## Online Course Design Guidelines

The following guidelines provide a roadmap for instructors during the course design process or as a “self-evaluation” tool to assist in revision of an existing online course using the rubric and suggested examples. This research-informed framework highlights key components essential to a high-quality learning experience for students.

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| Revision Suggestion for Standard: Present (P); Minor Revision (MiR); Moderate Revision (MoR); Major Revision (MaR); Not Applicable (NA) |
| Estimated time needed for revision: Minor = 1/2 hour or less; Moderate = 1/2 - 2 hours; Major = 2+ hours |
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|  | Standard | Try This | Notes |
| **1. LEARNER SUPPORT AND RESOURCES**Information about being an online learner and support services. These resources are available as single introductory module specifically designed to be linked from the Quercus course site. |  | [Use the information and links provided in the online Quercus course template](https://q.utoronto.ca/courses/81302) |  |
|  | Information about being a successful online learner/student is provided |  | [Link to Getting Ready for Online support page](https://onlinelearning.utoronto.ca/getting-ready-for-online/) |  |
| [Link to general student services and resources (Student Life)](https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/) |  |  |  |
| [Link to resources on conducting online research (Library Research Help)](https://onesearch.library.utoronto.ca/research) |  |  |  |
| [Link to resources on academic support (Academic Success Centre)](https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/academic-success/) |  |  |  |
| [Link to writing centre/other learner support (Writing Centres)](https://writing.utoronto.ca/) |  |  |  |
| [Link to information on accessibility (Accessibility Services)](https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/accessibility-services/) |  |  |  |
| [Link to information on Quercus support (Quercus Student Guide)](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10701) |  |  |  |
| Course specific resources including welcome and getting started content |  |  |  |
|  | Orientation or overview of the course overall, as well as in each module. Learners know how to navigate and what tasks are due. |  | [Consider a course tour video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Re-3bPMVVcA&feature=youtu.be) |  |
| Contact information and short biography for the instructor and co-instructor(s) and TA(s) if applicable. |  |  |  |
| Guidelines for student-instructor interactions (i.e. channels for different types of questions and timelines for response) |  |  |  |
| C ontact information for academic department or registrar. |  |  |  |
| Syllabus (printable option included) |  |  |  |
| Links or reference to relevant information on academic integrity, computer use, course equity, diversity and inclusion  |  |  |  |
| Information on access to any accompanying texts or materials not available on the course web site. |  |  |  |
| Resources supporting course content |  |  |  |
|  | Link(s) to web sites with supporting information, links to organizations or associations relevant to course content. |  |  |  |
| Glossary of terms or links to definitions of new vocabulary |  |  |  |
| Link to UTL Library resources or Lib Guide if applicable |  |  |  |
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| **2. COURSE TECHNOLOGY AND TOOLS**A list of technical competencies necessary for course completion is provided; identifying and delineating the role/extent the online environment plays in the total course. |  | [Link to minimum technical requirements page](https://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/covid-19/tech-requirements-online-learning/) |  |
|  | Requisite skills for using technology tools (websites, software, and hardware) are clearly stated and supported with resources. |  |  |  |
| Technical skills required for participation in course learning activities scaffold in a timely manner (orientation, practice, and application - where appropriate). |  |  |  |
| Frequently used technology tools are easily accessed. Any tools not being utilized are removed from the course menu. |  |  |  |
| Instructor takes advantage of the supported tools provided by the Learning Management Engine (Quercus) to enhance learning. Institutionally supported tools are used when possible. |  | [Refer to the ed tech catalogue for a list of supported tools](https://q.utoronto.ca/courses/46670/pages/edtech-catalogue) |  |
| Any technology tools meet accessibility standards.  |  |  |  |
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| **3. INTERACTION**Encourages students to become active learners and contribute to the online course community. |  |  |  |
|  | Introductory announcement or email to be sent to your students providing them information on how to access your course. |  | Remember to make course available |  |
| Expectations for interaction are clearly stated (netiquette, grade weighting, models/examples, and timing and frequency of contributions). |  | [Consider netiquette rules for online courses](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/1340/pages/netiquette-the-golden-rules-for-online-courses)  |  |
| Learners have an opportunity to get to know the instructor. |  |  |  |
| Course contains resources or activities intended to build a sense of class community, support open communication, and establish trust (at least one of the following - Ice-breaker, Bulletin Board, Meet Your Classmates, Ask a Question discussion forums). |  |  |  |
| Course offers opportunities for learner to learner interaction and constructive collaboration. |  |  |  |
| Learners are encouraged to share resources and inject knowledge from diverse sources of information in their course interactions. |  |  |  |
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| **4. DESIGN AND LAYOUT**Use of technology to effectively organize and deliver course content, and allow students to navigate with ease. |  | [Refer to tips and strategies to building a course in Quercus](https://q.utoronto.ca/courses/46670/pages/build-your-course) |  |
|  | A logical, consistent, and uncluttered layout is established. The course is easy to navigate (consistent color scheme and icon layout, related content organized together, self-evident titles). |  |  |  |
| Large blocks of information are divided into manageable sections with ample white space around and between the blocks. |  |  |  |
| Instructions are provided and well written. |  |  |  |
| Course content is concise and is free of grammatical and spelling errors. |  |  |  |
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| **5. ACCESSIBILITY AND UNIVERSAL DESIGN**Addresses the course’s adherence to accessibility and universal design principles that are critical to some learners but that benefit all learners. |  | [Refer to Accessibility and Quercus support resource](https://q.utoronto.ca/courses/46670/pages/build-your-course#accessibility) |  |
|  | Text is formatted with titles, headings, and other styles to enhance readability and improve the structure of the document. |  |  |  |
| There is enough contrast between text and background for the content to be easily viewed.  |  |  |  |
| Flashing and blinking text are avoided. |  |  |  |
| When possible, information is displayed in a linear format instead of as a table. |  |  |  |
| Tables are accompanied by a title and summary description. |  |  |  |
| Table header rows and columns are assigned. |  |  |  |
| For all slideshows, there are simple, non-automatic transitions between slides. |  |  |  |
| Text content is available in an easily accessed format, preferably HTML. All text content is readable by assistive technology, including a PDF or any text contained in an image.  |  |  |  |
| A text equivalent for every non-text element is provided ("alt" tags, captions, transcripts, etc.). |  |  |  |
| Text, graphics, and images are understandable when viewed without color. Text should be used as a primary method for delivering information. |  |  |  |
| Hyperlink text is descriptive and makes sense when out of context (avoid using "click here"). |  |  |  |
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| **6. CONTENT AND ACTIVITIES**Addresses the opportunities students have to interact with the content, their peers, and their instructor(s). |  | [Review strategies for active learning](https://teaching.utoronto.ca/ed-tech/online-learning/continuity-planning-and-online-learning/#active_learning) |  |
|  | Course offers access to a variety of engaging resources that facilitate communication and collaboration, deliver content, and support learning and engagement. |  |  |  |
| Course provides activities for learners to develop higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills, such as critical reflection and analysis. |  |  |  |
| Course provides activities that emulate real world applications of the discipline, such as experiential learning, case studies, and problem-based activities. |  |  |  |
| Where available, Open Educational Resources, free, or low cost materials are used. |  | [See Open UToronto](https://ocw.utoronto.ca/) |  |
| Course materials and resources include copyright and licensing status, clearly stating permission to share where applicable. |  |  |  |
| Modeling academic integrity, instructor appropriately cites all resources and materials used throughout the course. |  |  |  |
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| **7. ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK**Refers to the process used to gather evidence of the achievement of the Learning Outcomes. |  | [Refer to the CTSI “Assessing Learning” website](https://teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching-support/strategies/continuity-planning/online-remotely-pnt/assessing-learning/) |  |
|  | Learning outcomes are provided for each unit. The outcomes should use active verbs, and also be specific and measurable. |  | [Refer to Bloom's Taxonomy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bloom%27s_taxonomy) |  |
| Course grading policies, including consequences of late submissions, are clearly stated in the course information area or syllabus. |  |  |  |
| Course includes frequent and appropriate methods to assess mastery of content. |  |  |  |
| Criteria for the assessment of a graded assignment are clearly articulated (rubrics, exemplary work). |  |  |  |
| Learners have opportunities to review their performance and assess their own learning throughout the course (pre-tests, automated self-tests, reflective assignments, etc.). |  |  |  |
| Learners are informed when a timed response is required. Proper lead time is provided to ensure there is an opportunity to prepare an accommodation. |  |  |  |
| Learners have easy access to a well designed and up-to-date gradebook. |  |  |  |
| Learners have multiple opportunities to provide descriptive feedback on course design, course content, course experience, and ease of online technology. |  |  |  |
| Assessments are authentic (e.g. designed with personal and real world relevance). |  |  |  |
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These guidelines are adapted from the OSCQR – SUNY Online Course Quality Review Rubric. The OSCQR Rubric, Dashboard, and Process are made available by the Online Learning Consortium, Inc. (OLC - <http://olc.onlinelearningconsortium.org>) under the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) (CC By 4.0). The OSCQR Rubric, Dashboard, and Process were originally developed by the State University of New York, through SUNY Online, Online Teaching (<https://online.suny.edu/onlineteaching>)