Online course checklist

Structure is a key concept in online learning design and delivery. An online learning site includes structures *of* learning (the way the site is organized) and structures *for* learning (how the users will interact as they progress through the site materials and activities).

Good online learning site structure supports the achievement of three goals:

- **Goal 1: Achieving consistency, clarity, compliance & sustainability** (provision and set-up of essential administrative and orientation materials and tools for both staff and students)
- **Goal 2: Achieving effective connection & communication** (effective management of interaction in the online environment)
- **Goal 3: Achieving effective** c**urriculum design & delivery** (provision of appropriate content and resources, student engagement in online activities and processes for evaluation)

	Inadequate	Partially adequate	Largely adequate	Fully adequate	Not applicable
GOAL 1A: Consistency, clarity, compliance & sustainability for teachers					
Objectives for teacher support					
1. Teachers understand the course content, course design, planned sequence of delivery and the underlying pedagogical framework. 2. Teachers have access to all seed documents for the course, including content resources and resources for assessment. 3. There is evidence that the teacher continues to evaluate the effectiveness of their online teaching and learning throughout the unit and modifies their learning delivery accordingly.					
Indicators in the online environment					
• A *Facilitator's Guide* is provided for teaching staff in the online site • A folder of seed documents is available in the online site. These resources are regularly monitored and updated. • A *Teaching diary/notebook* is set up in the online site for teaching staff to record and reflect on course progress and note any suggested changes (for themselves or for future teaching staff).					

	Inadequate	Partially adequate	Largely adequate	Fully adequate	Not applicable

GOAL 1A: Consistency, clarity, compliance & sustainability for students

Objectives for student support

Accessibility: Interface design of online sites
1. Interface navigation, including access to all tools, activities and resources, is simple, clear and consistent across courses for all students, including those with a disability.

Orientation
1. Students are informed about the scope of content of the course, the key learning they can expect to engage in, the skills they will develop, the learning processes they will experience and the prior learning they are expected to have before beginning the course.
2. Students are informed about the requirements for successful participation in this course: what they will do and how much time they are expected to spend in class, online and undertaking individual study effort.
3. Students receive explanations about differences between learning online and face-to-face as well as guidance about study skills for online learning.
4. Students are provided with information about how to use the tools in the online environment.
5. Clear directions and escalation pathways are provided to guide students with respect to technical issues, pedagogical issues and problems.
6. Information about required technical skills is provided to students as well as clear directions for accessing and using specialist and/or new software or processes.
7. Students are informed regarding the requirements for successfully completing assessment in this course.
8. The scope, coverage and level of detail of the course content provide adequate support for students to achieve the learning tasks.
9. Students are familiar with the technology systems and protocols of working online, including processes for assignment submission.
10. Students can access policy information relevant to their studies.

Indicators in the online environment

Essential 1: Accessibility
Interface design of online sites
- Site adheres to university and existing LMS protocols to ensure compliance with accessibility guidelines and requirements
- Site follows Laying out your course in Moodle recommendations for online design and user navigation

Essential 2: Orientation
Introductory materials
An information package is provided, outlining:
- Course coordinator and admin contact details
- Course learning outcomes
- Textbook information
- Expectations for student participation
- Suggested study schedule
- Assessment details including the full details of required tasks, due dates for submission, referencing and presentation requirements, criteria by which the tasks will be assessed and the learning outcomes addressed in each task.
- Relevant student policy information (e.g. student support, assessment, including referencing requirements, information about extensions and remarking, academic integrity, cyber-ethics, social media, etc.)
- Information about learning online
- Information about technical support frameworks for online learning, including procedures for handling technology malfunctions
- Information about available study skills assistance and library support

Optional additional

- A welcome pod/vodcast is provided
- 'Are you ready to begin this course?': A readiness reckoner or matrix of expected prior learning is provided, together with suggested revision resources
- 'Where to go when you need HELP!': A document is provided which assists students to determine the appropriate resource for different kinds of difficulties and gives them directions for contacting each – for example, personal difficulties to Student Assist, computer difficulties to IT Help desk, questions about assessment tasks to the course coordinator.
- An Orientation quiz is provided to check/reinforce student understanding of key course information
- A Library skills quiz is provided for students to self-check their information literacy skills relevant to the study area

GOAL 2: Effective connection & communication
Strategies are provided to build rapport student-to-instructor and student-to-student in the discussion forums and other course contexts online. The course has clearly articulated strategies for moderation and response and students receive timely, accurate and well-targeted feedback.

Objectives for teacher and student support

1. Teachers can communicate effectively and efficiently with students in the online environment.
2. Students can contact and receive feedback online from the course teaching staff.
3. Students know who will respond to their communications, how often and when.
4. Students can communicate directly with other students in the online environment.

Indicators in the online environment

Tools
The course includes:
- a tool or tools by which the student may contact and receive feedback from the teacher
- a tool or tools to enable communications directly between/among students.

Guidelines
Students are given:
- clear explanations regarding the purpose of the different communication tools: which will be used, when, how and by whom
- clear direction about where to find different communication forums (for example, last item in every topic, at the top of the home page, etc.)
- guidance in choosing the most appropriate tool for their own communication purposes
- expectations and protocols for interaction including cyber-ethics information
- information about which interactions (if any) are required for students successfully to complete the course
- information about timing and frequency of coordinator moderation

GOAL 3A: Effective curriculum design & delivery

This goal addresses provision of appropriate content and resources, student engagement in online activities and processes for evaluating outcomes of student learning.

Objectives for the provision of course content, resources & activities

1. Study materials are relevant, current and compliant with all applicable copyright regulations and licence agreements.
2. Navigation and access to all resources is simple and clear.
3. Materials and activities are accessible to all students including those with disabilities.
4. All components of the course, both online and offline, are part of an integrated learning design.
5. Students gain knowledge relevant to employment in their profession and/or current thinking in the field.
6. Resources provide students with learning beyond factual recall including opportunities to digest, reflect on and review new learning (formative assessment).
7. Course activities provide students with opportunities to learn through experience, to demonstrate and reinforce knowledge, develop understanding and practise skills.
8. Students engage in analysis, synthesis and evaluation processes in their learning in this course.
9. Learning activities and resources in this course actively promote student acquisition of transferable generic skills such as communication, information literacy and technology skills.

Indicators in the online environment

- Resources (content), student learning activities and learning tasks (assessments) are organized around the learning outcomes of the course.
- A regular review of study materials ensures they are relevant, current and compliant.
- Students are given opportunity to provide feedback on learning materials and activities, and there is an evaluation process in place to ensure further upgrades take into account user feedback for improvement.
- Materials and activities can be modified and/or provided in alternative formats for learners with a disability.
- Where students are asked to communicate and cooperate on tasks or assignments, clear guidelines for group interaction are provided.
- Workload requirements for students to interact with learning materials and engage in prescribed learning activities are clearly stated and fall within the designated course expectations
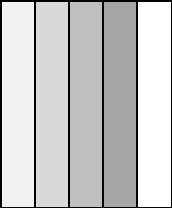
Online learning focus

For courses using or considering the use of evidence based online learning strategies for content delivery and student engagement, indicators in the online environment might include:

- o The learning design of the course is informed by research on effective e-learning.
- o Students actively participate online in order to learn through experience, demonstrate and reinforce knowledge, develop understanding and practise skills.
- o Students in the course use techniques such as concept mapping, case study analysis, project- and enquiry-based learning to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- o Activities in the course support learner collaboration and learner-generated resource building and sharing.
- o The course provides students with scaffolded interactions and opportunities for reflective learning.
- o Opportunities are provided for collaborative learning in a safe, supported environment. Students are provided with opportunities in the course learning design to share and compare their understandings against those of their peers in online discussions.
- o Assessments are structured so as to engage students in critical thinking as well as factual recall and basic comprehension.
- o The learning activities may include online peer assessment.
- o Students can compile and present assessable work using a professional portfolio framework.

GOAL 3B: Effective assessment

This goal addresses provision of appropriate resources, learning activities and scaffolding to support students in demonstrating their achievement of the course learning outcomes.

Objectives for the assessment of student learning

1. Course assessment tasks clearly reflect and are aligned with stated learning outcomes.
2. The assessment workload is appropriate for this level.
3. Completion of tasks for assessment is embedded in the ongoing learning activity of the course. All learning undertaken in the course relates directly to the completion of course assessment, and the scope, coverage and level of detail of the course content provide adequate support for students to achieve the learning outcomes.
4. Students can monitor and formatively evaluate their own learning.
5. Assessment tasks are authentic, significant to the student's context and professional needs, and reflect issues relevant to current professional practice.
6. Students have opportunity to demonstrate their ability to respond to assessment using a range of skills because assessment tasks include diversity/choice in activities undertaken and/or presentation formats (e.g., audio, HTML, multimedia, etc.)
7. Support structures are provided to identify at-risk students and to assist all students to progress towards required standards.

Indicators in the online environment

- Completion of tasks for assessment is embedded in and builds through the ongoing learning activity of the course.
- The course provides online activities that enable students to formatively assess their own learning (self tests). Students have opportunity to practise with the same assessment tools that are used in the summative assessment for the course (e.g. practice quizzes).
- Sample tests and past exams are available to students.
- A specific online discussion is set up to address FAQs about assessment tasks.
- Marking for assessment tasks is criterion-referenced. Pre-determined criteria are provided for each task to enable students to understand how their achievement will be/has been evaluated and how it could be improved.
- Model answers and/or examples of student work are provided, with explanations of grading relevant to the samples.
- Feedback on assessment is timely and specific.
- Where collaborative tasks are assessed, explicit guidelines and criteria for marking are included.

- Assessment tasks are multi-faceted and varied and students have opportunity to submit responses in diverse formats.
- All students are told how to access assistance from Academic Skills support staff. At-risk students receive explicit direction towards seeking these supports.

This document derives from the Learning Design Framework generated by the UNE VLE Learning Design working group (2010 – 2011) and the *Guidelines for the support of e-learning in New Zealand tertiary institutions* (**NzeLG:** http://elg.massey.ac.nz) with further refinement and input from Helenmary Jarrott, learning designer, CLIPP, Federation University.