

# Standards for Online Courses

The following Standards for Online Courses have been carefully developed to ensure the highest quality and consistency of online course offerings (full online, partial online, hybrid) at Clayton State University and align with best practices, national initiatives towards standardizing online teaching, and current research in the practice of teaching in an online environment.

## Sources:

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- Krauth, B. (1996). *Principles of Good Practice for Electronically Offered Academic Degree and Certificate Programs, Cause/Effect*, Spring, 1996. Maryland Online, Inc. (2014). *Quality Matters Rubric Standards* (5th ed.).
- Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) (2009). *Principles of Good Practice - The Foundation for Quality of Southern Regional Education Board's Electronic Campus*.
- Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) (2006). *Standards for Quality Online Courses*.
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# Standards Overview

## I. Course Overview, Introduction, Content and Design

Course content is carefully organized, current and relevant. Course design and navigation elements are consistent and user-friendly. Instructional materials are comprehensive, achievable and available before the course opens. The design of course materials has been carefully planned and prepared. Learning Management System (LMS) elements, instructor information, policies, student information and technical support are clearly indicated.

## II. Learning Objectives

The course uses learning objectives that are specific, measurable, active, aligned and learner focused.

## III. Assessment and Measurement

The effectiveness of the course is evaluated regularly using a variety of assessment strategies. Findings are used as a basis for improvement. Multiple assessment strategies are used to measure content knowledge, attitudes and/or skills. Feedback is provided throughout the course to enable self-monitoring of progress by students. Expectations, grading policies and rubrics are clear and easily accessible.

## IV. Resources & Materials

The course effectively incorporates relevant and real-world examples, applications and information resources, where appropriate by discipline. Strategies are employed to develop a community of online learners. The course offers opportunities to construct meaning, reflect, examine assumptions, critique, question and transfer knowledge. The course offers ample opportunities for interaction and communication and contains an appropriate level of rigor and depth.

## V. Learner Engagement

Course components that promote active learning contribute to the learning process and to learner persistence. Interactive activities and a variety of strategies are used to engage and motivate students.

## VI. Course Technology

The instructor takes full advantage of available interactive, communication, and student engagement technologies. The instructor provides links and connections to resources beyond the online classroom. Course technology is optimized for ease of use and user productivity.

## VII. Learner Support

Courses are effectively supported for students through fully accessible modes of delivery, resources, and student support.

## VIII. Accessibility

The course meets accessibility Standards for interoperability and access for all learners (where appropriate or required)

Standard I – Course Overview, Introduction, Content and Design – 23 points

Specific Standard	Points	Annotations
1.1 Instructions make clear how to get started and where to find various course components	3	<p>Instructors may choose to incorporate some of this information in the course syllabus. In this case, learners should be directed to the syllabus at the beginning of the course. A useful feature is a “Read Me First” or “Start Here” button or icon on the course home page, linking learners to start-up information.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A course “tour”</li> <li>• Clear statements about how to get started in the course</li> <li>• A “scavenger hunt” or “syllabus quiz” assignment that leads learners through an exploration of the different parts of the course</li> <li>• A table or diagram that depicts the relationship between the online and face-to-face portions of a blended course</li> </ul> <p><b>Blended Courses:</b> Instructions in the online classroom make it clear to learners that the course is a blended course, with both online and face-to-face components and activities. Instructions specify the requirements for both the online and face-to-face portions of the course. The introductory information clearly states when and where learners should participate each week, and a structured set of topics and a schedule are provided for each face-to-face meeting.</p>
1.2 A statement introduces the student to the purpose of the course and to its components; in the case of a blended course, the statement clarifies the relationship between the face-to-face and online components.	3	<p>Information is provided to help learners understand the purpose of the course and how the learning process is structured and carried out, including course schedule, delivery modalities (online or blended), modes of communication, types of learning activities, and how learning will be assessed.</p> <p>Such information may be provided or reinforced in the course syllabus or other course documents; or in areas with titles such as “Course Introduction,” “Welcome from the Instructor,” “Start Here,” “Course Schedule,” “Course Outline,” “Course Map,” “Course Calendar,” etc.</p>
1.3 The Syllabus is current, easily located, and can be read online or printed by the student.	3	Learners should be directed to the syllabus at the beginning of the course. For example, the syllabus could be included in the “Start Here” or “Read Me First” module.
1.4 Course and/or institutional policies with which the learner is expected to comply are clearly stated, or a link to current policies is provided.	3	Policies may address such matters as student conduct, academic integrity, late submission of assignments, the grade of “Incomplete,” withdrawal without penalty, confidentiality in the classroom, student grievances, electronic communication, etc. Confirm that the policies are adequately explained and up-to-date. The substance of

		<p>policies are not to be evaluated. Policies may be established by the instructor or by the institution. Most instructors include this information in the syllabus.</p> <p>Examples of policies to include in a policy statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Etiquette expectations (sometimes called “netiquette”) for online discussions, email, and other forms of communication are stated clearly.</li> <li>• Attendance</li> <li>• Late work</li> <li>• Course withdrawal</li> <li>• Academic integrity</li> <li>• Exams &amp; quizzes</li> <li>• Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)</li> <li>• Technology usage</li> <li>• Peer 2 Peer &amp; Copyright</li> </ul> <p>Academic integrity and late submission policies are especially important.</p>
1.5 The self-introduction by the instructor is appropriate and available online.	2	<p>The initial introduction creates a sense of connection between the instructor and the learners. It presents the instructor as professional as well as approachable, and includes the essentials, such as the instructor’s name, title, field of expertise, email address, phone number, and times when the instructor is typically online or may be reached by phone.</p> <p>Expectations of the relationship and communication style between teacher and learner are culturally influenced. Including information about the role of the instructor and how to address the instructor is helpful to learners from all backgrounds.</p> <p>For online courses a video introduction is highly encouraged.</p>
1.6 Virtual office hours and instructor contact information are prominently displayed.	2	<p>Instructor contact information is displayed on the course home page in the LMS for online courses. Contact information is available in the syllabus for blended courses.</p>
1.7 Students are asked to introduce themselves to the class.	2	<p>Learner introductions at the beginning of the class help to create a welcoming learning environment and a sense of community. Learners are asked to introduce themselves and given guidance on where and how they should do so.</p>

		<p>Instructors can increase student engagement by asking students to share something meaningful or memorable about themselves. This may be a career goal, an achievement or a challenge they have overcome.</p> <p>Instructors may provide an example of an introduction and/or start the process by introducing themselves. Instructors may give learners the opportunity to represent themselves by text, audio, or visual means.</p>
1.8 Minimum technology requirements are clearly stated and instructions for use provided.	2	<p>Include information in the syllabus or in the getting started learning module with instructions for using the software needed (i.e. Adobe Acrobat for PDF files).</p> <p>Create hyperlinks to software downloads and instructions</p> <p>Learners are provided with detailed, clearly worded information regarding the technologies they will need throughout the course. The word “technologies” covers a wide range, including hardware, software, subscriptions, and plug-ins. In evaluating whether this Standard is met, confirm that clear instructions are provided for obtaining, installing, and using the technologies.</p> <p>Examples of information to include in a technology requirements statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If a web camera, speakers, a microphone, and/or a headset are necessary, the need for such peripherals is clearly stated.</li> <li>• A list of required downloadable resources, including links, is provided.</li> <li>• If publisher materials are required, clearly stated instructions for how to obtain and use any required access codes are provided.</li> </ul>
1.9 Prerequisite knowledge in the discipline are clearly stated.	1	<p>Instructors may choose to list any course prerequisites in a section titled “Course Prerequisites” in the syllabus.</p> <p>For example, “Successful completion of ENGL 1101 is required to enroll in this course.”</p>
1.10 Minimum student preparation in the course are clearly stated.	1	<p>Instructors may choose to include a description of the minimum student preparation in a section of the syllabus titled "Student Preparation".</p> <p>For example, “Students should expect to spend 9 hours per week on this course”.</p>
1.11 Minimum technical skills expected of the student is clearly stated.	1	<p>Instructors may choose to include a description of the minimum technical skill required to successfully complete the course. The information can be listed in the syllabus in a section titles “Computer Skill Prerequisites”.</p>

Specific Standard	Points	Annotations
<p>2.1 The course learning objectives describe outcomes that are measurable, clearly stated and written from a student's perspective.</p>	<p>3</p>	<p><b>Alignment:</b> The concept of alignment is intended to convey the idea that critical course components work together to ensure that learners achieve the desired learning outcomes. Measurable course and module/unit learning objectives or competencies form the basis of alignment in a course. Other elements of the course, including those addressed in Standards 2.2, 3.1, 4.1, 5.1, and 6.1, contribute to the accomplishment of the learning objectives or competencies.</p> <p>Describe “Course Learning Outcomes” in the syllabus and post related course objectives and module objectives at the beginning of each module.</p> <p>Measurable course learning objectives or competencies precisely and clearly describe what learners will learn and be able to do if they successfully complete the course. Course objectives or competencies describe desired learner mastery using terms that are specific and observable enough to be measured by the instructor. At some institutions, learning objectives or competencies may be called “learning outcomes.”</p> <p>Include directions on how to access alignment of outcomes, objectives, assessments (e.g., located within the syllabus or modules).</p> <p><b>Special Situations:</b> In some cases (check the Course Worksheet), the course objectives or competencies are institutionally mandated, and the individual instructor does not have the authority to change them. If the institutionally mandated learning objectives or competencies are not measurable, make note of it in your recommendations. Write specific suggestions for improvement that can be used at the institution level to frame objectives or competencies in terms that are measurable. If the course objectives or competencies are institutionally mandated, then the reviewer may need to consider Standard 2.1 in conjunction with Standard 2.2, as follows:</p> <p>Standard 2.1 is MET under the following circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1. The course objectives or competencies are measurable, whether set by the institution or by the instructor.</li> <li>• 2. The institutionally mandated course objectives or competencies are not measurable, but the faculty-written module/unit objectives or competencies are measurable and aligned with the course objectives.</li> </ul> <p>Standard 2.1 is NOT MET under the following circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1. There are no stated course objectives or competencies.</li> <li>• 2. The course objectives or competencies set by the instructor are not</li> </ul>

		<p>measurable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. The institutionally mandated course objectives or competencies are not measurable, and the faculty-written module/unit objectives or competencies are either not measurable or not present.</li> </ul>
<p>2.2 The module/unit learning objectives describe outcomes that are measurable, consistent with the course-level objectives, clearly stated and written from a student’s perspective.</p>	<p>3</p>	<p><b>Alignment:</b> The concept of alignment is intended to convey the idea that critical course components work together to ensure that learners achieve the desired learning outcomes. Measurable module/unit learning objectives or competencies form the basis of alignment in a course because they are consistent with the course-level objectives or competencies (2.1). Objectives or competencies explain how learners will be assessed (3.1). Instructional materials (4.1), activities (5.1), and technologies used in the course (6.1) contribute to the accomplishment of the learning objectives or competencies.</p> <p>Learning objectives or competencies at the module/unit level align with and are more specific than course objectives or competencies. The module/unit learning objectives or competencies describe learner mastery in specific, observable terms and in smaller, discrete pieces. The objectives or competencies precisely describe the specific competencies, skills, and knowledge learners can master and demonstrate at regular intervals throughout the course. The module/unit objectives or competencies may either implicitly or explicitly be aligned with the course-level objectives or competencies.</p> <p>Align Course Outcomes and Learning Module Objectives Using:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Syllabus Chart</li> <li>Checklist within modules</li> </ul>
<p>2.3 The relationship between learning objectives or competencies and course activities is clearly stated.</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>Learning Objectives or competencies are integrated throughout the course and are not just listed in the syllabus. Confirm a relationship exists between the stated learning objectives or competencies and the activities learners are asked to complete.</p> <p>Examples of course components that clarify the relationship:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Links from assignments to the relevant course objectives or competencies</li> <li>A numbering system that shows how course activities correspond to learning objectives or competencies</li> <li>A narrative explaining how the course activities enable learners to meet the objectives or competencies</li> </ul> <p>As a reviewer, consider both the course and module/unit learning objectives or</p>

		<p>competencies in your assessment of this Standard. Reviewers may look for information indicating which learning activities, instructional materials, assignments, and assessments support specific learning objectives or competencies.</p> <p>See Standard 4.2 regarding instructions to learners on how to use the instructional materials to meet the learning objectives or competencies. The relationship between course objectives or competencies and learning activities also is discussed in Standard 5.1.</p>
<p>2.4 The learning objectives or competencies are suited to the level of the course.</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>Expected content mastery is appropriate to the type and level of the course. Taxonomies that describe levels of learning can be helpful in categorizing learning objectives or competencies by level and in enabling reviewers to determine whether the objectives or competencies correspond to the course.</p> <p>For example, a first-year course is likely to include objectives or competencies that are lower in the cognitive realm than those in an upper-level course. Objectives or competencies in a lower-level course may use verbs such as "identify," "describe," or "apply," which align with assessments such as multiple-choice quizzes, essay questions in exams, or solving problems.</p> <p>In addition to content-specific objectives or competencies, lower-division courses may address content mastery and core learning skills. Core learning skills, including critical thinking, information literacy, and technology skills, are typically those that transcend an individual course and are integrated across the curriculum. Core learning skills are sometimes called "core competencies."</p> <p>Upper-division and graduate courses may focus on objectives or competencies closely related to the specific discipline. For example, an upper-level or graduate course would include objectives or competencies high in the cognitive realm and use verbs such as "differentiate," "design," or "justify," with assessments such as critiques, flow charts, or original research.</p> <p>For Reviewers: Examine the course and module/unit learning objectives or competencies to ensure they describe knowledge and skills that correspond to the course level.</p>

Standard III – Assessment and Measurement Specific Standard – 13 points

Specific Standard	Points	Annotations
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<p>3.1 The types of assessments and activities selected measure the stated learning objectives.</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>Align course outcomes and assessments using:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Syllabus Chart</li> <li>• Checklist within modules</li> </ul> <p><b>Alignment:</b> Course assessments (ways of confirming learner mastery) are consistent with the course and module learning objectives or competencies (see Standards 2.1 and 2.2) by measuring the accomplishment of those objectives or competencies. Instructional materials (4.1), activities (5.1), and course technologies (6.1) support the learning objectives or competencies and enable learners to meet them.</p>
<p>3.2 The course grading policy is stated clearly.</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>Include a section in the syllabus that describes the evaluation process and the course grading policy.</p> <p>A clear, written statement fully explains how the course grades are calculated. The points, percentages, and weights for each component of the course grade are clearly stated. The relationship(s) between points, percentages, weights, and letter grades are explained.</p> <p>The instructor's policy on late submissions is clearly stated.</p> <p>Review the clarity of the explanation and presentation to the learner, not the simplicity or complexity of a given grading system itself. Even a relatively complex grading system can be made easy to understand.</p> <p>Suggestions for meeting this criterion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A list of all activities, tests, etc., that will determine the final grade</li> <li>• An explanation of the relationship between the final course letter grade and the learner's accumulated points and/or percentages</li> <li>• An explanation of the relationship between points and percentages, if both are used</li> <li>• A clearly stated policy on point deductions for assignments submitted late</li> </ul>
<p>3.3 Specific and descriptive criteria are provided for the evaluation of students' work and participation.</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>Learners are provided with a clear and complete description of the criteria that will be used to evaluate their work and participation in the course. These criteria are stated up-front at the beginning of the course. The description or statement of criteria provides learners with clear guidance on the instructor's expectations and on the required components of coursework and participation. The criteria give learners the information they need to understand how a grade on an assignment or activity will be calculated.</p> <p>Examples of what to look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1. Evidence that the instructor has stated the criteria for evaluation of all graded</li> </ul>

		<p>work. Criteria may be in the form of a detailed checklist, rubric, or other instrument for identifying the various levels of learner mastery.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2. A description of the how learners’ participation in discussions will be graded, including the number of required postings per week; the criteria for evaluating the originality and quality of learners’ comments and their responsiveness to classmates’ comments; and the grade or credit learners can expect for varying levels of performance.</li> </ul>
<p>3.4 The assessment instruments selected are sequenced, varied, and suited to the learner work being assessed.</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>Multiple assessment strategies are used in both the online and face -to-face settings, including alternative assessments that require learners to apply what they learn and to think critically.</p> <p>In traditional assessments, such as those that use multiple choice, true-false, or matching, learners are asked to select a response from different options, and tests often are self-scoring.</p> <p>In alternative assessments, also commonly called performance or authentic assessments, learners are asked to develop an answer in response to a prompt or stimulus, which is graded by the instructor. Such assessments may include interviews, journals, portfolios, observations, demonstrations, performance tasks, and exhibits.</p> <p>Assessments are varied to provide multiple ways for learners to demonstrate mastery, and to accommodate diverse learners.</p> <p>The assessments are sequenced to promote the learning process and to build on previously mastered knowledge and skills gained in this course and prerequisite courses. Assessments are paced to give learners adequate time to achieve mastery and complete the work in a thoughtful manner.</p> <p>Examples that meet the Standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A series of assessments that progress from the definition of terms, to a short paper explaining the relationship between various theoretical concepts, to a term paper that includes the application of theoretical concepts and critical analysis of a journal article</li> <li>• Multiple types of assessment that enable the instructor to become familiar with an individual learner’s work and that discourage “proxy cheating” (someone other than the learner completing and submitting work)</li> </ul> <p>Examples that MAY NOT meet the Standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The assessments consist of only multiple-choice tests.</li> <li>• The first assessment requires learners to locate research materials, while library</li> </ul>

		<p>research skills and methods are not covered until later in the course.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No assessments are administered during the first 12 weeks of the semester, and an essay, term paper, and final exam are due during the 13th, 14th, and 15th weeks, respectively.</li> <li>• Discussion board posts are assessed based on frequency or word count instead of on criteria related to the course objectives or competencies.</li> </ul> <p>Circumstances affecting some upper-level/graduate courses: The grade may be entirely based on a major assignment due at the end of the term. In this case, benchmarks for progress are provided during the term, with feedback from the instructor.</p> <p>Examples of benchmark assignments might include submission of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An outline or project plan</li> <li>• A bibliography</li> <li>• A précis of the paper or project</li> <li>• One or more preliminary drafts</li> </ul>
<p>3.5 The course provides learners with multiple opportunities to track their learning progress.</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>Learning is more effective if learners receive frequent, substantive, and timely feedback. The feedback may come from the instructor directly, from assignments and assessments that have feedback built into them, or even from other learners. Look for examples of self-check quizzes and activities, as well as other types of practice opportunities that provide timely feedback. Such assignments may be voluntary and/or allow multiple attempts.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing assignments that allow for the submission of a draft for instructor comment and suggestions for improvement</li> <li>• Discussion posts with feedback (grading form or feedback)</li> <li>• Self-mastery tests that include informative feedback with each answer choice</li> <li>• Interactive games and simulations that have feedback built in</li> <li>• Self-scoring practice quizzes</li> <li>• Practice written assignments</li> <li>• Peer reviews and critiques</li> <li>• Model papers or essays provided for learners' viewing</li> <li>• Sample answers or answer keys provided for learners' viewing</li> <li>• Portfolios with a self-evaluation component, journals, and reflection papers</li> </ul>

Standard IV – Resources & Materials – 13 points

Specific Standard	Points	Annotations
4.1 The instructional materials are sufficiently comprehensive to achieve the stated course/unit outcomes.	3	<p><b>Alignment:</b> The instructional materials used in the course align with the course and module learning objectives or competencies (see Standards 2.1 and 2.2) by contributing to the achievement of those objectives or competencies and by integrating effectively with the tools (6.1), assessments (3.1), and activities (5.1) selected for the course.</p> <p>Instructional materials may include but are not limited to textbooks, publisher- or instructor-created resources, multimedia, and websites. The materials align with the learning objectives or competencies in a clear and direct way and provide the information and resources learners need to achieve the stated learning objectives or competencies. As a reviewer, consider both the course and module/unit learning objectives or competencies in your assessment of the course’s adherence to this Standard.</p>
4.2 Both the purpose of instructional materials and how the materials are to be used for learning activities are clearly explained.	3	<p>Learners are provided with an explanation of how the instructional materials, resources, technologies, and learning activities are used in the course, and how each will help them achieve the stated learning objectives or help them prepare to demonstrate course competencies.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Links to external websites indicate the purpose of the links or are completely self-evident.</li> <li>2. The function of interactive games or exercises is clearly explained or is completely self-evident.</li> </ol> <p>The purpose of all instructional materials (books and other publications, videos, multimedia, software or interactive elements, etc.) used in the course is clearly explained to learners.</p> <p>Reviewers confirm that instructional materials such as simulations or interactive media are integrated well enough to be useful to the learner.</p> <p>An example would be a course that requires learners to use the following materials: a textbook divided into chapters, video segments ordered by topics, a website or simulation activities organized around specific skills, and an internal or external website that has an opening menu consisting of “practice quizzes,” “images,” and “audio examples.” In such a course, consider whether the order in which learners should use these varied materials is clearly indicated, as well as how each is related to the learning</p>

		<p>objectives or competencies and activities, and how the materials are related to one another.</p> <p>In advanced undergraduate and graduate courses in which learners are expected to find their own learning materials, the instructor posts guidelines that assist the learner in identifying relevant materials and in distinguishing between core and supplementary materials and between scholarly and non- scholarly sources for academic writing.</p> <p><b>Blended Courses:</b> Instructions make clear which materials are to be used in the face-to-face classroom and which are specific to the online portion of the course.</p>
4.3 Instructional materials are divided into manageable sections or chunks.	3	<p>It is advisable to create “chunks” of content (i.e., short video and audio, smaller PPT’s, etc.). The smaller chunks of content allow students to consume content without having to block out long periods of time. And, since students may not instinctively block out enough time to study in an online course, this can help them consume the content while at the same time make managing the content easier.</p>
4.4 All resources and materials used in the course are appropriately cited and follow copyright guidelines.	2	<p>All audio, visual, pictures, articles and other materials should contain a statement like the follow: This content is only for the use students in the course for the purpose associated with the course and may not be retained or further disseminated.(Include in the header or description of each link)</p> <p>Cite all use of graphics, video and copyrighted documents.</p> <p>Annotate resource links</p> <p>Never use content that is copyright protected without obtaining permission. The CID and the Library Staff can assist you in obtaining or identifying copyrighted materials and permissions.</p> <p>For more information see <a href="http://www.clayton.edu/cid/copyright">http://www.clayton.edu/cid/copyright</a></p>
4.5 The instructional materials are varied.	2	<p>Use varied methods to convey course content, such as audio, video, PowerPoint, virtual classroom, screen external websites, and other source documents.</p> <p>The course presents a variety of relevant instructional materials that may include textbooks and other publications, instructor-created resources, websites, and multimedia.</p> <p>Typically, a course includes multiple sources rather than material from a single author. In some disciplines, it may be appropriate to have all materials from a single author.</p>

Standard V – Learner Engagement – 11 points

Specific Standard	Points	Annotations
5.1 The learning activities promote the achievement of the stated learning objectives or competencies.	3	<p><b>Alignment:</b> The purpose of learning activities is to facilitate the learner's achievement of the stated objectives or competencies. Learning activities align with the course and module objectives or competencies, as well as with assessments, instructional materials, and course technologies (see Standards 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 4.1, and 6.1), by engaging learners in activities that promote mastery of the stated learning objectives or competencies.</p> <p>Ensure that the activities support the learning objectives or competencies and assessments</p>
5.2 Learning activities provide opportunities for interaction that support active learning.	3	<p>Activities encourage learners' engagement through different types of interaction as appropriate to the course. Interactions are designed as activities to support the course objectives or competencies and may vary with the discipline, purpose, and level of the course. Look for the interactions and not just the number of opportunities for interaction.</p> <p>Types of interaction include learner-instructor, learner-content, and learner-learner. Active learning involves learners engaging by "doing" something, such as discovering, processing, or applying concepts and information. Active learning entails guiding learners to increasing levels of responsibility for their own learning.</p> <p>Activities for learner-instructor interaction might include an assignment or project submitted for instructor feedback; learner-instructor discussion in a synchronous session or an asynchronous discussion board exchange; or a frequently-asked-questions (FAQ) discussion forum moderated by the instructor.</p> <p>Activities for learner-content interaction might include assigned reading from a textbook, article, or online resource; assigned completion of a workbook or online exercise; or a learning-how-to-learn activity.</p> <p>Activities for learner-learner interaction might include assigned collaborative activities such as group discussions; small-group projects; group problem-solving assignments; or peer critiques.</p> <p>Look for opportunities for learner-instructor interaction, learner-content interaction,</p>

		<p>and, if appropriate to the course, learner-learner interaction.</p> <p><b>Blended Courses:</b> In courses that use both online and face-to-face settings, the learning activities that occur in these two settings are connected by a common thread or theme and are mutually reinforcing. The connection and reinforcement are made clear to learners. For example, the different parts of an activity might be sequenced in an alternating way in online and face-to-face meetings of the course.</p>
<p>5.3 The instructor’s plan for classroom response time and feedback on assignments is clearly stated.</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>Frequent feedback from the instructor increases learners’ sense of engagement in a course. Learners are better able to manage their course activities when they know upfront when to expect feedback from the instructor. The course provides clear information about when learners will receive instructor responses to emails and discussion postings, feedback on assignments, and grades. This information typically appears in the course syllabus.</p> <p>If it is necessary to alter the response-time standards during the course, the adjustment is clearly communicated to learners.</p> <p>The purpose of this standard is to ensure that each instructor has provided a response plan. Instructors will not be evaluated on the content of the plan.</p>
<p>5.4 The requirements for learner interaction are clearly stated.</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>A clear explanation of the requirements for learner interaction helps learners plan and manage their class participation and is important for promoting learners’ active involvement in the course. The statement of requirements also provides a basis for the instructor to evaluate learner participation. The more specifically the expectations are explained, the easier it is for the learner to meet the expectations. Clearly explaining the role of the instructor and expectations for interactions with the instructor and with other learners is especially helpful to learners from cultures in which deference to the instructor is customary and who may need encouragement to “speak up.”</p> <p>Typically, expectations for learner participation are stated in the course information page or syllabus. These requirements may specify the nature of the required participation and expectations for frequency and quality of the learner’s interactions. More specific, task-related performance expectations may be included in the individual task description. The instructor may also provide rubrics detailing how learner interactions are evaluated, including reading and responding to the instructor’s and classmates’ posts.</p>

		Reviewers will look for a clear, prominently placed statement of the instructor's expectations for learner participation in required course interactions (frequency, length, timeliness, etc.).
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Standard VI – Course Technology – 8 points

Specific Standard	Points	Annotations
6.1 The tools used in the course support the learning objectives and competencies.	3	<p><b>Alignment:</b> The tools selected for the course align with the course and module objectives or competencies (see Standards 2.1 and 2.2) by effectively supporting the course's assessment instruments (3.1), instructional materials (4.1), and learning activities (5.1).</p> <p>Tools are functional software that provide areas for interaction in the course; they may be included in the LMS or external to the LMS.</p> <p>Examples of tools are discussion boards, chat rooms, grade book, social media, games, whiteboard, wikis, blogs, virtual classrooms, web conferencing, etc.</p> <p>Specific tools are not required for this Standard to be met. Tools that are used support the learning objectives or competencies and fit the learning activities.</p> <p>Clear information and instructions are provided regarding how the tools support the learning objectives or competencies. Technology is not used simply for its own sake. For example, a course might require posting to a discussion forum, but it may not be clear how the discussions support a learning objective or competency.</p> <p><b>Special Situations:</b> In some cases, the course objectives or competencies are institutionally mandated, and the individual instructor does not have the authority to change them. For such cases, the reviewer will consider instead the module/unit objectives or competencies to assess whether Standard 6.1 is met.</p>
6.2 Course tools promote learner engagement and active learning.	3	<p>Tools used in the course help learners actively engage in the learning process rather than passively absorb information. Selected tools help the learner actively engage in the course by facilitating interactions with the instructor, course materials, and other learners.</p> <p>Examples of tools that support engagement and active learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interactive, real-time software, such as real-time collaborative tools, webinars,</li> </ul>

		<p>and virtual worlds</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Software that facilitates interactions and collaborations, such as shared documents or wikis</li> <li>• Animations, simulations, and games that require learner input</li> <li>• Discussion tools with automatic notification or a "read/unread" tracking feature</li> <li>• Automated self-check exercises requiring learner responses</li> </ul>
6.3 Navigation throughout the online components of the course is logical, consistent, and efficient.	2	<p>Instructors may provide learners with a "Course Tour" to demonstrate course navigation.</p> <p>Each module within the course should use a consistent organizational structure.</p>

#### Standard VII – Learner Support – 8 points

Specific Standard	Points	Annotations
7.1 The course instructions articulate or link to a clear description of the technical support offered.	3	<p>Instructors may provide a hyperlink to HUB site: <a href="http://thehub.clayton.edu">http://thehub.clayton.edu</a></p> <p>This standard is met by using the “Course Default” navigation template.</p>
7.2 Course instructions articulate or link to an explanation of how the institution’s academic support system can assist the student in effectively using the resources provided.	3	<p>Instructors may provide a hyperlink to CSU Center for Academic Success: <a href="http://www.clayton.edu/cas/Information">http://www.clayton.edu/cas/Information</a></p> <p>This standard may be met with the Student Services Widget in D2L template.</p>
7.3 Course instructions articulate or link to an explanation of how the institution’s student services and resources can help learners succeed and how learners can obtain them.	2	<p>Support services and resources include advising, registration, financial aid, student or campus life, counseling, career services, online workshops, and student organizations.</p> <p>This standard may be met with the Student Services Widget in D2L template.</p> <p>The course may provide the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A clear description of support services and how to obtain them (including email addresses and phone numbers for key personnel)</li> <li>• Guidance on when and how learners may obtain a support service or resource (for example, when and how to meet with an academic advisor)</li> </ul>

#### Standard VIII – Accessibility – 9 points

Specific Standard	Points	Annotations
8.1 Course navigation facilitates ease of use.	3	<p>Navigation refers to the process of planning, controlling, and recording the movement of a learner from one place to another in the online course. Navigation throughout the course is consistent, logical, and efficient.</p> <p>Confirm that the course's navigation strategies facilitate ease of movement through the course and course activities.</p> <p>As a reviewer, also consider the ownership of the design of course navigation features. Some navigation devices—"next" and "previous" links, for example—are in the LMS and cannot be modified. The Course Worksheet provides information about navigation features that cannot be changed. Other navigation devices—hypertext links, icons, and window functions, for example—may be within the control of the instructor.</p> <p>Examples of strategies that facilitate ease of use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent layout and design are employed throughout, making content, instructional materials, tools, and media easy to locate from anywhere in the course. Design elements are used repetitively, increasing predictability and intuitiveness.</li> <li>• Course pages have links, files, and icons that are labeled with easy-to-understand, self-describing, and meaningful names. Icons used as links also have HTML tags or an accompanying text link.</li> <li>• The course design enables learners to easily locate where they are within the course and to easily return to the home page from any location.</li> <li>• Tables are used to organize data and have appropriate table headers. Data cells are associated with their appropriate headers, making it easy for learners to navigate and understand the data.</li> <li>• The hierarchy of material in a page or document is clearly indicated through heading styles (Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.). A table of contents can be included that allows learners to move easily throughout documents.</li> </ul>
8.2 The course provides alternative means of access to course materials in formats that meet the needs of diverse learners.	2	<p>The course provides alternatives to all non-text content so that all learners have access to equivalent information.</p> <p>The Standard is met if the equivalent textual representations are located or linked within the course. In instances where alternative formats are provided, the general accuracy of the alternate content is verified. For example, if captions are provided for a video, the reviewer can view some of the captions to confirm that the captions correctly represent the audio content.</p>

		<p>Examples of non-text content and options for equivalent textual representation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Video and animations are captioned, or text transcripts are readily available. If the audio content corresponds with the visual content in a way that conveys meaning (e.g., a video demonstrating how to operate a Bunsen burner in a chemistry lab), captions provide an equivalent experience. If the audio content does not correspond with visual content (e.g., a visual of an instructor providing a lecture without visual aids), then a text transcript is sufficient.</li> <li>• Visual information, including images, graphs, and tables, are described via an alt-tag, long description, caption, or audio description.</li> <li>• Tables are set up with headings for columns and rows.</li> <li>• Document or HTML titles, headings, etc., are formatted using styles found in the word processing software (such as Word) style gallery; they do not merely utilize a larger or bold or italic font.</li> <li>• PDFs that contain text are not merely image scans; any text contained in PDFs is selectable and searchable.</li> <li>• Colors alone are not relied on to convey meaning. The meaning is also conveyed in another way that does not require perceiving different colors.</li> <li>• When alternative formats are provided, verify the general accuracy of the alternate content. Verification is important because not all attempts to provide alternate formats meet the goal of providing equivalent access for diverse learners.</li> </ul>
8.3 The course design facilitates readability.	2	<p>Course design elements maximize usability by facilitating readability and minimizing distractions.</p> <p>For this Standard to be met, course content is clearly presented so that learners can easily read and interpret it.</p> <p>Examples of strategies that facilitate readability and minimize distraction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Similar content is grouped together; headings are used to indicate change of topic.</li> <li>• Font style and size are selected to maximize on-screen legibility; simpler fonts are chosen over more ornate fonts, and the number of font families is limited to one or two.</li> <li>• White space or negative space is used around content to help increase comprehension and reduce eye fatigue that occurs with large blocks of text.</li> <li>• Content is formatted to serve specific instructional purposes. For example, format and text color are used purposefully to communicate key points, group</li> </ul>

		<p>like items, and emphasize relevant relationships.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Text is clearly distinguishable from the background, with thought given to color choice and providing sufficient contrast.</li> </ul> <p>In all course materials, editing and proofreading errors (spelling, grammar, punctuation, word choice, syntax) are minimal.</p>
8.4 Course multimedia facilitate ease of use.	2	<p>Course elements maximize usability by ensuring multimedia used as a vehicle for content or feedback (e.g., images, audio, animation, video, and interactive components) are easy to use, intelligible, and inter- operational across devices.</p> <p>For this Standard to be met, course multimedia is easy to view, operate, and interpret.</p> <p>Examples of strategies that ensure the usability of multimedia:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Graphics and animations are used to enhance instructional materials and illustrate ideas without causing distractions.</li> <li>2. Images are appropriately sized and can be viewed in their entirety without scrolling.</li> <li>3. Audio quality is clear.</li> <li>4. A video window can be resized; resolution is sufficient for comprehension.</li> <li>5. Long videos (videos longer than 15 to 20 minutes) are broken into shorter segments and/or are searchable.</li> <li>6. Movement through presentations can be controlled.</li> </ol> <p>Video is viewable in a smooth stream without frequent interruptions. Note that some videos must be of high quality for content to be clearly understood. An example would be a video demonstrating sign language, in which learners need to be able to accurately discern hand shapes and movement.</p> <p>Interactive elements integral to the content are cross-platform (PC, Mac) and cross-browser, or guidance is provided about the best browser to use.</p>