FACULTY GUIDE

ONLINE CURRICULUM DESIGN FOR IECC

This document outlines a framework for online course development and review at IECC. It covers aspects such as policy, procedures, Quality Matters (QM), Regular and Substantial Interactions (RSI), team formation, course design and planning, quality assurance, and ongoing support.

ONLINE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

This is a practical guide to help instructors develop quality online education products. The Illinois Eastern Community Colleges (IECC) is dedicated to the provision of exceptional online education through careful design, development, and delivery of programs and certificates. This guide outlines the online course development and review procedures, emphasizing the integration of Regular and Substantial Interactions (RSI), adherence to Quality Matters (QM) principles, the utilization of CETL-developed templates, and a commitment to online education quality.

Policy and Procedure

This guide adheres to instruction policy 800.9 and Procedure 800.9.

Link here: (TBD pending board approval)

Instructional Design

Developing an online course is significantly different from preparing to teach a face-to-face course, both pedagogically and technologically. Each course approved for support will be assigned an instructional design lead. This instructional designer will be the point of contact to help faculty develop their course materials, troubleshoot issues, and make updates for as long as the course is offered online.

The Course Framework

If your course is part of an online program, you will be asked to collaborate with other faculty members in your department and an instructional designer to develop a course structure or framework. This is essential not only to establish the brand of the program but also to make it easier for students to navigate through the different courses within the program. The course framework at IECC adheres to the Quality Matters guidelines for course design. Once the framework is approved, the instructional designer will help faculty implement it into their online courses.

Online Course Development Process at IECC

1. Initiation of Course Development

o Course selection is determined by the approval of academic leadership and alignment with the district's strategic goals.
o The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) begins the course development process upon receiving the approved list from CAO's office.

• **2. Team Formation**

o A multidisciplinary team is formed for each course, including faculty subject matter experts (SMEs), instructional designers, technology specialists, and a project manager.
o Team members are oriented towards IECC's commitment to RSI, QM principles, and the use of CETL templates.

• **3. Course Design and Planning**

o The team utilizes CETL's QM-compliant templates to design the course framework, ensuring alignment of learning outcomes, assessments, and instructional materials.
o Regular meetings are held to discuss progress, resolve challenges, and strategize for effective online course delivery.

• **4. Development of Course Materials**

o Course content, including multimedia, assessments, and interactive activities, is developed in alignment with QM standards and syllabus guides.
o CETL supports content development with a focus on accessibility and inclusivity.

• **5. Regular and Substantial Interaction Integration**

o Course design incorporates elements to promote regular and meaningful interactions between students and instructors.
o Engagement and collaboration strategies are discussed and implemented.

6. Quality Assurance and Review

o CETL conducts a thorough review of QM standards and RSI requirements.
o Feedback is provided for revisions to meet quality benchmarks.

Online Course Development Process at IECC

7. Draft and Feedback Collection

o A draft version of the course is used to collect feedback and adjust based on effectiveness and stakeholder input.

• **8. Final Approval and Launch**

o After revisions, the CETL director signs off for final approval.
o The course is launched, and SMEs are compensated upon approval.

• **9. Ongoing Support and Enhancement**

o CETL provides continuous support for course delivery and updates the course based on feedback, technological advancements, and educational practices.

• **10. Professional Development and Training**

o Continuous professional development opportunities are offered to Faculty and staff.

• **11. Documentation and Reporting**

o Submitted for review and improvement.

Step-by-Step Guide for Course Development

1.CETL Director Creation: Initiates the DEV shell and coordinates with the team.

2. Template Importation: SME imports the primary template, and the Director imports learning outcomes.

3. Team Assignment: Course ID, SME, CCR, and Admin oversight are assigned.

4. Material Development: SME and ID fill out the vision worksheet and develop course materials with support from Marketing and video specialists.

5. Review Process: The draft course is reviewed, feedback is collected, and final corrections are made.

6. Launch and Payment: The course becomes a Master Template, with payment processes initiated.

7. Review Schedule: The course is scheduled for a three-year review process.

8. Scheduling for Review: Courses are selected for review based on CETL and CAO management.

9. Review Team Assignment: Review teams and SMEs are designated.

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9. Review Team Assignment: Review teams and SMEs are designated.

10. Review Utilization: Courses are reviewed on Canvas using CCR, focusing on QM standards.

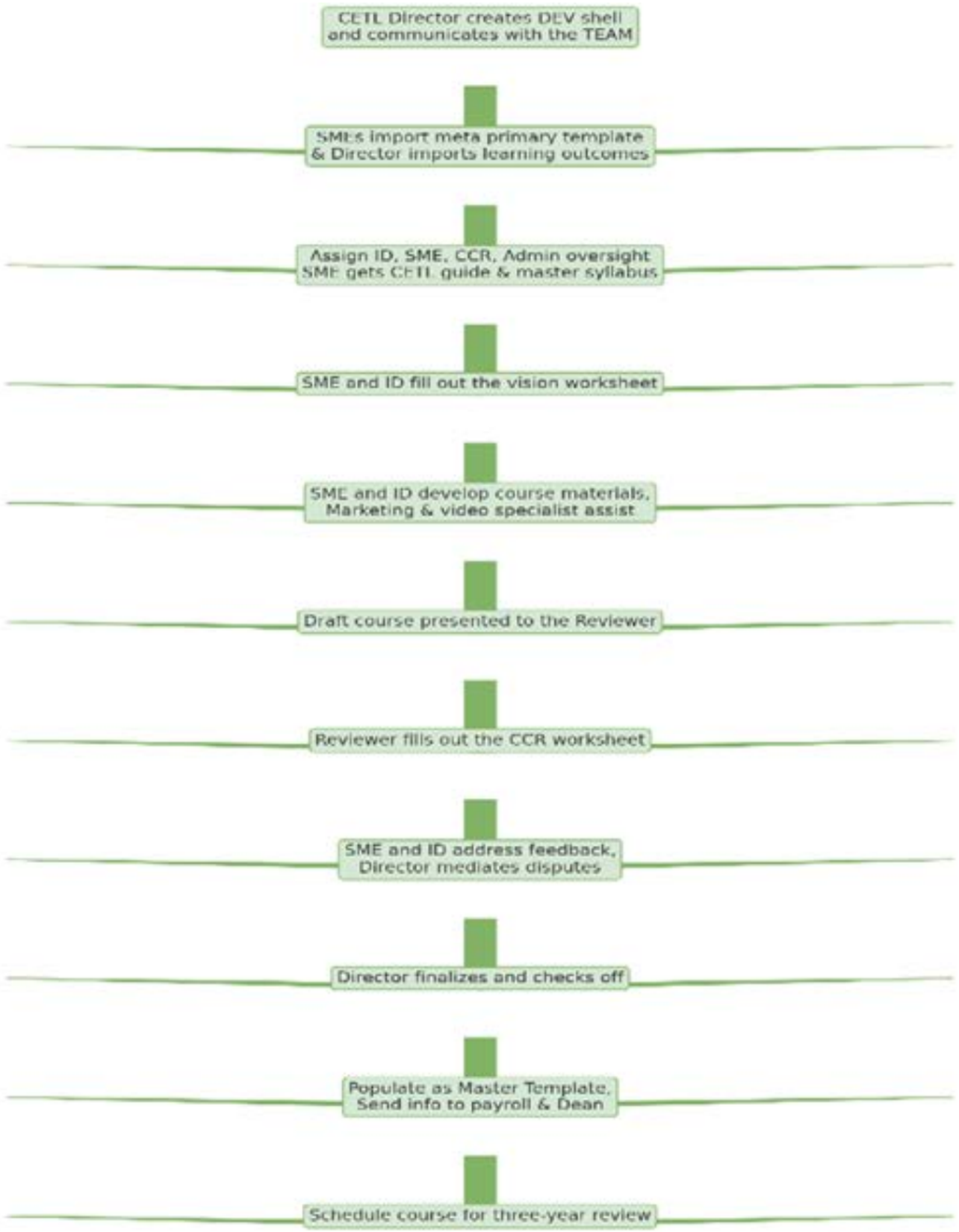
11. Feedback and Corrections: SME and department make necessary corrections.

12. Final Review and Badge: Courses passing the 85% QM standard receive a review badge.

13. Completion and Stipend: Final sign-off is given, and Faculty are compensated per contract agreements.

14. Syllabus Population: Reviewed courses are added to the Master Database for faculty and dean use.

Flow Chart:



Curriculum Design

Curriculum design incorporates creating new courses and learning outcomes for programs. This is a time-intensive process that includes mapping courses for alignment with the institutional goals, checking with IAI stipulations, ensuring appropriate contact hours for a class, and making the online course engaging for all students. The following outlines strategies, best practices and approaches to online courses and curriculum design.

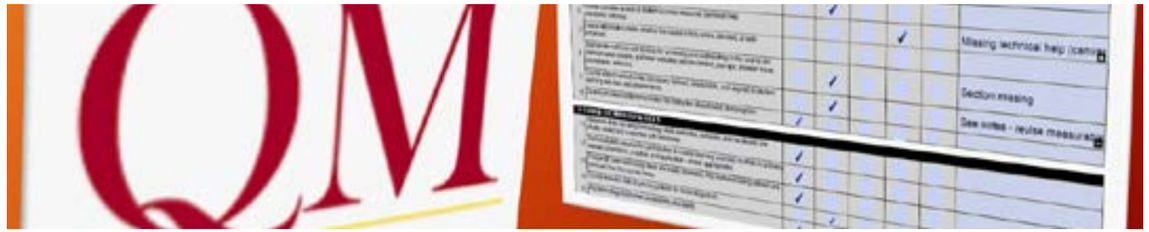
Quality Matters

Quality Matters (QM) is a nationally recognized, faculty-centered, peer-review process designed to certify the quality of online and blended courses. The QM framework is built around rigorous standards based on research, best practices, and national standards for course design. These standards are detailed in the QM Rubric, which provides a comprehensive checklist covering course alignment, learning objectives, assessment and measurement, instructional materials, course activities and learner interaction, and course technology. By adhering to these standards, institutions ensure that their online courses are designed to facilitate and enhance learning, providing students with clear expectations, meaningful engagement, and practical assessments.

For IECC, integrating Quality Matters principles into developing and reviewing online courses is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, it underscores the institution's commitment to maintaining the highest standards of educational excellence. By aligning online course design and delivery with QM standards, IECC demonstrates its dedication to offering educational experiences that are academically rigorous and pedagogically effective. This commitment to quality assures students, Faculty, and external stakeholders that IECC values and invests in delivering superior online education.

The QM process ensures the consistency and coherence of online courses at IECC. The QM Rubric's detailed criteria provide a structured framework for course design, which helps Faculty, and instructional designers create systems that are logically organized, easy to navigate, and aligned with learning objectives. This consistency is vital to fostering an effective learning environment where students can focus on achieving their learning outcomes without being hindered by poor course design or unclear expectations.

QM certification process offers an opportunity for continuous improvement. The iterative process of self-review, peer review, and revision based on QM standards enables IECC to enhance the quality of its online courses continually. This culture of continuous improvement ensures that IECC's online offerings remain at the forefront of educational technology and pedagogical strategies, thereby preparing students effectively for their future careers and academic pursuits. Quality Matters is integral to achieving IECC's vision of excellence in online education, ensuring that courses are designed to meet rigorous quality standards and continuously refined to enhance student learning and success.



Course Templates

Each IECC online course will use a course template developed by CETL. The templates are developed in Canvas LMS (Learning Management Systems) to ensure consistency and quality in online course delivery—a strategic approach to structuring online education to support student success and streamline their journey through academic programs.

Incorporating best practices and Quality Matters (QM) standards into these Canvas course design templates ensures that each course is not only well-organized but also pedagogically sound. Best practices in online education, such as clear navigation, engaging content presentation, and diverse assessment strategies, are integral to these templates. They are designed to promote active learning, critical thinking, and meaningful interaction among students and between instructors.

The integration of QM standards further ensures that courses meet rigorous quality benchmarks in terms of learning objectives, content alignment, accessibility, and student engagement. This dual emphasis on best practices and QM standards helps create an online learning environment that supports all students, including those from diverse backgrounds and with varying levels of preparedness, thereby enhancing overall student success and satisfaction.

Course Syllabus

The syllabus in an online class serves the same purpose and has the same elements as a face-to-face course syllabus. However, the syllabus for an online course should include some additional information and may be customized to make it easier to navigate and use. The syllabus is also the first moment to create a welcoming climate and to set the stage for students to be part of a learning community.

If you share a standard syllabus created for all Faculty teaching the course, still remember that you can add opportunities in the course to make this a living and welcoming document. When creating a syllabus designed for an online course, it is essential to write with clarity and organization to signal how to navigate the digital learning environment and essential technology information that offers accessibility alternatives to access learning materials. Be sure your syllabus communicates student support resources to connect students with campus offices that can support their needs for academic advising, student disability services, tutoring, writing center services, career services, technical support, loaner laptops, library services, campus or community food assistance, and housing resources. Providing these resources upfront sets a tone of being equity-forward. It creates a sense of belonging and connects students to needed support.

Developing efficient assessment strategies and methods is vital to successful online teaching. Integrating multiple forms of assessment allows students more opportunities to evaluate their performance. It is crucial to align learning objectives and activities with the evaluations and provide summative and formative assessments. Research shows positive results when students can repeat checks to achieve optimal results instead of high-stakes testing. More consistent assessments over short periods can help students and Faculty see the specific steps students may struggle with.

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Alignment

Alignment is the direct link between learning outcomes and course components: assessments, activities, and learning materials.

Alignment is a key part of backward design and is visualized through course mapping. Mapping out your course will help you determine the essential assessments and activities that build comprehension and application of the learning material, leading to the expected outcomes.

A well-aligned course means that all components of the course contribute to the learner's experience and lead them directly toward achieving the expected outcome.

Presentation Materials

Faculty who are developing online courses typically want to use PowerPoint presentations just like they do in their face-to-face courses. But imagine going to a workshop, having the instructor turn on their PowerPoint and walk out of the room, forcing you to read the slides to learn the materials. Not what you might expect. The same is true for online course presentations. Proper use of the technology means PowerPoint presentations should be accompanied by audio.

Web Conferencing

Another interactive tool that benefits the online community is live webinars. These are scheduled live meetings with students through online tools such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams. Both applications are available to all Faculty, staff, and students for free online collaboration in and out of the classroom.

Introductions

To help your students feel a sense of community, it is good practice to provide them with a welcome video, introducing yourself, telling them a little bit about your background, and telling them what to expect in the class they are about to take. In addition, it is considered good practice in online courses to ask students to introduce themselves as well. However, not all students are comfortable using webcams, so that should be considered when developing your introduction assignment.

Demonstrate Examples

Your instructional designer will provide guidance on video use to demonstrate examples, models, past and current events, etc. Digital video cameras have become inexpensive and easy to use. Video editing software comes bundled with most operating systems, so in some cases, you may want to create your own video. You could also get some help from our Video Producer to record and edit your video.

Involve the Learner

A common perception is that online courses require students to read or view videos and then regurgitate the information in an essay or simple discussion post. However, this is false because numerous activities fully engage online students.

Students should show their understanding of the content and heighten their engagement throughout any course. Instructors can incorporate authentic activities that connect real-world relevance and content knowledge. Authentic activities can range from examining case studies to creating problem-based scenarios in which the students research the problem and develop solutions or address gaps within the issue.

Students begin their inquiry by exploring unfamiliar areas and developing questions to guide their exploration. This process culminates in a final project based on their questions, which guides their learning. However, before starting their final project, students must submit a proposal to their instructor outlining how to present the material they have learned to focus on the content.

Final projects can be of diverse types, such as research, scholarly or practical work, in-depth discussion-based role-playing, and enactment of practice. Irrespective of the method used, instructors must strengthen the learning process in each section and encourage interaction among students.

Develop Consistent Structure

The course's appearance can be intentionally inviting or unintendedly disengaging. Often, instructors have a lot of information that must be crammed into the online learning environment, which can create a disinviting learning environment.

In addition, each module should look like the previous modules, with updated content and learning outcomes. When thinking about course design and usability for learners, an effective approach is to ensure all resources utilized throughout the course are contained within the LMS.

An effective strategy for module development is to begin with an overview page that outlines all readings, tasks, and assignments required for the module, along with corresponding due dates for each item. Instructors hyperlink items on the overview page directly to the assignments, which provides a clean and organized feel to the course. The overview page adds to the course's structure and can help keep students engaged in the learning process and increase academic integrity.

Rubrics posted with each assignment also foster open communication and clear expectations. Students can easily read the assignment narrative and still not comprehend what is expected; rubrics provide additional clarity. Students are more successful on assignments when they know exactly what will be expected for assignment grading.
learning community.

Reflect and Revise

According to academic research, a reflective practitioner is a successful practitioner. There are several strategies that instructors can use to practice reflective strategies to improve the learning environment for students.

Reflective practitioners use the evaluation phase to review their courses through the lens of best practices. A few ways to reflect upon course designs are through student feedback and by keeping a design journal of things that come up during a semester. Finally, there are course design rubrics, such as from Quality Matters, which can assess course design according to research-based rubrics.

Creating Learning Objectives

It is essential to build measurable and clear objectives that outline what is expected of the learner. These objectives will make it easy to align the rest of your course and will serve to communicate learning expectations to students.

Course Learning Outcomes are specific and measurable statements that define the knowledge, skills, and attitudes learners will demonstrate upon the completion of a course.

Learning Outcomes are written with a verb phrase and declare a demonstrable action within a given time, such as by the end of the course. Ideally, they should be observable, measurable, and achievable within a specified period. For some, this definition describes what they have already understood to be Learning Objectives.

Writing an effective learning outcome that is measurable involves the structuring of two parts: a verb and an object. The verb phrase describes the intended cognitive process or what the learner intended to do, and the object phrase describes the knowledge students are expected to acquire or construct.

Using Bloom's Taxonomy to find Measurable Verbs – Benjamin Bloom and a committee of colleagues identified three domains of learning and objectives that can be written for any type of learning (Skills, Knowledge, and Attitude).

Learning objectives should encourage students to reach higher orders of thinking through careful scaffolding of concepts (structuring learning to build on prior concept knowledge). Using actionable verbs, you can create objectives that encourage students to reach higher orders of thinking through careful scaffolding of concepts (structuring learning to build on prior concept knowledge). For example:

· Non-measurable: verbs understood, appreciate, learn.

· Measurable verbs: explain, discuss, compare, etc.

· ABCD Method – An easy framework for creating learning objectives is the ABCD method. This stands for Audience, Behavior, Condition, and Degree. Learning objectives containing each element will outline the learning to be achieved after completing each module.

Each module should have 3-5 learning objectives. If you have more, your objectives may be too long, or your module theme could be too broad.

Content for Courses

All course content should be carefully considered. This includes textbooks, lectures, and assignments for online courses. The following are best practices and guidance to help with course creation.

OERs (Open Education Resource)

Open Educational Resources (OER) are freely accessible, open, licensed teaching and learning materials. There are worldwide repositories for the sharing and use of OER. Materials are available in almost any subject area and can include a single image, assignment, or activity OR a full textbook and even an entire course. OER Commons

Creative Commons resources are less specific and include a variety of resources (educational in purpose or not) that can be used under specific, more open licensing arrangements than traditional copyright processes. Items include clip art, images, videos, music, and more.

Publisher Content

Publishers often create online course materials that go with your textbook. Talk to your publisher to receive access to the content. Often, you can select the materials and customize them to reach your learning objectives.

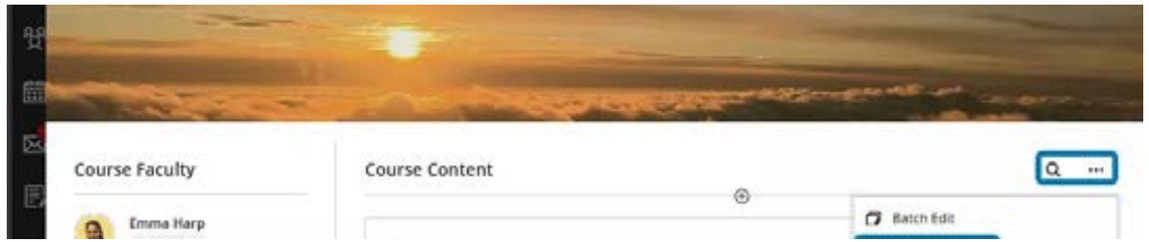
IECC discourages online courses directed to an outside publisher, LMS, or web content provider that fulfills teaching and assessments. It is recommended that all assessments and instructional materials should be accessible through the IECC-approved LMS, which is Canvas, at the time of this publication.

Some exceptions may apply for industry standard materials and providers in CTE areas; examples include workforce education modules, standardized health care tests, or Amatrol Process Control and Instrumentation training program for industrial maintenance.

However, instructors are expected to develop their own teaching videos, materials, and assessments as part of their terms of employment. Publisher made materials may supplement instruction but should never replace the role of the instructor in an online environment.

Assessment for Learning

Assessment is more than just tests, quizzes, and final projects. A truly "informative" assessment helps students measure their progress and helps guide your instruction. How will you embed informal and formal assessments for students to demonstrate understanding of major course concepts?



Summative and Formative

Assessments come in two varieties: summative and formative. Summative Assessment evaluates student learning, skill, and academic achievement at the end of a defined instructional period (i.e., project, unit, course, semester, etc.). Formative Assessments monitor student learning through formal and informal processes to gather evidence to improve learning (i.e., guiding learning from concept to concept, activity to activity, and lesson to lesson, identifying clarifications and misconceptions before moving on to the next concept).

Using Canvas

Canvas is the IECC-adopted Learning Management System (LMS). It is called a learning management system because the focus is on the facilitation of learning, not on the storage of content. You will find that Canvas provides wonderful opportunities to enrich the online learning environment, including a built-in multimedia tool, the Edu Apps Center, quizzes, discussions, group and peer reviews, collaborative documents, and so much more!

Instructors are expected to direct all content and online/blended learning through the Canvas LMS. Execptions to this rule should be approved by the appropriate dean of instruction and are reserved only for industry standard training in specific CTE areas.

Canvas is designed to support modules! So, all that challenging work you have done mapping out each of your learning units will pay off now. To get started with Canvas takes advantage of one of the many opportunities to gain experience of how the system works.

· The Canvas Guides (software developer guides) cover all major features of Canvas by question topic. They are easy to navigate and mostly image-based walk-through demonstrations of how to use a particular feature.

· The IECC Center for Teaching and Learning also offers in-person training for teaching with Canvas.

Backward Design

Backward design is a process for designing courses that entails three steps:

· Determine the content and skills you want your students to learn in the course.

· What are the course learning outcomes?

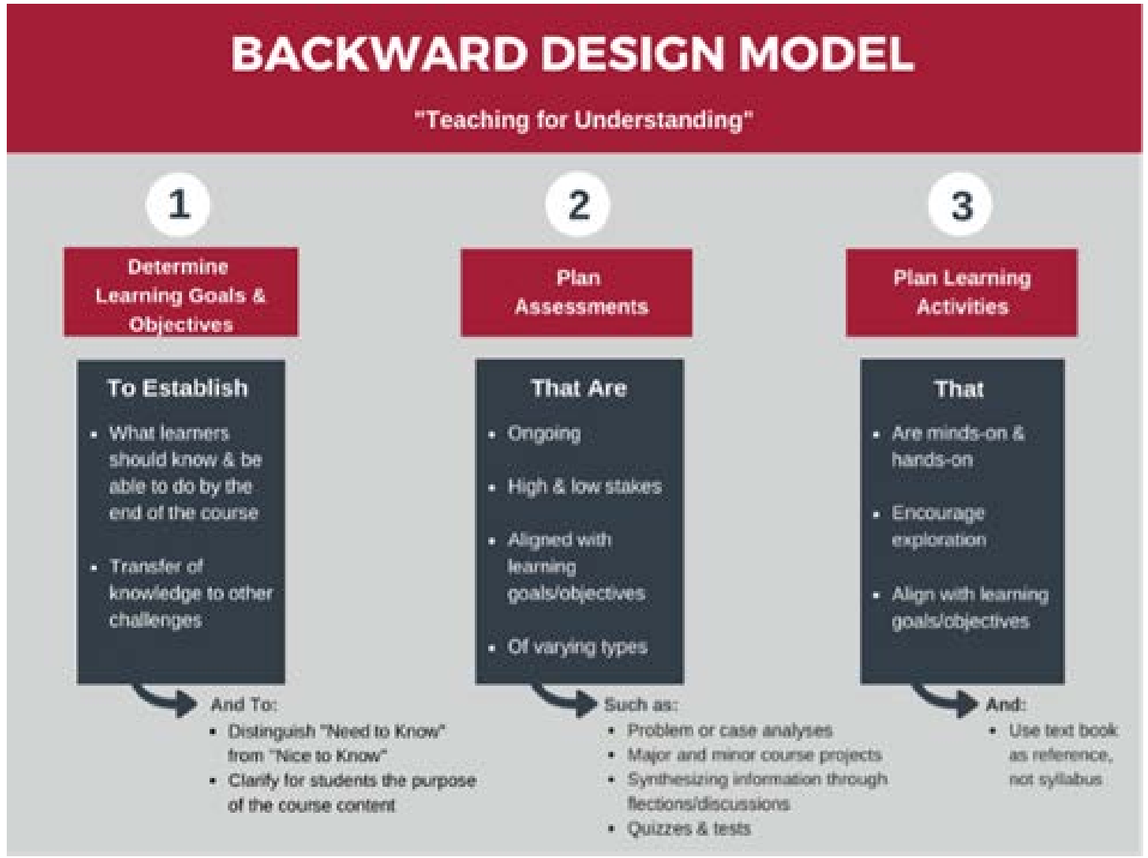
· Determine how you will know whether students have learned that content and skills.

· What assessment(s) will students complete to demonstrate in a measurable way that they have met the course learning outcomes?

· Determine what practice will prepare students to succeed on the assessment(s).

· What will the nature, frequency, and sequence of learning activities be in the course?

· How will you track student progress, provide feedback to students to guide their efforts, and help students learn to identify where their own learning is and isn't on track?



Constructing Effective Online Discussions

The discussion board (whether the main board or the student group boards) is often the heart of an online course as far as student dynamics is concerned, providing a home base for conducting the formal week-to-week activities of the course, asking, and answering questions of clarification, and offering a main venue for collaboration and interaction of all sorts. Interaction takes place between students and between instructor and students.

Three forum types that apply to the course as a whole:

· An introductions forum—a standalone forum used during the first week of the course that is easy for students to return to whenever they want to familiarize themselves with details about a classmate. This assists in building community for a class.

· A discussion forum was established for Q&A about the course, monitored by the instructor. This is where students can post questions that may not be related to a discussion topic of the week. For example, questions about assignments and requirements of the course, how to perform a task, to report a broken hyperlink, etc.

· A discussion forum for content areas specifics that explore learning outcome topics and allow students to work out key learning and ideas. Some instructors will also post in this area, although it is intended for students.

What is the Purpose of Discussion Activity?

To prepare for your use of asynchronous discussion opportunities, you should first decide how you want to use discussion about your presentation and assignment elements in the course. In other words, decide whether discussion topics will closely follow the questions you raise in your lectures and other presentations or whether the topics will provide opportunities to introduce additional materials and further applications of ideas you have presented.

Discussions coordinated with assignments and assessments must be scheduled to allow enough time for reflection and response. If student assignments are presented in the online classroom and students are asked to comment on them, guidelines and procedures must be set up in advance to make sure that the discussion is structured and focused. Naming conventions are important to avoid confusion—for example, do you want students to include the title of their project in their threads? Do you want projects posted by means of an attached document?

Remember that a forum may be the setting for more than a pure discussion. It can be a place to demonstrate problem-solving, share assignments, stage debates, post group projects, and serve many other purposes. If you teach a hybrid course, you will need to coordinate the online discussion forum with your f2f meetings closely. The discussion can be used as a place to post questions before an f2f meeting, to post full projects which can only be presented in short form within the time limit of a f2f meeting, or to continue a discussion begun in a f2f meeting.

Tips for Setting Up Discussion

It is a good idea for the instructor to start all major topic threads unless you have designated a forum for student presentations or have designated students to act as the moderator. You can ask students to start new threads for the meeting if appropriate. And, if you wish to, you can allow students to contribute additional threads. However, this arrangement should be considered carefully. Students often create new topics without fundamental necessity, and your discussion area may soon be overwhelmed with too many threads on duplicate issues.

Organize forums and threads to reflect the class chronology or topical sequence and suggest a pattern for posting. The organization of discussion forums should complement the class structure and provide reminders of the course chronology and sequence. For example, creating one for each week or unit of the course helps students know where they should be looking for that week's activity.

It should be available for each week or unit of the course unless you want students to post questions related to weekly course content to the general Q&A forum. Suggest a schedule for posting that is appropriate to the topic, assignment, and your student audience—for example, if you want students to comment on other students' postings, you might suggest that everyone post their first responses to your question by midweek and to classmates during the remainder of the week. You may even set up your system of credit for the discussion participation rubric to reflect that.

Create thread topics to correspond to and support appropriate and relevant activities. Tying your thread topics to the assignments, readings, projects, and exercises for a particular week will help keep students on the subject in their discussions and provide a prominent place to discuss anything that occurs in the course during that week.

While you may have some critical topics in mind, do allow students to ask related questions you may have yet to anticipate. Add a prompt at the end of the discussion question, such as "If you have another question based on this week's reading, feel free to post it in reply/post it in a new thread." Or you may create a weekly thread that is a placeholder for "other questions about this week's readings and activities."

Rubric and Expectations

A participation rubric and clear criteria for both quality and quantity of participation are crucial factors in a successful discussion. Always include a realistic requirement for students to comment on or respond to classmates. However, asking students to respond to more than one or two classmates in a week can result in superficial

responses. Providing examples of good responses rather than just stating criteria can be particularly helpful in introductory courses.

For example, here is a list of elements that are not dependent on the order of tasks:

1. Paper length must be 1000-1500 words, not including your reference list.

2. Include at least ten sources, with seven of those being from peer-reviewed articles. Please review the definition of a peer-reviewed article on this website __ before conducting your research.

3. Use APA citations and documentation throughout. Refer to the APA guide at __ if you need to refresh your knowledge of APA.

4. The following is a task list that needs to be done in a certain order. Your assignment might include both types of tasks:

5. Your paper is divided into a series of smaller assignments, due as indicated: 1. Select a paper topic and email the instructor by week 2; 2. Write an outline of your paper and submit it by week 4; 3. Submit a reference list of your ten sources by week 6, using APA format; 4. Submit the final paper by week eight via the Canvas Assignments area.

6. Students need to know how and where to submit the assignment and the due date or dates (for incremental assignments). For example, "Due __ by submitting to the Assignment area in Canvas, this paper is worth 20% of your grade and will be evaluated using the rubric posted with the syllabus and other course documents." If the assignment is submitted online but not through an assignment link, you will need to be more explicit. For example, "Submit by posting to the 'Debate Prep' discussion forum, creating a new thread, and placing your topic name in the subject line."

Assessment Criteria

This can be, at its simplest, a list of required elements, or if some elements are worth more than others, which can be stated or provided via a fully formed rubric. The total number of grade points or percentage of the grade should be stated, as well as any late policy. It may be that you have already included some of this information in your syllabus, but you should either repeat it or refer students to the more detailed version.

For example,

· "The essay is worth 25 points of your total grade and will be graded on the following elements:

· Clarity and organization of essay or video presentation–4 pts

· Persuasive and logical argument–7 pts

· Selection of reliable sources–5 pts

· Evidence of research into the issues–5 pts

· Quality of comments on classmates' essays or presentations–4 pts

· Late papers will be docked with one point for every day late. No papers or presentations will be accepted after the end of week 5."

Rubrics

Rubrics are useful pedagogical and evaluative tools that list the criteria and point distribution you use to evaluate student work. While you have a mental set of guidelines and criteria that guide your assessment of student work, creating and posting a rubric makes these internal criteria more explicit and, thus, the grading process more transparent. The student knows what to expect and uses the rubric as a guide in completing assignments, while you will be able to grade more efficiently and consistently and will also find fewer questions from and challenges by students.

It is possible to create a rubric for all online course activities. That said, you do not need a formal rubric for every assignment; adequately detailed, clearly stated criteria can be sufficient. However, a rubric is often helpful in communicating more detailed assignment expectations and expectations about what a quality submission may include.

An effective rubric should be detailed enough to cover the assignment's complexity and requirements but simple enough that an instructor can easily distinguish between the higher and lower parts of the grading range. We recommend keeping rubrics to no more than five or six different scoring categories. This will help ensure that you have an efficient process that avoids unnecessary hair-splitting and time-consuming deliberations. You may overlay a late policy onto your rubric (for example, deduct one or a partial point from the total score when postings are made within a specific number of days after the due date) or build your late policy into the rubric itself.

In writing rubrics for assignments, you should also address some general expectations about what constitutes quality work for undergraduate or graduate students, including coherent and error-free writing, adequate documentation, and the policy on plagiarism. Although writing a good rubric requires some initial investment of time, you may find that the process of constructing one, by requiring thoroughness and attention to each aspect of the assignment, helps produce a more carefully considered and effective assessment of student work.

Inclusivity and Accessibility

IECC is deeply committed to fostering an inclusive and accessible online learning environment for all students, including those with disabilities. To uphold this commitment, our online course development and delivery processes incorporate specific strategies aimed at removing barriers and enabling equitable access to education. The following outlines IECC's approach to ensuring inclusivity and accessibility in online courses:

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

IECC employs the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to create flexible courses that can accommodate the diverse needs of all students. UDL principles guide the design of inclusive courses by providing multiple means of representation, action and expression, and engagement. For example, course materials are presented in various formats (text, audio, video) to address different learning preferences and needs. Additionally, students are given multiple ways to demonstrate their understanding and mastery of course content, such as through written assignments, presentations, or multimedia projects.

Above the Line and Below the Line in Curriculum Development

The terms "Above the Line" and "Below the Line" refer to distinct facets of curriculum development in the educational field. "Above the Line" content encompasses the curriculum designed and determined at the administrative level. This content is strategically aligned and collaboratively pre-determined, ensuring consistency and coherence across the board, and is intended for use by all educators within the institution.

Above-the-Line Components: These elements are often developed through a collaborative process involving key stakeholders at the administrative level. The aim is to create a unified and standardized curriculum framework that guides the educational direction for all teachers and students.

Below-the-Line Components: In contrast, "Below the Line" content is primarily the domain of individual faculty members. This material consists of course-specific content and teaching methods developed by teachers themselves. While this content may be more specialized and tailored to the individual teacher's style and the students' needs, it can also be developed collaboratively as exemplary models or best practices for adoption by others within the institution.

This aspect of curriculum development offers flexibility and autonomy to teachers, allowing them to infuse personal expertise and innovation into their teaching. It supports the dynamic adaptation of the curriculum to meet the diverse needs of students, encouraging a more personalized and engaging learning experience.

Together, these two components form a comprehensive approach to curriculum development, balancing standardized objectives with the innovative and adaptive strategies of individual educators. This dual framework ensures that while a consistent educational standard is maintained, teachers retain the freedom to creatively address the needs of their students and enhance the learning environment.

Accessible Course Materials

All course materials, including textbooks, videos, PDFs, and presentations, are selected, or designed with accessibility in mind. Textual materials are provided in formats compatible with screen readers. Videos include captions and transcripts to support students who are deaf or hard of hearing, as well as those who prefer textual content. Images and other visual content are accompanied by descriptive alt text for students using screen readers. Accessibility checks are performed regularly to ensure that materials meet or exceed WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) standards.

Assistive Technologies

IECC supports the use of assistive technologies and ensures that online courses are compatible with these tools. Courses are designed to function seamlessly with screen readers, speech-to-text applications, and other assistive devices. The institution also provides guidance and support for students and instructors on the effective use of these technologies within the online learning environment.

Course Delivery

Once a course is designed, the instructor will teach from the template. A separate set of skills is required. This skill is not a direct transfer of skills from a face-to-face class. Much of the education literature demonstrates that to be an effective online teacher, one must use a distinct set of skills. These skills and best practices for online course delivery are presented in this section.

Regular Substantial Interactions

Regular and Substantial Interactions (RSI) are a cornerstone of online education delivery. RSI refers to the meaningful and ongoing engagement between students and instructors and among students within the online learning environment. This engagement can take various forms, including synchronous or asynchronous discussions, feedback on assignments, interactive webinars, and collaborative group projects. RSI's primary goal is to foster a learning community that is engaging, supportive, and responsive to all participants' needs, thereby enhancing students' educational experiences and outcomes.

The importance of RSI in online courses at IECC cannot be overstated. First, it bridges the physical gap inherent in online education by creating an interactive and dynamic virtual classroom environment. This interaction is vital for student engagement, as it helps to prevent feelings of isolation and disconnection that can sometimes occur in online learning settings. By ensuring regular and meaningful contact with instructors and peers, students are more likely to remain motivated, participate actively in their learning process, and achieve their academic goals. Additionally, RSI supports personalized learning, as instructors can provide timely feedback, address individual student queries, and adapt teaching strategies to meet diverse learning needs.

RSI aligns with the Quality Matters (QM) principles and the accreditation standards that guide the development of online courses at IECC. These standards emphasize the importance of learner interaction and engagement as critical components of effective online education. Regular and substantial interactions ensure that systems deliver content and create opportunities for critical thinking, practical application, and the development of a learning community. This approach enhances student satisfaction and learning outcomes. It supports IECC's mission to offer high-quality online education that is accessible, inclusive, and effective in preparing students for their future careers and academic endeavors.
While you may have some critical topics in mind, do allow students to ask related questions you may have yet to anticipate. Add a prompt at the end of the discussion question, such as "If you have another question based on this week's reading, feel free to post it in reply/post it in a new thread." Or you may create a weekly thread that is a placeholder for "other questions about this week's readings and activities."

Here are five ways to provide RSI in your online class:

Substantive interaction is engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment consistent with the content under discussion. It must include at least two of five components:

1. Providing direct instruction

2. Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework

3. Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency

4. Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency

5. Other instructional activities are approved by the institutions or program's accrediting agency (such as Higher Learning Commission).

Criteria to address RSI

The interaction must be:

I. with an instructor that meets accrediting agency standards.

Interaction must be provided by the institutional staff who meet accrediting agency standards in the subject taught. The definition of instructor has also been updated to include an individual responsible for delivering course content and who meets the qualifications for instruction established by an institution's accrediting agency.

II. initiated by the instructor.

This criterion states that the interaction must be mostly faculty driven. This does not include interaction that is optional or initiated primarily by the student.

Examples:

Example 1: Weekly Interactive Webinars

Scenario: In an online business course, the instructor hosts weekly live webinars to discuss contemporary trends in the market, analyze case studies, and connect theoretical concepts with real-world applications. During these sessions, students can ask questions in real-time, participate in polls, and engage in breakout room discussions with peers.

RSI Implementation: This strategy allows for direct, synchronous interaction between students and the instructor, enhancing the understanding of course material through real-time dialogue and collaboration.

Example 2: Personalized Feedback on Assignments

Scenario: A literature professor assigns weekly essays to her students. Instead of generic comments, she provides personalized video feedback for each student, highlighting strengths, areas for improvement, and suggestions for further reading.

RSI Implementation: Personalized feedback ensures that students receive individual attention and guidance, fostering a deeper connection between student and instructor and encouraging a more personalized learning journey.

Example 3: Collaborative Group Projects with Instructor as a Mentor

Scenario: In a software development course, the instructor divides the class into small groups to work on a semester-long project developing a mobile application. The instructor schedules bi-weekly check-ins with each group to discuss progress, challenges, and provide expert advice.

RSI Implementation: By acting as a mentor, the instructor facilitates regular, meaningful interactions focused on students' project work, promoting collaboration, problem-solving, and real-world application of course content.

Other examples:

o Individualized emails.

o Personalized feedback on assignments.

o Instructor-facilitated discussion forums.

o Scheduled virtual office hours.

Faculty Insights

Interaction between students and the instructor is regular (at least once weekly), and interaction is of an academic nature. As explained in its definition, the interaction should occur with reasonable frequency considering the length of time the course is run.

Examples:

o Weekly course announcements.

o Weekly summaries or highlights of discussion posts.

o Regularly schedule online reviews or help sessions.

o Office hours at a recurring time each week.

Student Engagement

Student engagement has long been hailed as a vital component of online learning, although definitions of and strategies for engagement vary widely. Engagement implies some form of interaction, which in online classes may entail learner interaction with their instructor, other learners, or learning content. This interaction framework is the foundation of student engagement research and practice.

Given the level of autonomy typically associated with online learning, learners take responsibility for their learning journey and, especially in asynchronous courses, apply self-regulation and independent problem-solving skills. Learner-centered online instruction can foster the development and use of these skills.

Both student engagement and learner-centeredness promote active learning. Active learners do not simply consume course content but must participate in learning activities and are likely to receive formative feedback based on that participation. To engage active learners, instructors must apply learner-centered principles to promote learning strategies such as inquiry, collaboration, and reflection. In other words, a class taught by lecture alone would not engage students in active learning or be considered learner-centered.

In contrast, instructors draw on learner-centered principles and support by requiring students to participate in ways that help them make meaningful connections with the course content and each other. Active learning concepts are interrelated but may not be designed or valued equally for online classes by all instructors.

Student-Instructor Communication

It is important to provide options and opportunities for students to communicate with the instructor. These opportunities are especially impactful in online courses, in which real-time interaction is limited or unavailable.

Providing opportunities for students to communicate with the instructor in an online course is essential to establishing an instructor's presence. Students do not necessarily see or interact with instructors in real time in the online environment. Ensuring that there are adequate opportunities for communication for students is critical, especially for minoritized students or students who face learning or circumstantial barriers.

The most impactful way to understand and identify the needs of your students is to communicate with them regularly and make yourself accessible through email, virtual office hours, study sessions, individual conferences, and other means.

Accommodation Processes

IECC has established clear and efficient processes for students to request accommodation. Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with the Office of Disability Services at the outset of their program. Individualized accommodation plans are developed with the student, faculty, and disability services staff. These plans may include extended time for assignments and exams, alternative assessment formats, or the provision of additional resources and support.

Reflection and Improvement

Once a course is completed, it is always a good idea to reflect on it and seek continual improvement. At IECC, we encourage this in multiple methods. First is the teacher's assessment of the course and the assessment activities from the CAO's office. Second is the review of student satisfaction surveys that provide valuable feedback. Lastly, the CETL team manages the course review process. During this process, courses are reviewed annually for quality control against the QM rubric and consistency at IECC.

Training and Awareness

Faculty and instructional design teams receive ongoing training on accessibility best practices, legal requirements, and the use of inclusive pedagogies. Training sessions cover topics such as creating accessible course content, understanding the diverse needs of students with disabilities, and implementing accommodations effectively. Awareness campaigns are also conducted to foster an inclusive culture and encourage understanding and support among all students and staff.

Continuous Feedback and Improvement

IECC values the feedback of students with disabilities regarding the accessibility and inclusivity of online courses. Mechanisms for feedback include course evaluations, surveys, and direct communication with the Office of Disability Services. This feedback is used to make continuous improvements to courses, materials, and support services.

Course Surveys

IECC collects feedback from both students and faculty and is essential for the continuous improvement of online courses. All instructors will be provided with the data from these Online surveys after class completion.

Implement anonymous online surveys at multiple points during the course: at the beginning to gauge initial expectations and technological readiness, in the middle to assess interim satisfaction and challenges, and at the end to gather comprehensive feedback on all aspects of the course experience. Use survey data to identify patterns and areas for improvement. Adjust course content, pacing, and technology tools as needed. Share key findings and planned adjustments with students and faculty to demonstrate responsiveness.

Course Material Ownership

Any courses or materials developed through CETL are owned by the IECC district.

Any question related to course materials ownership should be directed to the appropriate Dean of Instruction.

Course materials developed outside of the IECC district or resources are owned by the instructor/creator.

Definitions and Key Terms:

ASYNCHRONOUS LEARNING: When learners participate in an online learning course at various times. This might also be called eLearning or web-based training (WBT). Asynchronous learning allows learners to go through a course at their own pace and on their schedule.

BLENDED LEARNING: Blended learning is an instructional approach that includes a combination of learning mediums. For example, a course might include eLearning plus scheduled sessions for synchronous discussions. For example, participants can complete online self-paced lessons by a certain date and then meet on-site or online for additional learning activities.

DISTANCE EDUCATION or DISTANCE LEARNING: Distance Education/Learning occurs when students and their instructors are in various locations, and the instruction occurs on an electronic device, such as a computer or mobile phone. Learning can happen in a synchronous environment, where all participants are connected simultaneously, or in an asynchronous environment, where participants learn at various times. This term often applies to university courses delivered online but relates to a broader historical time of correspondence education and distance education as a movement in Higher Education.

ELEARNING: eLearning (short for electronic learning) is an umbrella term that refers to all types of training, education and instruction that occurs on a digital medium, like a computer or mobile phone.

HYBRID LEARNING: See blended learning.

INFORMAL LEARNING: Informal learning occurs when people have a need to know something. They set their own learning objectives and acquire knowledge, skills, and information in their own ways. This could be through asking questions, observing experts, practicing, and conversing. It is the kind of natural learning humans do outside of a structured environment.

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN: Instructional design involves the identification of the performance, skill, and knowledge gaps of a particular group of people and creating

or selecting learning experiences that close this gap. Instructional designers base their learning decisions on cognitive psychology, instructional theory, and best practices.

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGNER: An instructional designer practices the craft and science of instructional design. This person identifies the needs and performance issues of a targeted audience and determines the best approaches for meeting the audience's needs and improving performance.

MOBILE LEARNING: Learning that takes place on a hand-held device, such as a mobile phone, which can take place anytime and anywhere.

MULTIMEDIA: Multimedia refers to the presentation of information and instruction through a combination of graphics, audio, text, or video. Multimedia instruction is often interactive.

ONLINE LEARNING: The term online learning is often used synonymously with eLearning. It is an umbrella term that includes any type of learning accomplished on a computer and usually over the Internet.

SELF-PACED LEARNING: Self-paced learning refers to the type of instruction that allows a person to control the flow of the courseware. It implies the learning environment is asynchronous.

SOCIAL MEDIA LEARNING: Social media learning refers to the acquisition of information and skills through social technologies that allow people to collaborate, converse, provide input, create content, and share it. Examples of social media learning can occur through online social networking platforms, blogs, and microblogs (like Twitter), online talk radio and wikis.

STREAMING MEDIA: Streaming media refers to video and audio that is downloaded to a computer from the Internet as a continuous stream of data and is played as it reaches the destination computer.

SYNCHRONOUS LEARNING: When learners participate in an online learning course at the same time but in various locations, it is known as synchronous learning. Synchronous learning allows learners to interact with the instructor and other participants. This is done through software that creates a virtual classroom.

VIDEO CONFERENCING: Video conferencing refers to the use of video technology (both hardware and software) to create a virtual meeting between two or more people in different physical locations. Participants can see and hear each other through this technology.

VIRTUAL CLASSROOM: The virtual classroom refers to a digital classroom learning environment that takes place over the Internet rather than in a physical classroom. It is implemented through software that allows an instructor and students to interact.

WEBINAR: An online seminar is a virtual classroom in which the facilitator and participants view the same screen at the same time. Webinars typically use video, audio and slides that the facilitator controls and functionality that allows participants to chat by entering text, answering polls, raising their hands, and asking questions.

REGULAR SUBSTANTIVE INTERACTIONS: This term typically refers to meaningful and consistent engagements between instructors and students in an educational setting. These interactions are not merely superficial or administrative but involve significant exchanges related to course content, learning objectives, and student progress. Regular substantive interactions are crucial for fostering effective learning environments, facilitating discussions, providing feedback, and addressing student queries or concerns.

QUALITY MATTERS: "Quality Matters" is a rubric and a peer-review process designed to evaluate the quality of online and blended courses. It sets standards for course design and delivery to ensure that online education is effective and engaging for students. The Quality Matters rubric covers various aspects of course development, including instructional materials, course navigation, assessment, learner engagement, and accessibility. Institutions and instructors often use the Quality Matters framework to assess and improve the quality of their online courses.

OERs (Open Educational Resources): OERs are free educational materials available for use, remixing, and redistribution. These resources can include textbooks, lecture notes, assignments, videos, and other learning materials that are released under an open license, such as Creative Commons licenses. OERs aim to make educational resources more accessible and affordable, allowing educators to adapt and customize materials to suit their teaching needs and learners to access high-quality educational content without financial barriers.

F.A.Q.

A list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) about online course design and review at IECC:

What principles and standards guide online course design at IECC?

IECC's online courses incorporate Regular and Substantial Interactions (RSI), Quality Matters (QM) principles, CETL-developed templates, approved master shells, and focus on quality online education.

Who facilitates the online course design process at IECC?

The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) facilitates all district course design and online course review.

How is the course development team formed at IECC?

A multidisciplinary team including faculty subject matter experts (SMEs), instructional designers, technology specialists, and a project manager is formed for each course.

What are the steps in the online course development process at IECC?

The process includes course selection, team formation, course design and planning, development of course materials, integration of RSI, quality assurance and review, draft and feedback collection, final approval and launch, ongoing support and enhancement, professional development and training, and documentation and reporting.

How does IECC ensure quality in online course development?

Through adherence to Quality Matters (QM) standards, regular reviews, and incorporation of feedback for continuous improvement.

What is the procedure for online course review at IECC?

Courses are scheduled for review, a review team is assigned, the course is reviewed against QM standards, necessary corrections are made, and a final review is conducted to ensure quality benchmarks are met.

How often are courses reviewed at IECC?

Courses are put on the schedule for a three-year review process. This timeline is per the Faculty Union contract.

What happens after a course passes the review?

A course that passes receives a review badge from CETL, and the Director provides final sign-off. Faculty involved in the review receive stipends as per contract rates.

What criteria are used in the course review process?

The course is scored for adherence to Quality Matters standards, focusing on course alignment, learning objectives, assessment and measurement, instructional materials, learner interaction, and course technology.

How are Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) involved in the course review process?

SMEs participate in the review process, making necessary corrections to the course based on feedback from the review team.

Are there professional development opportunities for faculty involved in online course development?

Yes, CETL offers continuous professional development opportunities to keep faculty and staff updated with the latest trends in online teaching and learning.

What support does IECC provide for online course delivery?

CETL provides ongoing support to instructors for course delivery, addressing technical or pedagogical issues, and updates courses based on feedback and advancements.

How does IECC ensure student engagement in online courses?

By incorporating elements promoting Regular and Substantial Interactions (RSI) and strategies for fostering engagement and collaboration among students and instructors.

What is the role of Quality Matters (QM) in IECC's online education?

QM principles guide the development and review of online courses at IECC to ensure they meet high-quality standards in design and delivery.

How can faculty and staff learn more about online course development and review processes?

They can participate in professional development sessions offered by CETL and access resources and guides provided for online course creation and review.

Resources

Illinois Articulation Initiative: https://itransfer.org/

Quality Matters: https://www.qualitymatters.org/

CETL website: https://iecc.edu/CETL