

CENTER FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

COURSE DESIGN RUBRIC

This course design rubric is meant to be a tool for evaluating course renewal as well as new course development. This rubric focuses on the dynamics of electronic communication, particularly web-based opportunities, but does not presuppose any specific technology. Purposeful selection of course delivery methods enhances the quality of distance courses and provides effective learning outcomes.

The course rubric is segmented into three distinct course facets: Course Organization, Student Assessment, and Enriched Learning Environment. Within each facet are identified various individual features to be evaluated for each course. Each feature is to be rated as either *Advanced*, *Proficient*, or *Developing* according to the outlined criteria.

Advanced: Only a few courses in the inventory will fall completely in the Advanced column.

Proficient: All courses offered to students will attain Proficient status in 95% of the features.

Developing: A course either on the way up the development process or about to be dropped from the catalog. These courses will not be open to student enrollment.

All the Features share a similar philosophic continuum from Developing to Advanced. In the developing column features may be completely absent, not addressed, or not mentioned in the course syllabus. In the Proficient column the feature is something done to the student, described to the student, in a single mode, or derived from stock resources. In the Advanced column, the feature is done with the student, explained to the student, repeated in multiple modes, or customized to the specific student in the class.

Traditional correspondence distance classes (via print, audio/teleconference) are strongly encouraged to incorporate web-based components where they would most appropriately enrich the learning experience.

COURSE NUMBER

COURSE TITLE

Course Organization

WELCOME

Create encouraging context.



Advanced



Proficient



Developing

Advanced:

Instructor welcome letter to student customized via auto-merge features.
Course learning outcomes associated with post-completion professional skills.

Proficient:

Syllabus contains a standardized introductory letter to the student.
Description of learning outcomes connected to grading criteria.

Developing:

No introductory statement of welcome.
No statement of course learning outcomes.

Comments:

VISUAL LAYOUT

Utilization of two-dimensional presentation to create a coherent learning context.



Advanced



Proficient



Developing

Advanced:

Visual and textural elements on course pages hyperlinked directly to a learning objectives list.

Proficient:

Visual presentation is clear and uncluttered on the page.

Developing:

Preponderance of text only on pages.

Comments:

AUDIENCE SPECIFIED

Situate course with student academic goals.



Advanced



Proficient



Developing

Advanced:

Program-specific statement identifying the course as part of a degree/certificate program

Proficient:

Statement of identifying the course as a core or elective of specific university programs.

Developing:

No statement identifying course as part of any program plan.

Comments:

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Relation of course objectives to program requirements.



Advanced



Proficient



Developing

Advanced:

Course objectives customized to meet individual learning needs.

Proficient:

Clearly stated relevance of course objectives to program standards and graduation requirements.

Developing:

No stated link between program requirements and course objectives.

Comments:

Course Organization

LESSON/MODULE

OBJECTIVES

Intentional link of lessons to over-all objectives.



Advanced



Proficient



Developing

Advanced:

Lesson/Module objectives related to department requirements.
Lesson/Module objectives related to post course utilizations.

Proficient:

Clear brief statements of lesson/module objectives.
Lesson/module objectives linked to learner outcomes.

Developing:

No unit objectives evident.

Comments:

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Specificity of learning outcomes.



Advanced



Proficient



Developing

Advanced:

Learning outcomes derived from customized assessment of student need in relation to course objectives.

Proficient:

Learning outcomes directly linked to course objectives.

Developing:

No stated learning outcomes.

Comments:

PRE-EXISTING KNOWLEDGE

Learning constructed on pre-existing knowledge.



Advanced



Proficient



Developing

Advanced:

Course materials adapt to pre-existing knowledge.
Pre-existing knowledge is routinely assessed at the lesson/module level.

Proficient:

Pre-existing knowledge identified only in regards to English or Math abilities.

Developing:

No mechanism to ascertain pre-existing knowledge of course content area.

Comments:

COMPUTER SKILLS

Awareness of the variation in computer skills among students.



Advanced



Proficient



Developing

Advanced:

Assignments customized to student skill levels.

Proficient:

Clear expectations provided of necessary hardware or software skills with links to tutorials.

Developing:

No description of needed skills or equipment.

Comments:

Course Organization

COURSE MATERIALS

Afford pre-planning for access to course materials.



Advanced



Proficient



Developing

Advanced:

Alternative materials and sources are identified.
Participant-generated resources are encouraged and shared.

Proficient:

Comprehensive list of necessary materials.
Clear directions how to obtain materials.

Developing:

No course material list.

Comments:

GRADING POLICY

Student access to grade information.



Advanced



Proficient



Developing

Advanced:

Course specific grading policy in the syllabus.
Hyperlink to online grade checking location in the syllabus.
Examples provided for legitimate grade appeals.

Proficient:

CDE standard grading policy in the syllabus.
Clear directions for students to check their grades.
Instructions for test proctoring.

Developing:

No grading policy.
No late assignment policy.
No participation policy.

Comments:

COURSE SCHEDULE

Visibility of successful course completion pacing.



Advanced



Proficient



Developing

Advanced:

Detailed, inter-linked schedule of due dates and exams.

Proficient:

Completion in the semester or yearlong mode are clear.
Lesson pacing expectations provided.

Developing:

No course completion schedule or time line.

Comments:

INSTRUCTOR CONTACT INFORMATION

Ease of instructor contact.



Advanced



Proficient



Developing

Advanced:

Automated response to all student contact to confirm receipt.
Virtual office hours or IM address

Proficient:

Multiple & preferred methods to contact instructor in the syllabus.

Developing:

No instructor contact information provided.

Comments:

Course Organization

MID-COURSE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Effort to contact students while course is underway with broad announcements.



Advanced



Proficient



Developing

Advanced:

Mention in the syllabus that announcements will be regularly used throughout the course. Course announcements placed on a web site available to all enrolled students. Announcements mailed out to correspondence students.

Proficient:

Course announcements sent to students attached to their lessons.

Developing:

No mid-course announcements.

Comments:

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FAQ as a community building tool.



Advanced



Proficient



Developing

Advanced:

FAQ maintained online for enrolled students. FAQ has dated entries to place the questions in a historical context.

Proficient:

FAQ is part of the course syllabus.

Developing:

No information provided about questions from previous students.

Comments:

ORGANIZATIONAL POLICIES & GUIDELINES

Explanation of the learning context.



Advanced



Proficient



Developing

Advanced:

Departmental policies are available from multiple sources with explanations of why they are necessary.

Proficient:

Department policies and guidelines are conveniently available.

Developing:

No department policies or guidelines posted.

Comments:

ETHICAL/LEGAL EXPECTATIONS

Awareness of professional ethical nuances.



Advanced



Proficient



Developing

Advanced:

Course syllabus provides explanatory scenarios to illustrate ethical decisions specifically related to the course content areas.

Proficient:

University legal and ethical expectations clearly identified regarding plagiarism, test taking, copyright laws, and confidentiality.

Developing:

No ethical or legal guidelines evident.

Comments:

Course Organization

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

Recognition of the validity of disability accommodation.



Advanced



Proficient



Developing

Advanced:

Methodologies and materials for the course are adapted for students with disabilities.

Proficient:

University policy cited in syllabus.

Non-threatening procedure provided for candidates to notify the instructor for accommodation needs.

Developing:

No disability accommodations is course tasks.

No procedures for students to notify instructor of special needs.

Comments:

COURSE ASSESSMENT

Procedure for utilization of course evaluations in formative feedback loops.



Advanced



Proficient



Developing

Advanced:

Procedure in place to aggregate course evaluations over multiple semesters and return that information to the instructor and course design team.

Proficient:

Course evaluation procedure has a mechanism to return aggregated student response to instructor.

Developing:

Course evaluation instrument is not specific to distance courses.

Comments:

Course Organization Summary

OVERALL ORGANIZATION

A cumulative rating based on organizational features evaluated.



Advanced



Proficient



Developing

Comments/Suggestions:

Student Assessment

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

Channels for mid-course communication.



Advanced:

Instructor to provide feedback on projects using scoring guides.
Student self-evaluation.
Peer evaluation (online only)

Proficient:

Regular feedback on course progress and performance. Criteria for grading (eg. class projects; papers; online forums; participation; surveys; communication to instruction; quizzes/exams).

Developing:

Grades communicated to students with reference to syllabus course objectives.

Comments:

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

Final assessment communication to students.



Advanced:

Grades scored relative to multiple learning modalities routinely visible to students.

Proficient:

Grades communicated to students with reference to syllabus course objectives.

Developing:

No final grade evaluation communication to student.

Comments:

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Making communication choices visible.



Advanced:

Short written discussion associating available communication channels with course competencies.
Examples of expectations from prior student work.
Expectations and examples of student group work.

Proficient:

Clear criteria outlining communication expectations.
Opportunity for peer interactions as process of knowledge acquisition.
Examples of successful student work.

Developing:

No communication expectations or philosophy provided.

Comments:

MULTIPLE ASSESSMENTS

Recognizing multiple intelligences.



Advanced:

Variety of tools to demonstrate the skills/knowledge/understanding of concepts.
Examples of successful projects/essays modeled.

Proficient:

Scoring guides provided for course work.
Both quantitative and qualitative assessments.

Developing:

Grades rely on a limited number of assessments (eg. 1 or 2 tests).

Comments:

Enriched Learning Environment

DESIGNED DISCOURSE

Explicit course interaction features enabled in support of course objectives.



Advanced:

Multiple channels of interaction are enabled for routine communication.

Customized communication channels relate to the course learning objectives (eg. group collaboration or computer supported group work)

Proficient:

All student and instructor interaction channels explicitly tied to course material and objectives.

Developing:

Interaction within the course not specific to the material.

Comments:

INSTRUCTOR/STUDENT INTERACTION

Ease of contact between student and instructor.



Advanced:

Course syllabus specifies pre-arranged synchronous and asynchronous communication methods between students and instructors.

Proficient:

Course syllabus specifies methods for routine contact between student and instructor.

Developing:

No specific interaction with students other than returning graded papers.

Comments:

LEARNING COMMUNITY

Ease of practice of community building skills.



Advanced:

Students practice networking with other students and professionals through course learning objectives using synchronous and asynchronous tools (eg. blogs, pictures, personal files).

Proficient:

Course syllabus gives specific methods for students to reach a network of professionals or in the field.

Developing:

Course syllabus mentions ways for students to network with other students.

Comments:

PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY

Familiarity with a community of practitioners.



Advanced:

Guest experts are invited into the course.

Students are encouraged to join in professional activities as a course objective.

Proficient:

Course contains a discussion of a variety of schools of thought within the content area with linkages to professional associations.

Developing:

No specific linkages to professional resources in the course content field.

Comments:

Enriched Learning Environment

LEARNING STYLES

Validity of multiple pathways to course learning objectives.



Advanced:

Participants ask to self-report preferences in learning modes.

Assessment methods tied to multiple learning styles to allow student success based on student preferences.

Proficient:

Course uses multiple information processing methods (eg. problem-based collaborative groups, role playing, active learning aimed at visual or auditory learners).

Developing:

Course relies on a single modality for processing information (eg. didactic lecture or reading book chapters).

Comments:

SITUATED LEARNING

Recognition that students are only partially embedded in the class.



Advanced:

Students share their place-based experiences with other students through retention of student portfolios as reference for incoming students.

Proficient:

Materials and activities linked to student exploration of their own place-based examples.

Developing:

No references to student's place as a relevant learning tool.

Comments:

PACING

Flexibility of completion rate.



Advanced:

Course delivery specifically sends progress reminders at predetermined completion milestones (eg. end of the first quarter of course lessons or completion of first class project).

Course specifies reminders of course progress at specific time intervals (eg. semester break, 90 days prior to expiration, two weeks prior to extension filing deadline).

Proficient:

Students choose their own rate of completion of course work.

Developing:

No flexibility in the pace of instruction or student work.

Comments:

Course Evaluation Summary

OVERALL COURSE RATING

A cumulative rating based on all evaluated course features.



Comments/Suggestions: