Guidelines for Quality Online Courses

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The following guidelines were synthesized from a variety of sources including the Quality Course Teaching & Instructional Practice scorecard, the SUNY Online Course Quality Review Rubric, the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC) guidelines, and the Quality Matters Higher Education Rubric (6th Edition). This synthesis was intended to reduce the complexity of the existing rubrics by focusing on the most pervasive aspects with application to the specific technologies and processes at UWSP. The guidelines are intended to be general enough to apply to all disciplines. It is ideal to work with an Instructional Designer in CITL who can assist in implementing and interpreting these guidelines for your specific course and teaching style.

- The course includes a welcome and course information module to orient students.
- Assignments are due at least once a week in semester-long courses or every few days in shorter classes.
  - Providing frequent due dates helps students stay on track and avoid falling too far behind. If students are working on larger projects, the assignment may simply be a progress report. During the pandemic in particular, forgiving late policies are recommended.
- Rubrics and/or grading criteria are provided to help students understand assignment expectations. If additional explanation of an assignment would occur in a face-to-face class, consider creating a video with this elaboration for online students.
- The course includes a combination of content types: textbook, websites, videos, pdfs, etc. rather than focusing exclusively on the textbook.
  - It is ideal for the instructor to create some videos, but the key is for the instructor's "voice" to be evident throughout the course, whether through written documents or videos. In other words, the instructor provides information to supplement or elaborate on readings and online resources and share their expertise.
  - Instructor-created videos are less than 15 minutes long. A traditional face-to-face class may consist of the same amount of lecture content, but studies consistently find that breaking it down into shorter chunks with specific topics aids in learning and also produces a smaller, more manageable video file for the instructor to work with.
- There is a comparable level of rigor and time commitment (for both students and the instructor) between the online and face-to-face versions of the course.
- There are opportunities for student-student interaction in the course, usually in discussions. Student-student interaction can reduce isolation and peer learning has many benefits.

- o *Required* synchronous (live web conferencing/Zoom) activities are discouraged to provide flexibility, unless the course is designated as virtual classroom with set meeting times.
- Content and activities or assignments align with learning outcomes/objectives.
- Optional/supplemental content is indicated as such if it is not needed to accomplish a learning objective.
- There are varied assignment types, both formative and summative: discussions, quizzes, papers, projects, etc.
- Instructors use announcements or send emails to students with updates, reminders, etc regularly and give timely feedback to students. Please see the student engagement document created by a CITL workgroup for more information on student engagement.

Technological:

- The course is in Canvas.
- Canvas assignments, quizzes, and discussions have due dates set to appear in the student calendar.
- Course navigation and organization is consistent and clear. If you'd like advice on the clarity of your course, Instructional Designers are helpful to provide an outside perspective.
- Instructor-created videos are in Kaltura and the machine captions are turned on. Ideally, these automatic captions are fixed for accuracy whenever possible, which is required when a student requests captioning for a disability. Minimally, having instructor-created videos in Kaltura ensures that third-party captioning can be put in place easily for students who need captioning as an accommodation. For assistance with Kaltura, contact CITL.