



# Online Course Quality Standards



These standards are used to guide online and hybrid course design and assess online course quality at Northern Illinois University.

The standards identified as NIU Essential represent a minimum level of quality. Courses must meet all of the noted essential standards to be designated as NIU quality essentials courses. Additionally, exemplary standards are encouraged.

## Standards

		NIU Essential	Exemplary	
Course Overview and Introduction	1.1	Instructions make clear how to get started and where to find various course components.	X	
	1.2	Learners are introduced to the purpose and structure of the course.	X	
	1.3	Communication guidelines for online discussions, email, and other forms of interaction are clearly stated.		X
	1.4	Course and institutional policies with which the learner is expected to comply are clearly stated within the course, or a link to current policies is provided.	X	
	1.5	Minimum technology requirements for the course are clearly stated, and information on how to obtain the technologies is provided.	X	
	1.6	Technical skills and digital information literacy skills expected of the learner are clearly stated.	X	
	1.7	Required prior knowledge in the discipline and/or any required competencies are clearly stated in the course site.		X
	1.8	The self-introduction by the instructor is welcoming and is available in the course site.		X
	1.9	Learners have the opportunity to introduce themselves.		X
Learning Objectives (Competencies)	2.1	The course learning objectives describe outcomes that are measurable.	X	
	2.2	The module/unit-level learning objectives describe outcomes that are measurable and consistent with the course-level objectives.		X
	2.3	Learning objectives are clearly stated, are learner-centered and are prominently located in the course.		X
	2.4	The relationship between learning objectives, learning activities and assessments is made clear.		X
	2.5	The learning objectives are suited to and reflect the level of the course.		X
Assessment and Measurement	3.1	The assessments measure the achievement of the stated learning objectives.	X	
	3.2	The course grading policy is stated clearly, available at the beginning of the course, and consistent throughout the course site.	X	
	3.3	Specific and descriptive criteria are provided for the evaluation of learners' work, and their connection to the course grading policy is clearly explained.	X	
	3.4	The course includes multiple types of assessments that are sequenced and suited to the level of the course.		X
	3.5	The types and timing of assessments provide learners with multiple opportunities to track their learning progress with timely feedback.	X	
	3.6	The assessments provide guidance to the learner about how to uphold academic integrity.		X
Instructional Materials	4.1	The instructional materials contribute to the achievement of the stated learning objectives.	X	
	4.2	The relationship between the use of instructional materials in the course and completion of learning activities and assessments is clearly explained.		X
	4.3	The course models the academic integrity expected of learners by providing both source references and permissions for use of instructional materials.	X	
	4.4	The instructional materials represent up-to-date theory and practice in the discipline.		X
	4.5	A variety of instructional materials is used in the course.	X	
Course Activities and Learner Interaction	5.1	The learning activities help learners achieve the stated objectives.	X	
	5.2	Learning activities provide opportunities for interactions that support active learning.		X
	5.3	The instructor's plan for regular interaction with learners in substantive ways during the course is clearly stated.	X	
	5.4	The requirements for learner interaction are clearly stated.	X	
Course Technology	6.1	The tools used in the course support the learning objectives.	X	
	6.2	Course tools promote learner engagement and active learning.		X
	6.3	A variety of technology is used in the course.		X
	6.4	The course provides learners with information on protecting their data and privacy.		X
Learner Support	7.1	The course instructions articulate or link to a clear description of the technical support offered and how to obtain it.	X	
	7.2	Course instructions articulate or link to the institution's accessibility policies and accommodation services.	X	
	7.3	Course instructions articulate or link to the institution's academic support services and resources that can help learners succeed in the course. [NIU <a href="#">student success tips and tools</a> and <a href="#">Huskie Academic Success Center</a> ]	X	
	7.4	Course instructions articulate or link to the institution's student services and resources that can help learners succeed. [NIU <a href="#">student life</a> site]	X	
Accessibility and Usability	8.1	Course navigation facilitates ease of use.	X	
	8.2	The course design facilitates readability.		X
	8.3	Text in the course is accessible.		X
	8.4	Images in the course are accessible.		X
	8.5	Video and audio content in the course is accessible.		X
	8.6	Multimedia in the course is easy to use.		X
	8.7	Vendor accessibility statements are provided for all technologies required in the course.		X