.4% in 2010/11.
- In the same trend line satisfaction survey students responded to the question (Q24)"How do you rate the amount of contact with the other students in this course?" The result: 71.1% (2003/04) and 67.0% (2010/11) respondents said that the contact was sufficient.
However, given the choice of preferences for more contact, they chose 'more contact in a threaded discussion'. The steady progression in this preference from 21.4% in 2003/04 to 32.4% in 2010/11 is significant and will be noted for both instructional design and faculty training.

	03/04	04/05	07/08	09/10	10/11
more contact in a chat room setting	8.6%	11.0%	7.0%	8.2%	5.6%
more contact in a threaded discussion	21.4%	26.9%	27.6%	29.3%	32.4%
more contact by email	9.5%	7.9%	6.4%	8.7%	5.1%
more contact in face-to-face meetings	7.1%	6.3%	3.9%	5.4%	2.9%

►**Action Item (II.2.g.):** Schedule faculty workshops geared toward threaded discussion features in online courses.

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II.2.h.
The delivery of instruction is sensitive to time and place limitations of students.

Section(II.1.j.)in this Audit Report indicates that the College is generally aware of problems relating to place and time constraints in online courses and has taken steps to address them applicable to both course design and delivery of instruction. Two issues demand attention:

- In the trendline student satisfaction survey (APPENDIX 11.a.) students responded to the question(Q21) their online course required more/less time than other college courses they have taken.

	03/04	04/05	07/08	09/10	10/11
more time	30.6%	33.5%	31.1%	34.5%	35.9%
about the same	58.0%	58.8%	57.4%	57.4%	56.5%
less time	11.4%	7.4%	10.9%	8.5%	7.5%

At the 31%-36% level the responses claiming more time spend in their online course deserve further investigation. Some clarification might arrive in the progression of the College's "time on task" study (See section II.1.b. in this Audit Report).

- The 2010 "W" Study with over 3000 respondents from community colleges in California and Maryland pointed to a course delivery issue that deserves attention. A little over 30% of the students identified "Getting Behind" as the highest ranking, single most important issue that they wanted to convey to new students taking an online course. The instructor flipside of the issue raises the question how instructors respond when students do in fact fall behind. Is the deadline an integral part of the assignment ("that is why it is called a "dead"- line) or is it better to have an assignment completed two days after the original deadline? Faculty practices seems to be as varied as their underlying reasoning is subjective.

►**Action Item (II.2.h.):** Establish a "Deadline" faculty task force to articulate Best Practice recommendations.

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II.2.i.
There is a process in place to monitor that the coursework and assessments are completed by the student registered for the course.

With an enrollment increase of 53% between 2006 and 2009 it became necessary to develop Best Practice principles for three test scenarios in online courses:
(a) the non-proctored test taken at the home computer;
(b) the proctored test taken in the FCC Testing Center; and
(c) the test proctored in any accredited testing facility.

Four 'Best Practice' principles guide online faculty in the design and execution of tests and exams:
- Exams and tests from online courses, proctored or non-proctored must be taken online in Blackboard, i.e. password protected.
- Unless the course has special requirements, each online course should have at least one proctored test component to serve as a reference point for non-proctored components and establish the identity of the student taking the test.

- The instructor should notify the Testing Facility of the date(s) and nature of the test at the beginning of the semester.
- Increase test security for both proctored and non-proctored exams in Blackboard by timing and randomizing tests and by other means appropriate to the course.

Section (I.7.a.) above indicates that Federal regulations allow three methods of authentication:

(i) A secure login and pass code;

(ii) Proctored examinations; and

(iii) New technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identification.

At present FCC relies on methods (i) and (ii) to authenticate the identity of students.

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3. Assessment of Student Performance

| II.3.a. |
| *Assessment of student performance is evidence based.* |

At its root the assessment of student performance is an assessment of student learning. A complex array of indicators and methodologies suggested in the literature or enshrined in Federal regulations leaves room for different approaches serving the same assessment goal. Evidence of student learning can be gathered from two perspectives, the student perspective ("Have I learned something?") and the instructor/institutional perspective ("Has the student learned what the core or course learning outcomes stipulate?"). For the purpose of this audit report, **student self-assessment** is demonstrated in part II of the regular student evaluations. Students respond to seven General Education indicators.

Combining "Strongly Agree" and "Agree", the analysis of results for questions 10-16 shows that

- results for online courses have improved from 04/05 to the spring of 2011;
- online and on-campus figures are in close proximity overall;
- the gap between online and on-campus has been closing from 04/05 to the spring of 2011; in the spring of 2011 Online and On-Campus data are practically identical in five of seven questions;
- In the case of question 13 "Course developed ability to gather information, etc." the online results have been some two percentage points ahead since 2007/08;
- results for question 11 regarding improved writing skills need further attention for both online and on-campus courses.

		04/05	04/05	07/08	07/08	Sp.11
	Course Evaluation (General Education)	Online	Campus	Online	Campus	Online
10	Course helped understand basic facts, concepts, etc.	91%	93%	91%	94%	92%
11	Course helped improve writing skills.	51%	59%	n.a.	n.a.	68%
12	Course helped think critically about information etc.	75%	82%	87%	90%	87%
13	Course developed ability to gather information, etc.	77%	79%	92%	91%	87%
14	Course helped understand relevance of world issues	83%	87%	93%	90%	91%
15	Course helped with complex ideas	70%	80%	92%	89%	85%
16	Course helped develop critical-thinking skills	66%	75%	94%	89%	87%

From the **instructor/institutional** perspective, evidence of student performance has been traditionally documented in academic grades from "A" to "F" on three levels: (1) Assignment Level; (2) Course Level; (3) Grade Distribution on the Program Level. This method generates measurable

results as demonstrated in the course level grade distribution comparing F2F with online courses(APPENDIX 10.d.). However, the data are not compelling in linking stated learning objectives to student achievement. In 2005 FCC began to implement course-level outcomes assessment on two tracks. One track concentrated efforts on high-enrollment general education courses. FCC is now at the end of its 2nd*Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Cycle*. Each academic department created one or more comprehensive assessment projects that measured student learning. Building on the results of the 1st Assessment Cycle, the 2ndCycle focused attention on helping students develop critical thinking skills across the curriculum. The analysis of these assessments has resulted in course-level changes to assure that students meet Course Learning Outcomes with a higher level of success.

The second track collects parts from annual faculty self-evaluations in which faculty reflects on their internal class assessments and analyzes student course performance. These assessments document FCC faculty success at using assessment to improve student learning; faculty reported that outcomes assessment is more effective than traditional grading (APPENDIX 6.d.).

With few exceptions, most assessment projects on both tracks were conducted in on-campus courses. As of now, there has been no sustained effort to measure student learning in online courses. One of the projects involving online sections of CIS101 is documented in APPENDIX6.e.

In cooperation with the Testing Center the Office of Distance Learning is launching an assessment project that is specifically focused on online courses (See section II.3.c. of this Audit Report).

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II.3.b.
Assessment of student performance is aligned with course and program objectives.

The 2012/13 QM Rubric calls for the alignment of critical course components, such as learning objectives, assessments, course materials and course activities as identified in QM standards 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 4.1, 5.1, and 6.1.Previous editions of the rubric had a similar requirement linking each of the course components directly to and supporting the measurable learning objectives. Forty eight of FCC's ninety online courses carry the QM logo (APPENDIX 7.a.) and as such have passed the QM alignment review. In addition, ten online courses are scheduled for a formal QM review in 2010/2011 (APPENDIX 7.a.) As a Best Practice feature, the alignment requirement is incorporated in the creation of new master courses and stressed in faculty training and informal course reviews (APPENDIX 6.b.). Evidence of compliance with the alignment requirement in the non-QM reviewed courses is incomplete and partly anecdotal.

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II.3.c.
Assessment of student performance accurately measures student attainment of the course's educational goals.

Various assessment projects (referenced in section II.3.a. above) document accuracy of measurement in linking student achievement to learning objectives. The noted caveat was that there has been no sustained effort to measure student learning in online courses. With few exceptions, most assessment projects were conducted in on-campus courses. In cooperation with the Testing Center the Office of Distance Learning is launching an assessment project that is specifically focused on online courses. The project rests on three practices that are already in place:

- Every QM-reviewed course turns into a Master Course.

- All sections derived from the Master Course follow the same pattern and carry the QM logo.
- As is the case with all online courses, all Master Courses and their sections are designed with at least one test or exam proctored in the Testing Center.

The assessment project for online courses will begin with a two-step pilot (two courses in the spring and six courses in the fall of 2012) in which the single one proctored exam of a course will use a standardized rubric that links learning objectives (various CLOs, Program SLOs, and Middle States General Education Competencies) to assessment items such as MC/T-F questions or essays. A team including the instructor and an Instructional Designer will create an Assessment Matrix for each type of the proctored exam (APPENDIX 6.f.).The test/exam is administered in the Testing Center. Resulting outcomes assessment data will be automatically collected and analyzed to determine ways to help students learn. The system will greatly enhance quality assurance of FCC's online courses.

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II.3.d.
Assessment strategies enable students to monitor their own learning progress.

Faculty professional development emphasizes and supports the application of a variety of assessment strategies. Resulting grades are recorded in Blackboard's Grade Center, and students can monitor the progression of point or grade accumulation in real time. Formative assessment strategies are designed to allow students to monitor their own learning progress. According to a survey (APPENDIX 6.c.) of thirty syllabi from online courses taught by different instructors, 29/30 indicate formative assessment strategies.

The 2008/10 QM Rubric calls for "Self-check" or practice assignments with timely feedback to the student (QM standard 3.5).Forty eight of FCC's ninety online courses carry the QM logo (APPENDIX 7.a.) and as such are more than likely to have passed the QM "Self-check" review. In addition, ten online courses are scheduled for a formal QM review in 2010/2011 (APPENDIX 7.a.) to pass the same requirement.

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II.3.e.
Assessment of student performance enables faculty to measure and adjust the effectiveness of their teaching methods.

Instructors have access to the 3-part student evaluations (APPENDIX 16.a.) immediately after the close of the evaluation period at the end of the semester. The timing enables them to make appropriate and effective adjustments for upcoming iterations of the course. FCC's Best Practices for online courses strongly suggest that all course materials, including instructions and information about teaching methods, be accessible to the student at the beginning of the term. While major changes to online courses are discouraged during the semester, the mid-semester feedback option gives the instructor the opportunity to make minor and non-disruptive adjustments to the course proceedings.

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II.3.f.
Multiple methods to assess student performance are used.

Faculty receive professional development to support the application of a variety of assessment strategies, including formative assessments that are less likely to be standardized and require more writing, critical thinking, peer analysis, and application of knowledge. A sequence

of several assignments over time assists with cheating prevention and helps to authenticate the student identity. A survey of thirty syllabi from online courses taught by different instructors (APPENDIX 6.c.) shows that 24/30 use multiple formats in the 'summative' category and 29/25 in the 'formative category. (see II.3.g. below)

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| II.3.g. |
| *Assessment strategies use formative assessments to inform instructional practice.* |

FCC's Best Practices in teaching online encourage instructors to use multiple and varied assessment strategies including formative assessments. In a balanced assessment system, both summative and formative assessments are an integral part of assessing student success. **Formative Assessment** informs both instructors and students about student understanding at a point when timely adjustments in the learning process can be made. A survey (APPENDIX 6.c.) of thirty syllabi from online courses taught by different instructors shows the following results:

Courses	Proctored assessment	Summative		Formative	
		In place	Multiple Formats	In place	Multiple Formats
30	**30**	**30**	**24**	**29**	**25**

Examples for Summative Assessments include MC/TF Tests, end-of-unit or chapter tests, end-of-term or semester exams, standardized tests.

Examples for Formative Assessments include Practice quizzes/activities; discussion, drafting process for essays; homework exercises, projects.

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| II.3.h. |
| *Assessment strategies provides for timely and frequent feedback about student progress.* |

The College has an Early Alert system in place which requires the instructor during the third week of class (15-week format) to verify a student's class participation for Financial Aid purposes. In addition, the form (APPENDIX 17.i.) asks the instructor to identify concerns, make remedial suggestions, and indicate whether the student is likely to succeed or should withdraw. The content of the form is automatically emailed to the student and serves as a record for the instructor. For an analysis of relevant data see section (V.13.f.).

Instructors in all FCC courses are also required to observe the 6-week feedback rule (for 15-week formats) by which students are to be notified of their progress in the class. In all online courses that are either QM reviewed or derived from a master course website (APPENDIX 6.a.) and (APPENDIX 7.a.), Best Practice instructions request the instructor to inform students at the beginning of the term as to when they can expect to have assignments graded and/or returned. Self-practice assignments are designed to provide intermittent feedback on student progress.

Instructors are encouraged to use the mid-semester procedure (APPENDIX 14.a.*[D]*)to ask for student feedback on particular course features and any suggestions for improvement.

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