

I. Course Overview and Introduction

<i>Review Standard I.1</i>
Navigational instructions make the organization of the course easy to understand.
<p>Instructions provide a general course overview, guide the new student to explore the course website, and indicate what to do first.</p> <p>Instructors may choose to incorporate some of this information in the course syllabus. If so, students should be directed to this item at the beginning of the course. Other ways to make course navigation easy to follow might be the use of a course tour, clear statements for getting started, a "Start here" module, or an assignment like a discussion board activity or a syllabus quiz to encourage course explanation.</p>
<i>Review Standard I.2</i>
A statement that introduces the student to the course and structure of learning.
<p>The learning process is structured to include the schedule, communication modes, types of activities, and assessment. These are often found in the course syllabus and should include the course schedule, course sequencing, the variety of activities, calendar of assignments and due dates, preferred mode for communication, procedures for exam taking and assignment submissions. For a detailed outline, see "CGS Syllabus Checklist" (Appendix).</p>
<i>Review Standard I.3</i>
Netiquette expectations regarding discussion, email, and chat room communications are clearly stated.
<p>Expectations for student conduct in the online environment must be outlined clearly. Some items to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rules of conduct for participating in discussion boards or chat rooms; • Rules of conduct for email exchange; • "Speaking style" requirements – no net acronyms; • Defined spelling and grammar expectations.
<i>Review Standard I.4</i>
The introduction of the faculty is appropriate.
<p>The initial introduction creates a sense of connection between the instructor and the students. It should present the instructor as professional as well as approachable, and include more than basic essentials, such as information about your teaching philosophy, past experience with teaching online, hobbies, and a photograph. Instructors may elect to create a short introductory video in place of the more traditional text – picture format.</p>
<i>Review Standard I.5</i>
Students are required to introduce themselves to the class
<p>The student introduction helps create a supportive learning environment and a sense of community. Students are asked to introduce themselves and given guidance on where and how they should do so. Instructors might ask students to answer specific questions (such as why they are taking the course, what they expect to learn, etc.) or may choose to let the students decide. Instructors may provide an example of an introduction and/or start the process by introducing themselves. See standard 1.4. above.</p>
<i>Review Standard I.6</i>
Clearly stated technology requirements, minimum student skills, and any prerequisite knowledge in the discipline.
<p>Sufficient technology and Internet access is required for online courses. You may want to consider listing hardware requirements (microphone, speakers, or headset); operating system and software requirements (Windows 10, Office 365, Chrome, Firefox, virus protection or familiarity with firewall, pop-up blocker, or anti-spam software, etc), as well as any other information that is pertinent to your course.</p>

II. Learning Objectives

<i>Review Standard II.1</i>
The learning objectives of the course describe outcomes that are measurable.
Measurable learning objectives ensure instructions precisely describe what students are to gain from instructions, and then guide instructors to accurately assess student accomplishment. All objectives describe student performance in specific, observable terms. Examples of measurable objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Select appropriate tax strategies for different financial and personal situations.• Develop a comprehensive, individualized wellness action program focused on the sedentary lifestyle. Recommended resources: Bloom's Taxonomy ; Learning Objective Online Generator
<i>Review Standard II.2</i>
The learning objectives address content mastery, critical thinking skills, and core learning skills.
Examine the learning objectives (course and unit level) as a whole for all three types of skills. Every single objective may not contain all three components. Content mastery should be appropriate for the type and level of the course. Critical thinking skills may include the ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Distinguish between fact and opinion;• Distinguish between primary and the secondary sources;• Identify bias and stereotypes;• Evaluate information sources for point of view, accuracy, usefulness, etc.;• Recognize deceptive arguments. Core learning skills may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Written and oral communication skills;• Manipulation/organization of information in various ways or using different tools;• Understanding what one knows and how one knows it, and also does not know and what one needs to find out.
<i>Review Standard II.3</i>
The learning objectives are clearly stated and understandable to the student.
Students can easily grasp the meaning of learning objectives. Use of jargon, confusing terms, unnecessarily complex language, and puzzling syntax are avoided.
<i>Review Standard II.4</i>
Instructions to students on how to meet the learning objectives are adequate and easy to understand.
Clear and complete instructions may take various forms (i.e. narratives, bulleted lists, charts) and may appear at different levels within the course (e.g., under weekly modules).
<i>Review Standard II.5</i>
The learning objectives of the course are articulated and specified on the module/unit level.
Module or unit level objectives may be written by the instructor or come from the textbook. If no such objectives are found, the instructor must gather more information.

III. Assessment and Measurement

<i>Review Standard III.1</i>
The assessments measure learning objectives and are consistent with course activities and resources.
Assessments, learning objectives, and learning activities align in a clear and direct way. The assessment formats must provide a reasonable way to measure the stated learning objectives. Make sure to include all the objectives appropriate to the course.
Examples of inconsistency: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The objective is to be able to “write a persuasive essay” but the assessment is a multiple choice test.• 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.
Examples of objective alignment: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A problem analysis evaluates critical thinking skills.• Multiple choice quiz tests vocabulary knowledge.• A composition assesses writing skills.
<i>Review Standard III.2</i>
The grading policy is transparent and easy to understand.
Review the clarity of presentation to the student, not the simplicity or complexity of a given reading itself. A relatively complex grading system can still be unambiguous and easy to understand. For example, a list of activities, tests, etc. that will affect the students’ grade is included at the beginning of the course.
<i>You should include your policy on late submissions as well as your grading scale.</i>
<i>Review Standard III.3</i>
Assessment and measurement strategies provide feedback to the student.
Students learn more effectively if they receive frequent, meaningful, and rapid feedback. This feedback may come from the instructor directly, from assignments and assessments that have feedback built into them, or from other students.
Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Instructor participation in a discussion assignment.• Writing assignments that require submission of a draft for instructor comment and suggestion for improvement.• Self-mastery tests and quizzes that include informative feedback with every answer choice.• Interactive games and group work that have built-in feedback.
<i>Review Standard III.4</i>
The types of assessments selected and the methods used for submitting assessments are appropriate for the online learning environment.
Assessments make use of the technologies and security found in an online classroom.
Examples that meet the standards: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Submission of text or media files via Turnitin.• Exams given in a proctored testing center.

- Quizzes with time limitations and other security measures
- Multiple and authentic assignments which enable instructors to familiarize themselves with each student’s work and give a true indication of the learning objectives being met.

Examples that do not meet the standards:

- Required assessment that cannot be submitted online, such a lab practicum in a science course.
- A course in which the entire set of assessments consists in 5 multiple-choice tests taken online, with no enforcement time limit, the print function enabled, and minimum security features in place.

Review Standard III.5

‘Self-check’ or practice assignments are provided for quick student feedback.

Students have opportunities to measure their own learning progress. Use “self-check” quizzes and activities, as well as other types of practice opportunities that provide rapid feedback.

Such assignments should be voluntary or allow for multiple attempts, for example practice quizzes, games, practice written assignments, and peer reviews.

IV. Resources and Materials

Review Standard IV.1

The instructional materials support the stated learning objectives and have sufficient breadth and depth for subject learning.

Instructions should provide meaningful content in a variety of ways, including the textbook, PowerPoint presentations, websites, lecture notes, outlines, and multimedia.

Review Standard IV.2

Instructional materials represented in a format appropriate to the online environment. These materials are accessible and usable for students.

Students with required technical equipment and software can view the materials online. If some of the course resources, including textbooks, videos, etc., are unavailable within the course website, determine how students would access and easily use them.

Examples:

- Textbooks and/or OER, if used, include titles, authors, publishers, ISBN numbers, copyright dates, and information as to where copies can be obtained.
- A navigation button is devoted to “Resources” and appropriately tied in with the overall course design.
- Required software plug-ins are listed, along with instructions for obtaining and installing these plug-ins.

Some visual format problems could include:

- Text size might be too inconsistent for typical View/Test size setting.
- Large text files are presented without table of contents or unit numbering.
- Multimedia files require plug-ins students do not have.
- Science lab courses may include learning activities that are not easy to format for online reading.

<i>Review Standard IV.3</i>
The purpose of the course elements is evident (content, instructional methods, technologies, and course materials).
<p>Students can easily determine the purpose of all materials, technologies, and methods used in the course and whether materials are required or recommended. For example, a course may be full of external links to Internet resources, but it is unclear if they are for background information, personal enrichment, or required for an assignment</p> <p>Examples of good course elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links to external websites indicate the purpose of the links or are self-evident. • The functions of exercises are clearly explained or are completely self-evident.
<i>Review Standard IV.4</i>
The instructional materials, including supporting materials, are consistent in organization.
<p>Online courses should use multiple types of instructional materials appropriate for the level of the course and students must easily understand how they relate to each other. For example, a course requires students to use: a textbook divided into chapters, video segments ordered by topics, a website organized around specific skills, and a tutorial website with an opening menu of “practice quizzes,” “images,” and “audio examples.” Such diversely formatted materials must be integrated well enough to be useful to the uninitiated student.</p>
<i>Review Standard IV.5</i>
All sources and materials used are appropriately cited.
<p>Materials created by the instructor and those borrowed from other sources should be distinctly identified. Text, images, graphic materials, tables, videos, audios, websites, and other forms of multimedia are appropriately referenced according to the University of Pittsburgh’s copyright and intellectual property policy.</p>

V. Learner Interaction

<i>Review Standard V.1</i>
The learning activities promote the achievement of stated objectives and learning outcomes.
<p>Learning activities are various and include class discussions, case studies, practice quizzes, tests, group work, etc. and align with and support the learning objectives. Most of the objectives can be reasonably achieved by students completing the learning activities.</p> <p>Examples of <i>mismatches</i> between activities and objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The objective requires students to be able to deliver a persuasive speech, but the activities in the course do not include practice of that skill. • The objective is “Prepare each budget within a master budget and explain the importance in the overall budgeting process.” Students review information about this in texts, observe budgets by the instructor, and produce only one budget.
<i>Review Standard V.2</i>
Learning activities foster instructor-student, content-student, and student-student interaction.
<p>All online courses should include interaction between the instructor and the students and between the students and the content.</p> <p>The degree and type of student-to-student interaction may vary with discipline and the level of the course.</p>

<p>Examples of learning activities (blogs, wikis, discussion boards, etc.) that foster the following types of interaction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Instructor-student</i>: Self-introduction; discussion postings and responses; feedback on project assignments; evidence of one-to-one e-mail communication, chat, virtual classroom, etc. • <i>Student-content</i>: Essays, terms papers, presentations, group projects, etc. based on readings, videos, and other content; self-assessment exercises; group work products, etc. • <i>Student-student</i>: Self-introduction exercise; group discussion postings; collaborative group projects; peer critiques, blogs, wikis, student home page etc.
<i>Review Standard V.3</i>
Clear standards are set for instructor response and availability.
Information clearly indicates instructor response time for key events and interactions, including e-mail response time, when feedback will be provided, time required for grade postings, discussion postings, etc. Standards also include instructor availability (office hours) via other media (phone, in person, Zoom, Canvas Conference, Microsoft Teams), as determined by the faculty.
<i>Review Standard V.4</i>
The requirements for course interaction are clearly articulated.
A clear statement of requirements should indicate the criteria for interaction. For example, students required to participate in discussions are told how many times each week they must post original comments, responses to other's comments, what the quality of the comments must be. How comments will be evaluated, what grade credit they can expect for levels of performance, and whether the interaction is required or optional.
<i>Review Standard V.5</i>
The course design prompts the instructor to be present, active, and engaged.
Students know that the instructor is approachable and will regularly interact with them. Opportunities for interaction will vary with the discipline of the course. Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An actively used and well-organized instructor-facilitated discussion board. • Optional "electronic office hours" provided in the chat room or chat sessions on selected topics, archived/edited and posted as an FAQ for other students. • An invitation for the class to email the instructor with individual concerns. • Current and regular/ weekly announcements, either in the online classroom or via email.

VI. Course Technology

<i>Review Standard VI.1</i>
The tools and media support the course learning objectives and are integrated with texts and lesson assignments.
Tools and media used in the course support related learning objectives and are integrated with texts and lesson assignments. Students know how the tools and media support the assignments and learning objectives.
<i>Review Standard VI.2</i>
The tools and media enhance student interactivity and guide the student to become a more active learner.
Tools and media used in the course help students actively engage in the learning process, rather than passively "absorbing" information.

Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Automated “self-check” exercises requiring student response. Animations, videos, and games that require student input. Software that tracks student interaction and progress. Use of discussion tools with automated notification or ‘read/unread’ tracking.
<i>Review Standard VI.3</i>
Technologies for this course are either provided or easily downloadable.
The term “technologies” may cover a range of plug-ins, such as Acrobat Reader, media players, etc. and courses may require special software packages for math calculators, spreadsheets, etc. clear instructions tell students how to obtain needed packages. Recommended: https://www.technology.pitt.edu/software/student
<i>Review Standard VI.4</i>
Tools and media are compatible with standards of delivery modes.
Course tools, media, and delivery modes meet current standards for widespread accessibility. For example, if most students use streaming media, such a mode is acceptable. If students do not have access to this technology, it should not be used.
<i>Review Standard VI.5</i>
Clearly stated instructions on how to access resources at a distance are sufficient and easy to understand.
Students are aware and able to obtain remote access to learning resources; information on these resources must be visible with clear instructions for accessing them. Example: An explanation of how to obtain full text journal is provided in the assignment that requires their use.
<i>Review Standard VI.6</i>
Technologies take advantage of existing economies and efficiencies of delivery.
New innovative technologies appear all the time and online course technology should be current. Courses not recently developed may need to be updated. For example, using compressed files to reduce file downloading time or delivering audio files in a common file type, such as Windows Media or RealPlayer. Use of Pitt’s lecture-capture and video-streaming platform: Panopto .

VII. Learner Support

<i>Review Standard VII.1</i>
Course instructions link to a clear description of the technical support offered.
Students should have access to technical support including information about how long to log in, use the software, upload files, etc. and does not include help with course content, assignments, or support services. For example, provide a clear description of the services, including a link to a technical support website email and a phone number for a helpdesk.
<i>Review Standard VII.2</i>
Course instructions link to an explanation of Pitt’s academic and student support system and assist the student in effectively using the resources.
<i>Review Standard VII.3</i>
Course instructions link to tutorials and resources that answer questions related to research, writing, technology, etc.
Students should have access to such support services from within the course with a clear description of the tutorials available and how to get them. For example, course directs students to review the Online Student Toolkit available through the Teaching Center.

VIII. Accessibility

<i>Review Standard VIII.1</i>
The course acknowledges the importance of ADA requirements.
All online courses should direct students about how to access Pitt's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) services on campus. The course must have both a statement that tells students how to access these services and be on approved Course management System (Canvas). Consult with the University Center for Teaching and Learning (The Teaching Center) about providing an appropriate ADA statement.
<i>Review Standard VIII.2</i>
Web pages provide equivalent alternatives to auditory/visual content.
Alternative means of access to course information are provided for the vision or hearing impaired student, such as equivalent textual representations of images, audio, animations, and video in the course website. Presenting information in text format is generally acceptable with screen reader software to read text.
<i>Review Standard VIII.3</i>
Web pages have links that are self-describing and meaningful.
Instructors provide links to Internet content with useful descriptions of what students will find at those sites, enabling the student to use screen reader software to understand links. Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• All file names and web hyperlinks have meaningful names. For instance, the link to take a quiz should say "Take Quiz 1" not "Click Here."• Icons used as links should also have HTML tags or an accompanying text link.
<i>Review Standard VIII.4</i>
The course demonstrates sensitivity to readability issues
The course uses font, color, and spacing to aid readability and minimize distractions. Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Formatting such as bold or italics in addition to color coding text.• Web page provided in an alternate, non-color-coded format.• Formatting and color coding are used to communicate key points, group terms, show relevant relationships, etc.