What "Online Course" Means at NMU

Depending on the context in which it is used, the phrase "online course" may have several different meanings. In some settings, an "online course" may be a self-paced tutorial; in others, it may be a live webcast. Neither of those definitions apply to NMU online courses, however. Before we talk about how to teach online, we need to define what we mean when we refer to "online courses" here at Northern.

Characteristics of NMU Online Courses

Online courses at NMU have the following characteristics:

- The teacher and students are in separate physical locations.
- Students are scattered in different locations from each other.
- The teaching and learning “space” is NMU EduCat™, NMU's learning management system (LMS). Content may be presented in a wide variety of formats within EduCat, and may also include links to external resources.
- They are designed to meet the best practice standards outlined by the Quality Matters rubric.
- They are led by an NMU faculty member or other instructors.
- Typically, the course is completely or almost completely asynchronous: the teacher and students have little or no "real time" interaction in the learning space. Note: EduCat does include tools for communicating synchronously (live), and some courses or activities may benefit from using them. However, when students sign up for NMU online courses, they expect to be able to complete coursework as their daily schedules allow (while adhering to deadlines, of course). If you plan to include synchronous (live) activities in an online course, that must be clearly stated in the course description.

Most online courses at NMU are taught by the faculty member who designs and develops them. There are some exceptions where a department has paid for development of an online course that is then provided to whatever instructor is teaching it in a particular semester.