



# Online Course Quality Standards



These standards are used to guide online 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 3 point standards and 85% of the total points to be designated as an NIU Quality course.

## Standards

			NIU Essential	Points
Course Overview and Introduction	1.1	Instructions make clear how to get started and where to find various course components.	X	3
	1.2	Learners are introduced to the purpose and structure of the course.	X	3
	1.3	Communication expectations for online discussions, email, and other forms of interaction are clearly stated.		2
	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	2
	1.5	Minimum technology requirements for the course are clearly stated and instructions on how to obtain the technologies is provided.	X	2
	1.6	Computer skills and digital information literacy skills expected of the learner are clearly stated.	X	1
	1.7	Expectations for prerequisite knowledge in the discipline and/or any required competencies are clearly stated.		1
	1.8	The self-introduction by the instructor is professional and is available online.		1
	1.9	Learners are asked to introduce themselves to the class.		1
Learning Objectives (Competencies)	2.1	The course learning objectives, or course/program competencies, describe outcomes that are measurable.	X	3
	2.2	The module/unit-level learning objectives or competencies describe outcomes that are measurable and consistent with the course-level objectives or competencies.		3
	2.3	Learning objectives or competencies are stated clearly, written from the learner's perspective, and are prominently located in the course.		3
	2.4	The relationship between learning objectives or competencies and learning activities is clearly stated.		3
	2.5	The learning objectives or competencies are suited to the level of the course.		3
Assessment and Measurement	3.1	The assessments measure the achievement of the stated learning objectives or competencies.	X	3
	3.2	The course grading policy is stated clearly at the beginning of the course.	X	3
	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
	3.4	The assessments used are sequenced, varied, and suited to the level of the course.		2
	3.5	The course provides learners with multiple opportunities to track their learning progress with timely feedback.	X	2
Instructional Materials	4.1	The instructional materials contribute to the achievement of the stated learning objectives or competencies.	X	3
	4.2	The relationship between the use of instructional materials in the course and completing learning activities is clearly explained.		3
	4.3	The course models the academic integrity expected of learners by providing both source references and permissions for use of instructional materials.	X	2
	4.4	The instructional materials represent up-to-date theory and practice in the discipline.		2
	4.5	A variety of instructional materials is used in the course.	X	2
Course Activities and Learner Interaction	5.1	The learning activities promote the achievement of the stated learning objectives or competencies.	X	3
	5.2	Learning activities provide opportunities for interaction that support active learning.		3
	5.3	The instructor's plan for interacting with learners during the course is clearly stated.	X	3
	5.4	The requirements for learner interaction are clearly stated.	X	2
Course Technology	6.1	The tools used in the course support the learning objectives and competencies.	X	3
	6.2	Course tools promote learner engagement and active learning.		3
	6.3	A variety of technology is used in the course.		1
	6.4	The course provides learners with information on protecting their data and privacy.		1
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	3
	7.2	Course instructions articulate or link to the institution's accessibility policies and services.	X	3
	7.3	Course instructions articulate or link to the institution's academic support services and resources that can help learners succeed in the course.	X	3
	7.4	Course instructions articulate or link to the institution's student services and resources that can help learners succeed.		1
Accessibility and Usability	8.1	Course navigation facilitates ease of use.	X	3
	8.2	The course design facilitates readability.		3
	8.3	The course provides accessible text and images in files, documents, LMS pages, and web pages to meet the needs of diverse learners.		3
	8.4	The course provides alternative means of access to multimedia content in formats that meet the needs of diverse learners.	X	3
	8.5	Course multimedia facilitate ease of use.		2
	8.6	Vendor accessibility statements are provided for all technologies required in the course.		2