

HVCC Guideline for Best Practices of Online Course Design

Instructor:

Department:

Course:

Training Cycle (start/end date):

Semester to be taught:

Category	Suggested Best Practices	Notes
Course Design	<i>Is the course design easy to navigate (3 clicks or less to get to content and coursework)?</i>	
	<i>Is there a consistent design and naming convention throughout your course? (If it is "Lecture Notes for Ch 3", then it should be "Lecture Notes for Ch 15" too.)</i>	
	<i>In the Course Menu, are there any empty links/buttons or duplicate links/buttons? Are the labels readable with the button style used? Is the button order appropriate for sequencing and prioritizing usage of the menu?</i>	
	<i>Are content folders and items consistently named, ordered, and used appropriately?</i>	
	<i>Are the instructions and directions literal and explicit concerning course navigation and coursework submission?</i>	
	<i>Are due dates well labeled and obvious in the course schedule (matrix), the module's folders, and on assignment/assessment items?</i>	
Syllabus Area	<i>Is a course schedule (matrix) included in the syllabus area? Does it list all the coursework and due dates? Does it state what constitutes the beginning and ending day and time of the course week?</i>	
	<i>If required, does the syllabus area contain the departmental syllabus / course outline?</i>	
	<i>Has the grading been adapted to the course management system options, i.e. does it contain a breakdown of the coursework that explains how Bb points translate to letter grades? Is it stated that the students will use the grades button/link to view their grades?</i>	
	<i>Is a late policy included in the syllabus area?</i>	
Content Area/s	<i>Are generic file types (e.g. Rich Text Format) used so that students may open and save files with the software they have?</i>	
	<i>Are the files appropriately sized for download by dial-up users?</i>	
	<i>Is the content broken into manageable sections for an online course?</i>	
	<i>Are text files (RTF or Word) divided into sections by topic headers, white space, or keywords?</i>	

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Course Materials	<i>If a textbook or supplement is used, is the information easy to find (title, author, ISBN)? If additional equipment (software, hardware, calculator...) is required, is the information easy to find? If publisher material or a cartridge is used, are instructions provided on how and when to use the material?</i>	
Teacher Presence	<i>Is the faculty voice evident throughout the content with some first-person language and conversational tone? Are narration and humor used at times? *as per Teaching Presence research, (see references).</i>	
Orientation of Students to the Online Environment	<i>Is there a welcome announcement that briefly tells the students how to navigate the course (find the syllabus, read the contact info, jump into Week 1)?</i>	
	<i>Is there an orientation to the courses in the first week that has the student complete all the functions they will use later in the course (discussion, email, quiz, etc)?</i>	
	<i>As appropriate, is there an icebreaker activity that introduces students to each other?</i>	
	<i>If there are quizzes later in the course, is there an orientation week quiz (pre-test, syllabus quiz, student orientation quiz)?</i>	
Feedback	<i>Is it clear to the students when they can expect responses to emails sent to the instructor? (for example: once a day, within 24 to 48 hours, not on weekends, always on weekends, etc.)</i>	
Discussions	<i>If appropriate, are there discussions or opportunities for student interaction throughout the course weeks?</i>	
	<i>Do students receive clear expectations of what they should write and post in the discussion board? Does the discussion board tell when messages are due, how many messages, and what constitutes an acceptable message?</i>	
Assessments	<i>Is content reinforced with assignments as needed? Are the assessments tailored to the online classroom? Are there a variety of assessments each week?</i>	
	<i>As appropriate are the students given the chance for quick feedback with self-evaluation quizzes or auto-scored quizzes for points?</i>	
	<i>If applicable and appropriate to the course, are students asked to demonstrate critical thinking with meaningful essay questions?</i>	
	<i>If available, do any of the assignments take advantage of textbook CD-ROMs, textbook website, or other Internet-accessible materials?</i>	

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References

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- SUNY Learning Network Course Developer's Handbook*. (2004). (10th ed.)
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