Summary of Standards and Processes for Online Course Review

Throughout the 2020 spring semester, the Standards and Processes sub-group of the Online Quality Committee met, produced, revised, and finalized multiple documents to ensure Arkansas Tech University remains in compliance with not only the Higher Learning Commission, but also the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements.

An outline (overview) is below:

First, ATU now has a "Roadmap to Online Review." This document will aid departments and faculty with holding inter-departmental and colleague reviews of all online courses. This was left broad, as we want to ensure departments have the final decision to choose the review route to take. In essence, they can adapt the document to best suit their academic programs. They can also choose to follow the Quality Matters standards, Online Learning Consortium's rubric, and more. ATU is a member of many, quality, online learning/education sectors to assist this aspect. The step-by-step roadmap includes the following content sections (with bulleted examples): Course Overview and Information, Learning Objectives and Course Quality, Assessment, Instructional Materials and Activities, Student Interaction, Student Support, Instructional Technology, and Accessibility and Ease of Use.

Second, to aid in "scoring" ATU's online courses, the sub-group created a rubric. The rubric allows for a scoring of "3-Exceeds Requirements, 2–Meets Requirements, 1–Does Not Meet Requirements." The goal, with departmental and colleague review, is to provide feedback to the faculty member so they can edit or make additions in course areas that may fall into a "one" category. Each area of the score card follows the same content section titles as noted above for the "Roadmap to Online Review." The cohesion between the documents, and ease of use, was critical.

In addition, a document titled "Online Course Training and Review" was created to explain the recommendations of the sub-group/Online Quality Committee to departments. It includes the steps and reasoning behind the finalization of the documents. This is done to aid ATU in maintaining quality online instruction, and we are asking courses meet quality and universal design standards (including ADA requirements). The roadmap, as well as the scoring/review, are outlined in this document and included are recommendations for faculty to utilize University resources (i.e., the Instructional Design team, Ross Pendergraft Library, and much more). "Online Course Training and Review" also asks faculty to familiarize themselves with Blackboard Learn (ATU's LMS). For additional training, the Transition to Teaching Online (T2TOL) course is available, as well as training sessions with the Course Management Systems team, and Blackboard Learn also has a YouTube channel that is very informative.

Finally, "Syllabus Elements for Online Courses" was created. Standard information a faculty member should list in their syllabus, as well as recommendations on what should be included in the syllabus for technical resources, and policy resources, are included.

Roadmap to Online Review
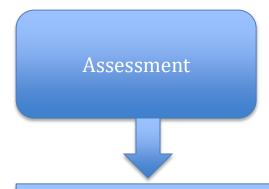
Course Overview and Information

Provide:
- Course and instructor introductions
- Printable syllabus that has approved elements
- Instructions about navigation of instructional materials
- Purpose & structure of course and required prerequisites
- Links to relevant ATU academic and other relevant policies
- Notification of receipt of communications policy

Learning Objectives and Course Quality

Provide:
- Measurable and clear learning outcomes, suited to course level
- Performance measures and activities relevant to course materials
- Roadmap for progress through course
- Course construction linked to progressive, intellectual development
- Professional Look, free of distracting errors
- Incorporation of approved syllabus elements

Roadmap to Online Review

Assessment

Provide:
- Assessments linked to measurable student learning outcomes
- Outcomes aligned with course/unit objectives
- Assessments appropriate for course objectives
- Feedback mechanisms defined and clearly explained
- Timelines provided for grading turnaround
- Methods for determining content mastery described

Instructional Materials and Activities

Provide:
- Instructional materials and activities clearly mapped or outlined
- Materials and activities linked to learning objectives
- Materials and activities sequenced
- Academic integrity explained and promoted
- Measures explained that prevent academic dishonesty
- Fair Use and Copyright defined and linked to institutional policies provided; included course materials follow Fair Use practices

Roadmap to Online Review

Student Interactions

Provide:
- Course activities promote active learning
- Where appropriate, course activities include opportunities for student-to student and faculty-to-student interaction
- Where appropriate, course activities include opportunities for collaboration among students and collaborative assignments
- Where possible, course activities build sense of community and open communication

Student Supports

Provide:
- Instructions provided that outline and explain available support systems with links to relevant student resources (OIS, Help Desk, Apex Tutoring, Disability Services, other relevant academic supports and student services)
- Link given for ATU's Student Services, Counseling and are easily located within the course and/or on the course syllabus
- Information on technology requirements explained (e.g. webcam, MyMathLab, Labster)
- Course overview provided; all assignments properly labeled,

Roadmap to Online Review

Instructional Technology

Provide:
- Technology tools included that enhance student engagement and active learning
- Linkages provided between course tools and course/unit learning objectives
- Course design is 508 compliant
- Information given on external resources (publisher assets, software, etc.)
- Where appropriate, multi-modal strategies with the use of various technologies
- Where appropriate, necessary technical skills explained that are necessary for participation in learning activities
- Illustrations of connection between course tools and course/unit objectives

Accessibility and Ease of Use

Provide:
- Accessibility through Blackboard Ally of closed captioning of audio/video files
- Formatting of files that enhances readability
- Documents that are accessible
- Connections to electronic resources, reserves, and publisher assets
- Hyperlinks and alt tags are for non-textual elements
- Logical reading order, with styles and descriptive headings, for easier navigation

Arkansas Tech University
Rubric
Scoring Online Courses

Faculty Name: _____

Semester: _____

Course Name, Number, Title: _____

Course Description: _____

Course Objectives & Topics: _____

Scoring:
3—Exceeds Requirements

2—Meets Requirements

1—Does Not Meet Requirements

1. Course Overview and Information	Description	Score
1.1 Orientation/Overview of Overall Course	Provides clear introduction to course/class; welcome message included	
1.2 Purpose and Structure of Course	Course organization is apparent; indication of required prerequisites for course and inclusion of all required syllabus elements	
1.3 Relevant Course Links	Instructor contact information is provided. Links to relevant ATU course and campus policies, such as plagiarism, computer use, and grievances	
1.4 Instructor Availability	Virtual office hours are posted; Instructor contact information is provided. Frequency of communication provided, including timeline for returning email, grade assignments, and other course feedback. Notification of receipt of student communication should occur within 24 hours but not more than 48.	
1.5 Participation Requirements	Required participation is explained.	

1.6 Communication	Guidelines for proper etiquette (netiquette) are explained. Expectations are announced for instructor response to student communications.	
2. Learning Objectives and Course Quality		
2.1 Course and Unit Objectives	Course and Unit Objectives have measurable outcomes. course/unit learning objectives may require alignment with external accreditors such as AACSB, ACEN, CACREP, ABET, or NASM.	
2.2 Course Map	Course map linking objectives to measures and activities for course; course tutorials; linkage to general education and major/program learning objectives also required.	
2.3 Professionalism	Course has been carefully edited; course shell is free of grammatical and spelling errors.	
2.4 Intellectual Quality	Course constructed for progressive intellectual development (Bloom's Taxonomy), which is a appropriate to the level of course (e.g. freshman, sophomore, junior, senior).	
3. Assessment		
3.1 Assessments	Assessments have measurable student learning outcomes (SLOs) aligned with course/unit objectives.	
3.2 Grading Policy; assignment rubrics	Explanation of grading policy; inclusion of assignment rubrics; timelines for grading turnaround; performance criteria for assignments.	
3.3 Mastery of Content	Description of methods that assess learners' mastery of material. Assessments are appropriate for the objectives being assessed (e.g. using multiple-choice exams to measure ability to create an essay).	
3.4 Feedback	Overview of learners' opportunity to review performance and assess their own learning (pre-tests, automated self-tests, reflective	

	assignments); clear indication of required responses and indication of lead time for completion and possible accommodation.	
4. Instructional Materials & Activities		
4.1 Materials	Clear mapping of instructional materials and activities to learning objectives; highlighting direction connection to learning and course sequencing	
4.2 Course Integrity	Academic integrity policy included and explained; procedure for appeals and grievances; measures are taken to prevent cheating	
4.3 Copyright Use	ATU requires that instructional materials be used and maintained in accordance with Fair Use and Copyright guidelines.	
5. Student Interactions		
5.1 Learning Activities	Description of learning activities that promote student interaction and active learning; Expectations of learning interaction clearly explained	
5.2 Student-to-Student Interaction	Resources or activities intended to build sense of community, support open communication, and establish trust (e.g. Icebreaker, Meet Your Classmates, Ask a Question discussion forums); learning communities	
5.3 Collaboration	Opportunities for learner interaction and constructive collaboration; learners share resources and sources of information; inclusion of collaborative assignments where appropriate to the course.	
6. Student Supports		
6.1 Description of Student Resources	Instructions and Links to Relevant student resources (OIS, Help Desk, Apex tutoring, Disability Services, MyMathLab, other academic	

	supports and student services); provision for alternative resources	
6.2 Student Assistance	Updates for course assignments and schedule clearly indicated on course page of the Blackboard shell, which might include deadline changes, syllabus adjustments, or additional assignments	
6.3 Blackboard	Introductory overview video of course provided; tutorial materials included and easy to locate; gradebook up to date with properly labeled assignments; all referenced material in Blackboard properly cited and linked	
7. Instructional Technology		
7.1 Course Technology	Description of technical skills required for success in course; requisite skills needed to navigate websites, use software and hardware	
7.2 Enhanced Learning	Clear indication of the relationship between course technologies, student engagement, and active learning	
7.3 Technological Connections	Illustrations available of connection between course tools and course/unit objectives	
7.4 Multimodality	A variety of strategies and learning modes used to deliver course content	
8. Accessibility and Ease of Use		
8.1 Course Design	By applying the principles of Universal Design for Learning, course is designed to promote accessibility for all learners, including--but not necessarily limited to: closed captioning, text formatting that enhances readability (simple fonts; avoiding blinking/flashing text; pre-defined slide layout with unique slide titles; simple, non-automatic transitions between slides, etc.).	
8.2 Accessibility of External Resources	Connections to electronic resources, reserves, publisher assets, software	

8.3 Currency	Links to online activities, assignment dropboxes, discussion posts, all active; URLs contain no broken links; Hyperlinks are descriptive (avoid using "click here"); "Alt" tags are provided for every non-text element.	
8.4 Accessible Documents	Any posted PDFs are accessible to screen-readers; whenever possible, content is created directly in Blackboard (using "Build Content/Item") rather than as attached files, particularly for content of one paragraph or less. Content that requires scrolling may necessitate attachment.	
8.5 Accessibility of Embedded Files	Attached files have been carefully checked for the following "typical" problem areas: • Images have alt-tags • PDFs are accessible and properly tagged • Word documents use styles/headings • Videos have closed-captioning • PowerPoint presentations use standard format (titles/body text); slides with voiceover should be evaluated through the use of Blackboard Ally.	

EVALUATION SUMMARY

Scoring Summary:

Course Strengths:

Possible Modification and Updates:

Timeline for Implementation of Revisions:

Online Course Training and Review

In an effort to maintain quality instruction, notably in online courses, newly developed or significantly redesigned courses will be required to meet course quality and universal design standards. These would include considerations of accessibility, such as with ADA requirements. This process also satisfies HLC requirements for reviewing and assessing the learning outcomes and performance measures for online courses.

1. As part of a periodic review of all courses within a program, department, or College, faculty can make use of the described online course review in order to satisfy approved standards for their disciplines and fields. As with face-to-face courses, faculty members should work with their department heads on a review process. The department head and faculty member should reach an agreement about how to address any areas of concern within the course and may include additional review including peer review or review by a designated departmental committee. Oversight of online courses is local, by department and College.

2. There are several documents available to assist faculty members with constructing their online courses, including the Requirement Syllabus Elements for Online Courses, the Roadmap for Learning Outcomes for Online Courses, and a Rubric for evaluating the design of online courses. These materials align with Quality Matters (QM) standards and are compliant with HLC requirements. Departments and Colleges may adapt these documents to suit their academic programs.

3. Faculty may wish to collaborate with the University's comprehensive resources, including the Instructional Design team, the Office of Information Systems, the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, and/or the Ross Pendergraft Library and Technology Center. These resources support and facilitate virtual course delivery. Faculty should take the first course in a sequence of online trainings, entitled the "Training to Teach Online" or T2TOL. This introductory course takes, on average, 2.5 hours to complete and is recommended by the Online Quality Committee for 100% of faculty and adjuncts to complete before instruction of any online course.

5. Faculty members teaching online courses will want to familiarize themselves with Blackboard Learn, ATU's Learning Management System (LMS) for online delivery of course materials. It is fully integrated with the student information system, Banner. All courses are already set up for faculty and enrolled students; they are ready for instructors to begin delivering content through Blackboard Learn. Instructors who are not already familiar with Blackboard Learn may need additional training to help them deliver online content effectively, other than the T2TOL. Training sessions with the Course Management Systems team are available, and Blackboard's YouTube channel offers many short videos that cover course design, communication, collaboration, and assessment.

Syllabus Elements for Online Courses

*Standard Information
1. Course Number and Prefix Code (e.g. HIST 1503)
2. Course Title
3. Semester/Session
4. Instructor
5. Office Hours and Contact Information
6. Catalog Description
7. Required Texts
8. Optional Texts (supplemental reading list)
9. Justification/Rationale for course
10. Course Content and Semester Assignments (e.g. outline of materials)
11. Grading Policies
12. Alignment with Gen Ed Objectives
13. Course- and Program-Learning Goals with means of assessment

Technical Resources
1. Accessible as Word or PDF document
2. Appearance on homepage of course shell
3. Available in Blackboard course shell
4. Listing of technology requirements (e.g. webcam, MyMathLab)
5. Instructions for access and use
6. Directions on how and where to submit assignments
7. Policy on methods of acceptable communication with instructor
8. Schedule on homepage that includes due dates for assignments and activities
9. Listing of available online resources
10. Statement on ADA Compliance (508)
11. Statement on Title IX Compliance
12. Statement of Privacy and Accessibility Policies

Policy Resources
1. Other course and University policies regarding academic integrity (plagiarism), grievances, and accommodations. Contact information for Disability Services should be provided.
2. Participation Requirements
3. Proper Communication (Netiquette)
4. Team Tasks should be clearly defined; methods to form teams announced; expectations of teams outlined
5. Identified Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) [not the same as course objectives]
6. Feedback mechanisms and timelines for grading turnaround are provided
7. Assignments clearly delineate progression of learning (Bloom's Taxonomy)

- Highlighted elements already listed in the Faculty Handbook are the "minimum" requirements for both face-to-face and electronic delivery. Other elements listed are highly recommended for syllabus inclusion.