

The Quality Matters™ Higher Education Rubric  
2011 – 2013 Edition QMRW\_2<sup>ND</sup>\_08/11

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| <p><b>General Standard 1:</b> The overall design of the course is made clear to the student at the beginning of the course.</p> |                      | <p>The course introduction sets the tone for the course, lets students know what to expect, and provides guidance to ensure they get off to a good start.</p>  |
| <p><b>Standard</b></p>  | <p><b>Points</b></p> | <p><b>Annotation</b></p>   |
| <p>1.1 Instructions make clear how to get started and where to find various course components.</p>                              | <p>3</p>             | <p>Instructions provide a general course overview, present the schedule of activities, guide the new student to explore the course website, and indicate what to do first, in addition to listing detailed navigational instructions for the whole course.</p> <p>Instructors may choose to incorporate some of this information in the course syllabus. In this case, students should be directed to the syllabus at the beginning of the course. A useful feature is a “Read Me First” or “Start Here” button or icon on the course home page, linking students to start-up information.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A course “tour”</li> <li>2. Clear statements about how to get started in the course</li> <li>3. A “scavenger hunt” assignment that leads students through an exploration of the different areas of the course</li> <li>4. A graphical table or diagram that depicts the relationship between the online and face-to-face portions of a blended course</li> </ol> <p><i>Blended Courses:</i> Instructions in the online classroom make it clear to students that the course is a blended course, with both online and face-to-face components and activities. Instructions specify the requirements for participation in both the online and face-to-face portions of the course. The introductory information clearly states when and where students should participate each week, and a structured set of topics and a schedule are provided for each face-to-face meeting.</p> |
| <p>1.2 Students are introduced to the purpose and structure of the course.</p>  | <p>3</p>             | <p>Information is provided to help students understand the purpose of the course and how the learning process is structured and carried out, including course schedule, delivery modalities (online or blended), modes of communication, types of learning activities, and how learning will be assessed.</p> <p>Such information may be provided or reinforced in the course syllabus or other course documents; or in areas with titles such as “Course Introduction,” “Welcome from the Instructor,” “Start Here,” “Course Schedule,” “Course Outline,” “Course Map,” “Course Calendar,” etc.</p> <p><i>Blended Courses:</i> The purpose of both the online and face-to-face</p>  |

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|  |   | portions of the course is clearly explained to students to help them understand how and why both formats are important to the learning process. The course schedule or calendar fully covers both the online and face-to-face portions of the course and clearly specify the dates, times, and locations of face-to-face class meetings.  |
| 1.3 Etiquette expectations (sometimes called “netiquette”) for online discussions, email, and other forms of communication are stated clearly.       | 2 | <p>Expectations for how students are to communicate online and in the classroom are clearly stated. Since student behavior is culturally influenced, it is important to be explicit about standards for communication that apply in the course. The substance of etiquette expectations is not to be evaluated.</p> <p>Examples of etiquette considerations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Expectations for the tone and civility used in communicating with fellow students and the instructor, whether the communication is by electronic means or by telephone or face-to-face</li> <li>2. Expectations for email content, including “speaking style” requirements (e.g., standard English as opposed to popular abbreviations used online)</li> <li>3. Spelling and grammar expectations</li> <li>4. Rules of civility for classroom/discussion board participation</li> </ol> <p>To reinforce etiquette and civility, the instructor may provide a link or reference to the institution’s student handbook or code of conduct.</p> |
| 1.4 Course and/or institutional policies with which the student is expected to comply are clearly stated, or a link to current policies is provided. | 2 | <p>Policies may be promulgated by the instructor or by the institution.</p> <p>Policies may include student conduct, academic integrity, late submission of assignments, the grade of Incomplete, confidentiality in the classroom, student grievances, etc. Confirm that the policies are adequately explained and up-to-date.</p>   |
| 1.5 Prerequisite knowledge in the discipline and/or any required competencies are clearly stated.  | 1 | <p>Information about prerequisite knowledge and/or competencies is found within the course, in documents linked to the course, or in supporting material provided to the student by another means. Look for a link to that information and/or a reminder of it for the student.</p> <p>Discipline knowledge prerequisites should specify courses that meet the requirements.</p>  |
| 1.6 Minimum technical skills expected of the student are clearly stated.   | 1 | <p>General as well as course-specific technical skills students must have to succeed in the course are specified.</p> <p>Examples of technical skills might include</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Using the learning management system</li> <li>2. Using email with attachments</li> <li>3. Creating and submitting files in commonly used word processing program formats</li> <li>4. Copying and pasting</li> <li>5. Downloading and installing software</li> <li>6. Using spreadsheet programs</li> </ol>  |

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|   |   | 7. Using presentation and graphics programs   |
| 1.7 The self-introduction by the instructor is appropriate and is available online.   | 1 | <p>The initial introduction creates a sense of connection between the instructor and the students. It presents the instructor as professional as well as approachable, and includes the essentials, such as the instructor's name, title, field of expertise, email address, phone number, and times when the instructor is typically online or may be reached by phone.</p> <p>Expectations of the relationship and communication style between teacher and learner are culturally influenced. Including information about the role of the instructor in the particular course and how to address the instructor is helpful to students from all backgrounds.</p> <p>The self-introduction helps students get to know the instructor and extends beyond the essentials. It could include</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Comments on teaching philosophy</li> <li>2. A summary of past experience with teaching online courses</li> <li>3. Personal information such as hobbies, family, travel experiences, etc.</li> <li>4. A photograph</li> </ol> <p><i>Blended Courses:</i> The instructor's self-introduction is available electronically for students who missed early face-to-face meetings.</p> |
| 1.8 Students are asked to introduce themselves to the class.                          | 1 | <p>Student introductions at the beginning of the class help to create a welcoming learning environment and a sense of community. Students are asked to introduce themselves and given guidance on where and how they should do so.</p> <p>In a few situations, such as when a class is very large, student introductions may not be feasible. Instructors are asked to indicate in the Instructor Worksheet if there is a reason for not providing an opportunity for student introductions.</p> <p>Instructors may ask students to respond to specific questions (such as why they are taking the course, what concerns they have, what they expect to learn, etc.) or may choose to let the student decide what to include. Instructors may provide an example of an introduction and/or start the process by introducing themselves.</p> <p><i>Blended Courses:</i> The opportunity for introductions is available electronically for students who may have missed the opportunity during early face-to-face meetings. Ideally, student introductions are posted online, for future reference, even if students have introduced themselves in a face-to-face meeting.</p>  |
| <b>General Standard 2:</b> Learning objectives are measurable and are clearly stated. |   | The learning objectives establish a foundation upon which the rest of the course is based.  |
| 2.1 The course learning   | 3 | Measurable course learning objectives precisely describe what students  |

objectives describe outcomes that are measurable.

are to gain from instruction and provide the criteria instructors need to accurately assess student accomplishment. Objectives describe student performance in specific, observable terms. If this specificity is not possible (e.g., internal cognition, affective changes), check for clear indications that the learning objective can be meaningfully assessed. Note that at some institutions, learning objectives may be referred to as learning outcomes.

Examples of measurable objectives:

1. Select appropriate tax strategies for different financial and personal situations.
2. Develop a comprehensive, individualized wellness action program focused on overcoming a sedentary life-style.
3. Describe the relationship between the components of an ecosystem.
4. Explain the factors that contribute to economic inflation.

In a course in which students are expected to demonstrate analytical skills and/or ability to express themselves effectively in writing or in other forms of communication, the learning objectives should include reference to these objectives in addition to objectives that relate to mastery of content.

In addition to measurable objectives, a course may have objectives or desired outcomes that are not measurable, such as increased awareness, sensitivity, or interest in certain issues or subjects; but they do not substitute for measurable objectives when determining whether the standard is met.

Special situations: In some cases (check the Instructor Worksheet), the course objectives are institutionally mandated, and the individual instructor does not have the authority to change them. If the institutionally mandated learning objectives are not measurable, make note of it in the “comments” box. Write specific suggestions for improvement so the institution has the information needed to improve the objectives. If the course objectives are institutionally mandated, then the reviewer may need to consider Standard 2.1 in conjunction with Standard 2.2, as follows:

Standard 2.1 is considered as being MET under the following circumstances:

1. The course objectives are measurable, whether set by the institution or by the instructor.
2. The institutionally mandated course objectives are not measurable, but the faculty-written module/unit objectives are measurable.

Standard 2.1 is NOT MET under the following circumstances:

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|   |          | <p>1. There are no course objectives.<br/> 2. The course objectives set by the instructor are not measurable.<br/> 3. The institutionally mandated course objectives are not measurable, and the faculty-written module/unit objectives are either not measurable or not present.</p> <p><b>Alignment:</b> The concept of alignment is intended to convey the idea that critical course components work together to ensure that students achieve the desired learning outcomes. Measurable course and module/unit learning objectives form the basis of alignment in a course. Other elements of the course, including those addressed in Standards 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 4.1, 5.1, and 6.1, contribute to the accomplishment of the learning objectives. <i>It may not be possible to complete the course review if measurable learning objectives are not present. In such a case, the review team chair should first consult the instructor to clarify whether measurable objectives are absent and whether the matter can be quickly addressed so the review can continue.</i></p>   |
| <p>2.2 The module/unit learning objectives describe outcomes that are measurable and consistent with the course-level objectives.</p> | <p>3</p> | <p>Measurable module or unit learning objectives are important. They precisely describe the specific competencies, skills, and knowledge that students should be able to master and demonstrate at regular intervals throughout the course. The learning objectives make clear to students learning expectations and outcomes on a weekly, modular, or unit basis.</p> <p>Module or unit objectives may be written by the instructor or come from the textbook. Regardless of origin, these objectives are prominently stated in the corresponding module or unit so that they are accessible to the student from within the online classroom. Module/Unit learning objectives enable instructors to accurately assess student accomplishment. Objectives describe student performance in specific, observable terms. Note that at some institutions learning objectives may be referred to as learning outcomes.</p> <p>The module/unit objectives are consistent with the course objectives, either implicitly or explicitly. For example, the module/unit objective “<i>Students will write sentences that demonstrate correct use of commas, semicolons, and periods.</i>” is consistent with the course objective “<i>Students will demonstrate a mastery of rules of punctuation.</i>”</p> <p><b>Alignment:</b> See the statement in the annotation for Standard 2.1.</p> |
| <p>2.3 All learning objectives are stated clearly and written from the student’s perspective.</p>                                     | <p>3</p> | <p>The learning objectives are stated clearly in the online classroom for all course delivery formats. The learning objectives are written in a way that allows students, including non-native speakers, to easily grasp their meaning and the learning outcomes expected. The use of educational jargon, confusing terms, unnecessarily complex language, and puzzling syntax is avoided. The learning objectives are clearly stated by the instructor, verbally during face-to-face meetings, if applicable, and</p>  |

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|   |   | <p>electronically in the online classroom.</p> <p>As a reviewer, consider both the course and module/unit learning objectives in your assessment of this standard.</p>  |
| <p>2.4 Instructions to students on how to meet the learning objectives are adequate and stated clearly.</p> | 3 | <p>Instructions may take various forms (e.g., narratives, bulleted lists, charts) and may appear at different levels within the course, such as module-based or in weekly assignment sheets. Instructions are stated clearly, are complete, and are provided electronically in the online classroom.</p> <p>As a reviewer, consider both the course and module/unit learning objectives in your assessment of this standard.</p> <p>Reviewers may look for information indicating which learning activities, resources, assignments, and assessments support specific learning objectives.</p> <p>Students may be given a list of steps that guides them in meeting the learning objectives for each week. An example would be weekly assignment pages in narrative, bulleted list, or chart form.</p>  |
| <p>2.5 The learning objectives are appropriately designed for the level of the course.</p>                  | 3 | <p>Examine the course and module/unit learning objectives as a whole to ensure they describe knowledge and skills appropriate to the course level. All knowledge and skills need not be present in both the course and module/unit objectives, nor in every single objective.</p> <p>Content mastery is appropriate for the type and level of the course. Lower-division courses address content mastery, critical thinking skills, and core learning skills. Upper-division and graduate courses may focus on objectives more closely related to the specific discipline. Taxonomies that describe levels of learning can be helpful in categorizing learning objectives by level. Evaluating the appropriateness of content mastery expectations may be difficult for reviewers whose expertise is not in the course discipline. Reviewers should consult with the SME (subject matter expert) on the review team.</p> <p>Core learning skills, including critical thinking, are typically those that transcend an individual course and are integrated across the curriculum. Core learning skills are sometimes called “core competencies.”</p> <p>Core learning skills may include</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Proficiency in written and oral communication</li> <li>2. Ability to perform mathematical operations</li> <li>3. Ability to organize and use information in various ways, with different tools</li> <li>4. Understanding what one knows and how one knows it, and also understanding what one does not know and what one needs in order to find it out</li> </ol> |

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|   |          | <p>Critical thinking skills may include the ability to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Distinguish between fact and opinion</li> <li>2. Distinguish between primary and secondary sources</li> <li>3. Identify bias and stereotypes</li> <li>4. Evaluate information sources for point-of-view, accuracy, usefulness, timeliness, etc.</li> <li>5. Recognize deceptive arguments</li> </ol> <p>Upper-division and graduate course objectives might include</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mastery of the professional standards of the field</li> <li>2. Ability to communicate using the specialized terminology and methods of discourse appropriate to the field</li> </ol>   |
| <p><b>General Standard 3:</b><br/>Assessment strategies are designed to evaluate student progress by reference to stated learning objectives; to measure the effectiveness of student learning; and to be integral to the learning process.</p> |          | <p>Assessment is implemented in a manner that not only allows the instructor a broad perspective on the students' mastery of the content, but also allows students to measure their own learning throughout the course.</p>   |
| <p>3.1 The types of assessments selected measure the stated learning objectives and are consistent with course activities and resources.</p>  | <p>3</p> | <p><b>Alignment:</b> Course assessments (ways of confirming student mastery) are consistent with the course and module objectives of the course (see Standards 2.1 and 2.2) by measuring the accomplishment of those objectives. From the types of assessments chosen, it is clear that students can successfully complete the assessments if they have met the objectives stated in the course materials and learning activities. Note: At some institutions, learning objectives may be called learning outcomes.</p> <p>Examples of learning objective-assessment alignment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A problem analysis demonstrates critical thinking skills.</li> <li>2. A multiple-choice quiz verifies vocabulary knowledge.</li> <li>3. A composition shows writing skills.</li> </ol> <p>Examples of lack of alignment between learning objectives and assessments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The objective is to be able to “write a persuasive essay,” but the assessment is a multiple-choice test.</li> <li>2. The objective is to “demonstrate discipline-specific information literacy,” but the assessment is a rubric-scored term paper; and students are not given any practice with information literacy skills on smaller assignments.</li> </ol> <p>Some assessments may be geared toward meeting outcomes other than those stated in the course; for example, a course may have a writing component as part of a college-wide “Writing Across the Curriculum”</p> |

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|   |          | <p>requirement. In that case, the reviewer should suggest including in the course the objectives that reflect the college-wide requirement, if those objectives are not already included in the course.</p> <p>Special situations: In some cases (check the Instructor Worksheet), the course objectives are institutionally mandated, and the individual instructor does not have the authority to change them. For such cases, consider instead the module/unit objectives to assess and score Standard 3.1.</p>  |
| <p>3.2 The course grading policy is stated clearly.</p>   | <p>3</p> | <p>A clear, written statement fully explains how the course grades are calculated. The points, percentages, and weights for each component of the course grade are clearly stated. The relationship(s) between points, percentages, weights, and letter grades are explained. The instructor's policy on late submissions is clearly stated.</p> <p>Review the clarity of the explanation and presentation to the student, not the simplicity or complexity of a given grading system itself. Even a relatively complex grading system can be made easy to understand.</p> <p>Look for some or all of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A list of all activities, tests, etc., that will determine the student's final grade</li> <li>2. An explanation of the relationship between the final course letter grade and the student's accumulated points and/or percentages</li> <li>3. If points and percentages are used, an explanation of the relationship between the two</li> </ol>  |
| <p>3.3 Specific and descriptive criteria are provided for the evaluation of students' work and participation and are tied to the course grading policy.</p> | <p>3</p> | <p>Students are provided with a clear and meaningful description of the criteria that will be used to evaluate their work and participation in the course. These criteria are stated up-front at the beginning of the course. The description and/or statement of criteria provide students with clear guidance on the instructor's expectations and on the required components of coursework and participation. The criteria give students the information they need to understand how a grade on an assignment or activity will be calculated.</p> <p>As a reviewer, you will ascertain that the criteria used to evaluate students' performance align with the course objectives and contribute to students' future growth and improvement. Note, however, that as a reviewer you are not asked to look for and evaluate the instructor's specific feedback to students in Standard 3.3. Your focus is the design of the course, not the delivery of the course.</p> <p>Examples of what to look for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Evidence that the instructor has stated the criteria for evaluation of students' papers and assignments, such as rubrics or a list of criteria with associated point values</li> </ol> |

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|   |          | <p>2. A description of the how students’ participation in discussions will be graded, including the number of required postings per week; the criteria for evaluating the originality and quality of students’ comments and their responsiveness to classmates’ comments; and grade credit students can expect for varying levels of performance</p>  |
| <p>3.4 The assessment instruments selected are sequenced, varied, and appropriate to the student work being assessed.</p> | <p>2</p> | <p>Multiple assessment strategies are used in both the online and face-to-face settings, and they are appropriate to the student work being measured and the format in which they are used.</p> <p>Assessments are varied in order to provide multiple ways for students to demonstrate mastery, and to accommodate multiple learning styles.</p> <p>The assessments are appropriately sequenced so as to promote the learning process and to build on previously mastered knowledge and skills gained in this course and prerequisite courses. Assessments are paced to give students adequate time to achieve mastery and complete the work in a thoughtful manner.</p> <p>Examples that meet the standard:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A series of assessments that progress from the definition of terms, to a short paper explaining the relationship between various theoretical concepts, to a term paper that includes the application of theoretical concepts and critical analysis of a journal article</li> <li>2. Multiple types of assessment that enable the instructor to become familiar with an individual student’s work and that discourage “proxy cheating” (someone other than the student completing and submitting work)</li> <li>3. A series of assessments evenly paced every two weeks throughout the course</li> </ol> <p>Examples that DO NOT meet the standard:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The assessments consist of only multiple-choice tests.</li> <li>2. The first assessment requires students to locate research materials, while library research skills and methods are not covered until later in the course and are tied to the third assessment.</li> <li>3. No assessments are administered during the first 12 weeks of the semester, with an essay, term paper, and final exam due during the 13th, 14th, and 15th weeks, respectively.</li> <li>4. Discussion board posts are assessed on the basis of frequency or word count instead of on criteria related to the course objectives.</li> </ol> <p>Circumstances affecting some graduate courses: The grade may be entirely based on a major assignment due at the end of the term. In this case, benchmarks for progress are provided during the term, with feedback from the instructor.</p> |

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|   |   | <p>Examples of benchmark assignments might include submission of</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A bibliography</li> <li>2. An outline or project plan</li> <li>3. A précis of the paper or project</li> <li>4. One or more preliminary drafts</li> </ol>   |
| 3.5 Students have multiple opportunities to measure their own learning progress.  | 2 | <p>Students learn more effectively if they receive frequent, meaningful, and timely feedback. This feedback may come from the instructor directly, from assignments and assessments that have feedback built into them, or even from other students.</p> <p>Look for examples of self-check quizzes and activities, as well as other types of practice opportunities that provide timely feedback. These types of assignments should be voluntary or allow multiple attempts.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Writing assignments that allow for the submission of a draft for instructor comment and suggestions for improvement</li> <li>2. Self-mastery tests that include informative feedback with each answer choice</li> <li>3. Interactive games and simulations that have feedback built in</li> <li>4. Self-scoring practice quizzes</li> <li>5. Practice written assignments</li> <li>6. Peer reviews</li> <li>7. Model papers or essays provided for students' viewing</li> <li>8. Sample answers or answer keys provided for students' viewing</li> </ol> |
| <b>General Standard 4:</b><br>Instructional materials are sufficiently comprehensive to achieve stated course objectives and learning outcomes. |   | <p>The instructional materials form the core of the course, and these standards respect the instructor's prerogative in selecting them. The focus of this standard is on supporting the course objectives and competencies, rather than on qualitative judgments about the materials.</p>   |
| 4.1 The instructional materials contribute to the achievement of the stated course and module/unit learning objectives.                         | 3 | <p><b>Alignment:</b> The instructional materials used in the course align with the course and module learning objectives of the course (see Standards 2.1 and 2.2) by contributing to the achievement of those objectives and by integrating effectively with the tools and media selected for delivery (see Standard 6.1).</p> <p>Course materials, resources, and learning objectives align in a clear and direct way. The course materials and resources enable students to achieve the stated learning objectives. As a reviewer, consider both the course and module/unit learning objectives in your assessment of this standard. Note: at some institutions, learning objectives may be called learning outcomes.</p> <p>Decisions on this standard may be difficult for reviewers whose expertise is not in the course discipline. Reviewers should consult with the team SME (subject matter expert) and use common sense to determine if the instructional materials support the learning objectives.</p>   |

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|   |          | <p>Normally textbooks are not provided to reviewers because of cost and logistical limitations. Many publishers provide web links to their textbooks, and reviewers may wish to consult these links. In evaluating the course against this standard, reviewers will work closely with the SME on the team.</p> <p>NOTE: If the course is built solely or predominantly from publisher material, the Quality Matters Publisher Rubric may be a better evaluation tool.</p> <p>In some advanced undergraduate courses and graduate courses, no textbook(s) are assigned. Reviewers will need to consider bibliographies and webliographies provided by the instructor, or, in some cases, developed by students themselves, following guidelines provided by the instructor. Reviewers should focus only on the alignment of the instructional materials with the learning objectives rather than attempt to evaluate the content. If the learning objectives have been judged to be appropriate to the level of the course (Standard 2.5), we assume instructional materials that support these objectives are also appropriate to the level of the course.</p> <p>Special situations: In some cases (check the Instructor Worksheet), the course objectives are institutionally mandated, and the individual instructor does not have the authority to change them. For such cases, consider instead the module/unit objectives to assess and score Standard 4.1.</p> |
| <p>4.2 The purpose of instructional materials and how the materials are to be used for learning activities are clearly explained.</p> | <p>3</p> | <p>Students can easily determine the purpose of all content, materials, resources, technologies, and instructional methods used in the course, and how each will help them achieve the stated learning objectives.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Links to external websites indicate the purpose of the links or are completely self-evident.</li> <li>2. The function of animated games or exercises is clearly explained or is completely self-evident.</li> </ol> <p>If various instructional materials (books, manuals, videos, CD-ROMs/DVDs, computer software, etc.) are used in the course, the purpose of their use and relationship to one another is clearly explained to students. Reviewers should determine if the diversely formatted course materials are integrated well enough to be useful to the student.</p> <p>For example, a course requires students to use the following materials: a textbook divided into chapters, video segments ordered by topics, a website organized around specific skills, and a tutorial CD-ROM or DVD that has an opening menu consisting of “practice quizzes,” “images,” and “audio examples.” Consider whether it is clear to students the order in</p>  |

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|  |   | <p>which they should approach these varied materials, how each is related to the learning objectives and activities, and how the materials are related to one another.</p> <p>In some advanced undergraduate and graduate courses in which students are expected to find their own learning materials, the instructor posts guidelines that assist the student in identifying relevant materials and in distinguishing between core and supplementary materials and between scholarly and non-scholarly sources for academic writing. Reviewers should determine whether these guidelines satisfy the standard.</p>   |
| 4.3 All resources and materials used in the course are appropriately cited.              | 2 | <p>Sources for materials used in the course are clearly identified. Text, images, graphic materials, tables, videos, audios, websites, and other forms of multimedia are appropriately referenced according to the institution's copyright and intellectual property policies.</p> <p>When an extensive body of material comes from a single source, a general statement will suffice. The material may include an e-pack, instructor material, publisher material, etc.</p>  |
| 4.4 The instructional materials are current.   | 2 | <p>The instructional materials represent current thinking in the discipline. Older works considered to be seminal are cited with publication dates. The SME on the team should verify that the works are seminal in the discipline.</p> <p>Decisions on this standard may be difficult for individual reviewers whose expertise is not in the course discipline. Reviewers should consult with the team SME (subject matter expert) and use common sense to determine if the materials are current.</p>   |
| 4.5 The instructional materials present a variety of perspectives on the course content. | 1 | <p>The course materials are robust and create a rich learning environment for students. The course presents meaningful instructional materials from a variety of sources, including the textbook(s), PowerPoint presentations, websites, lecture notes, periodicals, outlines, and multimedia.</p> <p>Instructional materials are varied, and different perspectives are presented (including, if relevant, perspectives from different cultures). Typically, reviewers would expect to find multiple sources and not just one author. In some disciplines, it may be appropriate to have all materials from a single author. If multiple sources are used, evidence of the intent to include a range of cultural perspectives is found in the sources selected for the course.</p> <p>Decisions on this standard may be difficult for individual reviewers whose expertise is not in the course discipline. Reviewers should consult with the team SME (subject matter expert) and use common sense to determine if the materials are from multiple sources.</p> |
| 4.6 The distinction between required and optional materials                              | 1 | <p>Clear explanations are provided to students regarding which materials and resources are required and which are optional. Particular attention is given</p>   |

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| <p>is clearly explained.</p>  |          | <p>to those resources students need to acquire through purchase, download, CD-ROM, or web access outside of the course. Instructors should clearly indicate materials students are expected to acquire and use to complete course activities and assignments.</p> <p>Such indications about required and optional materials may appear in the syllabus, class schedule, or instructions for learning activities. Ideally, students should be provided this information at the beginning of the class or prior to the start of the class.</p>   |
| <p><b>General Standard 5:</b> Forms of interaction incorporated in the course motivate students and promote learning.</p> |          | <p>Engaging students to become active learners contributes to the learning process and to student persistence.</p>   |
| <p>5.1 The learning activities promote the achievement of the stated learning objectives.</p>                             | <p>3</p> | <p><b>Alignment:</b> Learning activities align with the course and module objectives of the course (see Standards 2.1 and 2.2) by engaging students in activities that directly contribute to the achievement of those objectives and integrating smoothly with the tools and media (Standard 6.1) that enable these activities.</p> <p>The purpose of learning activities is to facilitate the student’s achievement of the stated objectives.</p> <p>The learning activities actively engage the learner with the course content. Learning activities are varied in order to provide reinforcement and mastery in multiple ways and to accommodate multiple learning styles. Activities may include reading assignments, student presentations, science labs, class discussions, case studies, role playing, simulation exercises, practice quizzes, tests, etc.</p> <p>Examples of mismatches between activities and objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The objective requires students to be able to deliver a persuasive speech, but the activities in the course do not include practice of that skill.</li> <li>2. The objective is “Prepare each budget within a master budget and explain the importance of each in the overall budgeting process.” The students review information about this objective in their texts and observe budgets worked out by the instructor, but they themselves produce only one of the several budgets.</li> </ol> <p><i>Blended Courses:</i> In courses that use both the online and face-to-face settings, the learning activities that occur in these two settings are connected by a common thread or theme and are mutually reinforcing. The connection and reinforcement are made clear to students. For example, the different parts of a particular activity might be sequenced in an alternating way in online and face-to-face meetings of the course.</p> <p><i>Special Situations:</i> When course objectives are institutionally mandated,</p> |

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| <p>5.2 Learning activities provide opportunities for interaction that support active learning.</p>          | <p>3</p> | <p>the reviewer should refer to module/unit objectives to assess Standard 5.1.</p> <p>Activities encourage students' engagement during learning through different types of interaction as appropriate to the course. Interactions are designed as activities to support the course objectives and may vary with the discipline, purpose, and level of the course. Reviewers should look for the purpose of the interactions and not just the number of opportunities for interaction.</p> <p>Types of interaction include student-instructor, student-content, and student-student. Active learning involves students engaging by "doing" something, such as discovering, processing or applying concepts and information. Active learning implies guiding students to increasing levels of responsibility for their own learning.</p> <p>Activities for student-instructor interaction might include an assignment or project submitted for instructor feedback; an opportunity for student-instructor discussion in a synchronous session or an asynchronous discussion board exchange; or a frequently-asked-questions (FAQ) discussion forum moderated by the instructor.</p> <p>Activities for student-content interaction might include assigned reading from a text, article, or online resource, assigned completion of a workbook or online exercise, or a learning-how-to-learn activity.</p> <p>Activities for student-student interaction might include assigned collaborative activities such as group discussions, small-group projects, group problem-solving assignments, or peer critiques.</p> <p>Reviewers should look for opportunities for student-instructor interaction, student-content interaction, and, if appropriate to the course, student-student interaction. Refer to the Instructor Worksheet to determine whether or not opportunities for student-student interaction are appropriate to the course.</p> <p>NOTE: Reviewers' evaluation of the types of interactions designed into the activities should be based on what is found to be the nature of the course and not on personal preferences. Students' learning environments usually are broader than a single course and may include informal networks that are beyond the scope of a QM review.</p> |
| <p>5.3 The instructor's plan for classroom response time and feedback on assignments is clearly stated.</p> | <p>3</p> | <p>A clear statement of instructor responsibilities is an important component of an online or blended course. Students are better able to manage their course activities when the instructor has stated his or her timeframe for responding to student emails and discussion postings and lets students know in advance when they will receive feedback on assignments and when grades will be posted. By sharing this information, the instructor also deflects unrealistic student expectations of 24/7 service from the</p>   |

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|  |   | <p>instructor. Frequently this information is conveyed in the syllabus or the "meet the instructor" message.</p> <p>If it is necessary to alter the response-time standards during the course, the instructor is responsible for clearly communicating the adjustment to students.</p>  |
| 5.4 The requirements for student interaction are clearly articulated.  | 2 | <p>Look for a clear statement of the instructor's expectations for student participation in required course interactions (frequency, length, timeliness, etc.). The statement helps students plan and manage their class participation and provides a basis for the instructor to evaluate student participation. The more specifically the expectations are explained, the easier it is for the student to meet the expectations. Clearly explaining the role of the instructor and expectations for interactions with the instructor and with other students is especially helpful to students from cultures in which deference to the instructor is customary and who may need encouragement to "speak up."</p> <p>Typically, general statements of student performance expectations are included in the course information page or syllabus. These general requirements may specify the nature of the required participation and expectations for frequency and quality of the student's interactions. More specific, task-related performance expectations may be included in the individual task description. The instructor may also provide rubrics detailing how student interactions are evaluated, including reading and responding to the instructor's and classmates' posts.</p> |
| <b>General Standard 6:</b> Course navigation and technology support student engagement and ensure access to course components. |   | <p>The technology enabling the various course components facilitates the student's learning experience and is easy to use, rather than impeding the student's progress.</p>   |
| 6.1 The tools and media support the course learning objectives.  | 3 | <p><b>Alignment:</b> The tools and media selected for the course align with the course and module objectives of the course (see Standards 2.1 and 2.2) by effectively supporting the assessment instruments (Standard 3.1), instructional materials (Standard 4.1), and learning activities (Standard 5.1) in the course.</p> <p>Tools are functional software that provide areas for interaction in the course; they may be included in the learning management system (LMS) or external to the LMS.</p> <p>Examples of tools include discussion boards, chat rooms, grade book, social media, games, whiteboard, wikis, blogs, virtual classrooms, web conferencing, etc.</p> <p>Media are one-way delivery modalities that enhance learning.</p>   |

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|   |          | <p>Examples of media include video, audio, animations, and podcasts.</p> <p>Specific tools and media are not required for this standard to be met. If they are used, they support the learning objectives and fit the learning activities.</p> <p>Clear information and instructions are provided regarding how the tools and media support the learning objectives. Technology is not to be used simply for the sake of using technology. For example, a course might require viewing video materials, but it may not be clear how the video materials illustrate or support a learning objective.</p> <p>Special situations: In some cases (check the Instructor Worksheet), the course objectives are institutionally mandated, and the individual instructor does not have the authority to change them. For such cases, consider instead the module/unit objectives to assess and score Standard 6.1.</p>   |
| <p>6.2 Course tools and media support student engagement and guide the student to become an active learner.</p> | <p>3</p> | <p>Tools and media used in the course help students actively engage in the learning process rather than passively absorb information. Selected tools and media help the student engage in the reflection that leads to deep learning. Types of learner interaction include learner-content, learner-instructor, and learner-learner. Interactions can provide opportunities to increase students' comfort with course material and technology, and the goal should be to facilitate the broadest and deepest learner engagement possible in the course.</p> <p>Examples of tools and media that support engagement:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Interactive, real-time software, such as real-time collaborative tools, webinars, and virtual worlds</li> <li>2. Software that facilitates interactions and collaborations, such as shared documents or wikis</li> <li>3. Animations, simulations, and games that require student input</li> <li>4. Discussion tools with automatic notification or a "read/unread" tracking feature</li> <li>5. Automated self-check exercises requiring student responses</li> </ol> |
| <p>6.3 Navigation throughout the online components of the course is logical, consistent, and efficient.</p>     | <p>3</p> | <p>Navigation refers to the process of planning, recording, and controlling the movement of a learner from one place to another in the online course.</p> <p>Considerations for effective navigation devices in the online course may include</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Adherence to accepted web standards-of-function for hypertext links, buttons, and windows</li> <li>2. Provisions for intuitive understanding of a function when non-standard navigation devices are employed (e.g., clicking and dragging a playing card from a deck into an appropriate category)</li> <li>3. Consistent use of navigation devices within the learning management</li> </ol>  |

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|   |          | <p>system (LMS) and for moving between the LMS and other sites, such as a publisher site</p> <p>Some navigation devices--next and previous links, for example--are provided by the learning management system used for course delivery and cannot be modified. Other navigation devices--hypertext links, icons, and window functions, for example--may be within the control of the course designer. In evaluating this standard, the reviewer should determine the locus of responsibility for the design of course navigation features.</p>  |
| <p>6.4 Students can readily access the technologies required in the course.</p> | <p>2</p> | <p>All required technologies are easily obtainable, either through download, purchase at the bookstore, or another means. The word “technologies” covers a wide range, including hardware, software, subscriptions, and plug-ins. In evaluating this standard, reviewers should consider both the availability of the technologies and other resources <u>and</u> whether clear instructions are provided for access, installation, and use.</p> <p>From information provided in the course instructions, students are able to readily obtain the hardware and peripherals necessary to complete all course activities. For specific peripheral devices needed for course completion, instructions are included on how to obtain the peripheral devices, and on how to install and use them.</p> <p>Students have ready access to all software used in the course. Examples of software include statistical analysis software, equation editors, web authoring tools, or programming software. Students also have access to online tools and plug-ins, such as Acrobat Reader and Flash, Java, media players, MP3 players, wikis, social media, etc.</p> <p>A clearly worded statement lists the required software and plug-ins, along with instructions for obtaining and installing them.</p> <p>For technologies that require subscriptions, instructions are provided on how to obtain the subscription, including information on acquisition of access codes and on user identification requirements.</p> <p>Examples of how to help ensure student access:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If speakers, a microphone, and/or a headset are necessary, the need for such peripherals is clearly stated.</li> <li>2. Links are provided to required peripherals to be purchased from the college bookstore or other source.</li> <li>3. A list of required downloadable resources, including links, is provided.</li> <li>4. Links are provided to access materials such as OpenOffice, to allow students free access to necessary course documents.</li> <li>5. If publisher materials are used, clearly stated information about how to obtain and use any required access codes is provided.</li> <li>6. Instructions are provided on how to access materials available through</li> </ol> |

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|   |          | <p>subscriptions to online journals or databases. When feasible, links are also provided.</p> <p>7. For textbooks, CDs, and DVDs, information provided includes the title, author, publisher, ISBN number, copyright date, and details on where copies can be obtained.</p> <p>8. A navigation button devoted to “Resources” is integrated in the overall course design.</p> <p>9. A custom CD or DVD prepared for the course is surface-mailed to students.</p> <p>Information on how to reach technical support likewise is easy to find and clearly presented for students who may need assistance with obtaining necessary course technologies or with changing software versions.</p>  |
| <p>6.5 The course technologies are current.</p> | <p>1</p> | <p>Innovative technologies continuously appear on the market, and course technology should be up-to-date and chosen to best meet the needs of the course. Look for evidence of appropriate incorporation of tools and media such as social media, mobile technologies, games, simulations, wikis, blogs, podcasts, and virtual worlds in the course’s online and technology-supported design. Courses not recently developed may need to be updated.</p> <p>Examples of current technology that may be used in support of the course objectives to enhance student learning:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Synchronous web conference tools used for orientation, group projects, tutoring, test reviews, etc.</li> <li>2. A mobile application that, for instance, students use to identify plants in a botany course</li> <li>3. A wiki used for group collaboration</li> <li>4. Blogs used for student journals</li> <li>5. A simulation that demonstrates something not possible in the physical world; for instance, a process or procedure that takes place inside a dangerous or inaccessible place</li> <li>6. A simulation replicating laboratory activities that allows manipulations of objects on the screen similar to hands-on lab experiences</li> <li>7. Web-based voice tools used by English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) instructors and students to practice pronunciation, vocabulary, etc.</li> </ol> <p>The course design takes advantage of the features of the learning management system. Courses may incorporate new features of the learning management system that further support learning objectives (see 6.1 regarding learning objectives).</p> <p>As a reviewer, keep in mind that the tools and media available to an instructor may vary greatly from institution to institution and are sometimes limited by the access and support provided by the institution.</p> |
| <p><b>General Standard 7:</b> The</p>           |          | <p>In the learner support standard, four different kinds of support services are</p>  |

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| course facilitates student access to institutional support services essential to student success.                            |   | addressed: technical support, accessibility support, academic services support, and student services support.  |
| 7.1 The course instructions articulate or link to a clear description of the technical support offered and how to access it. | 3 | <p>Technical support for learners differs from institution to institution and includes such information as how to log in; how to use the tools and features of the learning management system; and how to get help desk support. Technical support does not include help with course content or assignments or academic or student support services (see Standards 7.3 and 7.4).</p> <p>Look for evidence that learners have access to technical support services from within the course or the learning management system. The purpose is not to review the adequacy of those services at an institutional level but rather to determine if technical support services are provided for learners and that the course contains information about the services and how to access them.</p> <p>Examples of providing information about technical support:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A clear description of the technical support services provided by the institution, including a link to a technical support website</li> <li>2. An email link to the institution's technical support center or help desk</li> <li>3. A phone number for the institution's technical support center or help desk</li> <li>4. Clearly worded directions for obtaining support for access to publisher-supplied materials (e.g., e-packs or course cartridges)</li> <li>5. Links to tutorials or other resources providing instructions on how to use the tools and features of the learning management system</li> <li>6. A link to "frequently asked questions"</li> </ol> |
| 7.2 Course instructions articulate or link to the institution's accessibility policies and services.                         | 3 | <p>Accessibility policies or accommodation statements state that services and accommodations are available for students with disabilities and inform the student how such services may be accessed. To meet this standard, the course may include</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A link to the institution's formal accessibility policy, if a policy exists</li> <li>2. A statement that informs the student how to gain access to an institution's disability support services, if such services exist; for example, a telephone number or website link for the disability services office</li> </ol> <p>If the institution does not have an applicable disability policy or disability services, the instructor may provide a policy that will be adhered to in the course to assure that student disabilities will be accommodated.</p>   |
| 7.3 Course instructions articulate or link to an explanation of how the institution's academic support                       | 2 | Academic support for students, and the scope of what "academic support services and resources" entails, differs from institution to institution. For the purposes of review, academic support services and resources may include an online orientation; access to library resources; a readiness   |

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| <p>services and resources can help students succeed in the course and how students can access the services.</p>   |          | <p>assessment or survey; testing services; tutoring; non-native language services; writing and/or math centers; tutorials or other forms of guidance on conducting research, writing papers, citing sources, using an online writing lab, and using institution-specific technology; supplemental instruction programs; and teaching assistants.</p> <p>Look for evidence that learners have access to academic support services and resources from within the course or the learning management system. The purpose is not to review the adequacy of these services and resources on an institutional level but rather to determine if academic support services and resources are provided for learners and if the course contains information about the services and how to access them.</p> <p>Examples of features that connect students with academic support services:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A link to the academic support website, along with a listing and definition of academic support services and resources provided for learners</li> <li>2. Links to institution-specific academic support services and how to access these services (e.g., location of testing center and/or proctored test sites, hours of operation, phone numbers and email addresses for key personnel)</li> <li>3. Links to online orientations or demo courses</li> <li>4. A link to the library, including information on how to obtain library access, request materials, access databases, and contact a librarian</li> <li>5. A link to tutorials or guides on conducting research, writing papers, and citing sources</li> </ol> |
| <p>7.4 Course instructions articulate or link to an explanation of how the institution's student support services can help students succeed and how students can access the services.</p> | <p>1</p> | <p>Student support services, and the scope of what such support entails, differ from institution to institution. For the purposes of this review, student support services include advising, registration, financial aid, student or campus life, counseling, career services, online workshops, and student organizations.</p> <p>Look for evidence that learners have access to student support services from within the course or the learning management system. The purpose is not to review the adequacy of those services on an institutional level but rather to determine if information about student support services and how to access them is provided in the course.</p> <p>The course may provide the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A clear description of institution-specific student support services and how to access them (including email addresses and phone numbers for key personnel)</li> <li>2. A link to the student support website, along with a listing and description of student support services</li> <li>3. Guidance on when and how students should access a particular support</li> </ol>   |

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| <b>General Standard 8:</b> The course demonstrates a commitment to accessibility for all students.   |   | The accessibility standard incorporates the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and is consistent with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).   |
| 8.1 The course employs accessible technologies and provides guidance on how to obtain accommodation. | 3 | <p>As electronically delivered courses continue to evolve, instructors will face many choices when they select the tools and media that best support their learning objectives. The intent of this standard is to ensure the learning management system and the tools and media selected are accessible to students with disabilities.</p> <p>To meet this standard, reviewers should determine if the following conditions are met:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If the course is offered in an accessible learning management system (LMS), a statement by the LMS provider certifying accessibility should be readily available as a link or attached to the Instructor Worksheet.</li> <li>2. The instructor provides documentation stating the degree of accessibility of any content, tools, and software used in the course. If any component of the course is inaccessible, instructions are provided on how to obtain accommodation.</li> </ol> |
| 8.2 The course contains equivalent alternatives to auditory and visual content.                      | 2 | <p>To meet this standard, alternative means of access to course information are provided for the vision- or hearing-impaired student, such as equivalent textual representations of images, audio, animations, and video in the course website. Such alternatives may be found within the course, or learners may be directed to where they may access the alternative representations.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. An audio lecture has a text transcript available.</li> <li>2. A video clip, image, or animation is captioned and/or available with a text transcript.</li> </ol> <p>A statement accompanies any of the above media explaining how to seek accommodations or content in alternative formats. Note to reviewers: In instances where alternative formats need to be requested, the review team should test the availability of the alternate content.</p>   |
| 8.3 The course design facilitates readability and minimizes distractions.                            | 2 | <p>The course uses appropriate design elements, including colors, fonts, spacing, graphics, formatting, and color coding to facilitate readability and minimize distractions for the student. Colors are used judiciously and do not present a barrier to students accessing the content. Fonts and spacing do not crowd words or present a barrier to the content. Graphics and animations are used to enhance instructional materials and illustrate ideas without causing distraction from the materials.</p> <p>Formatting (how content is arranged on the page) and color coding are used to serve specific instructional purposes. For example, format and</p>  |

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|  |          | <p>color are used purposefully to communicate key points, group like items, emphasize relevant relationships, etc. Sufficient contrast between backgrounds and fonts is used to distinguish text from background, with thought given to color choices for those with difficulties distinguishing among colors. If color-coding is used, an additional means to communicate information, such as bold or italics, should be used in conjunction with color coding.</p> <p>Reviewers should remember to take a student perspective in determining whether or not the standard is met.</p>  |
| <p>8.4 The course design accommodates the use of assistive technologies.</p> | <p>2</p> | <p>Presenting information in text format is generally acceptable because screen reader software (used by the vision-impaired) can read text. Course pages have links that are self-describing and meaningful, with file names and web hyperlinks having easy-to-understand names. Icons used as links also have HTML tags or an accompanying text link. Reviewers should also consider whether the use of tables, particular document formats, navigation, and links may impose barriers to assistive technology.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Navigation is streamlined by providing a method that allows users to skip navigation or other elements that repeat on every page. This shortcut is usually accomplished by providing a "Skip to Content," "Skip to Main Content," or "Skip Navigation" link at the top of the page that goes to the main content of the page.</li> <li>2. HTML documents and tagged PDF files are mostly accessible to assistive technology.</li> <li>3. Tables are used for layout and to organize data. Tables used to organize tabular data have appropriate table headers. Data cells are associated with their appropriate headers, making it easier for screen-reader users to navigate and understand the data table.</li> </ol> |