

# Sample Statements for Your Online Course

Text in **brown** can be copied and/or modified as desired for placement in your course. Text in black is background information for you, the instructor.

## I. Announcement

Use the welcome announcement to make students feel you are enthusiastic about your subject matter and teaching your course (or you can put this as a header on your course homepage). *Note: Announcements can be created that open in a pop-up window the first time the student logs into the course.* Direct students where to begin exploring the course and what their initial duties are.

### Sample Statement:

Welcome to [course name]! I am [name] and I'll be your instructor at Mesa Community College for this course. I'm excited to be teaching you about [course name]. I hope you will enjoy this course and learn much that is useful to you in your future career and/or personal development. You'll want to get started exploring the course so you know what to expect. If you have any questions, click on the Mail tool on the left side of your screen and send me an email or email me at [your email address], or call me at [include office or department phone number].

Begin with the **Where Do I Start** icon on the left side of your screen. It's very important that you read thoroughly ALL the material accessed through this link. You want to know just what to expect in this course. To be sure we are on the same page, you will take an online quiz over this information. This will give you a chance to become familiar with what it is like to take an online quiz (if you haven't done so before) and assure both of us that we are communicating about the nature of this course.

## II. Where Do I Start- Introduction

The Where Do I Start icon links to several different files. Research shows that people do not usually scroll more than two screens. So it's better to have a number of shorter documents than one long document that requires the reader to scroll through many screens. Be sure to include:

**A. About the course:** provide an overview of the course, what type of student typically benefits from the class (specific major?), how the course is structured, background/experience/interest of the instructor, attendance (checkin/submit assignment) requirements, if the student must come to campus for some classes, if there any field trips they must take or performances they must attend, services related to special accommodations, contact information including identification of office hours [these may be on-campus or online], tutoring resources (if available), and behavior guidelines.

### Sample Statement:

[name of course] is a one-semester general education course for non-biology majors that examines the basic principles and concepts of [discipline name e.g. biology]. [overview of course e.g. Methods of scientific inquiry and the behavior of matter and energy in biological systems are explored. Previous students have enjoyed the opportunity to examine the world around them, starting each week with a hands-on investigation they design themselves. Results are compared with those of classmates.]

If you are majoring in English, education, business etc., [course name] is the appropriate course to satisfy the requirement for four credit hours in a laboratory science. Students do laboratory experiments at home using lab kits they purchase and supplies obtained at local stores. There are [no or appropriate number] required prerequisites for this course.

If you are a [discipline name e.g. biology] major, [name of course] is NOT the appropriate course for you. At MCC, you should enroll in [course name] instead.

In this course, we progress through [number such as 14] units (modules) . [weeks/modules] consist of the following items (some modules may not include all components): [list tasks as appropriate, such as:

- Menu - identifies objectives of this week's activities, specific tasks, and their due dates
- Exploration - do experiment at home
- Discussion - share results of experiment and conclusions with classmates
- Activities - submit assignment based on experiment to instructor
- Readings - assigned in textbook and interactive lesson online
- Quiz - an online assessment of how well you learned the concepts in the module]

We will utilize [fill in appropriate details such as our online course website and the tools it provides, a textbook, a laboratory manual, lab kit, web links, and supplies you purchase at the local grocery/drugstore to help us understand the world around us.]

**B. About the instructor** - [insert a bit about you, why you chose your discipline, your experience, what you like about teaching, your interests etc.]

### **Sample Statement:**

I became enthralled with biology in high school. What could be more interesting than examining ourselves and the world around us??? Biology has never lost its appeal for me. I'll do my best to engender some of that enthusiasm in you as we investigate the world around us. After many years of teaching face-to-face classes, I find the online environment to be a very rich one. We'll journey through it together! You may be struggling with the demands of college, family, and work. I've been there and it's not an easy juggling act. But taking an online class provides you with flexibility you will really appreciate.

### **C. Will taking a class online work for you?**

Students who've never tackled an online course before would do well to give some thought to whether the online format is likely to work for them and what it takes to be a successful online student.

**Sample Statement:**

Online courses are not for everyone. Is the online format likely to work for you? Let the MCC Distance Learning site help you determine if you are ready for distance learning. Go to <http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/distance/prospect.html> to help you make an informed decision.

There is no shame in deciding to take an on-campus class. If you'd like to discuss the issue with me, I'm available. Contact me at [phone number and email address].

If you are new to online learning and live in the greater Phoenix area, you might benefit from an on-campus orientation. MCC usually offers several sessions at the beginning of each semester. See <http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/distance/orientation.html> for the schedule.

Alternatively you may want to provide an online orientation you've created.

**D. Time Management****Sample Statement:**

How much time should you expect to spend on this course? If you took this class on campus you would spend about 3 hours per week [input what's appropriate here] in lecture and 3 hours per week in lab for 16 weeks. This is close to 100 hours for the semester. Then there's the time spent outside of class doing readings, homework, studying for quizzes, etc. Many previous students who were successful in this class report spending from 8 to 10 hours per week. Getting on the computer and "cramming for this week's quiz" didn't serve them well. Things went much better when that spent time several days during the week conducting their experiment, posting to the Discussion board, reading and studying. They scheduled in time to take the online quiz on the first or second day it was available so they did not incur any late penalty.

As a general guideline, you should expect to log in to your course at least 3 times a week. While there, check for any new announcements or emails from your instructor. Review due dates and schedule your work load so you can submit work on time. Submitting assignments before the due date gives you some leeway in case you encounter unexpected problems. Submit work that demonstrates you have a clear understanding of the concepts under study. A very important goal of a college education is to expand your mind. So keep an open mind regarding course materials and other people's views.

Although [course name] is an online course, it has firm deadlines. [insert late work policy here, such as No late work is accepted... or There is a [10 percent per day] late penalty for postings, assignments or quizzes. No postings, assignments, nor quizzes will receive credit if they are more than three days late.] It is very important to keep up with the course work!

It is the responsibility of the student to consult the course calendar and keep up with all assignments, discussions, quizzes and exams. You may be withdrawn without notice if you miss more than two quizzes in a row and at least two assignments or discussion posts. If you have missed

assignments or quizzes, it is your responsibility to contact your instructor to discuss your options.

You will get more out of your course if you and your instructor communicate well. Notify your instructor if you encounter problems or have concerns in a timely fashion.

Students who do not communicate with the instructor for two consecutive weeks will be automatically dropped from the class with the grade they have earned up to that point. Any missed assignments will be averaged in with a grade of zero.

## **E. Coming to Campus**

### **Sample Statement:**

You [will, will not] have to come to come to campus for this course. [For example, You will have to come to the Mesa Community College Southern and Dobson campus two times during the semester, to take the midterm and final examinations. If you do not live in the greater Phoenix area, you will need to identify a suitable proctor to administer these in-person exams at a campus near you. Many campuses and military bases have testing centers that will serve this function for you.] There are no field trips required for this course.

## **H. Disability Resources**

### **Sample Statement:**

I am willing to make reasonable accommodations for documented disabilities. If you are a student with documented special needs and would like to discuss accommodations, please make an appointment with the MCC director of Disability Resources and Services Department at (480) 461-7447 or TTY (480) 969-5587, web page at <http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/students/disability/services.html> This office will provide you with an Instructor Notification Form that you should share with me as soon as possible.

Among other resources, MCC has an Adaptive Lab in the Elsner High-Tech Center (library) that supports students with disabilities. JAWS software and ZoomText for the visually impaired are available for your use in the adaptive lab. Dragon Speech Synthesizer is also available in the adaptive lab if you have difficulty typing.

## **III. Syllabus**

The syllabus lays out important information about course details. Include the course calendar (with a subject to change statement), a list of supplies the student must acquire (e.g. textbook), technology requirements (hardware and software), and how grades will be calculated in the course. Include a printable version of the syllabus which may be several pages in length (your smaller online files may be compiled into one printable document for student reference).

MCCD has specific requirements for what needs to be included in a syllabus. Access the list and samples of syllabi at <http://www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/syllabus/index.php>

## A. Course Calendar

Perhaps the simplest way to present due dates in a calendar that is in table form. You can use software such as Word to create the calendar. Then choose *File* and *Save As* from the toolbar. In the dialog box that opens, locate the box at the bottom that says *Save as type*. Use the pull-down menu available there to select *Webpage* or *Webpage-Filtered*. Either option is fine. This will give you a file that ends in an htm or html extension. These files can be seen by any browser (Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, etc.). The student doesn't need to have Word software on their computer to view the document. Click on this link to view a sample calendar created as a table using Microsoft Office Word:

[http://ctl.mc.maricopa.edu/wiki/index.php/Sample\\_online\\_course\\_calendar](http://ctl.mc.maricopa.edu/wiki/index.php/Sample_online_course_calendar)

Google.com offers a free tool to create a calendar you can upload into your online course. Students have the option of viewing the calendar by month, week, next four days, etc. Google also gives the student the option to print a copy of the calendar. Click on this link to get directions on how to create your Google calendar and upload it into your online course [http://ctl.mc.maricopa.edu/wiki/index.php/Category:Help\\_Resources](http://ctl.mc.maricopa.edu/wiki/index.php/Category:Help_Resources) Under the letter C on the screen that appears, select Create Google Calendar for Uploading into WebCT.

There are also a number of videos on You Tube that also show you how to set up your Google calendar and upload it into your course. These include <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yb7IltP7UFw&feature=related>.

*Note:* Our LMS (WebCT) has a calendar creation tool. However, it is quite time consuming to use. The results are attractive and functional but have to be created from scratch each semester.

### Sample Statement:

Click on the course calendar to see specific due dates. Print a copy for your reference. Dates are subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

## B. Grading Policy

Post your grading policy. Include how many points each task (Discussion, Assignment, Quiz etc.) is worth. Include how the final grade will be determined (e.g. point scale). If revisions are made to the grading policy, they should be posted in both the Announcements section and in this section (noting that a change was made).

Decide what your policy will be regarding late submissions. Using the LMS (WebCT) Assignments tool, you can set a deadline that is firm. No late assignments will be accepted. Or you can set a due date but set the cutoff date later, say 24 to 48 hours later. Then students can submit their assignments late, but you will know the exact time they did submit. You can deduct points if that is your stated policy. This practice gives you a bit of leeway in case students experience technical problems.

If you use the Discussions tool with our LMS (WebCT), you can set a date after which no postings are accepted. Postings are visible to students but no new postings can be added. This is a very helpful option.

### Sample Statement:

There are three components that determine your course grade - Assignments, Discussions, and Assessments. They are weighted as shown below to calculate your course grade:

Assignments	40 %
Discussions	30%
Assessments	30 %

## ASSIGNMENTS

All Assignments are visible via the Assignment tool on the course homepage with their respective due date. You can earn 20 points on each assignment. Assignments submitted by midnight on the due date (see course Assignment tool) are on time. Assignments submitted one day late will be assessed a 10 percent penalty. Assignments submitted two days late will be assessed a 20 percent penalty. Assignments will not earn any credit if they are submitted more than 2 days past the due date. Specific grading criteria will be posted with each assignment.

Expect assignments to be graded within [insert number, recommended time is 5] days. You can check on the status of your assignment (whether it's been graded or not) by clicking on the Assignment tool. Your grade will be posted in the online course Grade book, [along with feedback from your instructor, if you intend to provide feedback].

## DISCUSSIONS

Discussions are accessible via the Discussions tool on the course homepage. There are two parts to each Discussion. The instructor will post a question to which you should post an original reply by the date indicated on the course calendar (usually within 3 days). Within the next two days, you should respond to at least one of your classmates' postings.

Each posting should be at least 3 to 5 sentences in length. It should relate to the topic at hand, be concise and substantive in nature, following accepted rules of grammar and correct spelling. Relating the subject matter to personal experience is acceptable as long as the focus remains academic in nature. Postings that say simply "Good job!" or "I agree!" will not earn credit. Use your posting to provide evidence you understand the concepts being studied. A good posting explains, explores, or expands on a concept. A good message appears in the context of other similar messages. Reading the discussion regularly provides the opportunity to enter the discussion on a timely basis. The initial posting is worth 6 points and the response posting 4 points.

Seven days after the instructor's initial posting, the Discussions board will be locked and no further postings can be made at this time on that particular Discussions board. Expect Discussions to be graded within [insert number, recommended time is 5] days after the Discussions board has been locked.

## ASSESSMENTS

Weekly quizzes are accessible via the Assessment tool on the course homepage. Each quiz, which is worth 20 points, covers that module's textbook readings, discussion postings, and online lessons. The number of points possible per question is indicated on the quiz. Each quiz is available for three days (dates on course calendar and via Assessment tool on course homepage). If the quiz is submitted on the first or second day it is available, it is on time. Quizzes submitted on the third day they are available will be assessed a 10 percent late penalty.

Assessments (quizzes) will normally be graded within [insert number, recommended time is 5] days. Once the quiz is graded, you can view your grade through the online course Grade Book. You can then view your quiz and see what questions you answered incorrectly.

Computer problems or other technical issues will not be accepted as excuses for late work. Please plan accordingly.

MCC's Learning Management System (WebCT) allows you to assign group work. If this will be part of your course, describe in detail how it will work.

## C. Assessment Criteria

MCC's LMS (WebCT) makes it fairly easy to create a grading form (rubric) for each assignment. This provides valuable information to students on what you are looking for in an assignment and how the various components of the assignment are weighted. You can use the rubric to quickly grade each student's work after it's been submitted, providing valuable specific feedback to the student on why they earned the grade they earned.

To see samples of grading forms (rubrics), go to this site: [http://ctl.mc.maricopa.edu/wiki/index.php/Grading\\_Forms](http://ctl.mc.maricopa.edu/wiki/index.php/Grading_Forms)

## Sample Statement:

Click on this rubric (grading form) to understand the criteria for this particular assignment.

#### **D. Contacting Your Instructor**

Let students know how to get ahold of you.

##### **Sample Statement:**

If you are on campus, feel free to drop and chat. My office hours for this semester are [insert days & times]. I will also be available online [insert time such as Monday evenings 7 to 8 P.M.]. Just log on to the course and click on the Chat tool.

The quickest way to communicate with me is via email. Open the course, click on the Mail tool and "talk" to me. Expect a response within [insert appropriate time, recommended time is 24 hours] on weekdays. I'll respond by Monday if you send an email over the weekend. Remember you can also post questions for your classmates on our CyberCafe (click on the Discussion tool in our course). You may reach me by phone (or leave a voice mail message) at [insert office phone number].

#### **E. Prerequisites**

If there are prerequisites for your course, list them.

##### **Sample Statement:**

Students enrolled in this class must have completed [insert course name and number] or the equivalent. If you are unsure if you meet the requirement, contact your instructor as soon as possible.

#### **F. Technical Requirements**

Determine what basic computer skills your students will need for your course. Customize this list for your course.

##### **Sample Statement:**

To be successful in this course you will need to have good basic computer skills. These include knowing how to:

- create files, edit them, save them, and retrieve them
- use a word processor (such as Microsoft Office Word or Open Office) to create, edit, save and retrieve a document
- create, send, read, and reply to email messages
- use a search engine to locate desired items on the internet
- use a link to access an internet site
- locate and copy the URL for an internet site
- access the MCC website to find the link to your online class

You will also need to have Adobe Acrobat reader and Adobe Flash player installed on your computer to access some of the course resources. These programs are free. You may already have them on your computer. If you don't have these programs or aren't sure if you have these programs, download them from the MCC Technology Support Services website: [http://wiki.mc.maricopa.edu/tsswiki/index.php/Main\\_Page](http://wiki.mc.maricopa.edu/tsswiki/index.php/Main_Page) Click on the Software link to download Adobe Acrobat reader, Adobe Flash player, or other free software you wish to have.

While you are in the process of downloading these software programs, be sure to remember the location on your computer to which you direct the download (the desktop works nicely). Once the download is complete, you should double click (click your mouse two times quickly) on the file name to install the program. Once the program has been installed, you can delete the original download from your desktop (or whatever location you directed it).

If these tasks seem somewhat daunting, you may want to consider enrolling in a basic computer course. The techniques you learn there will serve you in many capacities, including enrolling in an online course. MCC's business department offers a one-credit course to introduce you to business and personal computers. It's called BPC 100. For more information, go to the MCC Business Department's website at [http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/dept2/business\\_dept](http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/dept2/business_dept). or call them at (480) 461-7725.

## **F. Etiquette and Academic Integrity**

### **Sample Statement:**

Learning happens best in a comfortable environment, whether on-campus or online. Thus disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Inappropriate behavior will lead to student disciplinary action, including possible withdrawal from the course. Examples of such behavior include posting unsuitable message on the Discussion board and/or sending inappropriate email messages to the instructor and/or classmates. A warning will be given to the student upon the first incident. Subsequent actions will be reported to the [name of Department] chairperson and the appropriate Dean for further action.

Consider linking to this netiquette guide: <http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html>

We take academic integrity seriously, whether you are in an on-campus or online course. The Mesa Community College Catalog states:

Misconduct for which students are subject to disciplinary action falls into the general areas of cheating, plagiarism, excessive absences, actions or verbal statements that threaten the educational process, violation of Arizona laws and/or college regulations and policies, and inappropriate use of computer resources. If you choose to engage in academic misconduct, expect to suffer consequences that may include a grade penalty, failure to pass the course, and withdrawal from the class and/or the college. If you are in doubt as to the appropriate academic conduct in a particular situation, he or she should consult the course instructor, department chairperson, or the dean of the appropriate college division for guidance.

### G. PDF version of the syllabus for printing

Provide students with a pdf copy of your syllabus. The format of pdf documents stays the same no matter what computer operating system and/or browser the students uses. If you don't have access to a program such as Adobe PDF Creator, use Google (<http://www.google.com>) or other search engine to locate a download site for CutePDF. It's free software that will do the job for you.

### IV. Student Resources

Make it easy for your students to identify where to go for help when they need it. Encouraging students to access these resources can save your valuable time for class work.

#### Sample Statement:

- Visit MCC's distance learning site at <http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/distance/students.html> It has great tutorials on how to use the tools in your course, (e.g. Discussion tool, Assignment tool, Assessment tool). You'll want to bookmark it for future reference!
- What should you do if you can't log into your course or you encounter other technical problems? Call MCC's Technology Support Services department at (480) 461-7217 or email them at [tss@mcmail.maricopa.edu](mailto:tss@mcmail.maricopa.edu)

There is also a link on their webpage for live help: <http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/its/tss/index.html>

- Consider including a Discussion board in your course where students can post questions of a general nature about the course. You might name this Discussion board the CyberCafe (or some similar title). When students pose questions on this board, their classmates often post the answer before you do. This saves you valuable time and helps students look to each other as a resource. Take advantage of our CyberCafe (access it through the Discussions tool on the course homepage). Often the issue that is troubling you has been encountered by one or more of your classmates. Some of them may be more experienced at taking online classes than you are. Take advantage of the collective wisdom by posting your questions/concerns on the CyberCafe. Just remember that this is a site for questions of a general nature. If you have a specific question, such as about your particular grade, that should be addressed in a private email to your instructor.
- There are a few secrets to being a successful online student. Get the scoop and start out a winner! Visit [http://www.insidetrack.com/pdfs/Starting\\_Strong.pdf](http://www.insidetrack.com/pdfs/Starting_Strong.pdf)

## G. Tutoring

### Sample Statement:

Free tutoring is offered for [subject] in the Learning Enhancement Center on the Mesa Community College campus. The Learning Enhancement Center is located on the first level of the Elsner Library and High-Technology Complex on the east side of the MCC campus. Their website is <http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/library/LE/index.html> For further info, or to schedule a time to meet with a tutor, call (480) 41-7678.

## Disclaimer Statement

Maricopa Community College District directs all its faculty to include this legal disclaimer in their online course. Include include a link to it on your course homepage and any other webpage you wish: <http://www.maricopa.edu/disclaimer.html>

### Sample Statement:

The district instructs all faculty to include a link to the Maricopa County Community College Legal Disclaimer on their webpages. Be sure to include it on your course homepage, and any other pages you wish. The URL for the link is <http://www.maricopa.edu/disclaimer.htm>

[Maricopa Community College Legal Disclaimer](#)