ONLINE COURSE QUALITY: ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Get the most out of your course with these *must-have* quality elements. Check out our *Quality Assurance Checklist and Guidelines for Online Courses* for a complete outline!

ORGANIZATION AND NAVIGATION

Content is key! Make it easy to find with a consistent and logical layout. **Try using modules or weekly lessons.**

Start off on the right foot with our template!

SYLLABUS

Check out our *Designing Your Syllabus* page to discover everything you'll need to create a complete syllabus.

BE PRESENT

Of all the possible relationships within a course, the one between you and your students is the most important! Students want to see that you are right there with them throughout their learning experience.

- Presence starts with authenticity. Don't be afraid to share a little bit about yourself with students.
- Host virtual office hours.
- Respond to student messages (ideally within 24 hrs).
- Send weekly announcements that provides an overview and helps to connect the dots.
- When in doubt, communicate, communicate, communicate!

IT ALL LIES ON APPLICATION:

Increase engagement by focusing on real-world applications. The goal is not only for students to complete your course, but to also think about how their work has the potential to impact them and the world.

Begin with simple, low-stakes activities to get comfortable with new assessment strategies and provide time and opportunity for your students to ask questions and submit feedback. Focus on activities that apply what students are learning to real-world problems, challenges, and situations to increase engagement.

In an online environment, consider additional opportunities you might not tried in the past. The Internet is full of content, resources, simulations, data sets (and more!) that are readily available. You might even think about how to incorporate your students' community or environment so they can apply their learning locally.

PROVIDE REGULAR FEEDBACK TO KEEP STUDENTS INFORMED ABOUT THEIR PROGRESS.

When learning new skills, students need feedback that helps them determine whether or not they are doing the right thing. Feedback is most effective when presented in a descriptive and genuine manner. It should be delivered to a student in response to their work in a timely fashion to allow time and space for them to address any necessary revisions.

Utilizing a variety of multiple, low-stakes assessments throughout your course provides students a clearer picture of what they are learning. By increasing the number of assessments, you also provide more opportunities for feedback and improvement, reducing the stress associated with any single assessment.

INCLUSIVITY!

From course materials to teaching methods, the decisions you make about your course may privilege some students while disadvantaging others.

Set Expectations
Create an inclusive space by setting expectations for conduct early – consider DEI policies, preferred pronouns, and promote confidence!

Iteratively Improve
Iterate on your course design and solicit student feedback to maintain an engaging course. Consider diversity in your content selection and provide multiple assessment opportunities to keep students informed about their progress.

Communicate & Collaborate
An inclusive environment starts with you! Plan out group formation, invite diverse contributions, and allow time for reflection.

LEARN MORE!

Visit the Stearns Center's website to discover even more tips and resources for designing your next online course!

SPEAKING OF INCLUSION

What to see how accessible your course is?
Turn on Blackboard Ally and check the gauges – it's as easy as that!

Low (0-36%) Needs help!

Medium (34-66%) A little better

High (67-99%) Almost there

Perfect (100%) Perfect