Semester Start Checklist for Online Instructors

Item	Additional comments	
Setting up Blackboard		
Blackboard enable your courses	Sign into MyOleMiss and click on Faculty→Course Administration→Class Rolls and Grades→Set Blackboard Options→Enable→Make Available. You can uncheck 'Make Available' to keep the course hidden from students, but you will have to go back and check 'Make Available' on the first day of classes.	☐
Add teaching assistants to your Blackboard class	In your course in Blackboard, click on Users and Groups→users→find users to enroll. Enter the name or username of your TA, set his role as Teaching Assistant, then click submit. The TA's name should appear in your class list.	☐
Course copy	You can copy a previous semester's course content into the course you are building by logging into the course you want to copy, selecting 'course copy' on the menu under 'packages and utilities', and entering the number of the course you want the content to be copied into.	☐
Create a START HERE button on the left hand menu underneath your course name.	You can change the name of any of the menu buttons, making Course Information read START HERE by hovering over the button, clicking the arrow to the right of the button, and clicking 'rename'. Or you can add a menu item to this list by clicking the +.	☐
Build course modules	Divide your course into smaller chunks and set them up as modules. By building content in modules first, a content menu will appear to the left of the screen so students can more easily navigate through the content.	☐

Course Content		
Upload your syllabus	You should first save it as a PDF, then upload it either to the START HERE folder or a menu item marked SYLLABUS so students can easily find it. If you are using a syllabus from a previous semester, be sure to update the dates.	☐
Upload a video greeting	Video greetings don't have to be long – 1-2 minutes is enough time to tell the students who you are and what the course is about. You can add interest to your video by filming it on location in your research field or at one of your favorite places on campus. Be sure to caption your video so it is accessible to all students. You can do this yourself with most video editing software or if you've uploaded your video to YouTube. You can also send the video to your instructional designer to have it professionally captioned. Be sure to request captioning 7 days in advance of the first day of class.	☐
Upload a course schedule that clearly marks due dates for all assignments and scheduled dates for all quizzes, tests, and exams.	A course schedule should be in your syllabus, but also putting it in the START HERE folder as a printable and screen-readable document allows students a way to quickly access important information. If you are copying your course from one semester to another, be sure to change the dates on all documents. You may use Blackboard's course calendar.	☐
Write module learning objectives	Write learning objectives for each module and post them in the module description.	☐
After you build your modules, build your content folders.	The most common organization of folders is weekly, but other options include organizing them by assessment, learning objectives, or topics.	☐
Upload folder content	Try to be consistent in how you organize your modules and folders so students will know what to expect. Some instructors give students an estimated timeframe for completing each unit so they can plan accordingly.	☐
Check that your content meets copyright policy guidelines.	Videos, images, and music should be licensed, public domain, or fair use. Be sure to credit content creators.	☐

Check that your content meets accessibility policy guidelines.	Videos should be captioned, audio should have transcripts, text documents should be screen-readable (Word and pdf documents are readable, scanned content is not). Contact your instructional designer for help with captions and transcripts. Accessibility & Technology Solutions (ATS) provides resources on accessible documents and web pages.	☐
Check that your content meets copyright policy guidelines.	Videos, images, and music should be licensed, public domain, or fair use. Be sure to credit content creators.	☐
Check links and make sure content is still accurate and available	Sometimes content is removed from sites such as YouTube or moved to a different URL. You need to check web links regularly to be sure they are working correctly.	☐
Set up your gradebook	Add or link graded assessments, discussion boards, and drop box assignments so grades will appear in the gradebook. Be sure to make content available to students. If you wish to restrict content visibility, use the open and close dates. Contact your instructional designer or Blackboard Support (blackboard@olemiss.edu) for help.	☐
Synchronize course content	Double check that the schedule, assignments, and dates listed on your syllabus, course schedule, modules, content folders, and gradebook are the same.	☐
Student view	Open your course in student view to make sure it appears the way you want it to and that the students have access to everything they'll need in your class on the first day of the semester.	☐
Verification of Student Identity (VSI)	Federal regulations, our accrediting agency (SACS), and university policies require that safeguards are used to ensure that the student who receives the academic course credit is actually the person doing the work. There are several ways to verify student identity with the most common being proctored testing.	☐
Proctored Testing	If you select proctored testing as the means by which you verify student identity, the Distance Education Testing Lab (DETL) provides online testing services. Look for an email from DETL or contact them at detl@olemiss.edu. DO NOT share test passwords with students.	☐

Policy plans		
Student attendance verification	Make sure you have an active participation activity planning during the first two weeks of class because you will need to verify student attendance in your online class by providing an active participation activity.	☐
Student identity verification	If you are not using proctored testing in your class, you will need to plan a way to verify student identity so that imposters are not taking your class for registered students. Talk to your instructional designer about ways to integrate student verification into your course.	☐
SDS testing accommodations	You may have students with disabilities, so have a plan for providing them with alternate testing. Students who need an alternate location or extended time tests can be accommodated at any UM proctoring center and via ProctorU. Students with more advanced alternate testing needs should work with Student Disability Services.	☐