Standards for Online Master Courses  
 *(Approved by Academic Council 11/29/2018)*

1. Course Structure

1. University templates and structure for navigation, syllabi, course schedule, course materials and content delivery are followed.
2. Where available, the course syllabus resides on the master syllabus repository and is linked from within the course.
3. Meet the Instructor section and contact information for the academic program leader is provided.
4. Links or contact information are provided for student resources, including: I.T. helpdesk, LMS after-hours support, academic services, tutorial services and library support.
5. Unique hardware and software technology requirements for the course are stated.
6. Instructions, tutorials and technical support information for setup, configuration, access and use of software and technologies required for the course are provided for instructors and students.
7. Course Schedule includes major weekly topics, required readings, assignments, due days, grading criteria and descriptions of graded assignments.
8. Course Materials/Course Outline includes instructor information, course policies and other materials required for the course and instructions for accessing and using the materials.
9. Information in the Syllabus, Course Schedule, Weekly Assignments and Grade Book are aligned.
10. Weekly lessons are organized by weeks, modules or topics, not by textbook chapters.
11. References to specific textbook pages are to be found only on the Course Schedule and Assignments pages.

2. Lesson Structure

1. Introduction
   1. Includes stories, scenarios, images and/or other items to gain learner’s attention and introduce the topic.
   2. Draws upon the learner’s prior knowledge and experience to connect with the topic.
   3. Provides context for the lesson (i.e. where it fits within the course).
   4. Lists learner objectives for the lesson.
2. Instruction (lesson) includes:
   1. Instructional content to present the topics (e.g. written, audio, video).
   2. Instructional activities to facilitate active learning and achievement of the objectives, such as role play; case study; debate; discussion; virtual field trips; web quests; group/team collaborations; procedural/step-by-step tasks; audio/video/written interviews; practice-feedback activities; self-assessments; blogs; wikis; or individual or group research.
3. Assignments includes:
   1. Readings, including textbooks, journal articles, newspaper articles, magazine articles, websites, blogs or publisher-supplied materials.
   2. Assessments aligned with each lesson objective, such as written projects, papers, journals, reflections, discussion forums, tests/quizzes/exams, etc.

3. Learning Objectives

1. Course objectives are stated in terms of measurable student learning outcomes.1
2. Course objectives are appropriate to the academic level of the course.1
3. Course objectives are aligned with program-level learning outcomes.
4. All weekly lesson objectives are aligned with course objectives.

4. Assessments/Assignments

1. Each weekly assessment/assignment is aligned to and measures one or more weekly objectives.
2. Assessments/Assignments are appropriate to the academic level of the course.

5. Regular and Substantive Interaction

1. Course provides opportunities for instructor to initiate interaction and interact regularly and substantively with students (e.g. course announcements, discussion forums, virtual meetings, assignment annotations/feedback).
2. Expectations for instructor and student interaction are stated clearly (e.g. will provide feedback on assignments, will participate in discussion forums, will provide timely answers to question, etc.)
3. Student-student interaction (e.g. discussion forums, chat, teams) and student-content interaction (e.g. tutorials, games) is provided where appropriate to the learning objectives.
4. The Discussion Forum tool can be used for different purposes: however, online discussions should require interaction and do not have a single correct answer.
5. Online discussion assignments specify the requirements for both the initial posts and the responses. Response requirements should be specific and based on the lesson (not just “respond to two classmates”).
6. Online discussion assignments facilitate or require instructor interaction as appropriate.
7. Use of synchronous sessions in asynchronous courses are designed to either be optional or to be recorded for viewing by students who cannot attend the live session.

6. Instructional Materials

* 1. Whenever appropriate and feasible, courses should utilize free/open educational resources.
  2. As appropriate, multiple forms of media (text, images, audio, video, animation) should be used to facilitate multimodal learning. Media should be representative of the diversity of the population.
  3. Videos should be less than 15 minutes in length whenever possible.
  4. Materials from 3rd party vendors and publishers will have completed the formal technical adoption procedure prior to the development or revision of the master course.2

7. Formatting of Content

* 1. Course follows Sullivan University online course style policies.3
  2. Use of first-person and instructor-specific language in course is avoided.

8. Copyright

1. Course materials follow federal copyright rules, guidelines and licensing agreements.
2. All non-original material is properly cited and attributed according to APA style guidelines.
3. Materials originating on outside websites are linked--rather than copied--into the LMS.

9. Accessibility

1. Course follows Sullivan University policies and Online Course Accessibility Guidelines.4

10. Federal Requirements

1. Course adheres to federal credit hour definition of approximately 12 hours of average total weekly student work for a 4 credit-hour course.
2. To meet federal requirements for online student engagement, each week has a minimum of one assignment to be submitted by students.
3. The LMS grade book includes all graded course assignments, including assignments generated from outside the LMS.

Footnotes

1. See document “Measurable and Non-Measurable Objectives”
2. See document “Policy for Adoption of Vendor Materials for LMS Delivery”
3. See document “Online Course Style Policy”
4. See document “Online Course Accessibility Guidelines”

References

* Blackboard Inc. (2012). Blackboard exemplary course program rubric. Retrieved from http://blackboard.com/catalyst
* Maryland Online, Inc. (2017). Quality Matters: Non-annotated standards from the QM higher education rubric. Retrieved from https://www.qualitymatters.org/qa-resources/rubric-standards/higher-ed-rubric
* Online Learning Consortium (2018). OSCQR course design review scorecard. https://onlinelearningconsortium.org/consult/oscqr-course-design-review/
* Piña, A. A. (Ed.) (2017). Instructional design standards for distance learning. Bloomington IN: Association for Educational Communications and Technology