Midway College

Essential Standards Workbook

2014 - 2015

MIDWAY College

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General Standard 1: Course Overview and Introduction

The course overview and introduction set the tone for the course, let learners know what to expect, and provide guidance to ensure learners get off to a good start.

Specific Review Standard	Annotations
1.1 Instructions make clear how to get started and where to find various course components	- Instructions provide a general course overview, present the schedule of activities, guide the learner to explore the course site, and indicate what to do first. - Includes a detailed list of navigational instructions for the whole course - Instructors may choose to incorporate some of this information in the course syllabus. In this case, learners should be directed to the syllabus at the beginning of the course - A useful feature is a "Read Me First" or "Start Here" button or icon on the course homepage, linking leaners to start-up information.
Annotations continued	
Examples: 1. A course "tour" 2. Clear statements about how to get started in the course 3. A "scavenger hunt" or "syllabus quiz" assignment that leads learners through an exploration of the different parts of the course.	

Specific Review Standard	Annotations
1.2 Learners are introduced to the purpose and structure of the course	- Information is provided to help learners understand the purpose of the course and how the learning process is structure and carried out. - Includes course schedule, delivery modalities, modes of communications, types of learning activities, and how learning will be assessed - Such information may be provided or reinforced in the course syllabus or other course documents
Annotations continued	
Examples: 1. Uses titles such "Course Introduction," "Welcome from the Instructor," "Start Here," "Course Schedule," "Course Outline," "Course Calendar," etc. 2. For Competency-based courses or courses that use offsite programs, the options available to complete the course are clearly delineated through detailed instructions. Reviewers may need to look for this information on the course site or linked from the course site to the program website.	

General Standard 2: Learning Objectives (Competencies)

The learning objectives or competencies establish a foundation upon which the rest of the course is based.

Specific Review Standard	Annotations
2.1 The course learning objectives describe outcomes that are measureable	• Measurable course learning objectives precisely and clearly describe what learners will learn and be able to do if they successfully complete the course. • Uses terms that are specific and observable • It is not possible to complete a course review if measurable learning objectives are not present.
Annotations continued	

Examples: Upon completion of the course, learners will be able to
    1. Select appropriate tax strategies for different financial and personal situations.
    2. Develop a comprehensive, individualizes wellness action program focused on overcoming a sedentary life-style.	

Specific Review Standard	Annotations
2.2 The weekly learning objectives describe outcomes that are measurable and consistent with the course-level objectives.	• Weekly objectives align with and are more specific than course objectives • Weekly objectives describe learner mastery in specific, observable terms and in smaller, discrete pieces. • Precisely describe the specific competencies, skills, and knowledge learners are able to master and demonstrate at regular intervals throughout the course. • Weekly objectives may come from instructor or textbook. Regardless of origin, these objectives must be prominently stated in the corresponding week or unit so they are available to the learner from within the online classroom.
Annotations continued	

Examples:
 	
Course Objective – Upon completion of this course, learners will demonstrate master of rules of punctuation.
 	
Weekly Objectives –
    1. Learners will write sentences that demonstrate correct use of commas, semicolons, and periods.
    2. Learners will use apostrophes when, and only when, needed.
    3. Learners will use double and single quotation marks correctly in quoted material	

Specific Review Standard	Annotations
2.3 All learning objectives or competencies are stated clearly and written from the learner's perspective.	• The course and weekly learning objectives are stated clearly and prominently in the online classroom for all course delivery formats. • The learning objectives are written in a way that allows learners, including non-native speakers, to easily grasp their meaning and the learning outcomes expected. • The use of educational of educational or discipline jargon, unexplained terminology, and unnecessarily complex language is avoided.
Annotations continued	
Examples: 1. Course-level objectives are articulated in the course introduction or syllabus 2. Weekly level objectives appear in each week section	

Specific Review Standard	Annotations
2.4 The relationship between learning objectives and course activities is clearly stated	• Learning objectives are integrated throughout the course and are not just listed in the syllabus • A relationship exists between the stated learning objectives and the activities learners are asked to complete. • Consider both course and weekly learning objective in the assessment of this standard • Look for information indicating which learning activities, instructional materials, assignments, and assessments support specific learning objectives.
Annotations continued	
Examples of course components that clarify the relationship: 1. Links from assignments to the relevant course objectives 2. A numbering system that shows how course activities correspond to learning objectives or competencies 3. A narrative explaining how the course activities enable learners to meet the objectives 4. A diagram or table depicting the relationship between objectives and activities	

Specific Review Standard	Annotations
2.5 The learning objectives are suited to the level of the course	- Expected content mastery is appropriate to the type and level of the course. - Using taxonomies that describe levels of learning can be helpful categorizing learning objectives by level. - Examine course and weekly objectives as a whole to ensure they describe knowledge and skills that correspond to the course level - Reviewers who may not be familiar with the course discipline may benefit from working with a subject matter expert.
Annotations continued	

Examples:
1. A first year course is likely to include objectives that are lower in the cognitive realm than those in an upper-level course.
2. Lower-level courses may use verbs such as "identify," "describe," or "apply," which align with assessments such as multiple-choice quizzes, essay questions in exams, or solving problems
3. Upper-level and graduate courses may focus on objectives closely related to the specific discipline.
4. Upper-level and graduate courses may use verbs such as "differentiate," "design," or "justify," with assessments such as critiques, flow charts, or original research.

General Standard 3: Assessment and Measurement

Assessment is implemented in manner that corresponds to the course learning objectives and not only allows the instructor a broad perspective on the learners' master of content but also allows learners to track their learning progress throughout the course.

Specific Review Standard	Annotations
3.1 The assessments measure the stated learning objectives or competencies	- From the types of assessments chosen, it is clear that learners can successfully complete the assessments if they have met the objectives and enable learners to meet them. - Consider both the course and weekly objectives in your review of assessments
Annotations continued	
Examples of learning objective-assessment alignment: 1. A problem analysis demonstrates critical thinking skills 2. A multiple-choice quiz verifies vocabulary knowledge 3. A composition shows writing skills 4. A video of learner presentation in a foreign language shows mastery of the language 5. Participation in a game reveals learner skill levels in critical thinking, analytical thinking, or decision-making Examples of lack of alignment between learning objectives and assessments: 1. The objective is to be able to "write a persuasive essay," but the assessment is a multiple-choice test 2. The objective is to "create a body of work that illustrates your photographic vision," but the assessment is a 25-page thesis about contemporary photographers.	

Specific Review Standard	Annotations
3.2 The course grading policy is stated clearly	- A clear, written statement fully explains how the course grades are calculated. - The points, percentages, and weights for each component of the course grade are clearly stated. - The relationship(s) between points, percentages, weights, and letter grades are explained. - The instructor's policy on late submissions is clearly stated. - Review the clarity of the explanation and presentation to the learner not the simplicity or complexity of a given grading system itself. Even a relatively complex grading system can be made easy to understand
Annotations continued	
Look for some or all of the following: 1. A list of all activities, tests, etc., that will determine the final grade 2. An explanation of the relationship between the final course letter grade and the learner's accumulated points and/or percentages. 3. An explanation of the relationship between points and percentages, if both are used 4. A clearly stated policy on point deductions for assignments submitted late	

Specific Review Standard	Annotations
3.3 Specific and descriptive criteria are provided for the evaluation of learners' work and are tied to the course grading policy	• Learners are provide with a clear and complete description of the criteria that will be sued to evaluate their work and participation in the course. • Criteria are stated upfront at the beginning of the course. • The description or statement of criteria provides learners with clear guidance on the instructor's expectations and on the required components of coursework and participation. • The criteria gives learners the information they need to understand how a grade on an assignment or activity will be calculated • Confirm that the criteria used to evaluate learners' performance aligns with the course objectives
Annotations continued	
Examples of what to look for: 1. Evidence that the instructor has stated the criteria for evaluation of all graded work. Criteria may be in the form of a detailed checklist, rubric, or other instrument for identifying the various levels of learner mastery. 2. A description of how learners' participation in discussions will be graded, including the number of required postings per week; the criteria for evaluating the originality and quality of learners' comments and their responsiveness to classmates' comments; and the grade or credit learners can expect varying levels of performance.	

General Standard 4: Instructional Materials

The focus of this standard is on supporting the course objectives, rather than on qualitative judgments about the instructional materials

Specific Review Standard	Annotations
4.1 The instructional materials contribute to the achievement of the stated course and weekly learning objectives	• Instructional materials used in course align with course and weekly learning objectives in a clear and direct way and provide the information and resources learners need to achieve the state learning object • This standard may be difficult for reviewers whose expertise is not in the course discipline. Consult with a subject matter expert (SME) if this is the case. • Reviewers are encouraged to consult digital publisher materials to assess
Annotations continued	
1. If no textbook(s) are assigned, reviewers will need to consider bibliographies and webliographies provided by the instructor	

Specific Review Standard	Annotations
4.2 Both the purpose of instructional materials and how the materials are to be used for learning activities are clearly explained	• Learners are provided with an explanation of how the instructional materials, resources, technologies, and learning activities are used in the course, and how each will help them achieve the stated learning objectives. • The purpose of all instructional materials (books and other publications, videos, multimedia, software or interactive elements, etc.) used in course is clearly explained to learners. • Reviewers confirm that instructional materials such as simulations or interactive media are integrate well enough to be used to the learner.

Annotations continued

Examples:
1. Links to external websites indicate the purpose of the links or are completely self-evident
2. The function of interactive games or exercises is clearly explained or is completely self-evident.
3. A course requires learners to use the following materials: textbook, video segments, website or simulation activities organized around a specific skill, and an external site that has an opening menu consisting of "practice quizzes," "images," and "audio examples." In such a course, consider whether the order in which learners should use these varied materials is clearly indicated. It should also be noted how each is related to the learning objectives and how the materials are related to each other.
4. In an advanced undergraduate or graduate level course in which learners are expected to find their own learning materials, the instructor posts guidelines that assist the learner in identifying relevant materials and in distinguishing between core and supplementary materials. The instructor should also guidelines distinguishing between scholarly and non-scholarly sources for academic writing.

General Standard 5: Course Activities and Learner Interaction

Course components that promote active learning contribute to the learning process and to learner persistence.

Specific Review Standard	Annotations
5.1 The learning activities promote the achievement of the stated learning objectives.	- The purpose of learning activities is to facilitate the learner's achievement of the stated objectives - The reviewer is expected to review all learning activities in the course. A strategy for accomplishing the review may be to divide the activities among a team and reconvene to share findings. - Ensure that the activities support the learning objectives
Annotations continued	
Examples of alignment between activities and objectives: 1. The objective requires that learners deliver a persuasive speech. Activities include choosing an appropriate topic for the speech, creating an outline, and taping a practice of the speech delivery. 2. The objective is "Prepare each budget within a master budget and explain the importance of each in the overall budgeting process." The learners review information about this objective in their texts, watch videos of case studies where the different budgets are used, review informational websites about creating the different budgets, create the different budgets as practice activities, and develop a case study for a fictitious company explaining what would happen if each budget is not included in the master budget. Examples of a mismatch between activities and objectives: 1. The objective requires learners to deliver a persuasive speech, but the activities in the course do no include the practice of that skill. 2. The objective is "Prepare each budget within a master budget and explain the importance of each in the overall budgeting process." The learners review information about this objective in their texts and observe budgets worked out by the instruction, but they themselves produce only one of the several budgets.	

Specific Review Standard	Annotations
5.2 Learning activities provide opportunities for interaction that support active learning.	- Activities encourage learners' engagement through different types of interaction as appropriate to the course. - Interactions are designed as activities to support the course objectives and may vary with the discipline, purpose, and level of the course - Look for the purpose of the interactions and not just the number of opportunities for interaction - Look for active learning activities where learners are engaged by doing something, such as discovering, processing, or applying concepts and information.
Annotations continued	
Examples of interaction: 1. *Learner-Instructor interaction* – might include assignment or project submitted for instructor feedback; discussion in a synchronous session or an asynchronous discussion board exchange. 2. *Learner-content interaction* – might include assigned readings from a textbook article, or online resources; assigned completion of a workbook or online exercise; or a learning how to learn activity. 3. *Learner-learner interaction* – assigned collaborative activities such as group discussions; small group projects; group problem-solving assignments; or peer critiques.	

Specific Review Standard	Annotations
5.3 The instructor's plan for classroom response time and feedback on assignments is clearly stated.	- Frequent feedback from the instructor increases learners' sense of engagement in a course. - Learners are better able to manage their course activities when they know upfront when to expect feedback from the instructor - The course provides clear information about when learners will receive instructor responses to emails and discussion postings, feedback on assignments, and grades. - This information typically appears in course syllabus
Annotations continued	
Note to reviewers: You are not evaluating the instructor's plan; you are primarily ensuring the instructor has provided a plan.	

General Standard 6: Course Technology

The technologies enabling the various course components facilitate rather than impede the learning process.

Specific Review Standard	Annotations
6.1 The tools used in the course support the learning objectives.	- Tools are functional software that provide areas for interaction in the course; they may be included in the learning management system (LMS) or external to the LMS - The tools that are used support the learning objectives and fit the learning activities. - Clear information and instructions are provided regarding how the tools support the learning objectives.
Ann continued	
Note to reviewer: Technology is not used simply for its own sake. For example, a course might require posting to a discussion forum, but it may not be clear how the discussions support a learning objective. Examples of tools: Discussion board, chat rooms, grade book, social media, games, wiki, blogs, virtual classrooms, web conferencing, etc.	

Specific Review Standard	Annotations
6.2 Course tools promote learner engagement and active learning	- Tools used in the course help learners actively engage in the learning process rather than passively absorb information. - Selected tools help the learner actively engage in the course by facilitating interactions with the instructor, course materials and other learners.
Annotations continued	
Examples of tools that support engagement and active learning: 1. Interactive, real-time software such as real-time collaborative tools, webinars, and virtual worlds. 2. Software that facilitates interactions and collaborations, such as shared documents or wikis. 3. Animations, simulations, and games that require learner input. 4. Discussion tools with automatic notification or a "read/unread" tracking feature 5. Automated self-check exercises requiring learner responses.	

General Standard 7: Learner Support

It is important to ensure online learners know they have access to and are encouraged to use the services that support learners at the institution.

Specific Review Standard	Annotations
7.1 The course instructions articulate or link to a clear description of the technical support offered and how to obtain it	- Technical support for learners includes such information as how to log in; how to use the tools, and features of the LMS; and how to get help desk support. - Technical support does not include help with course content or assignment or academic or support services. - Look for evidence that learners have access to technical support services from within the course or the LMS. - The purpose is not to review the adequacy of those services at an institutional level but rather to determine if technical support services are provided for the learners and that the course contains the information about the services and how to access them.
Annotations continued	
Examples of information about technical support: 1. A clear description of the technical support services provided by the institution, including a link to a technical support website. 2. An email link to the technical support center or help desk. 3. A phone number for technical support center or help desk. 4. Clearly worded directions for obtain support for externally provided resources (e.g., publisher-supplied online materials and activities and third-part, vendor-provided software, materials and activities) 5. Links to tutorials or other resources providing instructions on how to use the tools and features of the LMS and other course technologies. 6. A link to "frequently asked questions."	

Specific Review Standard	Annotations
7.2 Course instructions articulate or link to the institutions' accessibility policies and services	Accessibility policies or accommodations statements state that services and accommodations are available for learners with disabilities and inform the learner how such services may be obtained.
Annotations continued	
Examples of information about accessibility policies or accommodations: 1. A link to the institution's accessibility policy, if a policy exists. 2. A statement that informs the learner how to obtain an institution's disability support services, if such services exist; for example, a telephone number or link for the disability services office.	

General Standard 8: Accessibility and Usability

The course design reflects a commitment to accessibility, so that all learners can access all course content and activities, and to usability, so that all learners can easily navigate and interact with course components.

Specific Review Standard	Annotations
8.1 Course navigation facilitates ease of use	- Navigation refers to the process of planning, controlling, and recording the movement of a learner from one place to another in the online course. - Navigation throughout the course is consistent, logical, and efficient. - Confirm that course's navigation strategies facilitate ease of movement through the course and course activities. - As a reviewer, consider the ownership of the design of the course as some navigational tools in the LMS cannot be changed.
Annotations continued	
Examples of strategies that facilitate ease of use 1. Consistent layout and design are employed throughout, making content, instructional materials, tools, and media easy to locate from anywhere in the course. Design elements are used repetitively, increasing predictability and intuitiveness. 2. Course pages have links, files, and icons that are labeled with easy-to-understand, self-describing, and meaningful names. Icons used as links also have HTML tags or an accompanying text link. 3. The course design enables learners to easily locate where they are within the course and to easily return to the homepage form any location. 4. Tables are used to organize data and have appropriate table headers. Data cells are associated with their appropriate headers, making it easy for learners to navigate and understand the data. 5. The hierarchy of material in a page or document is clearly indicated through heading styles. A table of contents can be included that allows learners to move easily throughout documents.	

Specific Review Standard	Annotations
8.2 Information is provided about the accessibility of all technologies required in the course.	• Learners with disabilities have access to information on the accessibility of the LMS and all additional required technologies. • The course includes links to the accessibility statements for all required technologies. If an accessibility statement does not exist for a particular technology, a statement is included that explains that the accessibility statement does not exist

Annotations continued

Examples of technologies that might be required in an online course
    1. A LMS, including integrated third-party software
    2. Presentation software
    3. A web-conferencing tool
    4. A polling tool
    5. A lecture-capture system
    6. One or more media players
    7. A document-sharing system
    8. Social media tools
 	
Examples of where accessibility statements may be located within the course:
    1. Course syllabus
    2. Page on required technology software
    3. Page on resources.