

Online Course Design Standards

Maine’s Community Colleges have adopted, with some modifications, the 2019 Creative Commons version of the Online Learning Consortium™ OSCQR Course Design Review, developed by Open SUNY Center for Online Teaching Excellence for use in the design and review of online courses.

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| **1** | **Course Overview & Information** |
| 1.1 | Course includes Overview/Syllabus area and content. |
| 1.2 | An orientation or overview is provided for the course overall and for module structure. Learners know how to navigate and what tasks are due. |
| 1.3 | Course information includes syllabus, course description, instructor contact information, and schedule. |
| 1.4 | A printable syllabus is available to learners (PDF, HTML). |
| 1.5 | Course and institutional policies are clearly stated or linked within the course. |
| 1.6 | Course provides access to learner success resources (library, technical help, orientation, tutoring, student services and resources). |
| 1.7 | Course clearly states at the start of the semester if/when any synchronous (live virtual) or on-campus activities or assessments are required. Course information states whether the course is fully online or hybrid. |
| 1.8 | Minimum technology requirements for accessing and participating in the course are communicated. Information on how to obtain the technologies is provided. |
| 1.9 | Course objectives/outcomes are clearly defined, measurable, and aligned to learning activities and assessments. |
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| **2** | **Course Technology & Tools** |
| 2.1 | Requisite skills for using technology tools (websites, software, and hardware) are clearly stated and supported with resources. |
| 2.2 | Orientation and/or practice as appropriate are provided for all required technical skills and components. |
| 2.3 | Frequently used technology tools are easily accessed. Any tools not being utilized are removed from the course menu. |
| 2.4 | When applicable, any required third-party platforms are integrated into the college’s learning management system. |
| 2.5 | Course technologies are current and work on Windows and Mac OS computers. |
| 2.6 | Any required technology or tools conform to MCCS information technology policies. |

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| **3** | **Design & Layout** |
| 3.1 | A logical, consistent, and uncluttered layout is established. The course is easy to navigate (consistent layout and organization, self-evident titles, and descriptions). |
| 3.2 | There is enough contrast between text and background for the content to be easily viewed. |
| 3.3 | All course activities and assessments include clear instructions. |
| 3.4 | Course is free of grammatical and spelling errors. |
| 3.5 | Text is formatted with titles, headings, and other styles to enhance readability and improve the structure of the document. |
| 3.6 | Flashing and blinking text are avoided. |
| 3.7 | A web-accessible font (such as Arial or Calibri) with a standard size of at least 12 pt is used. |
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| **4** | **Instructional Content & Activities** |
| 4.1 | Course offers access to a variety of engaging resources that facilitate communication and collaboration, deliver content, and support learning and engagement. |
| 4.2 | Course provides activities for learners to develop higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills, such as critical reflection and analysis. |
| 4.3 | Course provides activities that include real-world applications of the discipline, such as experiential learning, case studies, and problem-based activities. |
| 4.4 | Where available, Open Educational Resources, free, or low-cost materials are used. |
| 4.5 | Course materials and resources include copyright and licensing status, clearly stating permission to share where applicable. |
| 4.6 | Learning content should include regular and recurring assignments that require instructor grading and feedback. |
| 4.7 | Course activities and assessments meet the instructional standards, rigor, and commitment of a traditional college course. Course activities and content should reflect credit hour definitions as articulated by NECHE’s Policy on Credits and Degrees. |
| 4.8 | Learning content and activities cannot be solely based on publisher material or third-party resources. |
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| **5** | **Interaction & Student Engagement** |
| 5.1 | Expectations for timely and regular feedback from the instructor are clearly stated (questions, email, assignments). |
| 5.2 | Expectations for interaction are clearly stated (netiquette, grade weighting, models/examples, and timing and frequency of contributions). |
| 5.3 | Learners have an opportunity to get to know the instructor and classmates. Course contains resources or activities intended to build a sense of class community, support open communication, and establish trust (Ice-Breaker Discussion, Bulletin Board, Meet Your Classmates, Ask a Question discussion forums). |
| 5.4 | Course offers substantial and recurring opportunities for class interaction and constructive collaboration (discussion forums, peer reviews, group or partner work, etc.) |

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| **6** | **Assessment & Feedback** |
| 6.1 | Course grading policies, including consequences of late submissions, are clearly stated in the Overview/Syllabus area. |
| 6.2 | Course includes frequent and appropriate methods to assess learners’ mastery of content. |
| 6.3 | Criteria for the assessment of a graded assignment are clearly articulated (rubrics, exemplary work). |
| 6.4 | Learners have opportunities to review their performance and assess their own learning throughout the course (pre-tests, automated self-tests, reflective assignments, etc.). |
| 6.5 | Learners are informed when a timed response is required. Proper lead time is provided to ensure there is an opportunity to prepare an accommodation. |
| 6.6 | Learners have easy access to a well-designed and up-to-date gradebook. The gradebook will be set to calculate and display the final grade to the learner. |
| 6.7 | Learners have opportunities to provide feedback on the course design, content, and experience. |
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| **7** | **Accessibility & Usability** |
| 7.1 | Text content is available in an easily accessed format, preferably HTML. All text content is readable by assistive technology, including a PDF or any text contained in an image. |
| 7.2 | Any multimedia used in the course, such as audio and video, is accessible to all learners. A text equivalent for every video or visual element is provided ("alt" tags, captions, transcripts, etc.). |
| 7.3 | Text, graphics, and images are understandable when viewed without color. Text should be the primary method for delivering information. |
| 7.4 | All external documents (Word, Powerpoint, Excel, etc) are in an accessible format. |
| 7.5 | Hyperlink text is descriptive and makes sense when out of context (avoid using "click here"). |
| 7.6 | Third-party technologies meet accessibility standards. |
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A committee of Maine Community College online learning staff, instructional designers, IT staff, and college faculty modified the standards above primarily from:

Online Learning Consortium, Inc. (2019) *OSCQR course design review scorecard.* Open SUNY. State University of New York. Available from: <https://onlinelearningconsortium.org/>