Online Course Improvement Program

## NMSU Annotated Version of the Quality Matters Rubric 2011-2013

This rubric is currently under revision to reflect the move to the new 2011-2013 rubric and it will have our own annotations so that it can be shared with all NMSU learners taking the OTL Program or OCIP.

(This file is located in Google Docs at <http://bit.ly/XnyIkB> )

I. COURSE OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION

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| General Standard 1: The overall design of the course is made clear to the student at the beginning of the course. |  | The course introduction sets the tone for the course, lets students know what to expect, and provides guidance to ensure they get off to a good start. |
| Standard | Points | Annotation: What’s the idea? |
| 1.1 Navigational instructions make the organization of the course easy to understand. | 3 | Instructions provide:   * a general course overview * guide to course website * specify what to do first   Usually found in the syllabus.  Courses should have a “Read Me First” or “Start Here” |
| I.2 A statement introduces the student to the course and to the structure of the student learning. | 3 | Statement from instructor that includes:   * schedule * forms of communications * types of activities or assignments * assessments     Look for some or all of the following:   * course schedule (self-paced, following a set calendar, etc.) * course sequencing, such as a linear or random order * types of activities (written assignments, online self-tests, participation in the discussion board, group work, etc.) * course calendar with assignment and test due dates * preferred mode of communication with the instructor (email, discussion board, etc.) * preferred mode of communication with other students * testing procedures (online, proctored, etc.) * procedure for submission of electronic assignments |
| I.3 Netiquette expectations for communication are clearly stated. | 2 | Expectations of student conduct online are clearly stated. The expectations themselves are not evaluated.    Examples:   * expected conduct for participation on a discussion board * expected conduct for email content * “speaking style” requirements, (i.e. use of correct English required as opposed to net acronyms) * spelling and grammar expectations, if any |
| 1.4 Course and/or institutional policies with which the student is expected to comply are clearly stated, or a link to current policies is provided | 2 | Policies from the instructor or the institution are current and up-to-date and can include-   * academic integrity * late submission of assignments * incomplete grades * grievance procedure * student conduct |
| 1.5 Prerequisite knowledge in the discipline and/or any required competences are clearly stated. | 1 | A statement or a link is provided to students informing them of prerequisite knowledge or courses. If there are prerequisite courses they are specified. |
| I.6 Minimum technology skills of the student are clearly stated | 1 | Skills that students need for the course are clearly stated.  Examples:   * Using a learning management system * Being able to email and attach documents * Establishing and organizing files * Using copy, paste * Use other software programs for presentations or projects |
| I.7 The self-introduction by the instructor is appropriate. | 1 | Course introduction or welcome from the instructor should establish a sense of community and connection between the student and the instructor. This introduction can come in the form of a letter or discussion post and should include at a minimum the following-   * introduces instructor as professional and approachable * should include instructor’s name, title, field of expertise, and contact information * teaching philosophy * past experiences with teaching online classes * personal information such as hobbies or interests * photo |
| I.8 Students are asked to introduce themselves to the class. | 1 | Students are asked to introduce themselves in order to-   * create a learning community * should include some personal information such as family, hobbies, area of study but should not include very personal information such as birth date or address   Introductions should not be evaluated or scored. |
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II. LEARNING OBJECTIVES (COMPETENCIES)

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| General Standard 2: Learning objectives are measurable and are clearly stated. |  | The learning objectives establish a foundation upon which the rest of the course is based. |
| Standard | Points | Annotation: What’s the idea? |
| 2.1 The course learning objectives describe outcomes that are measurable | 3 | Measurable learning objectives are specific, measurable, and observable. Objectives and assessments must align. Some objectives are not observable such as “value”, “ethics”, or “feeling.” In this case, assure that the learning objective is assessed.  Examples of measurable objectives include terms such as: explain, select, development, describe, create, etc. This site from Eastern New Mexico University Student Learning Objectives has a comprehensive list. <http://www.enmu.edu/academics/assessment/faculty/manual/verb_list.shtml>    Special situations -objectives for the course are institutionally mandated and the individual instructor does not have the authority to change them. Check for alignment between the institution objective and the assessment of the objective. Note that the objective is mandated by the institution and that it is not measurable.    This standard is MET when:   * objectives are measurable * institutional objectives are not measurable but the instructor’s objectives are   This standard is NOT MET when:   * there are not stated learning objectives * objectives are not measurable * institutional objectives are not measurable and the instructor stated objectives are not stated or not measurable |
| 2.2 The module/unit learning objectives describe outcomes that are measurable and consistent with the course-level objectives. | 3 | Module or unit level objectives are   * clearly stated * align with course level objectives * state and make clear learning goals for the week, unit, or module * state student performance expected   May be referred to as learning outcomes. |
| 2.3 All learning objectives are stated clearly and written from the student’s perspective. | 3 | Course and module/unit objectives are stated-   * clearly * in student friendly language (free of academic jargon or use of complex language) * in understandable format for non-native speakers * verbally in face-to-face class meeting (if a face-to-face meeting occurs) |
| 2.4 Instructions to students on how to meet the learning objectives are adequate and stated clearly. | 3 | In both the course and module/unit learning objectives, instructions are-   * expressed in different forms including bulleted lists, narratives, tables, etc. * are shared with students at different points within the course such as handouts, assignment directions, pacing guides * stated clearly and complete to assure student’s understanding of what is expected of them to complete any activity or assignment |
| 2.5 The learning objectives are appropriately designed for the level of the course. | 3 | The course and module/unit level objectives align with expected content mastery for type and level of course.  Examples:  Course learning objectives state that students will write an essay but are then giving a multiple choice test.  Community engagement is listed as an overall course project but students are asked to write a research essay. |
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III. ASSESSMENT AND MEASUREMENT

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| General Standard 3: Assessment strategies are designed to evaluate student progress by reference to stated learning objectives; to measure the effectiveness of student learning; and to be integral to the learning process. |  | Assessment is implemented in a manner that not only allows the instructor a broad perspective on the students’ mastery of the content, but also allows students to measure their own learning throughout the course. |
| Standard | Points | Annotation: What’s the idea? |
| 3.1 The types of assessments selected measure the stated learning objectives and are consistent with course activities and resources. | 3 | Assessments, learning objectives, and learning activities align in a clear and direct way between course objectives/goals and unit/module objectives (2.1 and 2.2). The assessment formats provide a reasonable way to measure the stated learning objectives.  In the case where assessments aim to meet other learning objectives such as department or college wide stated assessments, suggestions should be made to the designer that these objectives should be included at the unit/module level. |
| 3.2 The grading policy is stated clearly. | 3 | How students will be graded is fully explained and stated including points, percentages, or weighting of grades. Late submission policy for the course is provided and explained.    Example:   * Pacing guide or chart provided with assignment titles, due date, points possible is provided. * A breakdown of points verses points is provided (usually in the syllabus) |
| 3.3 Specific and descriptive criteria are provided for evaluation of student’s work and participation and are tied to the course grading policy. | 3 | Assignments and assessments have clear expectations and grading procedures stated “upfront” so students know what they need to do in order to be successful with their work. This includes all information of the assignment and the instructor’s expectations so students fully understand how a grade will be determined.    Examples:   * Use of rubrics with noted point values * List of criteria with noted point values * Expectations on participation in discussions needs to be included. This criteria should include required number of posts, quality of posts, reponses or replies expected, format (for example: are students expected to post in APA format?) |
| 3.4 The types of assessments selected are sequenced, varied, and appropriate to the student work being assessed. | 2 | Varied assessment tools in both online and face-to-face classes are used to determine if students are learning. The assessments provide multiple avenues for students to demonstrate their learning.  Examples:  Does Not Meet:  Only one form of assessment is provided such as only multiple choice tests.  Testing information that has yet to be taught.  Discussion board responses are based on word count or number of postings instead of content within the post as it relates to the learning objectives.  Note- If there is a major assignment due at the end of the term, benchmarks for meeting and determining progress toward the final project are provided. |
| 3.5 Students have multiple opportunities to measure their own learning progress. | 2 | Learning takes place when opportunity to interact with the content presented takes place. Students need feedback on their learning to help them assure they are on the right track and learning what needs to be learned.  Examples:   * Self-Checks * Games * Interactives * Multiple attempts on assessments * Collaborative/peer activities * Models or samples of expected work |
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IV. INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

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| General Standard 4:  Instructional materials are sufficiently comprehensive to achieve stated course objectives and learning outcomes. |  | The instructional materials from the core of the course, and these standards respect the instructor's’ prerogative in selecting them. The focus of this standard is on supporting the course objectives and competencies, rather than on qualitative judgements about the materials. |
| Standard | Points | Annotation: What’s the idea? |
| 4.1 The instructional materials contribute to the achievement of the stated course and module/unit learning objective. | 3 | Learning objectives, materials and resources all align in a clear manner. The resources and course material provide students the means to meet the course learning objectives and/or competencies.  While reviewing- consider course and unit/module learning objectives AND the provided course materials and resources- these all must align.. |
| 4.2 The purpose of instructional materials and how the materials are to be used for learning activities are clearly explained. | 3 | It is clear how all content, materials, resources, and weblinks relate to the course and student learning. They align and are used to meet the learning outcomes stated. |
| 4.3 All resources and materials used in the course are appropriately cited. | 2 | All resources and materials are identified and properly cited for copyright and intellectual property policies. This includes epack, instructor developed material, or publisher material. |
| 4.4 The instructional materials are current. | 2 | Material and resources are current and up to date. Any older work is noted and cited. |
| 4.5 The instructional materials present a variety of perspectives on the course content. | 1 | Course material is from a variety of resources and provided to the student in a variety of forms including textbook(s), PowerPoint or other presentations, websites, lecturer or instructor notes, outlines, etc. |
| 4.6 The distinction between required and optional materials is clearly explained. | 1 | Students are made aware of which materials are required for a course and which materials are suggested or optional for their course.  This information is usually found in the syllabus, class schedule, or in the instructions for class activities. Where the information is located is not as important as how students know what materials they will need in order to achieve the learning objectives. Students should be apprised of necessary materials at the beginning of class or prior to the start date of class. |
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V. LEARNER INTERACTION and ENGAGEMENT

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| General Standard 5: Forms of interaction incorporated in the course motivate students and promote learning. |  | Engaging students to become active learners contributes to the learning process and to student persistence. |
| Standard: | Points | Annotation: What’s the idea? |
| 5.1 The learning activities promote the achievement of stated learning objective. | 3 | Learning activities are various including class discussions, case studies, simulation exercise, practice quizzes, tests, etc. Activities align with and support the learning objectives. Most of the objectives can reasonably be achieved by students completing the learning activities. The activities are provided in multiple formats (reading, role playing, quizzes, presentations, class discussions, etc) to meet multiple learning styles. |
| 5.2 Learning activities provide opportunities for interaction that support active learning. | 3 | Students are provided opportunity for interaction and engagement with the content for active learning. These opportunities align and support the learning objectives stated in the course. The interactive and engaging activities should have purpose (aligned to objectives, provide practice for a quiz, test knowledge for example) and are not added to the course simply to add interaction for students.    Examples:  Student to student interaction:   * introductions * group work * peer review   Student to content interaction   * self tests * simulations * games * creating presentations   Student to instructor interaction   * introductions * feedback opportunity (both ways!) * evaluation |
| 5.3 The instructor’s plan for classroom response time and feedback on assignments is clearly stated. | 3 | Information clearly indicates how quickly the instructor will respond, when feedback will be provided, and when and where the instructor is available to meet.    Information clearly indicates instructor response time for key events and interactions, including e-mail turnaround time, time required for grade postings, discussion postings, etc. Standards also include instructor availability, including e-mail response time, degree of participation in discussions, and availability via other media (phone, in-person) if applicable.    This standard does not prescribe what that response time and availability ought to be. |
| 5.4 The requirements for student interaction is clearly stated. | 2 | A clear statement of requirements should indicate the criteria for interaction that includes frequency, lenght, timeliness, etc).    For example:   * students required to participate in discussions are told how many times each week they must post original comments, how many times they must post responses to other’s comments, what the quality of the comments must be, how the comments will be evaluated, what grade credit they can expect for various levels of performance, and whether the interaction is required or optional. |
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VI. COURSE TECHNOLOGY

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| General Review Standard 6:  Course navigation and technology support student engagement and ensure access to course components. |  | The technology enabling the various course components facilitates the student’s learning experience and is easy to use, rather than impeding the student’s progress. |
| Standard: | Points | Annotation: What’s the idea? |
| 6.1 The tools and media support the course learning objectives. | 3 | Tools and media used in the course support related learning objectives (see Standards 2.1 and 2.2, 3.1,4.1, 5.1) and are integrated with texts and lesson assignments. Students know how the tools and media support the assignments and how they support the learning objectives. Technology is not used simply for the sake of using technology.    For example, a course might require viewing video materials, but it may not be clear how the video materials illustrate or support any learning objective. |
| 6.2 Course tools and media support student engagement and guide the student to become an active learner. | 3 | Tools and media used in the course help students actively engage in the learning process, rather than passively “absorbing” information.    Examples:   * self check opportunities * animations * simulations * games that require student input * discussion with “read” and “unread” |
| 6.3 Navigation throughout the online components of the course is logical, consistent, and efficient. | 3 | Attention is paid to best practice in web development including hyperlinks/text, buttons, windows, etc.  Moving within the course format is logical and clearly labeled for students to know where they are and where they should go next. |
| 6.4 Students can readily access the technologies required in the course. | 2 | Course tools, media, and delivery modes meet current standards for widespread accessibility.    For this standard, the term “technologies” may cover a range of plug-ins such as Acrobat Reader, media players, etc. In addition, courses may require special software packages (spreadsheets, math calculators etc.). Clear instructions tell students how to obtain needed plug-ins and software packages. A clearly labeled and listed list should be included in the course stating the expected technologies needed for the class.  Examples:   * List to students could include the following- * headset * microphone * Links to downloads such as FireFox, OpenOffice, Adobe Reader * If Publisher content is needed links are provided * Links to subscriptions * Information provided for textbooks, CD’s or DVD’s that include the author, publisher, ISBN number, copyright and details on where these items can be found. |
| 6.5 The course technologies are current. | 1 | Course design takes full advantage of an LMS if one is used. Course technology should be up-to-date and used within the course to meet the needs of the learner.  Examples:   * use of social media * mobile technologies * games * simulations * podcasts * use of virtual worlds |
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VII. LEARNER SUPPORT

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| General Standard 7: The course facilitates student access to institutional support services essential to student success. |  | In the learner support standard, four different kinds of support services are addressed; technical support, accessibility support, academic services support, and student services support. |
| Standard | Points | Annotation: What’s the idea? |
| 7.1 The course instructions articulate or link to a clear description of the technical support offered and how to access it. | 3 | Technical support for online students differs from institution to institution. Technical support includes information about such topics as how to log in, how to use the software, and how to upload files. It does not include help with course content, assignments, academic or student support services. (see Standards 7.3 and 7.4 below).    Look for evidence that students have access to technical support services from within the course. The purpose is not to review the adequacy of those services on an institutional level.    Examples:   * A clear description of the services, including a link to a technical support website * An email link to an online learning helpdesk * A phone number for an online learning helpdesk |
| 7.2 Course instructions articulate or link to the institution's accessibility policies and services. | 3 | Courses should provide accessibility policy or accommodation statements for students. This should include a link on how services can be accessed.  Examples:   * Link to institution's accessibility policy * information for students to gain access to disability support services (phone number, email, address for example) * statement that students with disabilities will be accommodated |
| 7.3 Course instructions articulate or link to an explanation of how the institution’s academic support services and resources can help students succeed in the course and how students can access services | 2 | Academic support for online students includes access to library resources, readiness assessment, testing services, tutoring, a writing center, a math center, supplemental instruction programs, or online orientation. Learners should have access to academic support services and resources from within the course or the learning management system.  Examples:   * link to academic support services * links to specific academic support services (testing center, writing center, etc.) * online orientation or demo class * tutorials or guides on conducting research, writing papers, or citing sources |
| 7.4 Course instructions articulate or link to an explanation of how the institution’s student support services can help students succeed and how students can access the services. | 1 | Support services for student include advising, registration, financial aid,l student or campus life, counseling, career services, online workshops, or student organizations. There should be links to this support services from within the course.  Examples:   * link to student support services * link to student union or student groups * link to student support webpage |
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VIII. ACCESSIBILITY

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| General Standard 8: The course employs accessible technologies and provides guidance on how to obtain accommodation. |  | The accessibility standard incorporates the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and is consistent with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). |
| Standard: | Points | Annotation: What’s the idea? |
| 8.1 The course employs accessible technologies and provides guidance on how to obtain accommodation. | 3 | All online courses should direct students to the institution’s Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) services on their campus. There should be a statement in the course that tells students how to gain access to ADA services at their institution.    To meet this standard a course must have both a statement that tells students how to gain access to an institution’s ADA services AND be on an approved Course Management System (Blackboard, WebCT, or WebTycho) or documentation provided by the CMS that it is ADA compliant.    Encourage faculty to include disability services for the wording of an ADA Statement appropriate to their institution. |
| 8.2 The course contains equivalent alternatives to auditory and visual content. | 2 | Alternative means of access to course information are provided for the vision or hearing impaired student. This includes-equivalent textual representations of images, audio, animations, and video in the course website. Presenting information in text format is generally acceptable because screen reader software (used by the vision impaired) can read text. A statement accompanies the media explaining that there are alternative formats to course content.    Examples:   * Audio lecture has a text transcript available * Video clip, image, or animation is accompanied by text transcript |
| 8.3 The course design facilitates readability and minimizes distractions. | 2 | Appropriate design elements are used including colors, fonts, spacing, graphics, formatting, and color coding to facilitate readability and to minimize distractions.  Examples:   * color is used purposely * like items are grouped * contrast is used to differentiate material |
| 8.4 The course design accommodates the use of assistive technologies. | 2 | Presenting information in text format is generally acceptable since screenreaders can read text. Course pages have links that are self-identifying and meaningful (no “Click here”)  Examples:   * icons used as links have HTML tags or an accompanying text link * navigation is streamlined * method to “skip to content” or “skip page” is offered * HTML documents and tagged PDF files are accessible by assistive technology * tables are used for layout and design * tables used to organize data * headers are used |
| Total | / |  |