



Online Course Delivery & Facilitation Checklist

Mason Online | Office of Digital Learning

Overview

Our Online Course Delivery & Facilitation Checklist is intentionally designed to be a practical tool to demonstrate minimum expectations for teaching in online asynchronous and synchronous courses. The checklist outlines fundamental quality indicators across two domains: Instructor Role and Learner Support.

Within each domain, essential components are outlined, along with additional ways in which faculty might further enhance their course design. This checklist can be used for:

- Formal course reviews as part of Mason Online's course review process;
- Programmatic quality assurance for ongoing faculty and course development;
- Self-assessment for instructors aiming to refine their courses.

Using the Checklist

The checklist is used to identify evidence of instructional practices that demonstrate effective online course facilitation. In online learning environments, facilitation represents the active implementation of course design. Where course design establishes the structure of learning activities, materials, and assessments, instructor facilitation brings that design to life through communication, feedback, guidance, and interaction with students.

During formal reviews, the Quality Assurance reviewer examines evidence of instructor facilitation within the course and provides constructive feedback highlighting strengths and identifying opportunities for improvement. Reviewers focus on how instructional practices support student engagement, communication, and learning throughout the course. Faculty may also use this checklist as a self-reflection tool to evaluate how their facilitation practices support the learning experience and align with the course design.

Contact Us

If you have any questions about the Online Course Delivery & Facilitation Checklist or wish to discuss a formal review, please contact the Quality Assurance team at gateam@gmu.edu.

1.1 Instructor Presence

Quality Indicator	Indicator Description	Why is this Important?	Essential Components
<p>Indicator 1.1</p> <p>Instructor Presence</p>	<p>Instructor presence reflects how the instructor actively brings the course design to life throughout the term. While the course structure, learning activities, and assessments establish the learning environment, consistent instructor engagement ensures that students experience the course as an active, guided learning process rather than a static set of materials.</p> <p>This indicator is aligned to University Policy 3014: Distance Education and 34 CFR 600.2 "Distance education", instructor presence is necessary to meet expectations for Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI) in online courses.</p>	<p>When instructors actively engage with students, they reinforce learning expectations, support student progress, and create an environment where students feel connected to the course and the instructor.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The instructor maintains regular, ongoing, and predictable communication with students (e.g., announcements, emails, responses in Q&A forums). <input type="checkbox"/> The instructor initiates meaningful academic engagement with students through activities such as facilitating discussions, responding to questions, hosting office hours, or meeting with students to support learning. <input type="checkbox"/> The instructor actively supports and guides student learning through multiple instructional methods (e.g., feedback on coursework, supplemental resources, clear instructions, or instructional content).

Additional ways to take this further:

- Provide short weekly video or audio updates connecting course concepts to real-world examples.
- Use [Course Analytics](#) to identify disengaged students and reach out proactively.
- Offer optional review sessions or virtual Q&A opportunities before major assignments or exams.

1.2 Introduction & Information

Quality Indicator	Indicator Description	Why is this Important?	Essential Components
Indicator 1.2 Introduction & Information	<p>The instructor introduction establishes the communication foundation for the course. By introducing themselves and outlining how communication will occur, instructors help students understand how to interact with the instructor and where to seek support throughout the course.</p> <p>Providing contact information, communication expectations, and instructor availability supports a consistent student experience across courses and programs.</p>	<p>Clear expectations help students navigate the course and reduce uncertainty about how and when to contact instructors. Establishing these expectations early encourages students to reach out when they need assistance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The instructor shares an introduction that includes personal background, qualifications, or professional interests. <input type="checkbox"/> The instructor provides contact information and preferred communication methods. The instructor is accessible through multiple communication channels. <input type="checkbox"/> The instructor communicates clear expectations regarding response times for emails and feedback on assignments.

Additional ways to take this further:

- Record a brief welcome video introducing yourself and the course.
- Host a live course orientation or optional introductory session.
- Share examples of how course topics connect to professional practice or real-world applications.

1.3 Professionalism

Quality Indicator	Indicator Description	Why is this Important?	Essential Components
<p>Indicator 1.4 Professionalism</p>	<p>Professionalism in course facilitation reflects how the instructor models respectful communication, academic integrity, and consistent course management. Through their interactions and decisions, instructors establish expectations for how members of the course community engage with one another.</p> <p>Maintaining professionalism also aligns with institutional policies on conduct, accessibility, and data privacy, ensuring courses reflect the values and ethical standards of the university.</p>	<p>Professionalism sets the tone for the learning environment and reinforces institutional expectations for respectful communication and academic integrity. Consistent and professional interactions help create a productive and supportive learning environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The instructor is available in regular virtual office hours via Zoom and is flexible in scheduling one-on-one meetings with students as needed <input type="checkbox"/> The instructor responds to student inquiries posted in the online classroom promptly (usually within 24-48 hours); the instructor also uses multiple communication channels to be available and responsive to students. <input type="checkbox"/> The instructor consistently models professionalism in all aspects of the course. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Using clear, respectful, and appropriate language <input type="checkbox"/> Maintaining a courteous and supportive tone <input type="checkbox"/> Honoring stated policies and deadlines <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrating inclusive and respectful interactions with all learners.

Additional ways to take this further:

- Use scheduling tools (such as [Canvas Calendar](#)) to allow students to book appointments easily.
- Post links or video tutorials with information about proper citation methods, copyright considerations and professional communication standards.
- Show students examples of exemplary work and explain how these meet professional guidelines.

2.1 Learner Support & Encouragement

Quality Indicator	Indicator Description	Why is this Important?	Essential Components
<p>Indicator 2.1</p> <p>Learner Support & Encouragement</p>	<p>Learner support reflects how instructors help students navigate the course and connect with resources that support their learning. While course design provides structure, instructor facilitation helps students interpret expectations and stay engaged with course activities.</p> <p>These practices align with institutional goals for student retention and inclusive excellence, ensuring that all learners have equitable access to the tools and support they need to succeed.</p>	<p>Students in online courses may hesitate to seek help or may be unfamiliar with available resources. When instructors actively communicate support options and encourage questions, students are more likely to remain engaged and persist in the course.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The instructor encourages students to reach out with questions or concerns through available communication channels. <input type="checkbox"/> The instructor clearly communicates policies and procedures for students facing challenges or emergencies. <input type="checkbox"/> The instructor provides guidance for accessing university learning support resources (e.g., Writing Center, Libraries, Learning Services) and discipline-specific resources.

Additional ways to take this further:

- Post announcements reminding students about available campus support services.
- Share additional learning resources related to course topics.
- Provide optional review sessions or informal Q&A opportunities before major assessments.

2.2 Respectful Classroom Climate

Quality Indicator	Indicator Description	Why is this Important?	Essential Components
Indicator 2.2 Respectful Classroom Climate	<p>A respectful classroom community encourages open dialogue, inclusion, and a sense of belonging. Instructors who foster civility and empathy help students feel valued and confident in contributing to discussions and collaborative work.</p> <p>This approach reflects the university's commitment to creating inclusive learning environments and supports compliance with institutional diversity, equity, and accessibility standards.</p>	<p>Students are more willing to take risks, share perspectives, and engage critically when instructors set clear norms and model inclusive communication.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The instructor encourages students to share their thoughts and experiences relevant to the course, ensuring that all voices are heard and respected. <input type="checkbox"/> The instructor creates a supportive and respectful classroom community where students feel safe to express themselves and participate fully. <input type="checkbox"/> The instructor ensures a positive and safe learning environment by overseeing classroom interactions and actively promoting respectful behavior that aligns with established expectations. <input type="checkbox"/> The instructor begins the course with icebreaker activities that encourage students to introduce themselves and share personal interests or experiences. This establishes a foundation for respectful interaction.

Additional ways to take this further:

- Implement anonymous feedback channels where students can express concerns or suggestions about the classroom climate. This provides a safe space for students to voice their thoughts.
- Establish clear protocols for resolving conflicts or misunderstandings, ensuring that issues are addressed promptly and respectfully.
- Promote collaborative activities and group work that require students to engage respectfully and cooperatively with one another.
- Set up a virtual space in the course allowing students to engage in informal optional conversations, share interests, and discuss non-course-related topics.

Final Considerations

This checklist provides a foundation for effective online course facilitation and highlights how instructional practices bring course design to life. We encourage instructors to use this checklist to reflect on their facilitation practices, seek feedback from students, and identify opportunities to strengthen engagement and communication throughout the course. Online learning environments continue to evolve, and thoughtful facilitation helps ensure that courses remain accessible, meaningful, and supportive of student success.

Faculty may also consider how institutionally approved AI tools can assist with course design tasks. [PatriotAI](#), George Mason's AI platform, includes [SyllaBright](#), a course design assistant that can support the development and refinement of syllabi, learning objectives, assessment planning, and adaptation of materials for multilingual learners. These tools are intended to supplement, not replace, faculty expertise and should always be used in ways consistent with University policy and best practices in online learning.

Learn More

For additional information, examples, and support materials related to online course delivery and facilitation, please visit our website: [Designing for Online Learning](#)

There, you'll find:

- Expanded guidance about online course design and facilitation;
- Faculty resources and best practices in online learning;
- Contact information for consultations and individual support.

If you have questions, suggestions for improvement, or would like to schedule a review, contact the Quality Assurance team at qateam@gmu.edu.



The framework for Mason Online's **Online Course Delivery & Facilitation Checklist** is based on "[OLC Course Review Scorecard](#)" and licensed under Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License.

