Essential Quality Standards 2.0

eCampusAlberta

For more information, *please refer to the resources that support each quality standard in the Quality eToolkit* http://quality.ecampusalberta.ca

Web Design Standards	√	√√	√√√
	ESSENTIAL	**EXCELLENT**	**EXEMPLARY**
Format The course elements use a logical and consistent structure and design format.	☐ Movement through the course is intuitive and logical and a consistent layout design orients users throughout the course. ☐ Font, colour, graphics and icons are consistent throughout the course. ☐ The course site design uses consistently formatted sections, pages or units that incorporate the same writing style, layout, graphic design, and organizational levels. ☐ All naming conventions are appropriate, logical and consistently applied throughout the course.	☐ Icons used to guide students through the learning material reflect their function (e.g., book represents reading, question mark represents help). ☐ At least three Universal Design for Learning (UDL) concepts related to format are consistently applied, e.g., all text and images are large or enlargeable; all information conveyed by colour is also available without colour; a text equivalent is provided for all non-text information.	☐ The course meets Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 or other recognized accessibility guidelines and displays the appropriate validation (e.g., Worldspace, Firefox Accessibility Extension, CynthiaSays, Truwex Online Check for Web Accessibility and Quality) on the home page or other prominent location within the course.
Legibility and Readability The course is designed to facilitate legibility and readability.	☐ Design strategies include use of visual contrast between the text colour and background, use of sans serif font, appropriate use of typographical emphasis (e.g., bolding, underlining, colour changes) and appropriate use of white space and alignment. ☐ Font size is a minimum of 11 to 13 pt. for text (except for footnotes, credits or referencing).	☐ The course material is accessible to some learners who may have visual or auditory challenges. ☐ To assist learners who use screen readers, alternative text is included for images. ☐ At least two instructional tools provide learners with two or more options as to how the learning material is presented, (e.g., an audio presentation that includes a transcript, a PDF document that is also available in MS Word).	☐ The course meets Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 or other recognized accessibility guidelines and displays the appropriate validation on the home page or other prominent location within the course. ☐ The course uses Universal Design for Learning concepts to present ideas and information in multiple ways. ☐ Course documents are compatible with assistive technology. ☐ Learners are able to choose among alternative formats.

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Navigation Navigation throughout the course is consistent, predictable and efficient.	☐ A consistent, predictable and efficient navigation scheme is used throughout the course. ☐ Hyperlinks and internal links are clearly identified by underlining (or other differentiation). ☐ It is easy for the learner to move from the course to outside links and back again. ☐ At least 90% of the links function properly.		☐ Screens in course materials have minimal scrolling (about 2 screens maximum). ☐ All pages have navigation options (e.g., links are provided to guide learners from one area of the course to another; a newly-opened window has an option provided to close it and return to the previous window). ☐ Breadcrumbs or other visual displays of the path are used with meaningful naming conventions to help learners navigate throughout the course. ☐ There is a mechanism for the learners to report broken links.	☐ Learners can easily locate specific topics or course components and navigate to them from any page. ☐ The course meets Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 or other recognized accessibility guidelines and displays the appropriate validation on the home page or other prominent location within the course.
Course Information Standards	√		√√	√√√
	ESSENTIAL		**EXCELLENT**	**EXEMPLARY**
Course Outline/Syllabus A course outline/syllabus and course description is provided.	☐ The approved course outline/syllabus is included in the course. If the current course outline/syllabus is not available during the review process, a past course outline/syllabus or placeholder for such is provided and is identified as such.		☐ The course outline/syllabus relates directly to the online course, including credit hours, course description, required materials, course grading, assignments and online participation requirements (e.g., discussions, checking e-mail regularly, logging in regularly, etc.). ☐ Departmental information and institutional academic policies are included.	☐ The course outline/syllabus is learner-centred (focused on learner needs and their learning process). ☐ The outline/syllabus is reviewed with the learners by the instructor at the beginning of the course (e.g., in an asynchronous or synchronous discussion, presentation, etc.).

Course Information Standards	√	√√	√√√
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Instructor Communication Learners are informed of the ways in which they can communicate with the instructor.	☐ Instructor contact information is provided, which includes, as a minimum, a phone number and an email address. If the course version being reviewed does not include specific instructor information, a placeholder is included for these items.	☐ The course includes a welcome note to the learners. ☐ Information about instructor office hours is provided or a placeholder included for this information. ☐ Professional biographical information about the instructor is provided or a placeholder is included for this information.	☐ The course includes a welcome synchronous or asynchronous session designed to allow learners to meet the instructor.
Learning Outcomes/Objectives Learning outcomes/objectives are achievable, measurable, relevant, clearly stated, and concise.	☐ The learning outcomes/objectives are achievable by the learner within the context of the course. ☐ They are measurable in terms of assessing the desired performance. ☐ They are relevant, clearly stated from the learner's perspective, and concise. ☐ The learning activities and assignments are aligned with the learning outcomes/objectives and match those provided in the course outline/syllabus. ☐ Module level objectives are consistent with course level outcomes (where provided).	☐ The learning outcomes/objectives are found within each course module.	N/A
Grading Information The grading information is presented to the learners at the very beginning of the course, and is easily accessible throughout the course.	☐ The grading information is presented early in the course and is easy to refer to later on. ☐ The weighting of each graded activity is identified.	☐ For each graded activity there is an indication of the weight given to each required element of that activity.	☐ Learners are able to track their overall grade in the course using an LMS grade book or other convenient method.

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Role of Instructor and Learners The respective roles of the instructor and the learners in the course in achieving the learning outcomes/objectives are explained.	☐ The instructor's role in supporting student learning is explained in the introductory or orientation section of the course. ☐ The learner's role is explained at the beginning of the course, noting the level of independence required in online learning, the importance of communicating online with the instructor and other learner/peers, and any other expectations that the instructor has of the learners.	☐ Learners are informed of the preferred method to ask questions. ☐ Learners are informed of the expected response time from the instructor. ☐ The instructor has a specific discussion forum or forums in which learners may post questions both related to the course content and for other matters. ☐ If synchronous delivery is used in a course, the expectations for the learner's active participation and responsibility for the content covered if a session is missed are explained.	☐ Learners are encouraged to provide peer support and contribute to the learning community through sharing questions and answers in discussion sessions.

Writing Standards	√	√√	√√√
	ESSENTIAL	EXCELLENT	EXEMPLARY
Bias The content is free of bias related to age, culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, or disability.	☐ The course uses inclusive language to promote an atmosphere of respect and equality. ☐ Writing is clear, objective and specific. ☐ All content provides a balance of inclusivity in terms of incorporating appropriate societal and cultural groups.	N/A	N/A
Tone The positive tone of the writing contributes to a supportive learning environment.	☐ The course uses a positive and supportive tone in course instructions, learning activities, instructor introduction, etc., which models appropriate online communication and helps to build a learning community in the course.	☐ Information on appropriate online communication strategies is provided. ☐ Learners are given information on how to provide appropriate peer feedback.	☐ Learners are oriented to online communication strategies through non-graded, hands-on activities that provide instruction, opportunities to practice, and feedback.

Writing Standards	√	√√	√√√
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Citations All academic content in the course is appropriately cited.	☐ Quotations and other material, including graphic images, used from outside sources are appropriately cited within the course materials (e.g., APA). ☐ A bibliography or reference list includes all citations. This can be presented in one location for the entire course, broken down for each module, or in other appropriate methods that allow learners to view sources of course content.	N/A	N/A
Clear Language The language is clear and readily comprehensible.	☐ Readability statistics generated using the Microsoft Word checker or other tool show that the course readability level is appropriate for the level of the course (e.g. academic upgrading or college level).	☐ Some supports to aiding comprehension are provided (e.g., glossaries, definition of terms, links to accessible web pages that build on concepts, pre-reading activities).	☐ The course text is available to learners in a plain language version. ☐ Vocabulary and symbols are clarified. ☐ All key concepts are provided in more than one representation (e.g., text and audio, video and sign language, embedded explanations of vocabulary).
Mechanics of Writing The course uses correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling.	☐ The course has no grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors.	N/A	N/A

Resources Standards	√	√√	√√√
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Currency Learning materials are current.	☐ The learning resources accommodate current technologies. ☐ Resources are a maximum of seven years of age. If older resources are used for historical or other purposes, the rationale for their use is provided.	N/A	N/A
Authority The authority of learning materials is apparent.	☐ The required learning resources are from credible and authoritative sources documented in the course (e.g., recognized experts and practitioners, respected organizations or institutions, peer-reviewed journals) and accurately portray the necessary information. Where non-authoritative sources are used (e.g., Wikipedia, YouTube, etc.) this is indicated to the student.	N/A	N/A
Varied Content Resources Learners are provided with various types of learning materials.	☐ There are at least three content-related resources (in addition to the required materials, such as the textbook) that support the learning outcomes/objectives help to provide a balanced view (e.g., describe different theories, techniques or approaches) and are from varied sources and formats. Examples could include multimedia, web-based documents, web sites, supplementary readings, tutorials, etc. ☐ Information is provided to the learners as to how to use these resources.	☐ A list of supplementary and/or optional learning resources is provided to learners along with an overview of each that addresses their alignment with the learning outcomes/objectives. ☐ These resources are clearly identified as supplemental. Learners are encouraged to use these materials as their time and interest permits. ☐ Where online publisher materials are included, learners are told what to use, how to use them, and are directed to appropriate areas of study on publisher websites.	☐ Learners are provided with the opportunity to add to the course learning resources through their own research, projects or assignments. ☐ Guidelines are provided for this collaborative building of content.

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Learner Support A list of learner support resources with links to the sources is provided.	☐ The resources include technical support services, library, tutoring services, counseling services, information on how to be a successful online learner, and other available learner support resources. ☐ Learners are provided with appropriate explanations of these resources. ☐ The resources are readily available to the learner in the course and are appropriately organized.	☐ Links to appropriate information resources are housed within the course content (e.g., a link to library services is provided within the module where learners are asked to conduct library research; information on how to handle technical problems during online examinations is provided when the learner opens the examination).	☐ Learners are provided with information on how to access learner support resources from all partner eCampusAlberta institutions.

Organization Standards	√	√√	√√√
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Learning Path The learning path guides learners through the entire course. It explains the learning activities and how they are to be used to fulfill the learning outcomes/objectives.	☐ Clear and concise instructions are readily available to the learner on how to proceed through the course. ☐ There is a course schedule which includes all learning activities and deadlines or other guidelines for when activities and assessments are to be completed. ☐ Delivery strategies are clearly described and explained in plain language. ☐ Information is provided on the nature of the delivery (i.e., if the course is synchronous, asynchronous, or a blend of both) and whether the course is cohort-based or independent study. ☐ Details on the technology used for the various activities are explained if new or specialized technologies are introduced (e.g., web or video conferencing, web logs).	☐ Learners are provided with some options in the learning activities that accommodate their individual needs and interests (e.g., an assignment may be submitted as a video presentation or an essay; learners can complete a pre-test before a module that allows them to skip the module if their knowledge is sufficient). ☐ The course schedule includes delivery mode information for each learning activity. ☐ All synchronous activities are pre-scheduled and clearly communicated to learners prior to course commencement or scheduling is negotiated with the learners and then confirmed in the course calendar/schedule. ☐ If learners are given options for how they sequence activities, this is reflected in the course information and schedule.	☐ The course is flexible. Material is presented in multiple representations and learners have alternative means of accessing and interacting with the material and demonstrating their knowledge. ☐ Instruction is designed to meet the needs of a broad range of learner preferences. ☐ The flexible options and means of accommodation for special needs are explained.

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Learning Material The learning material is organized to show learners the relationship of the course components to the achievement of the learning outcomes/objectives.	☐ The learning material is presented in coherent learning segments (e.g., modules, lessons, tutorials). ☐ Bridging statements or other strategies are used to identify relationships between learning segments.	☐ The learning material is presented in a logical order with appropriate sequencing (e.g., by time, topic, simple to complex).	☐ Learners are provided with strategies to work with the learning material through advanced organizers, concept maps, pre-reading, pre-tests, etc.
Time Commitment Learners are informed of the time commitment expected for them to complete all the learning activities.	☐ Time commitment includes estimated time (e.g. hours per week or percentage of total course hours) learners are expected to spend on the learning activities. ☐ The information is provided to the learner at the beginning of the course in a readily available way.	☐ For each learning segment within the course, learners are informed of the expected time commitment to complete the segment. ☐ This is included at the beginning of each segment or identified on the course schedule.	☐ Learners are informed about the procedures to follow if they need to take more time to complete assigned activities, due to special requirements or situations.

Pedagogy Standards	√	√√	√√√
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Instructions Instructions for all activities, graded and non-graded, are clear and complete.	☐ Instructions are clear and complete enough for learners to understand what is to be done, how it is to be completed, and how it is to be submitted. ☐ Instructions for each activity are easy to locate. ☐ All required details are included. ☐ For invigilated exams, details are provided on how to make arrangements for these.	☐ Each activity is given an appropriate title that summarizes the activity. ☐ A brief overview statement is provided that outlines the main idea or purpose of the activity. ☐ Instructions are in a logical order. ☐ Sequential steps are in numbered lists and non-sequential steps are bulleted lists. ☐ Only one instruction is included in each step of a procedure. ☐ Plain language is used and uncommon terms are defined.	☐ All instructions are provided in alternative formats. ☐ Important announcements are provided in both audio and text.

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Marking Criteria Learners are provided clear details of the marking criteria that will be used for all graded activities.	☐ Clearly stated, detailed scoring rubrics or equivalents describe the important performance criteria expected of the learners. ☐ This is provided to learners prior to beginning the activity. ☐ The performance criteria align with the learning outcomes/objectives, and with activity requirements that are stated in the activity directions. ☐ Learners are told which activities are graded and which are not.	☐ Marking criteria is located with each graded activity. ☐ Learners are encouraged to review the criteria prior to beginning the activity and again after completing the activity as a self-assessment. ☐ Where peer-review is encouraged, learners are informed about how to provide peer feedback.	☐ Models of "good work" are provided, along with clear marking criteria and results. ☐ These models are similar enough to the graded activities to demonstrate what high performance looks like, but do not provide answers to the graded activity.
Interactivity Interactive activities are incorporated into the course, all of which facilitate deeper understanding of the content.	☐ Types of interactivity include learner-learner (or learner-peer), learner-instructor, and learner-content. ☐ In cohort-based courses, learners interact with each other through directed asynchronous or synchronous discussions (e.g., chats, webinars) and/or other types of interactive group activities. In individual study courses, learners may interact with each other or with peers or others (e.g., experts, practitioners).	☐ Guidelines for interactivity are provided. ☐ Collaboration with other learners or other peers (e.g., fellow employee at place of employment) along with peer feedback is utilized in at least one graded learning activity.	☐ The course fosters a learning community by actively engaging learners with their peers and the instructor throughout the course. ☐ Learners share their perceptions and experiences gained through reflection and critical thinking with their peers. ☐ Networking, teamwork, cooperation, negotiation, and consensus-building skills are built throughout the course. ☐ Guest speakers (e.g., professionals in the field, community leaders, practitioners) are included in the course.

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Instructional Strategies Instructional strategies are designed to be compatible with learners' different interests, learning needs and preferences.	☐ Opportunities for varied learning experiences are provided through at least three different types of instructional method. ☐ The course design prompts the instructor to be present, active, and engaged with the students.	☐ Instructional strategies include a combination of effective instruction types (e.g., direct instruction, indirect instruction, experiential learning, independent study, interactive instruction, etc.). ☐ Instructional strategies include the use of various tools, including three or more of the following: visual and audio learning tools, simulations, games, modelling, drills, tools for interactivity, tools for research and documentation, etc.	☐ Supplementary learning activities (e.g., external visits to practitioners, field trips, access to external workshops, optional study groups) are provided to allow learners to further develop or reinforce knowledge or practice skills.
Feedback Formal and informal feedback to learners is incorporated throughout the course.	☐ The course is designed to ensure feedback is prompt, timely, frequent, ongoing, appropriate, and has value to the learners. ☐ Information is provided on how and when the instructor will provide feedback on assignments, exams, discussions, and other activities. ☐ Learners will be informed if self-tests, exams/quizzes and other learning activities provide automated feedback upon submission or completion.	☐ The course offers some opportunity for learners to self-assess early in the course (e.g., self-checks, self-tests). ☐ The instructor will contact learners on an individual basis, early in the course to discuss learner progress and facilitate learner retention.	☐ Peer feedback is expected from fellow learners or others (e.g., external contacts, practitioners, experts). ☐ Clear guidelines are included on how to provide peer feedback. ☐ There are opportunities to receive feedback and coaching from the instructor during assignment preparation before assignments are submitted for final grading.

Technology Standards	√	√√	√√√
	ESSENTIAL	EXCELLENT	EXEMPLARY
Multimedia The course uses basic hardware, and free software plug-ins where required. Learners are informed of any specialized technology requirements.	☐ Audio/video hardware requirements do not extend beyond basic sound cards, speakers, and video players unless appropriately needed to meet course goals and learning outcomes/objectives. ☐ Any necessary plug-ins are identified and readily available to the learners in the course. ☐ Audio/video software requirements are compatible with multiple operating systems and require only a standard, free plug-in. N/A☐ If other specialized technology requirements are needed, this information is provided to the learner.	☐ Required multimedia resources are presented in at least two formats to increase accessibility.	☐ All multimedia is available in captioned or interpreted formats. ☐ Learners with special requirements are advised whether external web sites offering multimedia resources are accessible by them. Alternative resources are provided in those instances.
Orientation An orientation to the delivery technologies used in the course is provided.	☐ An orientation is included and readily available in the course. ☐ Learners are directed to the orientation at the beginning of the course.	☐ Practice activities (e.g., practice quiz, submitting assignments) are included in the course.	☐ Within the course, learners are given information on how to access alternative orientation materials that conform to accessibility standards.