

Development of Benchmarks for Online Courses

Our DE Vision - A comprehensive online program that is fully integrated into the established university framework and aligned with existing academic principles

Our goal - To provide our students with access to quality online courses that is flexible and facilitates a successful learning experience

What are some common elements of a quality online course?

The E(X)cellence Factors of a Quality Online Course

- Clarity
- Consistency
- Interactivity
- Pedagogy
- Assessment

Clarity refers to an online course being comprehensible across every major area. Consistency also is tied to many aspects of the online course including web design, established communication channels, course layout, and workload. Interactivity refers to a course that is designed and implemented with several opportunities for student-to-instructor, student-to-content, and student-to-student communication. Pedagogy refers to the use of appropriate curriculum design, instructional design, and supporting resources for the online environment. Assessment means that a course incorporates effective and authentic student assessment in its design as well as assessment of the course itself.

The X Factors of a Quality Online Course



How do ensure that the X factors are being met?

An online course is evaluated on the following areas:

- Curriculum Design
- Teaching and Course Facilitation
- Instructional Design
- Web Design and Course Presentation
- Course Management and Technical Support

A quality online course will meet or exceed criteria specific to these areas. Here is an explanation for each one (Choi et al, 2006):

Curriculum Design - deals with the content, which dictates the learning outcomes for an educational program. In turn, the specified learning outcomes are incorporated into courses in the program. This incorporation of learning outcomes into courses based on the chosen content serves as the foundation for quality because it addresses the interests and needs of learners.

Teaching and Course Facilitation - is the art of carrying out the curriculum and instructional design plan. It encompasses the instructor's knowledge and skill in guiding learning and occupies the forefront of quality issues because it directly impacts learning experiences (e.g. consistent, timely and frequent feedback for learning activities).

Instructional Design - deals with the connection among learning outcomes, course activities, teaching strategies, and the use of media and technology.

Web Design and Course Presentation - deals with usability issues, especially those that affect learning and functionality, consistency (for example, in font size and layout, ADA requirements), grammar, and look and feel of the course.

Course Management and Technical Support – deals with the management of course components and tools (for example, active/inactive dates for learning modules, copyright laws) that lead to an understanding how the course functions. Also deals with technical support for classroom related technical issues (e.g. support information for 3rd party websites).

Proposed Evaluation Instrument

X Factor	Standard (Curriculum Design)
Pedagogy	The course learning objectives describe outcomes that are measurable
Pedagogy	The learning objectives address content mastery, critical thinking skills, and core learning skills.

X Factor	Standard (Teaching and Facilitation)
Clarity	Minimum technology requirements, minimum student skills, and, if applicable, prerequisite knowledge in the discipline are clearly stated
Clarity	Expectations regarding lesson, activities, discussions, and e-mail communications are clearly stated
Clarity	Academic Integrity, netiquette (Internet etiquette), and plagiarism are clearly stated
Clarity	The course grading policy is stated clearly
Clarity	Specific and descriptive criteria are provided for the evaluation of students' work and participation.
Clarity, Consistency	Clear standards are set for instructor presence, response, and availability (turn-around time for email, discussion postings, grade posting, etc.)
Clarity	Clear and complete course overview provided

X Factor	Standard (Instructional Design)
Assessment	The types of assessments selected measure the stated learning objectives and are consistent with course activities and resources
Assessment	Frequent/ongoing assessments are conducted to verify students' readiness for the next lesson
Assessment	Authentic and integrated assessment is used to evaluate students achievement
Assessment	The assessment instruments selected are sequenced, varied, and appropriate to the content being assessed
Pedagogy	Course makes maximum use of LMS tools and makes resources available by alternate means
Pedagogy, Assessment	The tools and media support the learning objectives, and are appropriately chosen to deliver the content of the course
Pedagogy	The instructional materials have sufficient breadth, depth, and currency for the student to learn the subject
Pedagogy	Activities that foster active learning are included
Pedagogy, Consistency	The instructional materials are logically sequenced and integrated
Interactivity, Pedagogy	Course design fosters instructor-student interaction
Interactivity, Pedagogy	Course design fosters content-student interaction
Interactivity, Pedagogy	Course design fosters student-student interaction
Pedagogy	Selected readings and resources reflect and fit the subject and course learning outcomes and are up to date

X Factor	Standard (Web Design and Course Presentation)
Clarity, Consistency	Easy to navigate
Clarity	The course acknowledges and adheres to ADA requirements
Clarity, Consistency	Course pages have links that are self describing and meaningful
Clarity, Consistency	Course materials are free of typos and grammatical errors
Consistency	Interface Consistency
Consistency	All internal and external resources are properly linked

X Factor	Standard (Course Management and Technical Support)
Clarity	All resources and materials used in the course are appropriately cited and adhere to copyright laws
Clarity	Privacy Policies are clearly stated
Clarity	Orientation training is provided
Clarity, Consistency	Resources are organized in ways that make them easily accessed and located