Quality Rubric with Annotations

Quality Section 1: Course Introduction

Standard 1-1

Course includes clear information on how to get started.

The course should contain clear and prominent directions on how to get started. In Blackboard, creating a "Welcome" or "Start Here" folder at the top of the coursework list can accomplish this. This folder should contain instructions for course navigation and any information on coursework required for Financial Aid attendance verification.

Standard 1-2

Course includes an introduction that gives an overview of the purpose and format of the course.

The course provides clear and detailed information on the purpose of the course, as well as the format (online, blended, F2F) and structure of the course. A document or folder can be created in Blackboard to provide learners with a course calendar, promote reading of the syllabus, and possibly provide a course tour using visual aids (screenshots, videos). It is important to reiterate the format of the course, especially for online and hybrid offerings.

Standard 1-3

Course includes a printable syllabus formatted in the template provided by Teaching and Learning

Teaching and Learning has provided a template for all faculty to use, regardless of modality. This template should be used as it contains editable sections for instructor and class policies, such as attendance and grading as well as college policies that should remain unaltered. This template should be completed and posted in a prominent location within your online course, such as your welcome folder, or as a document at the top of the coursework list.

Quality Section 2 - Learning Objectives

Standard 2-1
Student Learning Outcomes are present in the course.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) will provide the learner with information on what knowledge and skills they will attain upon successful completion of the course. These outcomes are typically mandated by the institution and approved through the Curriculum Committee. They should be located at the beginning of the course (in a welcome folder or syllabus) and will align with activities and assessments.

Standard 2-2
Unit-level learning objectives or goals are measurable.

Unit-level learning objectives will provide the learner with information on what knowledge and skills they will attain upon successful completion of a particular unit or chapter. These objectives (sometimes referred to as goals) will be written so that they are measurable by some means of assessment (tests, assignments, etc...). A measurable objective will include an action verb that will be used to demonstrate the format or type of assessment required. For example:

A measurable objective would be *"At the end of this course the student will be able to **DEMONSTRATE** the correct use of punctuation."*

A non-measurable objective would be *"At the end of this course the student will be able to **UNDERSTAND** the correct use of punctuation."*

In the first example, the use of the verb **DEMONSTRATE** could be measured by asking the students to write a sentence that uses correct punctuation. In the second example, the verb **UNDERSTAND** is too vague to be measured.

Standard 2-3
Learning objectives or goals are clear and concise.

Both course-level and unit-level objectives will be clear and free from technical jargon or language, unless it is unavoidable. They should be written from the learner's perspective so that they are understandable and kept as brief as possible.

Standard 2-4
Learning objectives or goals are appropriate for the subject matter.

Both course-level and unit-level objectives will reflect the subject matter, as well as the level of the course. For example, even though the American History course may require essays or research papers, an objective about grammar and punctuation would be out of place, and not in line with course material.

Also, the level of the objective should match the level of the course. Lower level courses will have more fundamental objectives, while higher level courses will use higher order

or critical thinking objectives. A good resource to determine appropriate level of an objective would be [Bloom's Taxonomy](#).

Quality Section 3 – Assessments

Standard 3-1

Assessments are designed to align with activities and learning objectives or goals.

As stated in Quality Section 2, objectives will be written using action verbs that are measurable. Course assessments must align with those objectives by providing appropriate means of measuring the objectives based on the verbs used. For example, if an objective indicates a student will DESCRIBE something, that would most likely be done with an essay or some form of written assessment, and NOT with a multiple choice question.

Assessments will also align with the specific skill or knowledge portrayed in the objective. An example of this is, an objective states a student will be able to describe the difference between different business models, an assessment must be included which asks them to do so.

Standard 3-2

A clearly written grading policy is presented at the outset of the course.

A course grading policy should be present, preferably in the syllabus, at the beginning of the course. The policy should contain a list of assignments and assessments that will be graded, how each will be weighted in a final grade, and a scale of letter grades and what percentage or number of points will be required to reach each level. It should also contain policies on late assignments, make-up work, and any extra credit available.

Standard 3-3

Specific information is provided for evaluation of learner assignments and assessments.

For each type of assignment or assessment, the instructor should provide detailed information on how they will evaluate or grade the work. Letting the students know up front what will be expected or required for successful assignment completion will give the students proper guidelines as to how to proceed with the assignment. Rubrics are an excellent tool for providing specific requirements and criteria for how the assignment or assessment will be graded.

Quality Section 4 - Instructional Materials

Standard 4-1

All course instructional content is designed to align with associated unit level objectives or goals.

Within the course, all assignments and materials should, in some way, be pertinent and tied to course or unit objectives. Extraneous materials that do not help learners achieve stated objectives can cause confusion and distract learners from what they should be focused on.

Standard 4-2

Any optional activities are clearly differentiated from mandatory activities.

At times, it may be beneficial to include materials in a course that, while they increase the learners skills or knowledge, are designated as "optional" and are not required to be successful in the course. In such cases, the optional materials should be labeled clearly as such to avoid any confusion with other required activities or materials. Examples of this would be additional reading materials that may promote, or have some connection with current content.

Quality Section 5 - Learning Activities and Interaction

Standard 5-1

Learning activities are designed to align with objectives or goals.

Learning activities are the link between objectives and assessments. They should be designed to allow the learner to achieve the objectives stated, and provide the knowledge or skills needed to pass associated assessments.

Standard 5-2

Course activities are designed to promote learning objectives and enhance critical thinking skills.

Activities should include items that promote critical thinking skills, such as case studies, or scenario type assignments where the learner must develop a conclusion through applying thinking and reasoning.

Standard 5-3

Course includes activities that promote engagement and interaction among learners within the course.

Online activities should be present that encourage student interaction. Studies have shown that students who interact and feel engaged in online courses are generally more successful. Sharing ideas and comments on content among students can build a sense of community as well as responsibility on the part of the learner. Interaction can be in

the form of discussion boards, or group work. The activities provided must also engage the students by using a variety of media or technology.

Standard 5-4

Course includes methods for instructor initiated interaction.

Instructors are required to provide and initiate regular and substantive interaction during an online course. This requirement has been mandated by SACS in order to create a higher level of engagement with the students. This interaction can be in the form of discussion boards, where faculty are participating by prompting students for additional information on their posts, or by use of some synchronous tool, such as Zoom, as a requirement for one on one or group meetings with the faculty.

Standard 5-5

Policy for response time and feedback on assignments is clearly stated.

Developing a policy for when students can expect responses on emails and assignments, and presenting it at the start of the semester is a crucial part of online education. Students may sometimes expect immediate turnaround on grades or emails if those items are not addressed. Standard response time for emails is 24-48 during the week. On weekends, or during holidays, that time will increase. Response for feedback on assignments will vary depending on the type of assignment. If a particular assignment will take longer to grade and provide feedback, such as a research paper, that should be noted in the assignment instructions.

Quality Section 6 – Technology

Standard 6-1

Both LMS tools and any external tools used support both course and unit level objectives.

All tools used within a course (i.e. LMS discussions, external publisher content) should support the course objectives by providing alignment with assessments, activities and learning materials. The use of extraneous technology simply to create busy work should be avoided.

Standard 6-2

Both LMS tools and any external tools facilitate engagement and interaction within the course.

All technology used within a course should be such that it creates and promotes student engagement with the material, as well as interaction with other students. Engagement with material can include the use of video presentations uploaded to Dropboxes by students, or practice quizzes or flashcards presented by third party publishers.

Interaction would include the use of discussion posts, or tools that allow students to provide feedback to each other on peer review projects.

Quality Section 7 - Learner Support

Standard 7-1

Detailed and prominent technical support information is present within the course.

Learners should be provided with technical support contact information for all tools used in the online classroom. This includes LMS support as well as any third party software, such as Turnitin, Pearson MyLab, and McGraw-Hill Connect. BlackBoard LMS support information can be found in the "Welcome to NWF" folder that is pre-loaded in your course shell, but it is also recommended it be added to the course syllabus.

Standard 7-2

Course provides a link to NWF's accessibility policies and services.

To ensure awareness of provisions provided for students with special needs, links to NWF policies and services should be posted in a prominent location within the course. This includes contact information for the Accommodations Resources Center. This information can be found in the "Welcome to NWF" folder that is pre-loaded in your course shell, but it is also recommended it be added to the course syllabus.

Standard 7-3

Course provides a link to NWF's Academic Success Center.

Information to provide services that promote student success, such as tutoring, should be located in the course. The main contact for this should be the Academic Success Center, which can be found in the "Welcome to NWF" folder that is pre-loaded in your course shell, but it is also recommended it be added to the course syllabus.

Quality Section 8 - Accessibility and Usability

Standard 8-1

Course reflects a logical, consistent and uncluttered layout.

The layout of an online course should be such that it is easy to navigate, and activities, assessments, and other assignments are easy to find. The typical layout for course materials are chronological. Chronological layouts would show folders listed in order of access from top to bottom. This method gives learners the ability to see the group of

activities required for each week, chapter, or unit without having to jump from folder to folder. It also gives the learner a better sense of their progress through the course.

When setting up folders for weekly or chapter-related assignments, remember to keep the appearance as consistent as possible. This includes consistent naming of folders, assignments, as well as document formatting.

Standard 8-2
Course design and content promotes readability.

When designing a course, it is imperative to consider possible challenges with readability, which refers to how content, text and images will appear on the page. Three of the most important things to remember when creating content is font style, color contrast, and "chunking."

Font style should be selected with readability in mind. Typically a sans serif font is best. Keep away from any unusual or script fonts.

Color contrast refers to the font color as compared to the background color. A colored font may not be readable to some students on certain color backgrounds. To check your color contrast, you can use the following resource:

[WebAIM Contrast Checker](#)

"Chunking" is the concept of grouping similar things together, but also includes using appropriate separation and spacing between paragraphs or sections. Reading a page with several different paragraphs is much easier than reading one with a solid block of text.

Standard 8-3
Course provides alternative means of accessing content, following standard accessibility guidelines.

It is NWF's legal obligation to ensure content within an online course follows WCAG 2.1 Web guidelines for accessibility enabling success of all students, regardless of any disability. When creating content, the following best practices should be followed as appropriate:

- Formatted headings should be used to annotate different sections within a document/page.
- Table headings should be used when creating tables.
- Use a 12 Pt (at minimum) sans serif font for all text.
- Meaning must be conveyed without relying on font size or color.
- Images must be labeled with alternative text.
- PDFs must be tagged and OCR'd.

- All videos presented must be captioned.

- Use descriptive hyperlinks instead of URLs when adding links.

- Ensure all content can be navigated using only the keyboard.

The CITL can provide training on any of these topics as well as assist in providing solutions to other accessibility issues.