



Best Practices for Online Course Design

About

This chart builds upon “Ecampus Essentials” to provide more information about best practices in online course design. Recommendations are based upon the Quality Matters Rubric, 5th edition.

Standards

General Standard	Detailed Standards	Why it's important
Course Overview and Introduction* Navigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Course structured into intuitive sections (weeks, units, etc.), with all materials for each section housed within that section• Intuitive and logical navigational structures are present• All OSU-required syllabus information is present (instructor's name, OSU email address, contact information, grading policies, etc.)• A course schedule with due dates is provided (within the syllabus or as a separate document)• Syllabus also includes information for online students, such as netiquette requirements and technical support info• Required special curricular instructions are provided for Bacc Core, WIC, and DPD courses	Clear navigation and overview/introductory materials help students find what they need, reducing frustration. They help students avoid missing important instructions or assignments.
Learning Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Course outcomes are equivalent to on-campus offerings of the same course• Course outcomes are measurable and observable (avoiding ambiguous verbs such as “understand,” or “comprehend”)• Weekly learning Outcomes and a weekly introduction is provided	An OSU course is an OSU course, regardless of modality. Learning outcomes are the roadmap for the course. Clear outcomes tell us exactly what should be covered and at which depth. Weekly Outcomes help students understand how daily coursework relates to course outcomes.



Assessment and Measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grading policies are stated clearly (such as stating grading criteria or supplying a rubric)• Assessments (assignments, exams, projects, discussions, etc.) are aligned with course outcomes, weekly Outcomes, content, and cognitive level• All assessments are collected within Canvas• Assessments are varied, including formative and summative assessments• If proctored exams are desired, proctoring requirements are established with the testing coordinator and communicated in the syllabus	<p>Clear expectations help students succeed. Assessments should be aligned with outcomes to ensure that outcomes are being met. Collection within Canvas is important for record-keeping and financial aid purposes. Using a “grade early, grade often” approach helps students monitor progress and helps to close the distance gap.</p>
Instructional Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Instructional materials are in alignment with the course outcomes and weekly Outcomes• Instructional materials are appropriately cited• Copyright permissions for any borrowed images, textual content, film, or other source materials have been requested; in cases where permissions are denied or when fees are not feasible, the source materials in question are removed. Videos are not streamed until permission is granted.• Instructional materials are presented in formats demonstrating best practices for distance education<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Appeal to a variety of learning preferences (readings, audio, visual, multimedia, etc.)○ Lecture content is brief (<20 mins.)○ All recordings are designed for Ecampus students (no recording of in class material)○ Audio and visual quality must be clear for all multimedia○ Lectures are not required; it is fine to use existing materials such as links to open education resources, readings, activities, etc.	<p>Instructional materials should prepare students for assessments.</p> <p>Copyright laws must be followed.</p> <p>Research shows that using best practices for presenting instructional materials helps students learn more effectively (for example, using active learning strategies, where students perform meaningful actions involving course content and then reflect on learning).</p> <p>Materials for online classes should be created for the audience of online students. Online students feel at a disadvantage when they are merely given recordings of on- campus activities or lectures.</p>



<p>Learner Interaction and Engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learning activities are aligned with course outcomes and weekly learning Outcomes• Opportunities for active learning (meaningful action + reflection) are provided• The instructor's response times for communications and grading are clearly stated• Three forms of interaction are present in the course:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Student/content (such as discussion board, readings, video, research projects)○ Student/instructor (such as discussion board, response to assignments, inclusion of a Q&A forum the instructor will facilitate)○ Student/student (such as discussion board, group projects, peer reviewed assignments)	<p>Research shows that active learning opportunities, as well as the three forms of interaction, are effective in online classes and for adult students.</p> <p>Response times help create a structure for interaction.</p>
<p>Course Technology</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appropriate tools are used for their intended purpose (assignment tool for homework, exam tool for exams, rather than having students email assignments, for example)• Tools outside of Canvas are used in ways that comply with FERPA regulations and student completion of work is logged within Canvas• Grades are communicated to students using the Canvas grading center• Links to outside resources are functional	<p>FERPA adherence is required by law. Tracking student participation and progress within Canvas helps us keep records and helps the financial aid office determine eligibility.</p>
<p>Learner Support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information about learner support is provided, such as the Start Here Module in the Ecampus Canvas course template, which includes a link to Ecampus Student Resources• LibGuides are embedded in Canvas course shells, when appropriate	<p>Access to student services sometimes differs for campus and Ecampus students. Online student fees provide access to Ecampus-specific student services, such as NetTutor.</p>
<p>Accessibility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simple font and color schemes are used• Canvas pages are structured in an accessible format (such as using heading styles)• Visuals, such as PowerPoint presentations, contain sufficient contrast from background color to foreground text• Audio and video materials have captions or transcripts available• Documents are posted in accessible format (such as a PDF file with document structure tags, and images with alt text)	<p>Providing accessible content is required by law.</p> <p>Using a universal design approach during course development is better for students, is more inclusive for diverse learners, and is more efficient than retrofitting a non-accessible course.</p>