



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 expectations 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 instructions on how to obtain the technologies is provided.	X	
	1.6	Computer skills and digital information literacy skills expected of the learner are clearly stated.	X	
	1.7	Expectations for prerequisite knowledge in the discipline and/or any required competencies are clearly stated.		X
	1.8	The self-introduction by the instructor is professional and is available online.		X
	1.9	Learners are asked to introduce themselves to the class.		X
Learning Objectives (Competencies)	2.1	The course learning objectives, or course/program competencies, describe outcomes that are measurable.	X	
	2.2	The module/unit-level learning objectives or competencies describe outcomes that are measurable and consistent with the course-level objectives or competencies.		X
	2.3	Learning objectives or competencies are stated clearly, written from the learner's perspective, and are prominently located in the course.		X
	2.4	The relationship between learning objectives or competencies and learning activities is clearly stated.		X
	2.5	The learning objectives or competencies are suited to the level of the course.		
Assessment and Measurement	3.1	The assessments measure the achievement of the stated learning objectives or competencies.	X	
	3.2	The course grading policy is stated clearly at the beginning of the course.	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 assessments used are sequenced, varied, and suited to the level of the course.		X
	3.5	The course provides learners with multiple opportunities to track their learning progress with timely feedback.	X	
Instructional Materials	4.1	The instructional materials contribute to the achievement of the stated learning objectives or competencies.	X	
	4.2	The relationship between the use of instructional materials in the course and completing learning activities 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 promote the achievement of the stated learning objectives or competencies.	X	
	5.2	Learning activities provide opportunities for interaction that support active learning.		X
	5.3	The instructor's plan for interacting with learners 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 and competencies.	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 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.	X	
	7.4	Course instructions articulate or link to the institution's student services and resources that can help learners succeed. [NIU student life site and student success tips and tools].	X	
Accessibility and Usability	8.1	Course navigation facilitates ease of use.	X	
	8.2	The course design facilitates readability.		X
	8.3	The course provides accessible text and images in files, documents, LMS pages, and web pages to meet the needs of diverse learners.		X
	8.4	The course provides alternative means of access to multimedia content in formats that meet the needs of diverse learners.	X	
	8.5	Course multimedia facilitate ease of use.		X
	8.6	Vendor accessibility statements are provided for all technologies required in the course.		X