

Course Development Guide *Annotations*

SECTION 1:
⇒ COURSE OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION

Summary:

To help insure student success and keep attrition to a minimum, the overall design of the course, navigational information, as well as course, instructor and student information are made transparent to the student at the beginning of the course within the Syllabus and/or Course Orientation.

Specific Review Standards:	Annotation: <i>What's the idea?</i>
1.1 Navigational instructions make the organization of the course easy to understand. This includes clear instructions on where to begin, a course banner on the homepage, and, if applicable, homepage icons match the left-hand navigation links.	Instructions (either on the Homepage, Course Orientation, or Syllabus) should guide the new student to explore the course website, provide a general overview of how the course will work, and specific instructions on what to do next. The idea is to make the first week of the course very clear for the students so they can acclimate themselves to the online environment if they are new to it.
1.2 There is a statement introducing the student to the course and to how student learning is structured in the online environment. Included in this should be a statement about how students will submit assignments.	It is a good idea to include an instructor statement that gives the new student an idea of how the learning process is structured. (e.g., Does the course consist of a linear sequence of units, or can modules be studied in random order? Is the course self-paced or not? What will an average week look like in your course? What will they be doing?)
1.3 Netiquette expectations with regard to discussions and email communication are clarified.	Netiquette is online etiquette. Netiquette expectations should be clearly articulated, however brief or elaborate they may be. (e.g., you may want discourage your students from using instant messaging acronyms [i.e., LOL] in the Discussion Board).
1.4 The self-introduction by the instructor is posted to the Discussion Board.	The initial introduction should help to create a sense of connection between the instructor and the students. It should go beyond essentials, such as the instructor's name, title, field of expertise, email address, and attempt to welcome the students both to the class and to the medium through which they will communicate with you and their classmates.
1.5 Students are requested to introduce themselves to the class on the Discussion Board.	It is a very good idea to lead the students to the Discussion Board as soon as possible and a self-introduction is the most common way to do this. The idea is to build community and interaction early on.
1.6 Minimum technology and software requirements, minimum student skills, and, if applicable, prerequisite knowledge in the discipline, are clearly stated.	If you require certain software or hardware (i.e., Microsoft Word, Adobe Acrobat, Flash Player), the Syllabus or Course Orientation would be the place to inform your students.
1.7 Weekly expectations are clearly outlined for the student. This can take the form of a comprehensive course calendar or a general guide to what is expected from week to week.	Most online courses operate on a weekly schedule which might be a little bit different from a traditional course. It is considered a best practice to provide your students with a course blueprint of sorts that they can rely on for course information and weekly activities. Example: Each week on Sunday night I will open the week's lecture and activity materials for you. Within you will find readings from the textbook, online lecture materials, a quiz, and weekly participation responsibilities. Your quizzes and

	assignments will be due the following Sunday night.
1.8 Course Syllabus is present and adheres to PCC's syllabus requirements.	You can find PCC's required syllabus information at http://www.pcc.edu/pcc/faculty/syllabus.htm

SECTION 2:

⇒ LEARNING OBJECTIVES (COMPETENCIES)

Summary:

Learning objectives are clearly defined and explained in the Syllabus or at the module/unit level. They assist the learner to focus on learning activities.

Specific Review Standards:	Annotation: <i>What's the idea?</i>
2.1 The learning objectives of the course describe outcomes that are measurable.	In order for learning to be meaningfully evaluated, learning objectives should describe outcomes which we are observable behaviors. If this is not possible, (e.g., internal cognition, affective changes), check for clear indications that the learning objective is meaningfully assessed.
2.2 The learning objectives address content mastery as well as critical thinking ability and increased learning skills.	
2.3 Instructions to the students on how to meet the learning objectives are adequate and easy to understand.	Instructions may take various forms (e.g. narratives, bulleted lists, charts) and may appear at different levels within the course (e.g. module-based or weekly assignment sheets.)
2.4 The learning objectives of the course are clearly stated and understandable to the learner.	The idea is to articulate what the students are going to learn during the term and what they will be able to do at the end of the term.
2.5 The learning objectives of the course are articulated and specified on the module/unit level.	Module or unit level objectives could be written by the instructor or come from the textbook and included in the corresponding online lesson.

SECTION 3:

⇒ ASSESSMENT AND MEASUREMENT

Summary:

Assessment strategies use established ways to measure effective learning, assess learner progress by reference to stated learning objectives, and are designed as essential to the learning process.

Specific Review Standards:	Annotation: <i>What's the idea?</i>
3.1 The types of assessments selected are consistent with course activities and measure the achievement of stated objectives and learning outcomes.	The assessment format used should be a meaningful way to measure the learning objective. Objectives, assessments, and learning activities should align. Examples of inconsistency: (1) The objective is to be able to "write a persuasive essay" but the assessment is a multiple choice test. (2) The objective is to "demonstrate discipline-specific information literacy" and the assessment is a rubric-scored term paper, but students are not given any practice with information literacy skills on smaller assignments.
3.2 The grading policy is transparent and easy to understand.	At issue here is not the degree of simplicity or complexity of a given grading system itself, but the clarity of its presentation to the student. A relatively complex grading

	system can still be unambiguous and easy to understand.
3.3 Assessment and measurement strategies are designed to provide feedback to the learner.	Examples: Instructor participation in a discussion assignment; writing assignments that require submission of a draft for instructor comment and suggestions for improvement; quizzes that include informative feedback with each answer choice.
3.4 The types of assessments selected and the methods used for submitting assessments are appropriate for the distance learning environment.	The idea with this standard is to keep the technology as transparent as possible and to know its limits. For instance, oral presentations will be difficult. "Showing your work" for math problems is hard to do. Group projects, while very effective, often require detailed rubrics, instructions, and expectations.
3.5 "Self-check" or practice types of assignments are provided for quick learner feedback.	

SECTION 4:

⇒ LEARNING RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

Summary:

Instructional materials are designed to be sufficiently comprehensive to achieve announced objectives and learning outcomes. Materials, other than standard textbook resources produced by recognized publishers, are prepared by the instructor and suitable for the online environment.

Specific Review Standards:	Annotation: <i>What's the idea?</i>
4.1 The instructional materials have sufficient depth in content and are sufficiently comprehensive for the student to learn the subject.	
4.2 Resources and materials are easily accessible to and usable by the learners.	If some of the course resources, including textbooks, videos, CD-ROM, etc., are unavailable within the framework of the course website, consider how easy it is for students to access them and whether you could direct them to the appropriate information. Example: If textbooks and/or CDs are used, titles, authors, publishers, copyright dates, and information as to where copies can be obtained, are listed.
4.3 The instructional function of the course elements (learning content, instructional methods, technologies, and course materials) is evident.	How evident to the learner is the instructional function of all materials, technologies and methods used in the course? For example: a course may be richly garnished with external links to Internet resources, but students may not know whether those resources are for background information, additional personal enrichment, or whether they are necessary for an assignment.
4.4 The instructional materials, including supporting materials - such as manuals, videos, CD ROMs, and computer software – are consistent in organization, and level of detail throughout.	Online courses often use multiple types of instructional materials, each of which may be organized differently: a textbook divided into chapters, video segments ordered by topic, the course website organized in modules, and a tutorial CD-ROM with functional units such as "quizzes", "images", and "Internet Links." Consider the rhetoric of your materials and try to make it as consistent and succinct as possible.
4.5 All instructional materials are presented in a visual format appropriate to the online environment.	Web pages, pdf files and images are the most common and accessible files for the web. Powerpoint and Word files could be inappropriate for Mac users or anyone that does not have Microsoft Office.

SECTION 5:

⇒ LEARNER INTERACTION

Summary:

The effective design of instructor-student interaction, student-student interaction, meaningful learner cooperation, and student-content interaction is essential to learner motivation, intellectual commitment and personal development.

Specific Review Standards:	Annotation: <i>What's the idea?</i>
5.1 The types of activities selected are consistent with the achievement of stated learning outcomes.	"Types of activities" include everything from class discussions to practice quizzes, from tests to case simulation exercises.
5.2 The course design provides learning activities to foster instructor-student, content-student, and if appropriate, student-student interaction.	The learning activities in the course should foster at least instructor-student and content-student interaction, for example: Instructor-learner: Self-introduction; discussion postings and responses; feedback on project assignments; one-to-one e-mail communication, etc. Learner-content: essays, term papers, group projects, etc. based on readings, videos, and other course content; self-assessment exercises; group work projects, etc. Learner-learner: Self-introduction exercise; group discussion postings; group projects; peer critiques, etc.
5.3 Clear standards are set for instructor response and availability (turn-around time for email, grades posted, etc.)	The idea is that just because the "classroom" is open 24 hours a day does not mean students should expect instant feedback. Tell your students upfront that you'll only be online every other day, or not on the weekends, or that they can expect a response within 48 hours.
5.4 The requirements for course interaction are clearly articulated.	Clear articulation of requirements is particularly important when a type of interaction (e.g. participation in the Discussion Board) is not optional. What are the penalties for non-participation? Impact on grade? How many posts do you expect per week? What is the quality of discussion you want to have? Example: some instructors post an example of an exceptional discussion so their students know what is expected of them in the Discussion Board.
5.5 The course design provides a variety of opportunities for interaction between instructor and learner.	Email, Discussion Board, Telephone, Chat Rooms, Feedback on projects, and Office Hours could all be included in this.

SECTION 6:

⇒ **COURSE TECHNOLOGY**

Summary:

To enhance student learning, course technology should function well, enrich instruction and foster learner interactivity.

Specific Review Standards:	Annotation: <i>What's the idea?</i>
6.1 The selection and use of tools and media supports the learning objectives of the course and is integrated with texts and lesson assignments.	Students should know how the tools and media they are asked to use fit into their assignments and how they relate to the learning objectives. For example: A course might require viewing video materials, but it is not clear whether some of the video materials illustrate or support any learning objective.
6.2 The selection and use of tools and media enhances learner interactivity and guides the student to become a more active learner.	Include tools and media in the course that help students actively engage in the learning process rather than passively "absorb" information. Examples: automated 'self-check' exercises requiring learner response; animations, simulations, and games that require student input; software which tracks student interaction and progress; discussion board postings;

6.3 All technologies required for this course are either provided or easily downloadable.	For this standard, the term “technologies” would most likely cover a range of plug-ins such as Acrobat Reader, media players, etc. In addition, courses may require special software packages (word processing, math calculators...). The idea is to make these requirements known and as easy as possible for your students to get.
6.4 The selection and use of tools and media are compatible with existing standards of delivery modes.	As standards of delivery mode change over time (for example, from 28.8 modems to broadband), consider the least common denominator when designing web pages. A page might look great on your 21” monitor, but your students may have a 14” monitor. Additionally, video and audio often need to be compressed to make them accessible to dial-up users.
6.5 Instructions on how to access resources at a distance are sufficient and easy to understand.	Online students need to know about and be able to get to educational resources available to them by remote access to the Internet or to the local College Library. Information on these resources should be readily visible in the class and provide clear instructions on how to access them.
6.6 The course technologies take advantage of existing economies and efficiencies of delivery.	Innovative technologies appear on the market all the time. Ask a support person if you have questions about the best way to present your materials online. Example: PowerPoint presentations are traditionally contained in large-sized files that take a long time to load. Newer technology now allows the instructor/designer to zip those files for almost instant replay within existing course platforms like WebCT.

SECTION 7:
⇒ **LEARNER SUPPORT**

Summary:

Courses are effectively supported for learners through fully accessible modes of delivery, resources, and learner support.

Specific Review Standards:	Annotation: <i>What’s the idea?</i>
7.1 The course instructions articulate or link to a clear description of the technical support offered. This standard is met by including the “Student Resources” dynamic footer on the homepage.	As the instructor, you are not expected to answer technical questions. Guide your students to the resources the PCC has set up for them. The “Student Resources” section at the bottom of your homepage has the basics, but you might find others.
7.2 Course instructions articulate or link to an explanation as to how the College’s academic support system can assist the learner in effectively using the resources provided.	Online students can feel more disconnected from the campus than traditional student, so guiding them to academic support services from within the course context is beneficial to everyone.
7.3 Course instructions articulate or link to an explanation of how the College’s student support services can assist the learner in effectively using the resources provided.	Example: PCC has an Online Writing Lab which students can use to submit their papers electronically and get feedback the next day from a qualified tutor. Another Example: MyPCC
7.4 Course instructions articulate or link to tutorials and resources that answer basic questions related to research, writing, technology etc...	The idea is to bring as much of the campus resources to the distant student through the computer. Links to the Library, WebCT tutorials, MLA guidelines, etc... are all appropriate.

SECTION 8:
⇒ **ADA COMPLIANCE**

Summary:

Access to course resources is in accordance with Section 508 of the American with Disabilities Act.

Specific Review Standards:	Annotation: <i>What's the idea?</i>
8.1 ADA statement and link to Students with Disabilities Office.	The idea is to direct students who need accommodations to the resources they need.
8.2 Web pages provide equivalent alternatives to auditory and visual content.	If you use multimedia, it is a good idea to include equivalent textual representations of images, audio, animations, and video in the course website.
8.3 Web pages have links that are self-describing and meaningful.	When instructors provide links to Internet content, they should also provide useful descriptions of what students will find at those sites. Instead of " click here " or http://www.webaddress.com , try something like: Microsoft offers virus removal program is an interesting article on MSNBC's site that describes the companies plans to develop virus software for home computers.
8.4 Information conveyed on Web pages in color is also available without color.	If web pages in the course are viewed by individuals who cannot perceive color displays accurately, the information on the pages should still be readable and understandable. It might be a good idea to use bolds and italics instead of color to stress certain things. And it is usually a good idea to use a white background with dark text.