

Evaluation of Online Courses/Teaching in the Department of Clinical Sciences

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Purpose

As an increasing number of Clinical Sciences faculty become involved with teaching online (delivering educational content via the Internet), a method of self-analysis and peer evaluation of this type of teaching needs to be developed. This document provides background information about “Best Practices” in online courses and their delivery and also proposes a system and self/peer evaluation form whereby faculty can be evaluated (and/or conduct self-evaluation) on their online courses and teaching.

Background

When evaluating teaching associated with online delivery of content, the most common evaluation tools look at both the quality of the course and qualities associated with delivery as measures of the overall quality of teaching.

Colorado State University’s The Institute for Teaching and Learning (TILT) has modified the frequently quoted and standard of best practices, “Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education” to provide CSU instructors a guideline about “best practices” that intentionally combines online and on-campus course delivery (<http://teaching.colostate.edu/guides/bestpractices/>). Another frequently quoted article adds specific comments regarding online courses to the original “Seven Principles” article: “Seven Principles of Effective Teaching: A Practical Lens for Evaluating Online Courses” (http://technologysource.org/article/seven_principles_of_effective_teaching/).

The seven principles are that “good practice” encourage/emphasize:

1. student-faculty contact
2. cooperation among students
3. active learning
4. prompt feedback
5. time on task
6. the communication of high expectations
7. respect for diverse talents and ways of learning

TILT adds two additional principles and modifies all of the principles to apply to both on-campus and online teaching:

8. the establishment of (clear) course procedures
9. effective use of technology

Peer Evaluation of Online Courses in the Department of Clinical Sciences

Recommended Process

To help facilitate the peer review of online courses, the following peer review process is proposed:

Pre-review:

- The **course instructor completes a self-evaluation/Instructor Request Form** - submits to the departmental Committee for Assessment & Development of Effective Teaching (CADET) group.
 - A **peer reviewer is identified to conduct the peer review of teaching (member of CADET or reviewer from outside of college - CSU Online or TILT).**
 - The **course instructor meets with the reviewer** and provides a brief overview, navigation tips, and answers any questions the reviewer may have.

Review:

- **Peer reviewer uses the “Peer Review Guide for Online Courses” to work through the online course**, observing how well the instructor addresses each of the Seven Principles. The reviewer notes the instructor’s strengths and areas for improvement for each Principle in the space provided.

NOTE: Reviewers should also feel free to ask questions of the instructor any time clarification or information is needed during the review process.

Post Review:

- The **peer reviewer meets with the instructor** (formative feedback)
- The **peer reviewer summarizes the feedback in written form, providing a copy for the instructor’s departmental review committee and a copy for the instructor.**

Recommended Forms

1. Instructor Request Form (see ADDENDUM 1)
2. Self and Peer Online Course Evaluation Form (ADDENDUM 2)

ADDENDUM 1:

A Peer Review Guide for Online Teaching in the Department of Clinical Sciences Instructor Request/Input Form

[based on Penn State's "Peer Review of Online Teaching": <http://facdev.e-education.psu.edu/evaluate-revise/peerreviewonline>]

Instructor and Peer Reviewer

1. Instructor's name: _____

2. Peer Reviewer's name (To be assigned by CADET): _____
3. Date of review (TBD) _____

Online Course

4. Course name and number (e.g. VS331): _____

5. Course title (e.g., Histology): _____
6. Semester (or term) and year during which course was most recently offered (e.g., Spring 2015): _____
7. Relationship of course to certificate or degree programs (e.g., elective for various undergraduate science degrees; part of CSU's Online PreHealth group of courses, etc.):

Online course technologies

8. Where will the Reviewer find the **course home page**?
 - CANVAS login page <https://colostate.instructure.com/>
 - Guest eID: _____
 - Guest password: _____
9. Where will the Reviewer find the **course syllabus**?
 - _____
10. Where will the Reviewer find the **calendar of assignment due dates**?
 - _____

11. Where will the Reviewer find the course **lessons and assignments**?

○ _____

12. Where will the Reviewer find **quizzes and examinations**?

○ _____

13. Please describe the nature and purpose of the communications between students and instructors in this course.

14. Does the course require or supply any **supplementary materials** beyond what is provided at the sites listed above (e.g., textbook or software)?

Yes No

If yes, please describe: _____

15. Does the course require any **synchronous activities** (same time, same place)?

Yes No

If yes, please describe: _____

16. Other information that Instructor wishes to have the Reviewer consider:

Addendum 2:

Online Course/Teaching Evaluation Form

Department of Clinical Sciences

Adapted from Appendix C-5e: YCCD Peer Observation Form for Faculty Teaching, Penn State Peer Review & Fairmont State College

Note: *This form is only 3 pages long.* Additional information is provided as background for the peer evaluator.

I. Suggested Course Checklist

_____ A **Syllabus** is available and includes (some of these may be separate links on the Homepage -- look for them):

- Contact information _____
- Text/Resource Information _____
- Hardware/Software requirements and information _____
- Student Learning Outcomes _____
- Grading Criteria _____
- Grading Scale _____
- Instructor Bio _____
- Time Requirements _____
- Instructor Policies and Procedures _____
- Student Services Available _____
- Assignment Overview _____

_____ Calendar is available and up-to-date.

_____ Course orientation (ex. "Getting Started" Learning Module)

_____ Course organized in manner that allows relatively easy navigation

Comments:

II. Course Criteria

Please rate the following criteria using the following scale.

4 = Exceptional performance; exceeds performance expectations.

3 = Consistently meets and at times exceeds performance expectations.

2 = Consistently meets performance expectations.

1 = Needs Improvement

*** Note:** *Those elements checked as "Needs Improvement" require comments.*

Upon entrance into the online class the point of entry and course organization makes it clear where to start and how to access the learning materials for time on task.

1. Navigation & Time on Task Organization	4	3	2	1	Comments
Navigational instructions make the organization of the course easy to follow.					
Provides orientation to course and its structure					
Clearly organizes and explains online assignments and related due dates					
Uses modules to organize course content					
Clearly presents expectations and grading policies					

The course design exemplifies the instructor has addressed multiple learning styles and student learning outcomes.

2. Course Design	4	3	2	1	Comments
Online course design clearly articulates course policies and procedures					
Learning Modules clearly state learning goals					
The course uses a variety of online tools to facilitate student comprehension and engagement					
Online course content addresses different learning styles					
Online course design describes available technical support					
Communicates a sense of enthusiasm and excitement					

There is strong evidence of regular and effective communication and student's participation is visible throughout the course.

3. Communication & Interaction	4	3	2	1	Comments
Instructor responds to emails within 72 hours or less					
Encourages mutual respect among students					
Encourages students to interact with one another and with the instructor					
Treats class members equitably and respectfully					
Recognize and responds when students do not understand					
Responds constructively to student questions, opinions and other input					
Creates a sense of community in the online course					
Effectively handles inappropriate					

discussion postings or other unacceptable online behavior					
The course content engages students in <u>active learning</u> and encourages opportunities to master the depth of knowledge required.					
4. Content	4	3	2	1	Comments
Demonstrates appropriate depth of knowledge of course subject					
Content is appropriate to course level					
Explains difficult terms, concepts or problems in more than one way					
Relates assignments to course content					
Includes examples relevant to student experiences and course content					
Provides opportunities for students to engage in active learning (i.e., peer review, interactive simulations, Web research, experience-based projects, and multimedia presentations)					

What do you believe the instructor has done especially well in conducting this course?

What might the instructor do to enhance the course?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Signature: _____ Date: _____

The 7 Principals of Quality Matters Rubrics

Principle 1: Good practice encourages contact between students and faculty.

Frequent and timely student-faculty contact is the most important factor in student motivation and involvement, particularly in a distance education environment. Evidence of faculty concern helps students get through challenging situations and inspires them to persevere. Knowing a few faculty members well enhances students' intellectual commitment and encourages them to think about their own values and future plans.

Examples of evidence to look for:

- A "welcome message" is provided at the beginning of the course that encourages student-to-instructor contact for course-related discussions or concerns.
- The instructor encourages and fosters a healthy exchange of ideas and sharing of experiences among course participants.
- The instructor initiates contact with, or respond to, students on a regular basis in order to establish a consistent online presence in the course (and prior notice is given to students in the event that the instructor will be unavailable for more than a few days, such as might be the case during professional travel).
- A prominent announcement area is used to communicate important up-to-date course information to students, such as reminders of impending assignment due dates, curriculum changes, scheduled absences, etc.
- The instructor holds regular office hours, and by appointment, that are mediated by technology (e.g., the telephone, chat areas, Adobe Connect Pro) to accommodate distance students.
- Student inquiries are responded in a timely manner.
- The instructor provides students with interaction space for study groups, "hall way conversations," etc.

Where to look:

- Discussion forums
- Email messages
- Posted announcements
- Course syllabus
- Chat & Virtual Rooms

Resources:

- "What to do when opening a course" - <https://www.e-education.psu.edu/facdev/pg3>
- "Using online icebreakers to promote student/teacher interaction" - http://www.southalabama.edu/oll/jobaidfall03/Icebreakers%20Online/ice_breakerjobaid.htm

Principle 2: Good practice develops reciprocity and cooperation among students.

Learning is enhanced when it is more like a team effort than a solo race. Good learning, like good work, is collaborative and social, not competitive and isolated. Working with others often increases involvement in learning. Sharing one's own ideas and responding to others' reactions sharpens thinking and deepens understanding.

Examples of evidence to look for:

- Regular opportunities for students to engage in one or more of the following activities:
 - Formal and/or informal discussions of course topics
 - Collaborative course assignments
 - Study groups
- A "meet one another" activity at the beginning of the course so students can begin to make personal connections.
- Encouragement to students to strengthen their online presence in the course by sharing links to their e-portfolio, personal Web site, and/or posting a photo of themselves to the class Web space.
- Group assignments that follow the basic tenants of cooperative learning (see Resources, below) in order to avoid the common pitfalls of "group work."
- An explanation of the criteria for "good" discussion participation.
- Modeling of good discussion participation practices by the instructor.
- Discussion prompts that help to guide and elicit student participation in class discussion activities.
- Instructor *facilitation* of class discussions by encouraging, probing, questioning, summarizing, etc.
- Student interaction space(s) for study groups, "hall way conversations," etc.

Where to look:

- Instructional materials / Assignment directions
- Discussion forums
- E-mail messages
- Course syllabus
- Chat space

Resources:

- "Strategies to Promote Online Discussion" - <http://members.shaw.ca/mdde615/howcommunicate.htm>
- "Ice-breakers" - [http://www.ion.uillinois.edu/resources/pointersclickers/2002_01/index.as p](http://www.ion.uillinois.edu/resources/pointersclickers/2002_01/index.as_p)
- "Leading and Facilitating Discussion" - http://www.princeton.edu/mcgraw/library/sat-tipsheets/facilitating_discussion/

Principle 3: Good practice encourages active learning.

Active learning methods engage students in the learning process by encouraging them to discover, process, and apply information. Empirical support for the positive impact of active learning on student achievement is extensive.ⁱ

Examples of evidence to look for:

- Student activities that involve one or more of the followingⁱⁱ:
 - Active use of writing, speaking, and other forms of self-expression
 - Opportunity for information gathering, synthesis, and analysis in solving problems (including the use of library, electronic/computer and other resources, and quantitative reasoning and interpretation, as applicable)
 - Engagement in collaborative learning activities
 - Application of intercultural and international competence
 - Dialogue pertaining to social behavior, community, and scholarly conduct
 - For General Education courses, three or more of these activities are integrated into courses offered in the knowledge domains (<http://www.psu.edu/ufs/geic/framework.html>):
- Opportunities for students to “customize” their learning by tailoring assignments to their personal and professional interests and needs.
- Examples of student work where they
 - Think, talk, or write about their learning
 - Reflect, relate, organize, apply, synthesize, or evaluate information
 - Perform research, lab or studio work, or physical activities
 - Participate in, design, or develop educational games and simulations.

Where to look:

- Course syllabus
- Instructional materials
- Assignment dropboxes
- e-Portfolios
- Discussion forums

Resources:

- “How Can Teachers Promote Learning and Thinking?” - <http://www.pgcps.pg.k12.md.us/~elc/theory9.html>
- “Inquiry-based Learning” - <http://www.schreyerinstitution.psu.edu/pdf/IBL.pdf>

[Back to Criteria](#)

Principle 4: Good practice gives prompt feedback.

Instructors help students frequently assess their knowledge and competence and provide them with opportunities to perform, receive meaningful suggestions, and reflect on their learning.

Examples of evidence to look for:

- Information about course feedback methods and standards on the course syllabus.
- Option (or requirement) for students to submit drafts of assignments for instructor feedback.
- Meaningful feedback on student assignments that is provided within a publicized, and reasonable, time frame.
- Assignment feedback that is clear, positive, specific, and focused on observable behavior that can be changed.
- Clearly communicated course and individual assignment grading criteria.
- Up-to-date, student-accessible course gradebook.
- An open discussion forum where students can ask questions, and receive instructor feedback, about course content and activities.
- Student surveys that provide the instructor with feedback for course improvement.
- Examples of student work that demonstrate advancement toward learning goals.

Where to look:

- Course syllabus
- Instructional materials / Assignment directions
- Assignment dropboxes and e-portfolios
- Course gradebook
- Discussion forums
- Survey instruments

Resources:

- TLT Ideas for Giving Prompt, Better Feedback to Students - http://www.tltgroup.org/SEVEN/4_Feedback.htm
- Providing Feedback - <http://www.netc.org/focus/strategies/prov.php>
- Collecting Feedback That Improves Teaching and Learning - <http://www.schreyerinstitute.psu.edu/Tools/MidsemesterFeedback>

Principle 5: Good education emphasizes time on task.

The frequency and duration of study, as well as effective time management skills, are critical for students and professionals alike. Students need help in learning to manage and prioritize their study time.

Examples of evidence to look for:

- A published course schedule that outlines topics to be covered and assignment due dates so students can plan their workload accordingly.
- Information on the course syllabus that provides an estimate of the amount of time students should spend on the course (e.g., “On average, most students spend eight hours per week working on course assignments. Your workload may be more or less depending on your prior experience with computing and the Web in general, and with this subject in particular.”)
- Time-to-completion information on course assignments (e.g., “This assignment should take you approximately 2 hours to complete.”)
- Course-specific study tips that provide students with strategies for utilizing their time well.
- Assignment feedback that provides students with information on where to focus their studies.
- Assignment due dates and timeframes that take into account the nature of the target audience. For example, a course targeted to working adult professionals might incorporate a weekend into an assignment timeframe.
- Course statistics that demonstrate that time-to-completion and weekly time-on-task estimates are on target.

Where to look:

- Course syllabus
- Instructional materials / Assignment directions
- Assignment dropboxes and e-portfolios

Resources:

- Emphasize Time on Task (Ohio Learning Network) -
http://www.ohn.org/ILT/7_principles/time.php
- iStudy Module (for students) on Time Management:
<http://istudy.psu.edu/modules.html>

Principle 6: Good practice communicates high expectations.

As the saying goes, “if you don’t know where you are going, how will you know when you get there?” Effective instructors have high, but reasonable, expectations for their students. They clearly communicate those expectations and provide support to their students in their efforts to meet those expectations.

Examples of evidence to look for:

- Explicit communication of the skills and knowledge every student needs to have in order to be successful in the course.
- Explanation of course learning goals and how assignments are designed to help students achieve those goals.
- Frequent feedback provided to students through written explanations and detailed feedback on assignments.
- Motivation and encouragement that inspires students to move past the easy answers to more complex solutions.
- Routine use of critical and probing questions when communicating with students about course assignments and activities.
- Examples and non-examples of high quality work, along with a discussion of the differences between these.
- Examples of student work that demonstrate advancement toward learning goals.

Where to look:

- Course syllabus
- Instructional materials / Assignment directions
- Assignment dropboxes and e-portfolios

Resources:

- “Student Learning Goals and Outcomes” - <http://www.schreyerinstitute.psu.edu/Tools/ProgramAssessment/MeasurableOutcomes/>
- “Checklist for a Course Assignment and Associate Grading Criteria” - http://www.schreyerinstitute.psu.edu/pdf/assignments_grading_checklist.pdf

Principle 7: Good practice respects diverse talents and ways of learning.

People bring different talents and styles of learning to the learning environment. Some bring a wealth of relevant experience to a course, while others may be new to the topic at hand. Likewise, students who are strong in a discussion situation may be less adept at lab or studio work. Students need the opportunity to demonstrate their talents and to “personalize” their learning so that it is relevant to them. It is also important to give students opportunities to learn in ways that may be less comfortable in order to improve their learning skills.

Examples of evidence to look for:

- Use of a variety of assessment tools that gauge student progress.
- Alternative assignment options that allow students to demonstrate their progress in a manner that is best conducive to their talents. For example, a podcast might be allowed as learning evidence instead of a written paper.
- Supplemental online materials are provided to students who lack prerequisite knowledge or who would benefit from having content presented in an alternative manner.
- Timely, corrective feedback for online activities.
- A positive online climate where students are encouraged to seek assistance with course content and learning activities if needed.
- A policy for accommodations that is stated on the course syllabus.
- Accommodations are proactively offered for students with disabilities.

Where to look:

- Course syllabus
- Instructional materials / Assignment directions
- Assignment dropboxes and e-portfolios
- Discussion forums

Resources:

- “Learning effectively by understanding your learning preferences” – <http://www.mindtools.com/mnemlsty.html>
- “Classroom assessment techniques” - <http://www.ntlf.com/html/lib/bib/assess.htm>
- Accessibility in course design forum on PSU Learning Design Community Hub - <http://ets.tlt.psu.edu/learningdesign/forum/4>
- Office of Disability Services Faculty Handbook – <http://www.equity.psu.edu/ods/faculty/overview.asp>

ADDENDUM 3: Brief Literature Review

Evaluation of Online Courses & Teaching

1. Colorado State University, The Institute for Teaching and Learning (2014)
<http://teaching.colostate.edu/guides/bestpractices/>

CSU TILT-based check sheet for course development "Best Practices"

2. Chickering, A. & Gamson, Z. (1987). Seven Principles for good practice in undergraduate education. AAHE Bulletin (39)7.

3. Tunks, K.W. and Hibberts, M.F. (2013); A Comparison of Instructor Evaluations for Online Courses; Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration, Volume XVI, Number II, Summer 2013 of West Georgia, Distance Education Center

University

"Course evaluation systems have not kept up with changes"...(Online courses).

"Key competencies for online instruction can include "response rate and availability, frequency and quality of instructor presence, community building, assessment, and overall management of the course. Evaluation specific to online instructors is beneficial in informing online instructors of how their specific behaviors are viewed by students, providing data to administrators for faculty evaluation purposes (Tobin, 2004), and useful for planning and providing professional development opportunities (Mandernach, Donnelly, Dailey, Schulte, (2005)."

4. Grahm, G, Cagiltay, K., Lim, B., Craner, J., and Duffy, T. (2001) Seven Principles of Effective Teaching: A Practical Lens for Evaluating Online Courses
Note: This article was originally published in The Technology Source (<http://ts.mivu.org/>) as: Charles Graham, Kursat Cagiltay, Byung-Ro Lim, Joni Craner, and Thomas M. Duffy "Seven Principles of Effective Teaching: A Practical Lens for Evaluating Online Courses" The Technology Source, March/April 2001. Available online at <http://ts.mivu.org/default.asp?show=article&id=1034>. The article is reprinted here with permission of the publisher.

http://technologysource.org/article/seven_principles_of_effective_teaching/

Same as CSU TILT (CSU's guide used this article as a reference). This article is quoted by MANY and seems to be the foundation for evaluating online courses and teaching.

5. California State University Chico; 2012, Rubric for Online Instruction
http://www.csuchico.edu/roi/the_rubric.shtml

6. Southern Regional Education Board Educational Technology Cooperative, Nov. 2006: Checklist for Evaluating Online Courses
http://publications.sreb.org/2006/06T06_Checklist_for_Evaluating-Online-Courses.pdf

7. Florida Gulf Coast University (2004) Evaluation of Online Course (based on Principles of Online Design <http://www.fgcu.edu/onlinedesign/> (form)
8. Tobin, T.J. Best Practices for Administrative Evaluation of Online Faculty; Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration, Volume VII, Number II, Summer 2004
State University of West Georgia, Distance Education Center
<http://www.westga.edu/~distance/oidla/summer72/tobin72.html>
9. DeSales University; Online Course Evaluation Rubric (unknown date)
<http://web1.desales.edu/assets/desales/Technology/InstructionalTechnologu/QRubric.pdf>
**** Fill out for each of my courses!!!**
10. ***Penn State; Faculty Peer Review of Online Teaching (2013);
<http://facdev.e-education.psu.edu/evaluate-revise/peerreviewonline>
****Forms for request for peer review of online courses**