Online Course Design Rubric: Version 2

The Online Course Design Rubric was developed by the Saint Louis University Distance Education Committee (with faculty representatives from every school/college) and is based on the online course design rubric from Quality Matters: Inter-Institutional Quality Assurance in Online Learning. Alignment with all required criteria in the rubric is expected of all online courses offered by Saint Louis University.

NOTE: This rubric may be shared internally within Saint Louis University but may not be shared on a publicly-available website.

Purpose: The purpose of this rubric is to provide a tool to guide the design of online courses offered by schools and colleges at Saint Louis University. The rubric also is used in the Online Course Design Peer Review Process. The rubric criteria are adapted from: Quality Matters: Inter-Institutional Quality Assurance in Online Learning. While most of the Standards described in this rubric are hallmarks of effective course design in any modality, research shows that the online environment places additional importance on these design standards, since online instructors do not have the same opportunities for spontaneous, synchronous communications with students in the same ways they do in a face-to-face or on-ground course. Required criteria are noted by an asterisk (*), and online courses must align with each of the required criteria. Criteria that are not noted by an asterisk are not required at this time; however, they are recommended best practices for online course design.

Scope: The rubric criteria apply to all online courses offered by Saint Louis University. Online courses are defined as those in which all or the vast majority (75% or more) of the instruction and interaction occurs via electronic communication or equivalent mechanisms, with the faculty and students physically separated from each other. The academic unit sponsoring the course or program will use the Higher Learning Commission definitions to determine if a program or course falls within the purview of this policy, as required by the University Policy for Distance Education [LINK].

Peer Review: A peer review process is used to provide feedback to faculty members regarding the design of their online course. Feedback is based on the Online Course Design Rubric criteria. Faculty members are identified by the Distance Education Office to serve as peer reviewers. Peer reviewers are provided training on the application of the rubric. In order to pass peer review, courses must meet all of the criteria marked with an asterisk (*).

Support Resources: Instructional design staff in the Reinert Center for Transformative Teaching and Learning are available to partner with faculty members to design online courses based on the rubric criteria.
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<td><strong>Standard 1: Course Organization and Structure</strong></td>
<td>The course organization and structure are visible, clear, and promote ease of navigation. A course overview/introduction sets the tone for the course, lets learners know what to expect, and provides guidance to ensure learners get off to a good start. Course layout makes policies and course expectations easy to find.</td>
<td>Reviewers: Courses approved for offering through a third-party platform will require a different method for accessing the course. The Distance Education Office will help coordinate your access to the course. Aside from this Standard, all other required criteria must be met for the course to pass peer review.</td>
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| **1.1 Instructors must use a University-supported Learning Management System.** | All online courses at Saint Louis University must use a University-supported Learning Management System (LMS) to comply with Federal Regulations for verification of student identity. Other online platforms (such as publisher websites, external tools, and the like) may be used to supplement course instruction but may not serve as a substitute for the Learning Management System. In rare cases, exceptions may be made for online platforms external to SLU that replicate LMS functions and that sufficiently comply with Federal Regulations. Exceptions must be approved by the Associate Provost for Distance Education, and any third-party platform must be accessible to peer reviewers. | Evidence for this Standard may include/be found in:  
- A course “tour”  
- A video or text titled, “Welcome from the Instructor”  
- A section called “Start Here” or “Read Me First”  
- A “scavenger hunt” or “syllabus quiz” activity that leads learners through an exploration of the different parts of the course  
- Course syllabus (with statement about how to get started in the course)  
Reviewers: If the course is approved for a third-party platform, instructions should be provided to students on how to access the platform. This information may be provided in a course site within the University-supported LMS, in a draft pre-course email communication to students, etc. |
| **1.2 Instructions make clear how to get started and where to find various course components.** | Instructions provide a general course overview, present the schedule of activities, guide the learner to explore the course site, and indicate where to start/what to do first. Instructions also provide detailed navigational instructions for the course site and how the course is structured. Ideally, the instructor also provides a course overview that helps learners understand the purpose of the course.  
Optional: If appropriate, the instructor also may connect the purpose of the course to SLU’s Jesuit identity/mission in some way. | Evidence for this Standard may include/be found in:  
- A course “tour”  
- A video or text titled, “Welcome from the Instructor”  
- A section called “Start Here” or “Read Me First”  
- A “scavenger hunt” or “syllabus quiz” activity that leads learners through an exploration of the different parts of the course  
- Course syllabus (with statement about how to get started in the course)  
Reviewers: If the course is approved for a third-party platform, instructions should be provided to students on how to access the platform. This information may be provided in a course site within the University-supported LMS, in a draft pre-course email communication to students, etc. |
| **1.3 The course is organized by modules** | Effective online courses are arranged by modules, which provide a way to represent units of instruction and the time | Evidence for this Standard may include/be found in:  
- Course syllabus |
that provide structure for
the course and the term.

period within which those units will be addressed. Modules
serve three distinct but related functions:

- Provide an organizing principle for the course (similarly to
  instructional units or course segments in an on-ground
  course)
- Communicate the expected time/pacing of course
  instruction to learners (without the course meeting
days/times of an on-ground course, it is important to
  provide learners with clear instructions about when new
  content/activities begin and end)
- Create virtual “containers” for all the content and
  activities within a given unit of instruction (an important
  element of online course design because it facilitates
  learners’ completion of required tasks within each unit of
  instruction)

Modules may cover one or more concepts or themes. They
should contain all the information – including links to all
necessary readings/content and required tools, information
about all required activities, and (if appropriate) the distinct
learning outcomes of the given module – within the module
structure.

1.4 Etiquette
expectations for online
discussions, email, and
other forms of
communication and
conduct are clearly
stated.

Expectations are provided to guide the learners’
communications and conduct. Since learner behavior is
culturally influenced, it is important to be explicit about the
standards of conduct and communication that apply in the
course.

Learners should be informed about the possible consequences
for any breaches of expectations. To reinforce etiquette and
civility, the instructor may provide a link or reference to the
institution’s or program’s student handbook or code of
conduct.

Evidence for this Standard may include/be found in:
- Course syllabus
- Course introduction
- Course home page
- Link to department/program website with relevant
  expectations

Examples include expectations about:
- The tone and civility used in communicating with fellow
  learners and the instructor, whether the communication
  is by electronic means or by telephone or in an in-person
  meeting
- Awareness of and sensitivity to cultural differences
| *1.5 Policies with which the learner is expected to comply are clearly stated (including grading policies), and/or a link to current policies is provided. | Policies include course, University, and/or program policies. Course-level policies – such as policies on grading, the submission of late work, and etiquette in the course – are important for the learner’s success in the course. University-level and/or program-level policies provide important information on such matters as student conduct, academic integrity, the grade of “Incomplete,” withdrawal without penalty, confidentiality in the classroom, and student grievances. Some information is required by the University’s Course Syllabus Policy. | Evidence for this Standard may include/be found in:  
- Link on Blackboard or syllabus to SLU Distance Education website  
- Link on Blackboard or syllabus to student handbook or academic integrity policy  
- A link to the University or program student handbook  
- An explanation of the relationship between academic integrity and the ethical practices in a profession, including a link to the University’s academic integrity policy  

*Reviewers: Confirm the presence and clarity of etiquette expectations. Do not evaluate the substance of etiquette expectations.* |
| *1.6 Minimum technology requirements are clearly stated.* | Learners are provided with detailed information about the technologies they will need throughout the course. The word “technologies” covers a wide range of tools, including hardware, software, subscriptions, peripheral devices (e.g., speakers, microphone, headset), and plug-ins. Clear instructions are provided for how to obtain and use required publisher content access codes. | Evidence for this Standard may include/be found in:  
- Course syllabus  
- Link to SLU ITS  
- Link to SLU Distance Education website, Information for Students  

*Reviewers: The substance of policies is not to be evaluated. If policies for academic integration and late submission of work are not found in the course, recommend they be included.* |
| *1.7 The online course contains a syllabus document (PDF, Word) in* | Although elements of a syllabus may be presented in various sections of the course site, a complete syllabus (as defined by the academic unit or program) must be present in the form of a course syllabus. | Evidence for this Standard may include/be found in:  
- Blackboard course menu  
- Course introduction |
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<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>a printable format.</td>
<td>downloadable/printable document. This requirement assures the course syllabus is available beyond the life of the course site, in case learners or program leadership need to consult course policies/requirements in the future (e.g., to address a student appeal, for the purposes of transfer credit articulation, etc.).</td>
<td>• Course home page</td>
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| *1.8 A self-introduction by the instructor is provided, is professional in nature, and available online. | The instructor’s initial introduction creates a sense of connection between the instructor and the learners. This introduction may appear in text, audio, and/or video form. It should present the instructor as professional and approachable. The course also should provide essential information about the instructor, 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. Expectations of the relationship and communication style between instructor and learner are culturally influenced. Including information about the role of the instructor and how to address the instructor is helpful to learners from all backgrounds. | Evidence for this Standard may include/be found in:  
• A short welcome video where the instructor introduces themselves  
• A brief written statement from the instructor, introducing themselves and linking to information about how to contact them and when they will be available online each day  
• An “Instructor Information” section in the course that includes a brief bio for the instructor |
| 1.9 Learners are given an opportunity to introduce themselves to the class. | Learner introductions at the beginning of the class help to create a welcoming learning environment and a sense of community. Instructors may give learners the opportunity to represent themselves by text, audio, or visual means. Learners should be given guidance on how they should introduce themselves. Instructors may ask learners to respond to specific questions (such as why they are taking the course, what their strategies for success are, what concerns they have, what they expect to learn, etc.), or they may choose to let the learners decide what to include. | Evidence for this Standard may include/be found in:  
• A discussion thread inviting students to briefly introduce themselves  
• A blog for Class Introductions  
• A required activity that asks students to post a short video in which they introduce themselves |
In certain situations, such as when a class is very large, learner introductions may not be feasible and/or may need to be assigned within groups.

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| **Standard 2: Learning Outcomes** | The stated learning outcomes establish a foundation upon which the course and modules are based. Outcomes are measurable and clearly articulate what a student will know and/or be able to do as a result of educational experiences (e.g., course materials, learning activities, assignments, service-learning activity, etc.). The focus of the learning outcomes is not the activities themselves. Learning outcomes may also be referred to as objectives or competencies. Online courses typically have both course-level and module-level outcomes. | Evidence for this Standard may include/be found in:  
- Course syllabus  
- Course overview  
- Course home page  

Examples of measurable outcomes include:  
- Develop a comprehensive, individualized wellness action program focused on overcoming a sedentary lifestyle.  
- Describe the relationship between the components of an ecosystem.  
- Explain the factors that contribute to economic inflation.  
- Evaluate the credibility of websites.  
- Apply economic theories to the plays of William Shakespeare.  

**Reviewers:** The number and cognitive level of course learning outcomes should not be evaluated.  

**Special Situations:** In some cases, course learning outcomes are mandated, and the individual instructor does not have the authority to change them. In such cases, reviewers should... |

| *2.1 Course-level outcomes are clearly stated and describe measurable learning.* | Measurable course learning outcomes precisely describe what students are to gain from the educational experiences within a course. “Measurable” means that the learning can be observed in or demonstrated through learners’ work; it may be qualitative or quantitative. Outcome statements should describe what the learners will know and be able to do by the end of the course. Ideally, statements would complete the sentence, “By the end of this course, students will know and/or be able to...” The learning outcomes should be written so that their meaning is clear to a student audience, including non-native speakers. Instructors should consider whether the number of course-level outcomes are manageable, given the focus and constraints of the course. Additionally, they should consider whether their learning outcomes are aimed at an appropriate cognitive level for the specific course level (e.g., introductory level, capstone level, graduate level). |...
| 2.2 Course-level outcomes are explicitly connected to learning activities and assessments. | Learners benefit from explicit articulation of the relationship between course-level learning outcomes and course activities/assessments.  
Learning outcomes should be integrated throughout the course and are not just listed in the syllabus. | Evidence for this Standard may include/be found in:  
- Course syllabus (in addition to listing outcomes, the syllabus might also include a section that explains the relationship between course-level outcomes and assessments/assignments)  
- Assignment prompts that link back to course outcomes  
- Activity descriptions that link back to course outcomes  
- A mid-term self-assessment asking students to make connections between course outcomes and work done |
|---|---|---|
| 2.3 Module-level outcomes are clearly stated, describe measurable learning, and contribute to course-level outcomes. | Modules provide an organizing principle for online courses. In most cases, modules will have their own distinct learning outcomes, which contribute to the course-level outcomes. For example, if a course-level outcome is for students to be able to produce an argumentative research paper, module-level outcomes might include things like, “develop a research question” or “write an effective literature review.”  
However, in certain kinds of courses, modules may serve solely as an organizational framework without having discrete, distinctive learning outcomes (e.g., a literature course where modules are organized by different texts to be read, not different levels of learning to be demonstrated).  
If module-level learning outcomes are included in the course design, these outcomes should contribute to the achievement of one or more course-level outcomes. A single module’s outcomes are necessary, but may not be sufficient, for the achievement of course-level outcomes. | Reviewers: Module-level learning outcomes should be prominently stated in the corresponding module so that they are visible to the student. |
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<td><strong>Standard 3: Course Materials</strong></td>
<td>Course materials form the core of the course and contribute to achievement of learning outcomes. Such materials may include, but are not limited to, books, textbooks, publisher- or instructor-created resources, research articles, multimedia content, and websites. This Standard respects the instructor’s autonomy in the selection of course materials. As such, the focus is on how well the course makes connections between course materials and learning outcomes and on the ways in which the instructor communicates about course materials. The focus is not on qualitative judgments about the course materials.</td>
<td><strong>Reviewer’s: To assess the course’s adherence to this Standard, consider the relationship between course and/or module learning outcomes and course content, rather than evaluating the content itself. (The evaluation of content is the purview of the academic unit.) Reviewers will need to consider materials that appear in the online course, as well as any bibliographies and webliographies provided by the instructor. If course materials are solely or mostly from digital publisher content appearing outside the Learning Management System, reviewers must be provided with access to those materials to assess whether the Standard is met.</strong> <strong>Special Situations:</strong> In some cases, some learning outcomes are mandated, and the individual instructor does not have the authority to change them. For such cases, consider instead the module/unit outcomes in determining whether the course meets the Standard.</td>
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| 3.1 The course materials contribute to the achievement of the stated course and/or module learning outcomes. | Course materials enable learners to meet the stated outcomes of the course and/or module and are integrated with the tools, assessments, and activities selected for the course. | **Evidence for this Standard may include/be found in:**  
- Links to external websites that include a description of the purpose of the links and/or where the purpose is self-evident  
- Clear explanation of the function of interactives games or exercises  
- A short video in which the instructor explains the different types of learning materials used in the course and their relationship to stated learning outcomes |
<p>| 3.2 Both the purpose of course materials and how the materials are to be used for learning activities are clearly explained. | Information is provided to help learners understand the purpose of selected course materials. Learners also are provided with an explanation of how course materials, resources, technologies, and learning activities are used in the course, including how each will help learners achieve the stated learning outcomes. In courses in which learners are expected to find their own learning materials, the instructor posts clear guidelines that assist the learner in identifying appropriate materials. |  |</p>
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<th>3.3 All course materials are appropriately cited and copyright permissions obtained where necessary.</th>
<th>Some courses may require learners to use a variety of materials: a textbook divided into chapters, video segments ordered by topics, a website or simulation activities organized around specific skills, and an internal or external website that has an opening menu consisting of “practice quizzes,” “images,” and “audio examples.” In such a course, the order in which learners are expected to use course materials is clearly indicated, as is information about how each type of course material is related to the course and/or module learning outcomes and how the materials are related to one another.</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Evidence for this Standard may include/be found in:</strong></td>
<td>Reviewers: Confirm that course materials are integrated well enough to be useful to the learner. In cases where learners are expected to find their own learning materials, assess whether the guidelines provided satisfy this Standard.</td>
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<tr>
<td>* List of course materials that includes relevant information</td>
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<td>* Course syllabus</td>
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<tr>
<td>* “Course Content” section of the Blackboard course site</td>
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<td><strong>SLU library faculty are available to aid the understanding of copyright laws (including fair use) and regulations, and with licensing issues. They also can provide guidance about how best to request and obtain permissions for copyright or licensing needs that are personal (e.g., publishing) or course-related but not part of library services; however, costs of such needs are not borne by the libraries. Should copyright permissions or licensing be required for library acquisitions in support of online courses, any associated costs will be borne by the pertinent library to the extent its budget permits. If demand exceeds the library budget, library faculty can assist with identifying alternative resources.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reviewers are not expected to verify copyright permissions.</strong></td>
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| 3.4 A variety of course materials is used in the course. | The course offers a variety of course materials that may include textbooks and other publications, instructor-created resources, websites, and multimedia. In online courses, especially, it can

Reviewers: Look for evidence that learners have options for how they consume content (e.g., reading, viewing a video, listening to a podcast).
be helpful for students to have alternatives to simply scrolling through many screens of written text.

Typically, a course includes multiple sources rather than material from a single author. In some disciplines, it may be appropriate to have all materials from a single author.

3.5 The distinction between required and optional materials is clearly explained.

Clear expectations are provided to learners regarding which materials and resources are required and which are optional. Instructors are expected to clearly indicate which materials learners must acquire and use to complete course activities and assignments. This is a required component of the University’s Course Syllabus Policy. Optional resources (such as extra videos included for supplemental instruction but not necessary for course completion) are identified as such, through clear titles or labels that designate them as “optional.”

Evidence for this Standard may include/be found in:
- Course syllabus
- Course schedule
- A Blackboard section listing/describing Course content
- Instructions for learning activities

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<td><strong>Standard 4:</strong> Learner Interaction and Engagement</td>
<td>Incorporating activities to promote interaction into the course motivates students and promotes learning. Active engagement of learners contributes to the learning process and to learner persistence. A primary distinction between an online course and a correspondence course is regular and substantive interaction between students and instructors, initiated by the instructor. Designing regular and substantive interactions into the course helps ensure the course meets the definition of an online course. Federal financial aid may be disbursed to students enrolled in online courses, but not to students enrolled in correspondence courses.</td>
<td>Reviewers: Consider all learning activities in the course. Confirm that the activities are aligned with the learning outcomes. For example, if a stated learning outcome is that students should be able to &quot;evaluate the credibility of scholarly sources,&quot; but all the activities that ask students to work with scholarly sources only ask them to &quot;summarize&quot; the sources, these would not be aligned.</td>
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<td>*4.1 The learning activities promote the achievement of the stated learning outcomes.</td>
<td>The purpose of learning activities is to facilitate the learner’s achievement of the stated outcomes. Learning activities align with the course and module learning outcomes, course assessments, course materials, and course technologies by engaging learners in activities that promote achievement of the stated learning outcomes.</td>
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<td>*4.2 Activities provide opportunities for interaction that support active engagement of students in the learning process.</td>
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<td>Activities encourage learners’ engagement through different types of interaction as appropriate to the course. Interactions are designed as activities to support the course outcomes and may vary with the discipline, purpose, and level of the course. Types of interaction include learner-instructor, learner-content, and learner-learner. Activities engage learners in “doing” something, such as discovering, processing, or applying concepts and information. In effective online courses, activities guide learners to increasing levels of responsibility for their own learning.</td>
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<th>*4.3 The instructor’s plan for response time and feedback on assignments is clearly stated.</th>
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<td>Frequent feedback from the instructor increases learners’ sense of engagement in a course, and timely feedback on assignments promotes learning. Learners are better able to manage their engagement in an online course when they know upfront when to expect instructor feedback. Clear information should be provided about when learners will receive instructor feedback.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Activities that promote learner-instructor interaction include:</th>
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<td>● An assignment/project submitted for instructor feedback</td>
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<td>● Planned synchronous discussions with students and instructor</td>
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<td>● A Discussion board task that makes clear students and instructor will interact</td>
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<td>● A Frequently Asked Questions discussion forum that will be moderated by the instructor</td>
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<th>Activities that promote learner-content interaction include:</th>
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<td>● Assigned readings from a textbook, article, or online resource</td>
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<td>● Assigned completion of workbook or online exercises</td>
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<td>● A journal, blog, or discussion activity that asks students to share their reflections on course content</td>
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<th>Activities that promote learner-learner interaction might include:</th>
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<td>● Assigned collaborative activities, like discussion threads</td>
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<td>● Small group projects or problem-solving tasks</td>
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<td>● Peer critiques or feedback</td>
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**Reviewers: Because the Standards focus on course design, not delivery, reviewers will not be able to assess the instructor’s actual interactions with learners. Look for opportunities for learner-instructor interaction, learner-content interaction, and learner-learner interaction. Learner-learner interaction may not be included in every course, however learner-instructor and learner-content interactions must be present. Look for explanations of the purpose of the interactions, not just the number of opportunities for interaction.**

<table>
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<tr>
<td>● Course syllabus</td>
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<td>● Course policies</td>
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<td>● Instructor information (including what students can expect from the instructor)</td>
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| ● A course communication policy describing how/when the
responses to emails and discussion postings, feedback on assignments, and grades.

Note to instructors: If it is necessary to alter the response-time standards during the course, please ensure adjustment is clearly communicated to the learner.

*4.4 The requirements for learner interaction are clearly stated.

A clear explanation of the requirements for learner interaction helps learners plan and manage their participation and promotes learners' active involvement in the course. Clearly stated expectations also provide a basis for the instructor to evaluate learner participation in the course.

The more specific the description of expected interaction, the easier it is for learners to meet those expectations. Clearly explaining the role of the instructor, and expectations for learner-instructor and learner-learner interactions, is especially helpful to learners from cultures in which deference to the instructor is customary and who may need encouragement to “speak up.”

Evidence for this Standard may include/be found in:
- Course syllabus
- A Course Information page in the Blackboard menu
- A Course Overview page
- Individual assignment or learning activity (e.g., if blogs are assigned as a learning activity, the blog assignment describes expected learner interaction in greater detail)
- Rubrics explaining how discussion or blog posts will be evaluated

Reviewers: Look for a clear, prominently-placed statement of the instructor's expectations for learner participation in required course interactions (frequency, length, timeliness, quality, etc.).

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<td>Standard 5: Assessment and Evaluation</td>
<td>Assessment and evaluation strategies are appropriate for the stated learning outcomes, learning activities, and course materials. For the purposes of this rubric, the term assessment refers to strategies used to evaluate individual student work and learning within the course. Learners need both formative assessments (in which the task and feedback on the task are meant to inform future work in the course) and summative assessments (in which learning is evaluated at the end of a module or a course). Assessment is implemented in a manner that not only allows the instructor a broad perspective on students' mastery of the content, but also allows individual students to evaluate their own learning throughout the course. Assessments should address stated learning outcomes; measure the effectiveness of student learning; and be integral to the learning process. Assessments have a dual purpose: they provide a way of measuring learning, but they also help to facilitate</td>
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| **5.1 Learner achievement of all course-level outcomes is assessed during the course.** | All course-level learning outcomes must be assessed at some point during the course, though they may not all be assessed in the same ways. The targeted learning should be assessed through direct measures (i.e., assessments should provide clear evidence that the learner has achieved the stated outcomes), though indirect measures (e.g., student self-reported learning) also may be a part of the course and can be important to the learning process.

In order to ensure that learners are prepared to undertake formal, graded assessments, it is helpful to include small, low-stakes activities that lead up to the completion of more weighty or complex assignments. |

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| **5.2 Assessments measure the stated learning outcomes.** | Effective course design depends upon assessments being consistent with stated outcomes. When assessments measure one kind/level of learning and outcomes describe another kind/level of learning, assessments are not aligned to outcomes.

All assessments in the course should address some aspect of course or module learning outcomes. Some assessments will be more directly linked to these outcomes than others. Small, low-stakes tasks that build up to a larger formal assessment (e.g., submitting an outline for an essay before submitting the essay, completing an exploratory search for scholarly sources before submitting an annotated bibliography, etc.) may indirectly serve the achievement of a broader course or module outcome. |

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**Evidence for this Standard may include/be found in:**
- Assignments, exams, projects, presentations, and other formal, graded work that comprises a significant portion of a learner’s grade and that are tied to course-level outcomes
- Informal, often ungraded work (e.g., drafts, short practice activities, problem-sets, discussion or blog posts) that may or may not receive instructor feedback

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**Examples of assessment that ARE aligned to outcomes:**
- A problem analysis intended to demonstrate critical thinking skills
- A multiple-choice quiz to verify vocabulary knowledge
- An essay to demonstrate writing skills.

**Examples of assessments that are NOT aligned to outcomes:**
- The outcome is “students will be able to write a persuasive essay,” but the assessment is a multiple-choice test.
- The outcome is “photography students will be able to curate the photographs from their body of work that best represent their creative vision,” but the assessment is to write a 25-page thesis about contemporary photographers.
- The outcome is “students will be able to identify key political theories,” but the assessment is to write an essay that applies political theories in a particular situation.

_Reviewers: Consider whether (and to what extent) course assessments are aligned with the stated learning outcomes. Do not evaluate the substance of the assessments themselves._
5.3 The types of assessments are varied and appropriate for the stated learning outcomes.

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<tr>
<th>All learners benefit from having multiple kinds of learning activities and multiple ways of demonstrating their learning, and this is especially true in the online environment.</th>
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<td>Ideally, assessments are varied to provide multiple ways for learners to demonstrate mastery and to accommodate diverse learners. Further, online learners need a mix of lower-stakes and higher-stakes assessments. Assessments should be sequenced so as to promote the learning process and to build on previously mastered knowledge and skills gained in this course and/or prerequisite courses. Assessments should be paced to give learners adequate time to achieve mastery and complete the work in a thoughtful manner.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Different types of assessments are suited to different kinds of learning outcomes and different levels of learning (see Standard 5.2). The cognitive tasks at the heart of an assessment should be suited to or aligned with the outcomes for the assessment.</td>
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<td>Assessments may include more traditional quiz or exam-style tasks, in which learners are asked to select a response from different options, and online quizzes/tests may be self-scoring. Such assessments may use multiple choice, true-false, or matching tasks to gauge learning.</td>
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<td>Assessments also may include more open-ended tasks, sometimes referred to as authentic or performance assessments, in which learners are asked to create products, develop solutions, and/or engage in a performance in response to a more open-ended prompt. Such assessments may include written products, interviews, journals, portfolios, observations, demonstrations, performances, and other activities.</td>
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<td>In certain types of courses (e.g., capstone courses, graduate courses), it may be appropriate for a learner’s grade to be</td>
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Examples that WOULD meet this Standard:

- A series of assignments 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
- Multiple types of assessment that enable the instructor to become familiar with an individual learner’s work and that discourage “proxy cheating” (someone other than the learner completing and submitting work).
- Learners are expected to submit portions of a larger project well before the project is due for a grade; these portions are smaller components of the larger project and receive feedback from the instructor and/or other learners in the course.

Examples that WOULD NOT meet the Standard:

- The assessments consist of only multiple-choice tests.
- The first assessment requires learners to locate research materials, while library research skills and methods are not required prerequisite knowledge and are not covered until later in the course.
- No assessments are submitted until the end of the term, when a large paper is submitted.
- Discussion board posts are assessed on the basis of frequency or word count instead of on criteria related to the course outcomes.
- Learners complete only a mid-term and a final exam.

Examples of benchmark assignments might include:

- An outline or project plan
- A bibliography
- A précis of the paper or project
- One or more preliminary drafts
entirely based on a major assignment due at the end of the term. In such a case, benchmarks for progress should be assigned during the term, with feedback from the instructor, so learners have a clear sense of how they are progressing on the larger project.

### 5.4 Specific and descriptive criteria are provided for the evaluation of learners’ work.

Transparency about how learners’ work will be evaluated contributes to learning and engagement, as well as builds learner confidence in the instructor’s fairness and consistency in grading.

Learners should be provided with a clear description of the criteria that will be used to evaluate their work and participation in the course. At a course level, these criteria are stated up front at the beginning of the term. A description or explanation of criteria provides learners with clear guidance on the instructor’s expectations and on the required components of coursework and participation.

Additionally, for assessments that require learners to engage in work that goes beyond tasks in which they select a response from different options (e.g., quizzes, exams), evaluation criteria for each assignment should be given to learners before they complete the task.

Criteria should give learners the information they need to understand how a grade on an assignment or activity will be determined. These criteria should align with the stated learning outcomes and assigned task. Minimally, the criteria should describe the features of successful performance on the assigned task.

Criteria may be given in the form of a detailed checklist, a holistic or analytic rubric, or other instrument for identifying evidence of mastery and/or the various levels of mastery. Note: The degree of detail in criteria descriptions will depend on the

**Evidence for this Standard may include/be found in:**

- An articulation of how learners will be evaluated in the course, which may be found in a section of the syllabus or course policies.
- Explicit criteria for evaluation of major projects and assignments in the form of rubrics, grading checklists, or other such tools.
- A description of the how learners’ participation in discussions will be graded, including the number of required postings per week; the criteria for evaluating the originality and quality of learners’ comments and their responsiveness to classmates’ comments; and the grade or credit learners can expect for varying levels of performance.
- A note explaining that successful performance on exams will include explanations of the thinking behind responses, not simply arriving at the correct solution to a problem or answer to a question.

**Reviewers:** Confirm that the criteria used to evaluate learners’ performance align with the associated course, module, and/or assignment outcomes.
5.5 The course includes opportunities for regular and timely feedback to learners. Frequent, substantive, and timely feedback is important for learning. Feedback may come from the instructor directly, from assignments that have feedback built in (e.g., required drafts that will receive instructor and/or peer feedback), from other learners in the course, or from online quizzes/exams that provide automated feedback (i.e., upon completion of a quiz or specific questions on a quiz, learners automatically see how well they did and where to go for additional information to improve their learning). Feedback on low-stakes, formative assessments are as important for learning as is feedback on higher-stakes, summative assessments (see Standard 5.3).

Evidence for this Standard may include/be found in:
- Self-mastery tests that include feedback with each answer choice
- Interactive games and simulations that have feedback built in
- Practice written assignments or problem sets
- Peer reviews and critiques
- Model papers or essays provided for learners’ viewing
- Sample answers or answer keys provided for learners’ viewing
- Required virtual meetings with the instructor to discuss progress in the course

Reviewers: To assess whether feedback is “timely,” consider instructor policies for returning graded work and/or providing formal feedback on assignments, as well as the presence of self-graded or auto-graded quizzes or activities. For the latter, such tasks may be voluntary and/or allow multiple attempts.

5.6 The course includes opportunities for learners to reflect on their learning. Self-assessment is an important component of learning, and opportunities for reflection can contribute to learners’ ability to assess their learning and their learning strategies. Learners may be asked to reflect on how well they perceive they are learning, how effective their learning habits are, and/or on feedback received from the instructor or peers. Reflection is a critical component of learning and is a hallmark of Jesuit education.

Reflection activities may focus on the processes by which a learner engages with the course (e.g., analyzing their strategies for studying and the effectiveness of those strategies) and/or on the products of the learners’ engagement (e.g., summarizing instructor feedback on a graded essay and

Evidence for this Standard may include/be found in:
- Portfolios with a self-evaluation component
- Reflections on problems or exam questions missed with explanation for why they were missed
- Reflective journals or blogs in which learners must reflect on course content
- Exam wrappers
- Critical reflection essays or electronic posts in which learners must consider their experience on a previous assignment in the course, analyze the process by which they completed that assignment, and consider the instructor’s feedback on their overall performance
- A requirement that learners include a completed, self-scored rubric when they submit essays; the rubric
articulating improvements that could be made in future drafts). To be most effective, reflection activities require the learner to do more than simply *describe* an experience; they ask the learner to analyze that experience for the purposes of identifying future actions that can improve learning or performance.

represents the learner’s self-assessment of her/his achievement of the intended learning Reviewers: Confirm the presence of opportunities for self-reflection; do not evaluate the substance or merits of the reflection activities.

5.7 Learners are provided with information about how they can provide feedback on the course.

Assessment and evaluation are reciprocal processes. The course should provide information about how learners will able to provide feedback on their experience in the course.

All courses will provide learners an opportunity to offer feedback through the University’s online Student Course Evaluation tool. To motivate learner participation in end-of-term course evaluations, instructors may provide information in the course or syllabus about how such feedback is used and/or changes that have been made to the course due to previous learner feedback.

Many instructors also collect formative feedback from learners at mid-term and/or other points during the term. Such feedback allows instructors to make course adjustments that can benefit current students, rather than waiting for the next term to make changes.

Evidence for this Standard may include/be found in:
- A link to an anonymous feedback form in the course menu that is up for the duration of the course, which allows learners to provide feedback at any time
- A link to a short, online mid-term course evaluation
- A note (in the syllabus or elsewhere) that explains the importance of completing end-of-term course evaluations (perhaps with examples of changes that have been made to the course based on student feedback)

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| **Standard 6:** Learner Support | The course includes clear descriptions of (or links to information about) available support resources for learners, including: technical support, accessibility support, academic services support, and student services support. Information about how to access these resources also is provided. | Evidence for this Standard may include/be found in:
- A clear description of the technical support services provided by Saint Louis University, including a link and/or email to a technical support website |
| *6.1 Instructions on using technologies and on accessing technical support are provided.* | Technical support for learners includes such information as how to log in to the Learning Management System (LMS); how to use the tools and features of the LMS; and how to get technical support should students have difficulties. Technical |
| 6.2 Course explains or links to Saint Louis University’s policies and services related to disability/accessibility. | Disability/accessibility policies or accommodations statements describe available support for learners with disabilities. Information about support resources should be provided for learners and also should inform learners how to obtain these services. Information about disability/accessibility support should be clear and easy to find.

Note: SLU’s Office of Disability Services has a recommended syllabus statement that must be included in the course syllabus / site. This is a required component in the University’s Course Syllabus Policy. |

Evidence for this Standard may include/be found in:
- A link to (or copied text from) the required syllabus statement regarding support for students with disabilities
- A link to information about Saint Louis University’s Office of Disability Services

Reviewers: Confirm the presence of a link to or information about disability/accessibility support. Minimally, the course should direct learners to University-level support offered through the Office of Disability Services. Do not evaluate the adequacy of such support, since this often is outside of the instructor’s control. |

| 6.3 Course provides information about academic support services for learning and about how learners can access these services. | The course includes a link to or information from the Distance Education Information for Student resource page located on the Provost’s website (https://www.slu.edu/provost/distance_education/student_info_distance_ed/index.php).

Clear and easy access to information about School/College |

Evidence for this Standard may include/be found in:
- A syllabus statement describing available resources at the University and why learners might benefit from them
- A description of the role of any peer tutors or learning assistants, with information about how to contact them
- Links to instructor-created modules that provide guidance on effective study habits, writing strategies, |
6.4 Course instructions provide information about how to access non-academic student services and resources.

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<td><strong>Standard 7: Course Technologies</strong></td>
<td>The technologies that enable the various course components (e.g., learning activities, course materials, etc.) facilitate, rather than impede, the learning process. The word “technologies” here means the software, hardware, subscriptions, and plug-ins needed to successfully complete the course.</td>
<td><strong>Reviewers:</strong> Confirm the presence of a link to the distance student resource page and information about school/college specific services.</td>
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<td>Broad technology platforms may be hosted and supported by the University (such as the Learning Management System and lecture-capture technologies), or they may be externally hosted, often requiring additional student access and cost (such as access to digital publisher content platforms).</td>
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<td>All technologies and tools selected for the course should support learners’ ability to achieve the stated learning outcomes, the chosen materials for the course, and the desired assessments and learning activities within the course (to the extent that the instructor has control over the selection and functionality of the technologies).</td>
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| 7.1 The tools used in the course support the learning outcomes. | Tools are functional software that provide opportunities for interaction in an online course. They may be included in or external to the Learning Management System. Tools like discussion boards, blogs, wikis, online quizzes, virtual classrooms and web conferencing spaces, web-based games, chat rooms, electronic grade books, digital whiteboards, and digital textbooks are just some of the tools that may support online learning.

Tools selected for use in the course should be appropriate for the learning outcomes. Ideally, information is provided to explain how the chosen tools support the learning outcomes. If selected tools are external to the Learning Management System (LMS), links to those tools must be provided from within the LMS. | Examples of tools that ARE appropriate to the outcomes:

- A course that aims for learners to “be able to work effectively in teams to develop a co-authored paper” selects a collaborative drafting tool, such as a wiki or Google docs
- A course that aims for learners to “be able to engage respectfully in dialogue on challenging topics with people whose perspectives are different from their own” selects the discussion tool

**Reviewers:** Specific tools are not required for this Standard to be met. Confirm that the selected tools are appropriate for the stated outcomes. Consider the degree to which information provided explains how the tools support achievement of the learning outcomes. Keep in mind that the instructor may have limited options for tools, based on University-supported technologies, and/or may not have control over the functionality of available tools. |

| 7.2 Tools used in the course promote interaction and active engagement of students in the learning process. | Tools selected for the course enable learners to actively engage in the learning process rather than passively absorb information. Selected tools facilitate interactions with the instructor, course materials, and/or other learners. Information is provided to explain how the chosen tools support the kinds of learner interaction and learning activities that are required in the course. If selected tools are external to the Learning Management System (LMS), links to those tools must be provided from within the LMS. | Examples of tools that support interaction and engagement include:

- Interactive, real-time software, such as a web conferencing tool, that support one-on-one virtual conferences with the instructor
- Software that facilitates interactions and collaboration, such as shared documents or wikis
- Animations, simulations, or games that require learner input
- Discussion tools that promote learner-learner engagement
- Automated self-check exercises or quizzes that require learner response

**Reviewers:** Specific tools are not required for this Standard to be met. Confirm that the selected tools are appropriate for the kinds of learning activities, course materials, and assessments required in the course. Consider the degree to which information provided
explains how the tools support learner interaction. Keep in mind that the instructor may have limited options for tools, based on University-supported technologies, and/or may not have control over the functionality of available tools.

| *7.3 Technologies and tools required in the course are readily obtainable. | All required technologies and tools are readily obtainable through download, purchase at the University bookstore, or other means. In general, technologies to be accessed via the web should be available using current internet browsers.  
Consistent with Standards 1.6 and 6.1, the course also must provide (through instructor-created content or links to other content) information about minimum technology requirements, instructions on how to use the technologies, and information on how to access technical support.  
Additionally, where necessary, learners should be told if required technologies are not compatible across platforms (i.e., if a technology is only available for Mac or PC users) and/or given information about compatible alternatives to platform-specific technologies. | Evidence for this Standard may include/be found in:  
- Pre-course email/announcement informing students of what they'll need for the course  
- A section in the Blackboard course menu for Course Technologies  
- A section in the course syllabus that describes required technologies (perhaps with other expectations about course materials)  
Reviewers: Look for information that clearly indicates how learners are to access the technologies and tools and information that addresses any platform-specific requirements. If reviewers cannot discern whether the tools are “readily obtainable,” they should consult with the instructor for additional detail. |

| *7.4 Links are provided to privacy policies for all external technologies and tools required in the course. | For any required tools that exist outside the Learning Management System or other University-hosted systems (e.g., lecture-capture technologies), links are provided to the privacy policies of the creators of those. Access to privacy policies is particularly important if learners are required to create an account with username and password in order to access a technology. | Reviewers: Look for tools that are external to the Learning Management System (and other University-hosted tools), and confirm links to privacy policies exist. |

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| **Standard 8:** Accessibility and Usability | All online courses must align with key accessibility standards to ensure the course site and course materials meet the needs of all learners.  
The course design reflects a commitment to accessibility and usability. **Accessibility** means that all learners can access all course |  

8.1 The course design and materials align with each item on the SLU Online Course Accessibility Checklist. The SLU Online Course Accommodation Checklist was created to help faculty ensure alignment with Standard 8.1. The checklist includes course design criteria related to navigation, readability, and accessibility and resources to assist in meeting these criteria. Further resources and a downloadable version of this checklist are found on the SLU Distance Education faculty website.

**Navigation**
- Course has straightforward navigation (simple, clean, consistent formats).
  - The Reinert Center provides optional templates for the LMS that ensure consistent and easy course navigability.

**Color**
- Optimize contrast between font and background colors (Example: black text on white background).
- Color is not used exclusively as an indicator of emphasis (for example, the red text indicates important information).

**Documents (Word, PowerPoints, PDFs, Excel, etc.)**
- Documents contain actual text, not scanned or copied images of text.
  - Pius Library has two scanners that can create text searchable PDFs, located on level one in the Academic Tech Commons. The Library also provides access to Adobe Acrobat Pro, which can create text searchable PDFs from existing PDFs.
- Headers are used to differentiate sections of a page as well as rows and columns in tables.
- All pictures, charts, and graphs that contain information or data have alternate text or a text description that conveys the same information.
- Text formatting (shape, color, and styling) is not the only method used to convey information. (Example: If the incorrect answer is colored red, you must add an identifier – e.g., “This answer is correct.”)
- The links within the course and documents use descriptive text (Example: Instead of “click here” use the name of the resource you are linking to – “visit Google.”)

**Audio and Video**
- The Distance Education Office is in the process of determining how to best address audio-visual accessibility. In the meantime, accommodations will be made on an as needed basis.