

Section 4: Rationale, Instructions, and Examples

Organization & Structure

	Annotation
<p>Instructor provides a structured course timeline.</p>	<p>A course timeline gives adult learners a way to visualize the sequence of course modules and types of learning activities and assignments that assists the adult learner in scheduling time efficiently.</p>
<p>Course shell is well-organized and easy to navigate.</p>	<p>Instructions provide a general course overview, present the schedule of activities, guide the learner to explore the course site, and indicate what to do first, in addition to listing detailed navigational instructions for the whole course.</p> <p>Instructors may choose to incorporate some of this information in the course syllabus. In this case, learners should be directed to the syllabus at the beginning of the course. A useful feature is a “Read Me First” or “Start Here” button or icon on the course home page, linking learners to start-up information.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A course “tour” 2. Clear statements about how to get started in the course 3. A “scavenger hunt” or “syllabus quiz” assignment that leads learners through an exploration of the different parts of the course 4. A table or diagram that depicts the relationship between the online and face-to-face portions of a blended course
<p>An overview of weekly and/or module learning objectives, tasks and learning materials is presented.</p>	<p>Adult learners benefit from knowing what they are about to learn, as well as the scope of work and time commitment expected from them. Providing a course overview will help prepare learners for what, when, where, and why they will be learning, as well as what content, interactions, and assessments will take place within the week/module. These “advance organizers” help learners plan around conflicting priorities (school, family, work) and better manage their time. The week/module overview page should include at least a short introduction to the module topic and indicate what materials need to be reviewed and what activities and assignments need to be completed. Due dates should be</p>

	<p>included for every assignment and activity in the module. This will help your learners stay on track.</p> <p>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week/Module Introduction/Expectations • Week/Module Objectives & Goals • Readings & Videos • Activities • Assignments
<p>NSC-provided syllabus and course templates are present and not deleted.</p>	<p>The syllabus and course templates contain the most current information on NSC policies; Core Learning Outcomes; Netiquette; plagiarism; where to find technical support, Student Services, and Disabilities resources; and other useful information and resources to which students need to have access. The course name and number, as well as Instructor contact information are included on the landing page. The templates provide avenues for communication and easy access to support and guidance.</p>
<p>Course shell is free of typographical errors.</p>	
<p>All external links work properly in the LMS (check using Canvas course Link Validator).</p>	<p>Broken links to websites and other types of external content frustrate students. All links should function properly.</p>

Learning Design

	Annotation
<p>Course provides a variety of activities to develop higher order thinking, problem solving skills, or relevance to real world application.</p>	<p>When the learner thinks critically he or she goes through the process of constructing knowledge, inquiring, exploring, and thinking. Cognitive presence relies on critical thinking skills and active learning, as well as helping learners to link existing ideas to the creation of new knowledge.</p> <p>With measurable objectives guiding the pathway to higher-order thinking skills, Bloom’s Taxonomy can provide a framework for exploring different levels of thinking and associated skills and competencies.</p> <p>When adult learners can apply a learning activity to practical value beyond the course, relevance is established between the stated learning objective, the learning activity, and the assessment of that activity. Experiential learning, case studies, and problem-based activities are designed to immerse learners in real world scenarios, with the goal of having learners build on their existing knowledge and skills to analyze specific problems and find solutions.</p> <p>Transparency of learning activities should also be followed. Ensure that learning objectives are clearly stated for learning activities.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Include reflection as part of project assignments.2. Create peer review groups to encourage learners to learn from each other and help each other construct new knowledge.3. Create scenario-based discussion forums in which learners can interact.4. Have learners create and facilitate course-related scenarios.5. Have learners document their real-world experiences through digital storytelling.6. Assign “offline” activities to learners and have the learners “debrief” in the online environment.

<p>Course provides more than one modality (visual, textual, kinesthetic and/or auditory) within activities and materials that enhance student engagement.</p>	<p>Multimodal learning environments allow instructional elements to be presented in more than one sensory mode (visual, aural, written). Materials that are presented in a variety of presentation modes may lead learners to perceive that it is easier to learn and improve attention, thus leading to improved learning performance; in particular for lower-achieving students (Chen & Fu, 2003; Moreno & Mayer, 2007; Zywno 2003).</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Images • Video/Audio/Podcast clips • Mnemonics • Simulations/ Online Labs • Drag and Drop Checks • Concept Maps • Discussions
<p>Course offers opportunities for interaction and collaboration for student/student, student/instructor and/or student/content.</p>	<p>Collaboration in an online course fosters constructive learning by enabling learners to be active participants, take initiative, think critically, and engage each other in dialogue. (Palloff & Prat, 2007).By requiring learners to engage with each other, the design of such activities requires them to assume more responsibility for their own learning which often leads to a deeper level of engagement. Providing opportunities for learners to learn from each other is an integral part of constructive collaboration. Collaborative exercises can enable more advanced learners to help less experienced learners to maximize their abilities, and help construct new knowledge together (Vygotsky, 1978).</p> <p>Examples:</p> <p>1.Student↔student interaction-based activities include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • group projects • group case studies • peer instruction • synchronous or asynchronous discussions or debates • collaborative brainstorming

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• peer review of selected work <p>2. Student↔Instructor interaction include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• providing feedback on assignments, learning journals, or other reflective activities• participating in discussion forums or chats• sending frequent announcements to summarize the previous week or describe the next week <p>3. Student↔Content interaction include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tutorials• quizzes (if the feedback is useful and usable)• web quests• reading/video discussion or reflections• simulations
--	--

Accessibility / Course Technology Tools

	Annotation
Videos have closed captions and audio files have transcripts.	In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) all videos must be word-for-word closed captioned that is in standard sentence format, punctuation, and capitalization. Closed captioning benefits not only hearing impaired learners, but ELS and other learners viewing video content in a quiet location such as a library. Only audio files should have transcripts.
All course materials (PDF, Word, PowerPoint, etc.) are ADA compliant.	<p>Screen readers convert course text to speech so that learners can listen to the course content. Screen readers insert pauses for periods, semicolons, commas, question marks, exclamation points, and ends of paragraphs. Providing content that is accessible is critical to keep learners with visual disabilities on track. Screen readers, which make documents, etc., accessible to learners with visual impairments who rely on those readers, cannot read PDFs of book chapters or articles that have been scanned landscape style. Therefore, all PDF documents must be portrait style (8.5 x 11). All Word documents and those saved as PDF documents, and all content typed directly into a Canvas course must have titles, headers, and subheaders designated as Header 1, Header 2, etc. All numbered and bullet lists must be designated as numbered and bullet lists. Tables should include designated headers and are captioned. All links to external pages or documents should use the title of the link or document as the link. There should no “click here” or “link” used for the link. Only text that serves as a link should be underlined as screen readers read all underlined words as a link.</p> <p>If images are used, ALT (alternative) text, descriptive text needs to be provided. For some images, alternative text is enough. If a complex photograph, chart, or diagram is displayed, visually impaired learners need more descriptive text, including a narrative that explains clearly what the image is and what it represents.</p> <p>Closed captioning (above) also applies to PowerPoints with voiceovers.</p>

Necessary skills for required technology tools (websites, software, and hardware) are clearly stated and supported with resources.

Technology problems and ambiguous instructions frustrate online learners. Access issues need to be mitigated early on in order for learners to succeed. Any hardware, software, or technology applications that are required for successful participation in the course need to be introduced along with resources that support a full range of learner mastery. This information needs to be communicated out to learners early on and reinforced throughout the term. Additionally, if learners are required to use third party content (publisher websites, online labs, assignment utilities, web-based subscriptions, etc.) links to associated resources and explanations on how to access this content need to be included.

Technology requirements are part of the course shell template. Do not delete it.

Instructor presence

	Annotation
<p>Instructor provides personalized welcome and introduction to the course.</p>	<p>By welcoming learners to the course and providing context for what they will be learning, the instructor sets a tone for success from the start of the course. The course welcome should establish instructor presence and provide enough guidance to ensure that learners will get off to a good start in the online space. In essence, this is the learners' first impression of the instructor and the course.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a course introduction video introducing learners to the course topic and learning content. Add your insight and expertise by contextualizing the learning activities alongside course and module learning objectives. 2. Create a course introduction video that highlights your achievements in the field and relate that knowledge and experience back to what the learners will learn in the course. 3. Create a course introduction tour via video, audio, or illustrated document that welcomes learners to your online course and explains how and where to get started. 4. Hold virtual office hours via Conferences.
<p>Instructor contact information is clearly stated and easily accessible.</p>	<p>In addition to providing this information in the syllabus, include contact information on the template landing (Home) page. Be sure that there is a printable version of the syllabus with instructor contact information for learners to have on hand in case they are unable to access the online class and need to get in touch. Opening avenues for communication and providing easy access to those channels support learner-instructor interactions and facilitate engaging in supportive contact and interaction, a key component of social presence.</p>
<p>Instructor presence is evident in every week/module.</p>	<p>Adult learners need assurances throughout the semester that there really is an instructor on the other end of the online course. Additionally, maintaining a strong instructor presence in every week/module nurtures a sense of connection between learners and the instructor and builds community and trust.</p> <p>Examples:</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Make short videos of one or two key concepts for the week/module.2. Include a video or podcast on your week/module overview page, that goes into more detail about activities and assignments for that week/module.3. Provide feedback comments on rubrics used for grading.4. Post regular announcements (these can be set for delayed posting).5. Provide five-minute feedback videos as part of grading feedback.6. Include discussion wrap-ups at the end of select weeks/modules.7. Hold virtual office hours.8. Hold and record Conferences with learners.9. Make 15-minute mini-lectures and embed them in the modules.
--	---

Feedback and Assessment

	Annotation
<p>Course grading policies, including consequences of late submissions, are clearly stated in the course information area and/or syllabus.</p>	<p>Learners need to know how their work will be assessed in a clear and transparent manner. Grading policies can guide learner progress, and promote fair and objective review and assessment of all graded work. Research shows that grading policies directly impact learner motivation. Including clear course grading policies in the syllabus or course information documents area will also mitigate issues related to learner complaints about grades that they have received on assigned work.</p>
<p>Course includes formative and summative (low and high stakes) methods to assess students' learning.</p>	<p>Consistent and regular assessments help learners demonstrate their progress and deficiencies. As learners move through an online course, they should encounter regular assignments, activities, and interactions designed to assess how well they have mastered the learning content, and how close they are to meeting program, course, or module learning objectives.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <p>Low stakes-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mastery learning quizzes (required to reach a minimum score) • Pre-tests/Self-checks • Participation • Muddiest Point <p>High stakes-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Papers/Essays • Exams • Problem Sets
<p>Criteria for the assessment of a graded assignment are clearly articulated (rubrics, examples of work, etc.).</p>	<p>Elikai & Schuhmann (2010) found that grading policies, examples of work, and associated rubrics motivated learning by associating levels of mastery and performance with a specific grade, and guiding achievement progress.</p> <p>Guidelines or rubrics for the assessment of graded work should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • performance criteria

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • setting desired performance/proficiency levels for learners • performance descriptions. This includes detailing out what constitutes a full continuum of accomplishment, from unsatisfactory through to exemplary, and include associated grades along with each level along the continuum.
<p>Students have an opportunity to assess their learning (pre-test, automated self tests, reflective assignments, etc.).</p>	<p>Self-assessment plays a role in learner self-efficacy, fosters learners’ abilities to construct meaning, and promotes metacognition. By asking learners to check their skill mastery levels or reflect on their own work, they learn to examine their own reasoning and decision making process (Cukusic et al, 2014).</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflecting on personal goals statements • End of module quizzes with required performance levels • Evaluating own participation • Using a rubric to analyze one’s work
<p>Course learning outcomes are clearly defined and at least one objective is linked to a key assessment (e.g., Core Curriculum Learning Outcomes, Program and/or Course Learning Outcomes)</p>	<p>The syllabus and or modules should contain learning outcomes that are connected to program or school outcomes based upon relevant content.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •SOE-Key Assessment •Core Curriculum Outcomes (Critical Thinking, Communication, Citizenship) •Progression Portfolios