



# 2017 Teacher Handbook

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## **Welcome**

Welcome to Nextide Academy! Thank you for your interest in teaching online courses.

Online courses with Nextide Academy provide a great opportunity for students to enhance their learning through the convenience of courses taught in asynchronous environments. Online delivery is especially helpful for learners whose time constraints with work, family, or limited access to traditional brick-and-mortar schools prevent them from being able to attend traditional classes on a regular basis.

## **Staff Handbook for Online Teaching and Learning at Nextide Academy**

This handbook is for staffs that are planning to teach, via the Internet, for Nextide Academy. It is designed as a guide and reference tool to help staff understand the policies and expectations of teaching online for Nextide Academy.

## **Nextide Academy Distance Learning Philosophy**

The mission of Nextide Academy is to provide the best education possible, to as many students as possible, in as many countries as possible, for the lowest possible fee.

## **At-Will Employment**

No policy or provision in this handbook is intended to create a contract binding you or the employer to an agreement of employment for a specified period of time. Either the Course Instructor or the employer can terminate employment, at any time, for any reason, with or without notice. No representative or agent of the employer, other than the superintendent, can authorize or sign an employment agreement contrary to the above terms and otherwise make any binding offer of employment for a specific term. The contract is “non-exclusive” and does not prevent the Course Instructor from working for other online educational entities. However, the Course Instructor agrees to keep 1WS content, course development methods and all other operational details confidential and not to share details with other employers or professionals within the online education industry.

## **Who Should Take Nextide Academy Online Classes?**

Nextide Academy offers a standard American Middle and High School Diploma programs. Nextide Academy courses are developed based on research and standards. Students can also participate in credit recovery courses. The list of courses and course guides can be accessed when logged into the Learning Management System.

## **General Information about Nextide Academy Online Courses**

Please refer to the Nextide Academy website at <http://www.nextideacademy.org> .

## **Obtaining LMS accounts**

As a staff at Nextide Academy, you should receive login information for the Nextide Academy Learning Management Systems, Moodle and Plato LMS as part of your orientation. If you need technical

assistance regarding login credentials or the various online platforms, please contact the helpdesk at <http://helpdesk.nextideacademy.org> .

## **Assistance with Moodle and Edmentum**

For general information regarding the learning management system, Moodle, please visit this website:

[http://docs.moodle.org/25/en/Teaching\\_with\\_Moodle](http://docs.moodle.org/25/en/Teaching_with_Moodle)

Edmentum's Plato Courseware support can be accessed when logged into the Plato Courseware site at <http://ple.platoweb.com>

## **Responsibilities of Course Instructors**

1. Attend 2 hours of professional/peer training per month related to online-education. INACOL has free webinars in a variety of subject areas. Please log your training on Setmore (as a Training appointment with necessary information)
2. Post announcements within the course on a weekly basis to keep students informed of their progress and special assignments within the course.
3. Grade assignments and assessments within 48 hours of posting/completion.
4. Respond to emails from students within 48 hours so that students may progress at a steady pace.
5. Notify via the helpdesk of any problems with student behavior, student progress, course technology, or concerning additional teaching resources needed for the course. The helpdesk ticket will be routed to the appropriate staff for further action.
6. Communicate with student and staff as and when necessary. Sensei communication within the course is automatically logged. Any other form of communication outside of Sensei should be logged in the Setmore system. If you do not have your personalized Setmore URL, please contact the helpdesk.

7. Participation in one hour of virtual classroom each week, for every 25 students, is necessary in order to answer questions from students and assist in learning course concepts. (This means that if an instructor has more than 30 students then they should schedule additional time in order to adequately provide assistance to their students.)
8. Submit final grade reports for each student when they have completed their course. Interim reports may be submitted at the instructor's discretion if students are failing to make progress and need to be contacted by the administrative staff.
9. Keep all course content, course management, course development methods, administrative policies, personnel, and financial details of Nextide Academy private and confidential under penalty of law.

## **Teacher Evaluation Policy**

In order to fulfill the purpose of this policy and be consistent with the Policy Statement, the annual teacher evaluation and peer review process must contain the following elements at a minimum:

- Establishment of an individual growth and development plan, a peer review process, the opportunity to participate in a professional learning community and at least one summative evaluation performed by a qualified and trained evaluator such as a school administrator. For the years when a teacher is not evaluated by a qualified and trained evaluator, the teacher must be evaluated by a peer review. The teacher evaluation will be created based on professional teaching standards.
- Staff development activities must be synchronized with the teacher evaluation process and teachers' evaluation outcomes.
- Mentoring and induction programs may be included in the teacher evaluation process.
- Qualified and trained evaluators such as school administrators will perform summative evaluations.

- Nextide Academy will discipline teachers not making satisfactory progress in the teacher improvement process, including, but not limited to termination of employment.

Teacher's evaluation results are considered as sensitive data and all policies related to data security will apply.

## Questions?

We have an open communication policy at Nextide Academy. Please contact the helpdesk at <http://helpdesk.nextideacademy.org> for any questions, concerns or issues that you may have.

### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) by Teachers

1. Other than what is on the 'Course Prep Checklist' what should I be doing to prepare for the start of school?
  - a. Check discussion topics to make certain they're appropriate. You can edit them if you like. Confirm that all links to resources and readings work and are correct.
2. What should I do if something needs to be fixed within my content?
  - a. Open a ticket at <http://helpdesk.nextideacademy.org>
3. When will courses start?
  - a. Courses at Nextide Academy are open for enrollment year round.
4. When will I get paid?
  - a. Teachers are paid on the 1<sup>st</sup> of every month for the students from the previous month. There is a two-week delay giving us time to compute how many students each teacher had for that time period.
5. How much can I change the curriculum and assignments?
  - a. Courses were designed to meet standards and expectations. You can add assignments but may not remove any assignments so we do not lose the validity of courses. Once the courses are taught for a

while, we can discuss revamping any assignment that does not meet your expectations.

6. When will I know how many students I have?
  - a. When you login to the LMS system, access the class roster at any given time for the count. We will do our best to assign you the number of students you have requested (full or part time).
7. Who is the best person to ask questions to?
  - a. Please contact the helpdesk at <http://helpdesk.nextideacademy.org>
8. Where do I get tech support?
  - a. For tech support, contact the helpdesk at <http://helpdesk.nextideacademy.org>
9. There was some discussion about cultural differences. Will there be any further information on this? I think it might be useful for all of us to have access to some sort of “cheat sheet” or one-pager on any significant cultural differences that might impact the online learning environment.
  - a. A “cheat sheet” to share that can be a “living” document is being worked on currently. We will share the document online when it is ready.
10. Could you help me estimate the time commitment per student, per week? Since I am new to this, it would help in choosing the workload.
  - a. This is difficult to do. Some students only need feedback on their assignments while others will need extensive help (with a writing assignment, for example). Based on a recent published study, an experienced online teacher shared they currently are teaching 37 students and spend anywhere from one hour to three hours per day grading, depending on the student and the assignment.
11. What are our avenues for professional training for online education?
  - a. You can search the Internet and find numerous training videos and tip sheet that are available for self-learning. INACOL has numerous webinars on a variety of subjects related to online education. We

also notify you of symposiums and conferences that you can attend.

12. What is the evaluation criterion for teachers?
  - a. You can access the evaluation criteria from the policies page at <http://www.nextideacademy.org/policies>.
13. Can you tell me more about teacher pay?
  - a. Teachers get paid \$150 per student per year.
14. How many students will I be assigned?
  - a. Based on national benchmarking studies, we have a low student-to-teacher ratio at Nextide Academy compared to other online schools. It is our policy to limit the class-size at 100 students per teacher.
15. What are some of the other policies that I should be aware of?

All of our policies are laid out in the Student Handbook, Teacher Handbook and the detailed policies that are not covered are listed at <http://www.nextideacademy.org/policies>. Please remember that policies are always changing and always refer to our website for updates on the same.

## Definitions to Know for Online Teaching and Learning

- Accreditation- Often a peer reviewed process to determine quality of an educational program by evaluating schools using a set of educational standards. In the United States, there are national accrediting bodies and regional accrediting bodies that are established as a peer review process for validating quality. There are governmental and non-governmental accrediting bodies. It is important to note there are reputable, as well as dubious, accrediting bodies and the reputable accrediting bodies are approved by the United States Department of Education.
- Asynchronous leaning- Communication exchanges that occur in elapsed time between two or more people. Examples are: email, online discussion forums, message boards, blogs, podcasts, etc.

- Chatroom- A website, or part of a website or an online service, that offers communities a synchronous venue for discussing specific topics.
- Competency-based learning- 1) Students will advance upon mastery. 2) Competencies include explicit, measurable, and transferable learning objectives that empower students. 3) Assessment is meaningful and a positive learning experience for students. 4) Students receive timely, differentiated support based on their individual learning needs. 5) Learning outcomes emphasize competencies that include application and creation of knowledge along with the development of important skills and dispositions.
- Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI)- The use of educational software to enhance the mastering of educational concepts or standards without the involvement of a teacher.
- Course Management System (CMS)- The technology platform through which online courses are offered. A CMS includes software for the creation and editing of course content, communication tools, assessment tools, and other features designed to enhance access and ease of use.
- Distance education- General term for any type of educational activity in which the participants are at a distance from each other, in other words, are separated in space. They may or may not be separated in time (asynchronous vs. synchronous).
- Distance education course- Any course offered at a distance.
- E-course- Any course offered over the Internet.

- Engagement- Active participation in a course to promote retention and understanding for deeper learning.
- Full-time online student- A student who takes all of his/her courses over the Internet.
- Highly qualified teacher- The current Federal definition of a “highly qualified teacher” is one who is fully certified and/or licensed by the state; holds at least a Bachelor’s degree from a four-year institution; and demonstrates competence in each core academic subject area in which he or she teaches.
- Instructional media- The materials that teachers use to teach and students use to learn (for example, printed text, software, speech, images).
- Internet- A vast computer network connecting users worldwide via TCP/IP protocol.
- Intranet- A private network using the Internet within an enterprise for authorized users.
- Learning Management System (LMS)- The technology platform through which students access online courses. A LMS generally includes software for creating and editing course content, communication tools, assessment tools, and other features for managing the course.
- Learning object- An electronic media resource (or digital file; or collection of file) targeting a lesson objective, standard, or a lesson concept that can be used and reused for instructional purposes.
- Online course- Any course offered over the Internet.
- Online course provider- An organization that provides courses that are offered over the Internet.

- Online degree program- A program that offers degrees using courses delivered over the Internet.
- Online learning- Education in which instruction and content are delivered primarily over the Internet. The term does not include print-based correspondence education, broadcast television or radio, videocassettes, or stand-alone educational software programs that do not have a significant Internet-based instructional component. Used interchangeably with Virtual learning, Cyber learning, e-learning.
- Online learning program- An online learning program is an organized offering of courses delivered primarily over the Internet.
- Online learning resources- Any digital material used for supporting student learning that is delivered in multiple delivery models.
- Online professional development- Professional development delivered over the Internet.
- Online school- A formally constituted organization (public, private, state, charter, etc.) that offers full-time education delivered primarily over the Internet.
- Online teacher (or instructor)- The person who holds appropriate teaching certification and is responsible for instruction in an online course.
- Pace/pacing- The speed or time allotted with which a teacher or student moves through a course.
- Quality standards- A set of benchmarks or indicators for courses, teaching, professional development, programs, etc. developed by a governing body, association, or accrediting organization.
- Seat-time- The amount of instructional time to earn a credit (Carnegie Unit) and in online learning is indicated by the amount of time engaged in coursework.

- Self-paced- Online courses in which students work at their own pace within an overall timeframe.
- Student mentor- An adult who maintains a one-to-one relationship with a student over time and provides consistent instructional support and guidance toward academic achievement.
- Synchronous learning- Online learning in which the participant interact at the same time and in the same space.
- Threaded discussion- A forum that includes a running commentary of messages used by a group to facilitate asynchronous online discussions.
- Video conferencing- Interactive communication technologies which allow two or more locations to interact via two-way and audio transmissions simultaneously.
- Virtual class- A group of students assigned to the same online course.
- Webinar- A seminar which is conducted over the World Wide Web. It is a type of web conferencing. A webinar is “live” in the sense that information is conveyed according to an agenda, with a starting and ending time.