

Online Course Peer Mentor Form

The goal of the review is to give feedback to the course developer that would enable them to improve the design and presentation of their classroom prior to first offering.

I. Course Checklist

A Syllabus is available and includes: (check areas that are present with a X)

Instructor Bio	
Text/Resource Information	
Hardware/Software Requirements and Information	
Technical Assistance Protocol & Resources	
Student Learning Outcomes	
Grading Criteria/Grading Scale	
Student Resources for Online Help	
Contact information/Office Hours	
Turn-around Time for Communication/Feedback on (assignments, projects, discussions)	
Instructor Policies and Procedures	
Student Services Information Available (DSPS, AAC, Library, ITC, Counseling, Health, Help Desk)	
Assignment Overview and Schedule	

II. Required Online Course Components: (check areas with a X)

Video Welcome & Online Course Orientation	
A “Start Here First” Learning Module	
Lesson Plan/Overview for each Learning Module	
Course organized in learning modules that include rubrics, content, assessments, assignments, communication tools	
Evidence of Accessibility & Learning Style Techniques Present (alt tags on images, multiple file formats, captioning, transcripts)	
Evidence of Community Building with Multiple Communication Tools	

The 7 Principals of Quality Matters Rubrics

Principle 1: Good practice encourages contact between students and faculty.

Frequent and timely student-faculty contact is the most important factor in student motivation and involvement, particularly in a distance education environment. Evidence of faculty concern helps students get through challenging situations and inspires them to persevere. Knowing a few faculty members well enhances students' intellectual commitment and encourages them to think about their own values and future plans.

Examples of evidence to look for:

- A "welcome message" is provided at the beginning of the course that encourages student-to-instructor contact for course-related discussions or concerns.
- The instructor encourages and fosters a healthy exchange of ideas and sharing of experiences among course participants.
- The instructor initiates contact with, or respond to, students on a regular basis in order to establish a consistent online presence in the course (and prior notice is given to students in the event that the instructor will be unavailable for more than a few days, such as might be the case during professional travel).
- A prominent announcement area is used to communicate important up-to-date course information to students, such as reminders of impending assignment due dates, curriculum changes, scheduled absences, etc.
- The instructor holds regular office hours, and by appointment, that are mediated by technology (e.g., the telephone, chat areas, Adobe Connect Pro) to accommodate distance students.
- Student inquiries are responded in a timely manner.
- The instructor provides students with interaction space for study groups, "hall way conversations," etc.

Where to look:

- Discussion forums
- Email messages
- Posted announcements
- Course Syllabus
- Chat & Virtual Rooms

Resources:

- "Using online icebreakers to promote student/teacher interaction" -

<http://www.southalabama.edu/oll/jobaidfall03/Icebreakers%20Online/icebreakerjobaid.htm>

Principle 2: Good practice develops reciprocity and cooperation among students.

Learning is enhanced when it is more like a team effort than a solo race. Good learning, like good work, is collaborative and social, not competitive and isolated. Working with others often increases involvement in learning. Sharing one's own ideas and responding to others' reactions sharpens thinking and deepens understanding.

Examples of evidence to look for:

- Regular opportunities for students to engage in one or more of the following activities:
 - Formal and/or informal discussions of course topics
 - Collaborative course assignments
 - Study groups
- A "meet one another" activity at the beginning of the course so students can begin to make personal connections.
- Encouragement to students to strengthen their online presence in the course by sharing links to their e-portfolio, personal Web site, and/or posting a photo of themselves to the class Web space.
- Group assignments that follow the basic tenants of cooperative learning (see Resources, below) in order to avoid the common pitfalls of "group work."
- An explanation of the criteria for "good" discussion participation.
- Modeling of good discussion participation practices by the instructor.
- Discussion prompts that help to guide and elicit student participation in class discussion activities.
- Instructor *facilitation* of class discussions by encouraging, probing, questioning, summarizing, etc.
- Student interaction space(s) for study groups, "hall way conversations," etc.

Where to look:

- Instructional materials / Assignment directions
- Discussion forums
- E-mail messages
- Course syllabus
- Chat space

Resources:

- "Strategies to Promote Online Discussion" - <http://members.shaw.ca/mdde615/howcommunicate.htm>
- "Ice-breakers" - http://www.ion.uillinois.edu/resources/pointersclickers/2002_01/index.asp
- "Leading and Facilitating Discussion" - <http://www.princeton.edu/mcgraw/library/sat-tipsheets/facilitating-discussion/>

Principle 3: Good practice encourages active learning.

Active learning methods engage students in the learning process by encouraging them to discover, process, and apply information. Empirical support for the positive impact of active learning on student achievement is extensive.

Examples of evidence to look for:

- Student activities that involve one or more of the following:
 - Active use of writing, speaking, and other forms of self-expression
 - Opportunity for information gathering, synthesis, and analysis in solving problems (including the use of library, electronic/computer and other resources, and quantitative reasoning and interpretation, as applicable)
 - Engagement in collaborative learning activities
 - Application of intercultural and international competence
 - Dialogue pertaining to social behavior, community, and scholarly conduct
 - For General Education courses, three or more of these activities are integrated into courses offered in the knowledge domains (<http://www.psu.edu/ufs/geic/framework.html>):
- Opportunities for students to “customize” their learning by tailoring assignments to their personal and professional interests and needs.
- Examples of student work where they:
 - Think, talk, or write about their learning
 - Reflect, relate, organize, apply, synthesize, or evaluate information
 - Perform research, lab or studio work, or physical activities
 - Participate in, design, or develop educational games and simulations

Where to look:

- Course syllabus
- Instructional materials
- Assignment Areas
- e-Portfolios
- Discussion forums

Resources:

• “How Can Teachers Promote Learning and Thinking?” -

<http://www.pgcps.pg.k12.md.us/~elc/theory9.html>

• “Inquiry-based Learning” - <http://www.schreyerinstitution.psu.edu/pdf/IBL.pdf>

Principle 4: Good practice gives prompt feedback.

Instructors help students frequently assess their knowledge and competence and provide them with opportunities to perform, receive meaningful suggestions, and reflect on their learning.

Examples of evidence to look for:

- Information about course feedback methods and standards on the course syllabus.
- Option (or requirement) for students to submit drafts of assignments for instructor feedback.
- Meaningful feedback on student assignments that is provided within a publicized, and reasonable, time frame.
- Assignment feedback that is clear, positive, specific, and focused on observable behavior that can be changed.
- Clearly communicated course and individual assignment grading criteria.
- Up-to-date, student-accessible course gradebook.
- An open discussion forum where students can ask questions, and receive instructor feedback, about course content and activities.
- Student surveys that provide the instructor with feedback for course improvement.
- Examples of student work that demonstrate advancement toward learning goals.

Where to look:

- Course syllabus
- Instructional materials / Assignment directions
- Assignment areas and e-portfolios
- Course gradebook
- Discussion forums
- Survey instruments

Resources:

- TLT Ideas for Giving Prompt, Better Feedback to Students - http://www.tltgroup.org/SEVEN/4_Feedback.htm
- Providing Feedback - <http://www.netc.org/focus/strategies/prov.php>
- Collecting Feedback That Improves Teaching and Learning - <http://www.schreyerinstitute.psu.edu/Tools/MidsemesterFeedback>

Principle 5: Good practice emphasizes time on task.

The frequency and duration of study, as well as effective time management skills, are critical for students and professionals alike. Students need help in learning to manage and prioritize their study time.

Examples of evidence to look for:

- A published course schedule that outlines topics to be covered and assignment due dates so students can plan their workload accordingly.
- Information on the course syllabus that provides an estimate of the amount of time students should spend on the course (e.g., “On average, most students spend eight hours per week working on course assignments. Your workload may be more or less depending on your prior experience with computing and the Web in general, and with this subject in particular.”)
- Time-to-completion information on course assignments (e.g., “This assignment should take you approximately 2 hours to complete.”)
- Course-specific study tips that provide students with strategies for utilizing their time well.
- Assignment feedback that provides students with information on where to focus their studies.
- Assignment due dates and timeframes that take into account the nature of the target audience. For example, a course targeted to working adult professionals might incorporate a weekend into an assignment timeframe.
- Course statistics that demonstrate that time-to-completion and weekly time-on-task estimates are on target.

Where to look:

- Course syllabus
- Instructional materials / Assignment directions
- Assignment areas and e-portfolios

Resources:

- iStudy Module (for students) on Time Management:

<http://blog.aeseducation.com/2010/10/building-time-management-skills-with-a-penn-state-module/>

Principle 6: Good practice communicates high expectations.

As the saying goes, “if you don’t know where you are going, how will you know when you get there?” Effective instructors have high, but reasonable, expectations for their students. They clearly communicate those expectations and provide support to their students in their efforts to meet those expectations.

Examples of evidence to look for:

- Explicit communication of the skills and knowledge every student needs to have in order to be successful in the course.
- Explanation of course learning goals and how assignments are designed to help students achieve those goals.
- Frequent feedback provided to students through written explanations and detailed feedback on assignments.
- Motivation and encouragement that inspires students to move past the easy answers to more complex solutions.
- Routine use of critical and probing questions when communicating with students about course assignments and activities.
- Examples and non-examples of high quality work, along with a discussion of the differences between these.
- Examples of student work that demonstrate advancement toward learning goals.

Where to look:

- Course syllabus
- Instructional materials / Assignment directions
- Assignment areas and e-portfolios

Resources:

- “Student Learning Goals and Outcomes” -

<http://www.schreyerinstitution.psu.edu/Tools/ProgramAssessment/MeasurableOutcomes/>

Principle 7: Good practice respects diverse talents and ways of learning.

People bring different talents and styles of learning to the learning environment. Some bring a wealth of relevant experience to a course, while others may new to the topic at hand. Likewise, students who are strong in a discussion situation may be less adept at lab or studio work. Students need the opportunity to demonstrate their talents and to “personalize” their learning so that it is relevant to them. It is also important to give students opportunities to learn in ways that may be less comfortable in order to improve their learning skills.

Examples of evidence to look for:

- Use of a variety of assessment tools that gauge student progress.
- Alternative assignment options that allow students to demonstrate their progress in a manner that is best conducive to their talents. For example, a podcast might be allowed as learning evidence instead of a written paper.
- Supplemental online materials are provided to students who lack prerequisite knowledge or who would benefit from having content presented in an alternative manner.
- Timely, corrective feedback for online activities.
- A positive online climate where students are encouraged to seek assistance with course content and learning activities if needed.
- A policy for accommodations that is stated on the course syllabus.
- Accommodations are proactively offered for students with disabilities.

Where to look:

- Course syllabus
- Instructional materials / Assignment directions
- Assignment areas and e-portfolios
- Discussion forums

Resources:

• “Learning effectively by understanding your learning preferences” –

<http://www.mindtools.com/mnemlsty.html>

• “Classroom assessment techniques” - <http://www.ntlf.com/html/lib/bib/assess.htm>

• Accessibility in course design forum on PSU Learning Design Community Hub -

<http://ets.tlt.psu.edu/learningdesign/forum/4>

(The form is used for purposes of peer mentor support only)

III. Course Criteria

Please rate your peer on the following criteria using the following scale:

4 = Exceptional expectations; exceeds expectations.

*** Note: Those elements checked as “Exceptional” require comments.**

3 = Consistently meets the expectations and at times exceeds expectations.

2= Consistently meets expectations.

1 = Needs Improvement

*** Note: Those elements checked as “Needs Improvement” require comments.**

Upon entrance into the online class the point of entry and course organization makes it clear where to start and how to access the learning materials for time on task.					
1. Navigation & Time on Task Organization	4	3	2	1	Comments
Navigational instructions make the organization of the course easy to follow.					
Provides orientation to course and its structure					
Clearly organizes and explains online assignments and related due dates					
Uses modules to organize course content					
Clearly presents expectations and grading policies					
The course design exemplifies the instructor has addressed multiple learning styles and student learning outcomes.					
2. Course Design	4	3	2	1	Comments
Online course design clearly articulates course policies and procedures					
Learning Modules clearly state learning goals					
The course uses a variety of online tools to facilitate student comprehension and engagement					
Online course content addresses different learning styles					

Online course design describes available technical support					
Communicates a sense of enthusiasm and excitement					
There is strong evidence of regular and effective communication and opportunity for student's participation is visible throughout the course.					
3. Communication & Interaction	4	3	2	1	Comments
Indicates their planned timeline for responding to emails within 72 hours or less					
Encourages mutual respect among students					
Encourages students to interact with one another and with the instructor					
Initial course documents outlines and encourages students to interact with one another and with the instructor					
Initial course documents / assignments begin to create a sense of community in the online course					
The course content engages students in active learning and encourages opportunities to master the depth of knowledge required.					
4. Content	4	3	2	1	Comments
Demonstrates appropriate depth of knowledge of course subject					
Content is appropriate to course level					
Explains difficult terms, concepts or problems in more than one way					
Relates assignments to course content					
Includes examples relevant to student experiences and course content					
Provides opportunities for students to engage in active learning (i.e., peer review, interactive simulations, Web research, experience-based projects, and multimedia presentations)					

What do you believe the instructor has done especially well in designing this course?

What might the instructor do to enhance the course?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Signature:_____ **Date:**_____