Quality Standards for Online Learning

Guidelines regarding minimum standards are used for course development, design, and delivery of quality online instruction (such as course syllabus elements, course materials, assessment strategies, faculty feedback).

Quality learning is the goal for any online education program. This quality must be equivalent to the quality delivered via on-ground courses and programs in any institution of higher education. Consequently, we have identified six principles or standards to define the quality expected in this institution's online educational programs and courses.

- Quality online learning begins with an identity of the relevant higher education community. The online community from the institution must be fully integrated within the larger academic community of that institution (Std 1).
- Quality online learning elaborates an effective, practical, and sensible structure and organization for development of courses and programs (Std 2).
- Quality online learning integrates proven and research-based best instructional practices applied in the online environment (Std 3).
- Quality online learning takes full advantage of a variety of technology tools, has a user-friendly interface and is accessible by learners with special needs (Std 4).
- Quality online learning uses multiple strategies and activities to assess student readiness for, progress in, and mastery of learning outcomes, and provides students with feedback about their progress (Std 5).
- Quality online learning includes an ease of use and access to just in time support by both instructors and learners (Std 6).

Standard 1: Community and Faith Integration

Description: The course design and the instructor's active presence foster a sense of community among diverse online learners and confirm that online students are an equal and valued part of the APU community of disciples and scholars seeking to advance the work of God in the world through academic excellence promoting a Christian perspective of truth and life. Courses are designed and delivered consistent with approved university's, schools', and departments' academic policies and students are informed about those policies through course mechanisms.

A- Design	B- Delivery
1.1A Community-Building	**1.1B Community-Building**
1.1A1 Course design fosters both academic freedom and eLearning best practices; thereby creating a learning experience that employs best practices, reflects faculty individuality, and promotes APU's four cornerstones of Christ, community, service, and scholarship.	1.1B1 Instructor personalizes instruction within the parameters of APU's research-based eLearning standards; thereby extending learning opportunities and engaging students in a learning experience that promotes APU's four cornerstones of Christ, community, service, and scholarship.
1.1A2 Course establishes sense of community in first week through student introductions in the Class Lounge and instructor-produced introductory materials.	1.1B2 Instructor begins the class with a "Welcome" announcement, an introductory multimedia presentation, and an "Instructor Profile" page.
1.1A3 Course design fosters community with student-to-student collaboration, faculty-to-student interaction, and student-to-faculty interaction through various course elements.	1.1B3 Instructor maintains a presence, responds to student email and messages promptly, and actively engages students through forums and other course communication elements.
1.2A Policy Awareness	**1.2B Policy Awareness**
1.2A1 Syllabus clearly explains course prerequisites, netiquette, and other policies and procedures of APU and the department. Syllabus and course articulate APU policies regarding accessibility, academic support, and student support,	1.2B1 Instructor highlights key syllabus and course information through a "Welcome" multimedia presentation, a "Welcome" announcement, and an "Instructor Profile" page.

explaining how students can access related services and resources.	
1.2A2 Syllabus clearly states faculty response time for email plus other faculty expectations.	1.2B2 Instructor response to student email is prompt and appropriate as stated in syllabus.
1.3A Faith Integration	**1.3B Faith Integration**
1.3A1 Course features faith integration activities that, within the scope of course content, "encourage the dialogue between academic knowledge and Christian faith in the goal of reclaiming and applying the unity of God's truth."	1.3B1 Instructor facilitates learning activities in ways that foster student analysis, synthesis, and application of Christian perspectives on truth and life relevant to the course content.
1.3A2 The dialogue between academic knowledge and Christian truth within the context of the course discipline promotes awareness and application of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.	1.3B2 Instructor's interaction in the course content delivery models application of Christian truth principals within the context of the course discipline.

Standard 2: Structure and Interface

Description: The course uses instructional models and methods that engage students in active learning and provides students with multiple learning paths to master stated learning outcomes. The course content is based on student needs as well as research-based subject-matter expert recommended information. The course content provides ample opportunities for interaction and communication — student to student, student to instructor and instructor to student.

A- Design	B- Delivery
2.1A Structure	**2.1B Structure**
2.1A1 Navigation throughout the online components of the course is intuitive, logical, consistent, and efficient.	2.1B1 Navigation throughout the online components of the course is intuitive, logical, consistent, and efficient.

2.1A2 The course has logically sequenced units and/or lessons that have an overview describing outcomes, activities, assignments, assessments, and resources,	2.1B2 Provide multiple learning opportunities for students to master the content.
2.1A3 Learning sequence in syllabus and course is identical; both clearly state measurable learning outcomes and clearly explain, from the student perspective, how to meet the outcomes.	2.1B3 Instruction aligns with syllabus; syllabus modifications by instructor align with the master syllabus as developed within the department.
2.1A4 The course design facilitates readability and minimizes distractions.	2.1B4 Instructor adheres to readability standards when adding content.
2.1A5 Course integrates faculty expertise into research-based eLearning design principles.	2.1B5 When adding content, instructor follows research-based eLearning design standards regarding accessibility, readability, and learner-centered education.
2.1A6 Course is designed for faculty who have received "cybergogy" training regarding technical elements, pedagogical strategies, and fair use issues of eLearning.	2.1B6 Faculty complete training before teaching refreshed standards-based courses.
2.2A Instructions	**2.2B Instructions**
2.2A1 Instructions clearly explain the course structure, how to begin the course, and how to locate and use course tools.	2.2B1 Students can successfully navigate the course and find components.
2.2A2 Instructions clearly distinguish between required and optional activities.	2.2B2 Instructor monitors compliance with stated instructions and supplements them as necessary.

2.2A3 Course instructions clearly explain the purpose of course materials and how they are to be used.	2.2B3 The instructor makes use of course materials in ways that demonstrate their relationship toward stated learning outcome mastery.
2.3A Instructional Media	**2.3B Instructional Media**
2.3A1 Rich media, relevant to course content learning outcomes, are provided in multiple formats for ease of use and access in order to address diverse student needs.	2.3B1 Instructor makes use of personalized media and other media relevant to the content in ways that extend and contribute to student mastery of learning outcomes.

Standard 3: Teaching and Learning

Description: The course provides online learners with sufficient instructional input, resources, guides, and supplemental materials that are designed to induce progress toward mastery of identified learning outcomes and are aligned with course activities, and delivered in ways aligned with diverse learning styles of students in an open online environment. Students are provided options for multiple ways of engaging with learning experiences that promote mastery of stated learning outcomes for the identified course content.

A- Design	B- Delivery
3.1A Student-centered Learning	**3.1B Student-centered Learning**
3.1A1 Course pages and syllabus state how students can meet the learning outcomes and explain the requirements for student participation in learning activities and assignment completion.	3.1B1 Instructor uses course-based communication tools to encourage and promote student mastery of learning outcomes as they are aligned with each of the various course learning activities.
3.1A2 Learning activities focus on student-centered learning, promote the achievement of measurable learning outcomes, and are of sufficient rigor, depth, and breadth to achieve the outcomes being addressed.	3.1B2 Students achieve stated learning outcomes through course activities.
3.1A3 Course tools and learning activities support active learning by diverse learners through the promotion of student-to-student collaboration, faculty-to-student collaboration, and a variety of instructional models, methods and materials.	3.1B3 Instructor clearly engages with students via each of the course tools used for learning activities and promotes the learning collaboration among students, and between students and the subject matter.
3.2A Content and Resources	**3.2B Content and Resources**
3.2A1 Course instructions clearly explain the purpose of course materials and how they are to be used.	3.2B1 Course site provides easy access to course materials.
3.2A2 Instructional materials are current, sufficient, easily accessible, and contribute to the achievement of the	3.2B2 Instructor maintains currency of instructional materials that contribute to student achievement

stated course learning outcomes; for example, ISBN numbers are included in course syllabus for easy reference.	of stated course learning outcomes, and attaches instructional materials in formats (PDF for example) that can be opened in all systems.
3.2A3 Course provides student access to library professionals, research guidance, databases, and resources.	3.2B3 Instructor makes reference to research guides and resources and motivates learners to access and use them in learning activities.
3.2A4 All resources and materials used in the course are appropriately cited.	3.2B4 Instructor appropriately cites any added resources or materials.

Standard 4: Technology and Accessibility

Description: *The course takes full advantage of a variety of technology tools, has a user-friendly interface and meets accessibility standards for interoperability and access for learners with special needs.*

A- Design	B- Delivery
4.1A Basics	**4.1B Basics**
4.1A1 Syllabus clearly states minimum technology requirements (hardware, browser, software, etc.) and required technical skills of the student.	4.1B1 Course delivery system faculty, staff, and contractors ensure requisite technology is available to students and that it works with the identified hardware, browsers, and other software.
4.1A2 The course provides an orientation opportunity for students to learn the basics of eLearning.	4.1B2 Instructional personnel draw attention to the orientation opportunity and ensures students participate in it.
4. 2A Effectiveness	**4.2B Effectiveness**
4.2A1 The course technologies are current and readily accessible to students. Proven effective course-relevant current and emerging technologies are used to support student achievement of the stated learning outcomes.	4.2B1 Instructional personnel monitor student participation in the course to determine whether participation is impeded due to technology.
4.2A2 Technology, media, and course tools support the course learning outcomes, support student engagement, and guide the student to become an active learner.	4.2B2 Evidence from student work and course tools confirm that course tools and media support student engagement, guide the student to become an active learner, and support course learning outcomes.
4.3A Accessibility	**4.3B Accessibility**
4.3A1 The course features accessible technologies, instructions for obtaining accommodation, equivalent alternatives to auditory	4.3B1 Students needing special accommodations can access course content and activities through equivalent alternatives to auditory

and visual content, and accommodations for the use of assistive technology.	and visual content

Standard 5: Student Learning Assessment

Description: *The course uses multiple strategies and activities to assess student readiness for, and progress in, learning outcome mastery, and provides students with feedback on their progress.*

A- Design	B- Delivery
5.1A Strategies & Materials	**5.1B Strategies & Materials**
5.1A1 Course assessments are appropriate for online learning and measure content mastery, critical thinking skills, core learning, and achievement of department-approved student-learning outcomes.	5.1B1 Evidence from students' work and course tools confirms content mastery, critical thinking skills, and core learning of department-approved student-learning outcomes.
5.1A2 Course grading policy is stated clearly and addresses specific and descriptive criteria for the evaluation of student work and participation, plus the time frame for grading and providing feedback on assignments.	5.1B2 Instructor assesses student work and participation using stated grading policy, provides summative feedback that references stated grading criteria, and posts grades within time frame specified by syllabus.
5.1A3 Assessment instruments are sequenced, varied, and appropriate to the student work being assessed, and are consistent with course activities and resources.	5.1B3 Instructor draws attention to assessment instruments when engaged in the course interactive communication.
5.1A4 Students have multiple opportunities to measure their own learning progress.	5.1B4 Students assess their understanding of course content through self-assessment instruments.
5.2A Feedback	**5.2B Feedback**
5.2A1 Syllabus states instructor response time for grading and feedback on assignments.	5.2B1 Instructor provides prompt, constructive feedback on student assignments in accordance with stated expectations in syllabus.

Standard 6: Support

Description: *All technical processes are presented with opportunities for assistance and guidance where students find it necessary. The design and page layout formats are clear and interesting, and avoid distracting or confusing elements. Software that will be necessary is readily available to students before engaging in the program or course(s). Readily available instant 'help' resources are available to the student without disengaging in the course activities. A personal help resource is available to students by email and phone. Online instructors are prepared to teach their students in the online environment and are prepared to provide student technical support for course activity pages during the course.*

A- Design	B- Delivery
6A Support	**6B Support**
6A1 Technical support is provided for students. The course clearly articulates how to access help features of the course and how to obtain help from the support desk.	6B1 Faculty make use of appropriate communication tools and help-resources within the course to quickly direct students for resolving technical obstacles.
6A2 Training is provided to instructors in course mechanics and best practices for online instruction.	6B2 Instructors take advantage of the training offered and demonstrate their learning in the online classroom.