The Quality Matters™ Rubric
2008 – 2010 Edition

General Standard 1: **Course Overview and Introduction** The overall design of the course is made clear to the student at the beginning of the course.		
Standard	**Points**	**Annotation**
1.1 Instructions make clear how to get started and where to find various course components.	3	Instructions provide a general course overview, present the schedule for activities, guide the new student to explore the course website, and indicate what to do first, rather than or in addition to listing detailed navigational instructions for the whole course. Instructors may choose to incorporate some of this information in the course syllabus. In this case, students should be directed to the syllabus at the beginning of the course. A useful idea is a "Read Me First" or "Start Here" button or icon on the course home page, linking students to start-up information. Examples: 1. A course "tour" 2. Clear statements about how to get started in the course 3. A "scavenger hunt" assignment that leads students through an exploration of the different areas of the course 4. A graphical table or diagram that depicts the relationship between the online and face-to-face portions of a hybrid course *Hybrid Courses*: Instructions in the online classroom make it apparent to students that the course is a hybrid course with both online and face-to-face components and activities. Instructions specify the requirements for participation in both the online and face-to-face portions of the course. The introductory information clearly states when and where students should participate each week, and a structured set of topics and schedule is provided for each face-to-face meeting.
1.2 A statement introduces the student to the purpose of the course and to its components; in the case of a hybrid course, the statement clarifies the relationship between the face-to-face and online components.	3	The instructor's statement gives the new student an idea of how the learning process is structured--including schedule, communication modes, and types of activities--and how student performance will be evaluated. These features are often included in the course syllabus, but they may also be included in an introductory or welcome document. Look for some or all of the following: 1. The course schedule (self-paced or following a set calendar, etc.)

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		2. Course sequencing, such as a linear or random order 3. Types of activities the student will be required to complete (written assignments, online self-tests, participation in the discussion board, group work, etc.) 4. Fully developed course calendar with assignment, activity, and test due dates. In the case of a hybrid course, the calendar should fully cover both the online and face-to-face portions of the course and specify the dates and times when face-to-face class meetings will be held. 5. Preferred mode of communication with the instructor (email, discussion board, etc.) 6. Preferred mode of communication with other students 7. Testing procedures (online, proctored, etc.) 8. Procedure for submission of electronic assignments *Hybrid Courses*: Instructors should explain the purpose of both the online and face-to-face portions of the course, and how they complement and reinforce each other. The instructor explains how and why both formats are important to the learning process.
1.3 Etiquette expectations (sometimes called "netiquette") for online discussions, email, and other forms of communication are stated clearly.	1	Expectations for student conduct online and in the classroom are clearly stated. The substance of these expectations is not to be evaluated. Examples: 1. Rules of conduct for participating in the discussion board 2. Rules of conduct for email content 3. "Speaking style" requirements (e.g., use of correct English required as opposed to popular abbreviations used online) 4. Spelling and grammar expectations, if any 5. Rules of conduct for classroom participation 6. Expectations for the tone and civility used in communicating with fellow students and the faculty member, whether the communication be via electronic means or telephone or face-to-face 7. A link or reference to the school's student handbook or code of conduct
1.4 The self-introduction by the instructor is appropriate and available online.	1	The initial introduction creates a sense of connection between the instructor and the students. It should present the instructor as professional as well as approachable, and include the essentials, such as the instructor's name, title, field of expertise, email address, phone number, and times when the instructor is typically online or may be reached by phone. The self-introduction helps students get to know the instructor and should extend beyond the essentials. It could include 1. Information on teaching philosophy 2. Past experience with teaching online classes 3. Personal information such as hobbies, family, travel experiences, etc. 4. A photograph *Hybrid Courses*: The instructor's self-introduction should be available

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		electronically for students who missed early face-to-face meetings.
1.5 Students are asked to introduce themselves to the class.	1	The student introduction helps to create a supportive learning environment and a sense of community. Students are asked to introduce themselves and given guidance on where and how they should do so. Student introductions themselves are not evaluated. Instructors may ask students to answer specific questions (such as why they are taking the course, what concerns they have, what they expect to learn, etc.) or may choose to let the student decide what to include. Instructors may provide an example of an introduction and/or start the process by introducing themselves. *Hybrid Courses*: The opportunity for introductions should be available electronically for students who may have missed the opportunity during early face-to-face meetings. Ideally, student introductions are posted online, for future reference, even if students have introduced themselves in a face-to-face meeting.
1.6 Minimum student preparation, and, if applicable, prerequisite knowledge in the discipline are clearly stated.	1	Information about prerequisite knowledge and competencies is found within the course, in documents linked to the course, or in supporting material not on the course site. Look for a link to that content and/or a reminder of it for the entering student. Discipline knowledge prerequisites should specify courses that meet the requirements.
1.7 Minimum technical skills expected of the student are clearly stated.	1	General as well as course-specific technical skills students must have to succeed in the course are specified. Examples of technical skills might include 1. The ability to use email with attachments 2. The ability to save files in commonly used word processing program formats 3. The ability to copy and paste 4. The ability to work on two browser windows simultaneously 5. The ability to use spreadsheet programs 6. The ability to use presentation and graphics programs
General Standard 2: **Learning Objectives (Competencies)** Learning objectives are clearly stated and explained.		
2.1 The course learning objectives describe outcomes that are measurable.	3	Measurable course learning objectives precisely describe what students are to gain from instruction, and then guide instructors to accurately assess student accomplishment. Objectives should describe student performance in specific, observable terms. If this specificity is not possible (e.g., internal cognition, affective changes), check for clear indications that the learning objective is meaningfully assessed. Note that at some institutions, learning objectives may be referred to as learning

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		outcomes. Examples of measurable objectives: 1. Select appropriate tax strategies for different financial and personal situations. 2. Develop a comprehensive, individualized wellness action program focused on overcoming a sedentary life-style. 3. Describe the relationship between the components of an ecosystem. 4. Explain the factors that contribute to economic inflation. In a course in which students are expected to demonstrate analytical skills and/or ability to express themselves effectively in writing or in other forms of communication, the learning objectives should include reference to these objectives in addition to objectives that relate to mastery of content. In addition to measurable objectives, a course may have objectives or desired outcomes that are not measurable, such as increased awareness, sensitivity, or interest in certain issues or subjects, but these do not substitute for measurable objectives. Special situations: In some cases (check the Instructor Worksheet), the course objectives are institutionally mandated and the individual instructor does not have the authority to change them. If the institutionally-mandated learning objectives are not measurable, then please be sure to make note of it in the "comments" box. Write specific suggestions for improvement so that the institution has the information it needs to improve the objectives. If the course objectives are institutionally mandated, then the reviewer may need to consider Standard 2.1 in conjunction with Standard 2.2 as follows: Standard 2.1 is considered as being MET under the following circumstances: 1. The course objectives are measurable, whether set by the institution or faculty member. 2. The institutionally-mandated course objectives are not measurable, but the faculty-driven module/unit-level objectives are measurable. Standard 2.1 is NOT MET under the following circumstances: 1. There are no course-level objectives. 2. The course-level objectives set by the instructor are not measurable. 3. The institutionally-mandated, course-level objectives are not measurable, and the faculty-driven module/unit objectives are either not measurable or not present. ***Alignment:*** The concept of alignment is intended to convey the idea that

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		critical course components should work together to ensure that students achieve the desired learning outcomes. Measurable course and module/unit-level learning objectives form the basis of alignment in a course. Other elements of the course, including those addressed in Standards 2.1 through 2.5, 3.1, 4.1, 5.1, and 6.1, should contribute to the accomplishment of these objectives. *It may not be possible to complete the course review if measurable learning objectives are not present. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that the review team chair communicate with the instructor to resolve this issue early in the process.*
2.2 The module/unit learning objectives describe outcomes that are measurable and consistent with the course-level objectives.	3	Measurable module- or unit-level learning objectives are important. They precisely describe the specific competencies, skills, and knowledge that students should be able to master and demonstrate at regular intervals throughout the course. They provide students with greater focus and clarity of learning expectations and outcomes on a weekly, modular, or unit basis. Module or unit-level objectives may be written by the instructor or come from the textbook. Regardless of origin, these objectives should be prominently stated in course materials, such as the syllabus, so that they are accessible to the student from within the online classroom. Module/unit learning objectives enable instructors to accurately assess student accomplishment. Objectives should describe student performance in specific, observable terms. Note that at some institutions, learning objectives may be referred to as learning outcomes. The module/unit-level objectives should be consistent with the course-level objectives. The module/unit objectives may either be implicitly or explicitly consistent with the course-level objectives. For example, the module/unit objective *"Students will write sentences that demonstrate correct use of commas, semicolons, and periods."* is implicitly consistent with the course objective *"Students will demonstrate a mastery of rules of punctuation."* ***Alignment:*** See the statement in the annotations to Standard 2.1.
2.3 All learning objectives are stated clearly and written from the students' perspective.	3	The learning objectives are stated clearly in the online classroom for all course delivery formats. The learning objectives are written in a way that allows students to easily grasp their meaning and the learning outcomes expected of students. The use of educational jargon, confusing terms, unnecessarily complex language, and puzzling syntax is avoided. The learning objectives are clearly stated by the instructor, verbally during face-to-face meetings, if applicable, and electronically in the online classroom. As a reviewer, consider both the course and module/unit learning objectives in your assessment of this standard.
2.4 Instructions to students on	3	Instructions may take various forms (e.g., narratives, bulleted lists, charts)

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how to meet the learning objectives are adequate and stated clearly.		and may appear at different levels within the course, such as module-based or in weekly assignment sheets. Instructions are stated clearly, are complete, and are provided electronically in the online classroom. As a reviewer, consider both the course and module/unit learning objectives in your assessment of this standard. Examples: 1. Module-based or weekly assignment pages in narrative, bulleted list, or chart form comprise a list of steps that guide the student in meeting learning objectives for each week. 2. Information indicates which learning activities, resources, assignments, and assessments support the learning objectives.
2.5 The learning objectives are appropriately designed for the level of the course.	2	Examine the course and module/unit learning objectives as a whole to ensure they describe knowledge and skills appropriate to the course level. All knowledge and skills need not be present in both the course-level and module/unit-level objectives, nor in every single objective. Content mastery should be appropriate for the type and level of the course. Lower-division courses should address content mastery, critical thinking skills, and core learning skills. Upper-division and graduate courses may focus on objectives more related to the specific discipline. Decisions on this aspect of the standard may be particularly difficult for individual reviewers whose expertise is not in the course discipline. Reviewers should consult with the SME (subject matter expert) on the review team. Core learning skills, including critical thinking, are typically those that transcend an individual course and are integrated across the curriculum. Core learning skills are sometimes called “core competencies.” Core learning skills may include 1. Written and oral communication skills 2. Ability to compute and process mathematical information 3. Manipulation and organization of information in various ways or using different tools 4. Understanding what one knows and how one knows it, and also understanding what one does not know and what one needs in order to find it out Critical thinking skills may include the ability to 1. Distinguish between fact and opinion 2. Distinguish between primary and secondary sources 3. Identify bias and stereotypes 4. Evaluate information sources for point of view, accuracy, usefulness, timeliness, etc.

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		5. Recognize deceptive arguments Upper-division and graduate course objectives might include 1. Mastery of the professional standards of the field 2. Ability to communicate using the specialized terminology and methods of discourse appropriate to the field
General Standard 3: **Assessment and Measurement** Assessment strategies use established ways to measure effective learning, evaluate student progress by reference to stated learning objectives, and are designed to be integral to the learning process.		
3.1 The types of assessments selected measure the stated learning objectives and are consistent with course activities and resources.	3	**Alignment:** Course assessments should align with the course and module objectives of the course (see Standards 2.1 and 2.2) by measuring the accomplishment of those objectives. It should be clear that the assessments can be successfully completed if students have met the objectives embedded in the course materials and learning activities. Note: at some institutions, learning objectives may be called learning outcomes. Examples of objective/assessment alignment: 1. A problem analysis evaluates critical thinking skills. 2. A multiple-choice quiz verifies vocabulary knowledge. 3. A composition assesses writing skills. Examples of inconsistent alignment between learning objectives and assessment: 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 "demonstrate discipline-specific information literacy," and the assessment is a rubric-scored term paper; but students are not given any practice with information literacy skills on smaller assignments. Some assessments may be geared toward meeting outcomes other than those stated in the course; for example, a course may have a writing component as part of a college-wide "Writing Across the Disciplines" requirement. In that case, the reviewer should suggest including within the course the objectives that reflect the college-wide requirement. Special situations: In some cases (check the Instructor Worksheet), the course objectives are institutionally mandated and the individual instructor does not have the authority to change them. For such cases, consider instead the module/unit-level objectives to assess and score

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		Standard 3.1.
3.2 The course grading policy is stated clearly.	3	A clear, written statement fully explains how the course grades are computed. 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 student, not the simplicity or complexity of a given grading system itself. A relatively complex grading system can still be unambiguous and easy to understand. Examples: 1. A list of all activities, tests, etc. that will determine the students' final grades 2. An explanation of the relationship between the final course letter grade and the student's accumulated points and/or percentages 3. If points and percentages are used, an explanation of the relationship between these two
3.3 Specific and descriptive criteria are provided for the evaluation of students' work and participation.	3	Students are provided with a clear and meaningful description of the criteria that will be used to evaluate their work and participation in the course. These criteria are stated up-front at the beginning of the course. The description and/or statement of criteria provide students with clear guidance on the expectations and required components of work and participation. The criteria give students all the information they need to know how a grade on an assignment or activity will be calculated. As a reviewer, you will ascertain that the criteria used to evaluate students' performance align with the course objectives and contribute to students' future growth and improvement. Note, however, that as a reviewer you are not being asked to look for and evaluate the instructor's specific feedback to students in Standard 3.3. Your focus is the nature of the criteria, not their application. Examples: 1. Evidence that the instructor has stated the criteria for evaluation of students' paper and assignments, such as rubrics or a list of criteria with associated point values 2. A description of the how students' participation in discussions will be graded, including the number of required postings per week; the criteria for evaluating the originality and quality of students' comments and their responsiveness to other students' comments; and grade credit they can expect for varying levels of performance
3.4 The assessment instruments selected are sequenced, varied, and appropriate to the content being	2	Multiple assessment strategies are used in both the online and face-to-face settings, and they are appropriate to the content being measured and the format in which they are used. Assessments are varied in order to provide multiple ways for students to

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assessed.		demonstrate mastery, and to accommodate multiple learning styles. The assessments are appropriately sequenced so as to promote the learning process and to build on previously mastered knowledge and skills gained in this course and prerequisite courses. Assessments are paced to give students adequate time to achieve mastery and complete the work in a thoughtful manner. Examples that meet the standard: 1. A series of assessments that progress from the definition of terms, to a short paper explaining the relationship between various theoretical concepts, to a term paper that includes the application of theoretical concepts and critical analysis of a journal article 2. Multiple types of assessment that enable the instructor to become familiar with an individual student's work and that discourage "proxy cheating" (someone other than the student completing and submitting work) 3. A series of assessments evenly paced every two weeks throughout the course Examples that DO NOT meet the standard: 1. The entire set of assessments consists of five multiple-choice tests. 2. The first assessment requires students to locate research materials, while library research skills and methods aren't covered until the third assessment. 3. No assessments are administered during the first 12 weeks of the semester, with an essay, term paper, and final exam due during the 13th, 14th, and 15th weeks, respectively. Circumstances affecting some graduate courses: The grade may be entirely based on a major assignment due at the end of the term. In this case, there should be benchmarks for progress during the term, with feedback from the instructor. Examples might include 1. Submission of a bibliography 2. Submission of an outline or project plan 3. Submission of a précis of the paper or project 4. Submission of one or more preliminary drafts
3.5 "Self-check" or practice assignments are provided, with timely feedback to students.	2	Students have multiple opportunities to measure their own learning progress. Students learn more effectively if they receive frequent, meaningful, and timely feedback. This feedback may come from the instructor directly, from assignments and assessments that have feedback built into them, or even from other students. Look for examples of "self-check" quizzes and activities, as well as other types of practice opportunities that provide timely feedback. These types of assignments should be voluntary or allow multiple attempts.

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		Examples: 1. Writing assignments that allow for the submission of a draft for instructor comment and suggestions for improvement 2. Self-mastery tests and quizzes that include informative feedback with each answer choice 3. Interactive games and simulation that have feedback built in 4. Self-scoring practice quizzes 5. Practice written assignments 6. Peer reviews 7. Model papers or essays provided for students' viewing 8. Sample answers or answer keys provided for students' viewing
General Standard 4: **Resources and Materials** Instructional materials are sufficiently comprehensive to achieve stated course objectives and learning outcomes and are prepared by qualified persons competent in their fields.		
4.1 The instructional materials contribute to the achievement of the stated course and module/unit learning objectives.	3	**Alignment:** The instructional materials used in the course should align with the course and module learning objectives of the course (see Standards 1.1 and 2.2) by contributing to the achievement of those objectives and by integrating effectively with the tools and media selected for their delivery to the student (see Standard 6.1). Course materials, resources, and learning objectives align in a clear and direct way. The course materials and resources enable students to achieve the stated learning objectives. As a reviewer, consider both the course and module/unit learning objectives in your assessment of this standard. Note: at some institutions, learning objectives may be called learning outcomes. Materials other than standard textbooks, monographs, and articles published by recognized publishers are prepared by the instructor or instructional designers skilled in preparing materials for distance learning. Decisions on this standard may be particularly difficult for individual reviewers whose expertise is not in the course discipline. Reviewers should consult with the team SME (subject matter expert) and use common sense to determine if the instructional materials support the learning objectives. Normally textbooks are not provided to reviewers because of cost and logistical limitations. Many publishers provide web links to their textbooks, and reviewers may wish to consult these links. In evaluating the course against this standard, reviewers will work closely with the

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		SME on the team. In some advanced undergraduate courses and graduate courses, no textbook(s) are assigned. Reviewers will need to consider bibliographies and webliographies provided by the instructor, or, in some cases, developed by students themselves, following guidelines provided by the instructor. Special situations: In some cases (check the Instructor Worksheet), the course objectives are institutionally mandated and the individual instructor does not have the authority to change them. For such cases, consider instead the module/unit-level objectives to assess and score Standard 4.1.
4.2 The relationship between the instructional materials and the learning activities is clearly explained to the student.	3	Students can easily determine the purpose of all content, materials, resources, technologies, and instructional methods used in the course, and how each will help them achieve the stated learning objectives. It is clearly stated which materials are required and which are recommended resources. (See Standard 5.1 for a description of learning activities.) For example, a course may be richly garnished with external links to Internet resources, but it is not clear whether those resources are for background information or additional personal enrichment, or if they are required for an assignment. Examples: 1. Links to external websites indicate the purpose of the links or are completely self-evident. 2. The function of animated games or exercises is clearly explained or is completely self-evident. If various instructional materials (books, manuals, videos, CD ROMs, computer software, etc.) are used in the course, the purpose of their use and relationship to one another should be clearly explained to students. Reviewers should determine if such diversely formatted course materials are integrated well enough to be useful to the uninitiated student. The integration of these materials may be considered both physically and contextually. Students should clearly understand the learning objectives associated with the materials. For example, a course requires students to use the following materials: a textbook divided into chapters, video segments ordered by topics, a website organized around specific skills, and a tutorial CD-ROM that has an opening menu consisting of “practice quizzes,” “images,” and “audio examples.” Consider whether it would be clear to students the order in which they should approach these varied materials, how each is related to the core content and learning objectives, and how the materials are related

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		to one another. In some advanced undergraduate and graduate courses, in which students are expected to find their own learning materials, the instructor should post guidelines that assist the student in identifying relevant materials and distinguish between core and supplementary materials and between scholarly and non-scholarly sources for academic writing. Reviewers should determine whether these guidelines satisfy the standard. Decisions on this standard may be difficult for individual reviewers whose expertise is not in the course discipline. Reviewers should consult with the team SME (subject matter expert) and use common sense to determine if the materials are appropriate to this course.
4.3 The instructional materials have sufficient breadth, depth, and currency for the student to learn the subject.	2	Breadth: The course materials are robust and create a rich learning environment for students. Instructors should provide meaningful content in a variety of sources, including the textbook(s), PowerPoint presentations, websites, lecture notes, outlines, and multimedia. Depth: The level of detail in supporting materials is appropriate for the level of the course, and provides depth sufficient for students to achieve the learning objectives. For example, an upper-level capstone course should include significantly deeper materials than those required for an introductory general education course. Currency: The materials represent up-to-date thinking and practice in the discipline. Some examples: an introductory computer course should include recent trends such as podcasting; an English writing course should discuss the purpose of Internet research; a chemistry course should include computerized models to demonstrate chemical operations. Decisions on this standard may be difficult for individual reviewers whose expertise is not in the course discipline. Reviewers should consult with the team SME (subject matter expert) and use common sense to determine if the instructional materials meet the breadth, depth, and currency criteria. Normally textbooks are not provided to reviewers because of cost and logistical limitations. Many publishers provide web links to their textbooks, and reviewers may wish to consult these links. In evaluating the course against this standard, reviewers will work closely with the SME on the team.
4.4 All resources and materials used in the course are appropriately cited.	1	Sources for materials created by the instructor and those borrowed from elsewhere are clearly identified. Text, images, graphic materials, tables, videos, audios, websites, and other forms of multimedia are appropriately referenced according to the institution's copyright and intellectual property policies.

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		Courses that use an e-pack or course cartridge may provide a blanket statement acknowledging that a significant portion of the course materials came from the publisher rather than include individual citations for each instance of publisher materials.
General Standard 5: **Learner Engagement** Meaningful interaction between the instructor and students, among students, and between students and course materials is employed to motivate students and foster intellectual commitment and personal development.		
5.1 The learning activities promote the achievement of the stated learning objectives. (Note: in some institutions learning objectives may be called learning outcomes.)	3	**Alignment:** Learning activities should align with the course and module objectives of the course (see Standards 2.1 and 2.2) by engaging students in activities that directly contribute to the achievement of those objectives and integrating smoothly with the tools and media (Standard 6.1) that enable these activities. The purpose of learning activities is to facilitate the student's achievement of the stated objectives. The learning activities should actively engage the learner with the course content. Learning activities are varied in order to provide reinforcement and mastery in multiple ways and to accommodate multiple learning styles. Activities may include reading assignments, student presentations, science labs, class discussions, case studies, role playing, simulation exercise, practice quizzes, tests, etc. Examples of mismatches between activities and objectives: 1. The objective requires students to be able to deliver a persuasive speech, but the activities in the course do not include practice of that skill. 2. The objective is "Prepare each budget within a master budget and explain their importance in the overall budgeting process." The students review information about this in their texts and observe budgets worked out by the instructor, but they themselves produce only one of the several budgets. *Hybrid Courses*: In courses that use both the online and face-to-face settings, the learning activities that occur in these two settings should be connected by a common thread or theme and should be mutually reinforcing. The connection and reinforcement are made clear to students. For example, the different parts of a particular activity might be sequenced in an alternating way in online and face-to-face meetings of the course.

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		Special Situations: When course objectives are institutionally mandated, the reviewer should refer to module/unit objectives to assess standard 5.1.
5.2 Learning activities foster instructor-student, content-student, and if appropriate to the course, student-student interaction.	3	Interactions between the instructor and the students are designed to facilitate students' understanding and mastery of the learning objectives. These interactions may be supportive (welcome and introduction messages, "about the instructor," weekly announcements) and instructional (direct instruction, assignment feedback, FAQs, etc…). The communications between student and instructor may be one-to-one (personal emails) or one-to-many (forum postings, class announcements). The degree and type of student-to-student interaction may vary with the discipline and the level of the course. Not all courses require the same type and frequency of student-to-student interaction. Careful consideration of how the student-to-student interactions support the course objectives will lead to a more efficient and effective design. Examples of student-to-student interactions may include self-introductions, group discussion postings, small-group projects, peer critiques, etc. Refer to the Instructor Worksheet to determine if student-student interaction is appropriate for this course. If the Worksheet indicates that such interaction is appropriate, then consider it in deciding whether the standard is met. If the Worksheet indicates that such interaction is not appropriate, then focus only on student-to-content and instructor-to-student interaction to determine whether the standard has been met. When you think it is appropriate to do so, include a recommendation that student-student interaction be added to the course or receive more emphasis in the course. NOTE: Your evaluation should be based on what you find to be the nature of the course and not on your personal preferences about student-student interaction.
5.3 Clear standards are set for instructor responsiveness and availability (turn-around time for email, grade posting, etc.)	2	A clear statement of instructor responsibilities is an important component of an online or hybrid course. Students are better able to manage their course activities when the instructor has stated his or her timeframe for responding to student emails and discussion postings and letting students know when they will receive feedback on assignments and when grades will be posted. By sharing these expectations, the instructor also deflects unrealistic student expectations of 24/7 service from the instructor. Frequently these expectations are conveyed in the syllabus or the "meet the instructor" message. If it is necessary to alter the standards during the course, the instructor is encouraged to clearly communicate the adjustments to the students.
5.4 The requirements for	2	A clear statement of the instructor's expectations with regard to student

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student interaction are clearly articulated.		participation in required course interactions (frequency, length, timeliness, etc.) help students plan and manage their class participation and provide a basis for the instructor to evaluate student participation. The more specifically these expectations are defined, the easier it is for the learner to meet and adhere to the standards. Typically, general statements of student performance expectations are included in the course information page or syllabus. These general requirements may specify the nature of the required participation and expectations for frequency and quality of the student's interactions. More specific task-related performance expectations may be included in the individual task description. The instructor may also share with students a rubric detailing how student interactions are evaluated, including reading and responding to the instructor's and classmates' posts.
General Standard 6: **Course Technology** Course navigation and the technology employed in the course foster student engagement and ensure access to instructional materials and resources.		
6.1 The tools and media support the learning objectives, and are appropriately chosen to deliver the content of the course.	3	**Alignment:** The tools and media selected for the course should align with the course and module objectives of the course (see Standards 2.1 and 2.2) by effectively supporting the assessment instruments (Standard 3.1), instructional materials (Standard 4.1), and learning activities (Standard 5.1) in the course. Tools and media used in the course support learning objectives and are integrated with course materials and assignments. Clear information and instructions should be provided regarding how the tools and media 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. Examples of tools include discussion boards, chat rooms, grade book, whiteboard, wiki, blogs, etc. Media are not required for this standard to be met. Rather, *if* media are used, they should support the learning objectives and be contextually integrated. Examples of media include video, audio, podcasting, gaming, animations, simulations, wikis, blogs, virtual classrooms (for example, Elluminate Live, Second Life), webinars, etc. If a publisher course cartridge is used, the instructor should clearly

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		designate which media are required in the course and which are optional. Special situations: In some cases (check the Instructor Worksheet), the course objectives are institutionally mandated and the individual instructor does not have the authority to change them. For such cases, consider instead the module/unit-level objectives to assess and score Standard 6.1.
6.2 The 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. Selected tools and media should encourage the student to reflectively grasp and respond to the deeper learning process. Types of learner engagement include learner-content, learner-instructor, and learner-learner. Interactions can provide opportunities to increase learners' comfort levels, but the goal should be to facilitate the broadest and deepest learner engagement possible in the course. Examples: 1. Automated "self-check" exercises requiring student response 2. Animations, simulations, and games that require student input 3. Learning management system functions that provide competence/timed release functions 4. Software that tracks student interaction and progress 5. Discussion tools with automatic notification or a "read/unread" tracking feature 6. Interactive, real-time software, such as real-time collaborative tools, webinars, and virtual worlds 7. Interactive, constructivist software, such as shared documents or wikis.
6.3 Navigation throughout the online components of the course is logical, consistent, and efficient.	3	Annotation: Navigation refers to the process of planning, recording, and controlling the movement of a learner from one place to another in the online course. Considerations for effective navigation devices within the online course may include: 1. Adherence to accepted web standards-of-function for hypertext links, buttons, and windows 2. Provisions for intuitive understanding of function when non-standard navigation devices are employed 3. Consistent use of navigation devices Some navigation devices--next and previous links, for example--are provided by the learning management system used for course delivery and cannot be modified. Other navigation devices--hypertext links, icons, and window functions, for example--may be within the control of the course designer. It can be challenging for the reviewer to determine the locus of control for the various course navigation devices used to move the learner from one place to another in the course.

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6.4 Students have ready access to the technologies required in the course.	2	For this standard, the term "technologies" covers a range of software and plug-ins such as Acrobat Reader, media players, wiki, MP3 players, etc. In addition, courses might require special software packages (spreadsheets, math calculators, etc.). Clear instructions list the required software and plug-ins, along with instructions for obtaining and installing them. All required technologies are easily downloadable, provided by the institution, available for purchase at the bookstore, or otherwise easy to obtain and include clear instructions for installation.
6.5 The course components are compatible with current standards for delivery modes.	1	Assessments, activities, instructional materials, tools, and media make use of the available technologies and meet current standards for widespread accessibility. Other considerations: 1. Large text files are presented with a table of contents or unit numbering. 2. If some of the course resources, including textbooks, videos, CD-ROMs, etc., are only available in the face-to-face sessions and are unavailable at the course website, the instructor should indicate how students who miss the face-to-face sessions would gain access to the resources. 3. Learning activities in science lab courses 4. The appropriate delivery mode (online or face-to-face) is used for each activity. 5. The technology is used in a way that preserves student confidentiality with regard to grades and communication with the instructor. 6. Quizzes and exams are given with time limitations, with printing disabled, and with other security measures in place.
6.6 Instructions on how to access resources at a distance are sufficient and easy to understand.	1	The instructional materials, resources, tools, and media should be easily accessible, obtainable, and useable by the student. Students need to know about and be able to obtain access to educational resources by remote access. Information on these resources is easy to locate in the course materials and includes clear instructions on how to access the resources. Technical support information likewise should be easy to find and clearly presented for students who might need assistance with constantly changing software versions and compatibility questions. Examples: 1. For textbooks, CDs, and DVDs, etc., instructors provide the title, author, publisher, ISBN number, copyright date, and information on where copies can be obtained. 2. A navigation button is devoted to "Resources" and appropriately tied in with the overall course design. 3. A custom CD or DVD prepared for the course is surface-mailed to students.

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		4. Instructions for how to obtain full-text journal articles are provided in the assignment that requires their use. 5. If a publisher's course cartridge is used, clear information about how and when students will be accessing the publisher's material is necessary.Technical support information should be easy to find and clear for students who might need assistance with constantly changing software versions and compatibility questions.
6.7 The course design takes full advantage of available tools and media.	1	Innovative technologies continuously appear on the market, and course technology should be current and reflect the evolution of the field of online education. As new versions of a course management system are released, instructors should integrate the new features into their courses to ensure that students have the most effective and efficient access to the courses. Courses not recently developed may need to be updated. As a reviewer, keep in mind that the tools and media available to an instructor may vary greatly and are sometimes limited by the access and support provided by the institution. Be sure to check the Instructor Worksheet for information relevant to this standard. Examples of current technologies that will make the course content and activities more accessible: 1. Using compressed files to reduce file downloading time 2. Delivering audio files in a common file type such as Windows Media or RealPlayer 3. Using podcasts instead of audiocassettes 4. Using CDs and DVDs rather than VHS tapes 5. In Blackboard, using the Assignment feature rather than the Digital Drop Box feature
General Standard 7: **Learner Support** The course facilitates student access to institutional services essential to student success.		
7.1 The course instructions articulate or link to a clear description of the technical support offered.	2	Technical support for learners differs from institution to institution. Technical support includes information about topics such as how to log in and how to use the tools and features of the learning management system; a browser testing tool; information on minimal software and hardware requirements; and links for downloading software. It does not include help with course content, assignments, or academic or student support services (see Standards 7.2 and 7.3). Look for evidence that learners have access to technical support services from within the course or the learning management system. 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 learners.

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		Examples: 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 institution's technical support center or help desk 3. A phone number for the institution's technical support center or help desk 4. Clear directions for obtaining support for access to publisher-supplied materials (e.g., e-packs or course cartridges) 5. Links to tutorials or other resources providing instructions on how to use the tools and features of the learning management system 6. A link to "frequently asked questions"
7.2 Course instructions articulate or link to an explanation of how the institution's academic support system can assist the student in effectively using the resources provided.	2	Academic support for students, and the scope of what "academic support" entails, differs from institution to institution. For the purposes of review, academic support includes an online orientation, access to library resources, a readiness assessment or survey, testing services, tutoring, writing and/or math centers, supplemental instruction programs, and teaching assistants. Look for evidence that learners have access to academic support services from within the course or the learning management system. The purpose is not to review the adequacy of the services on an institutional level but rather to determine if academic support services are provided for learners. Examples: 1. A link to the academic support website, along with a listing and definition of academic support services provided for learners 2. Links to institution-specific academic support services and how to access these services (e.g., location of testing center and/or proctored test sites, hours of operation, phone numbers and email addresses for key personnel) 3. Links to online orientations or a demo course 4. Link to the library, including information on how to obtain library access, request materials, access databases, and contact a librarian
7.3 Course instructions articulate or link to an explanation of how the institution's student support services can help students reach their educational goals.	1	Student support services, and the scope of what such support entails, differ from institution to institution. For the purposes of this review, student support services include ADA services, advising, registration, financial aid, student or campus life, counseling, career services, online workshops, and student organizations. Look for evidence that learners have access to student support services from within the course or the learning management system. The purpose is not to review the adequacy of those services on an institutional level but rather to determine if student support services are provided for learners. Examples: 1. A clear description of institution-specific student support services and

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		how to access them (including email addresses and phone numbers for key personnel) 2. A link to the student support website, along with a listing and definition of student support services 3. Guidance on when and how students should access a particular support service
7.4 Course instructions answer basic questions related to research, writing, technology, etc., or link to tutorials or other resources that provide the information.	1	Tutorials and resources for learners differ from institution to institution. For the purpose of this review, academic resources include tutorials or other forms of guidance on conducting research, writing papers, citing sources, using an online writing lab, and using institution-specific technology. Look for evidence that learners have access to tutorials or other resources from within the course or the learning management system. The purpose is not to review the adequacy of the resources on an institutional level but rather to determine if they are provided for learners. Standard 7.4 does not refer to course-specific tutorials and resources or services provided by individual employees or faculty.
General Standard 8: **Accessibility** The face-to-face and online course components are accessible to all students.		
8.1 The course incorporates ADA standards and reflects conformance with institutional policy regarding accessibility in online and hybrid courses.	3	All web-based courses should comply with the institution's accessibility and/or disability policies and procedures. (Instructors are asked to identify these on the Instructor Worksheet.) In the absence of institutional policy, courses should comply with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). To meet this standard, a course should: 1. Include a link to the institution's ADA policy and/or guidelines, if available 2. Include a statement that tells the students how to gain access to an institution's disabilities support services (often known as ADA services) 3. If the course employs a Course Management System such as Angel, Blackboard, Desire2Learn, eCollege, WebCT, WebTycho, etc., a statement certifying ADA compliance from the CMS provider should be readily available or provided by the instructor. 4. .If other tools and software are used to deliver the course, the instructor should provide documentation stating their degree of ADA compliance. The criteria mentioned in the annotations to 8.1 (and 8.2-8.4) should be met by these tools. *Additional elements of Section 508 are covered in the annotations to Standards 8.2 – 8.4.*
8.2 Course pages and course	2	Alternative means of access to course information are provided for the

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materials provide equivalent alternatives to auditory and visual content.		vision- or hearing-impaired student, such as equivalent textual representations of images, audio, animations, and video in the course website. Examples: 1. An audio lecture has a text transcript available. 2. A video clip, image, or animation is accompanied by a text transcript. 3. Text provides an alternative to non-text content in web pages. It is especially helpful for people who are blind and rely on a screen reader to have the content of the website read to them. 4. Videos and live audio have captions and a transcript. With archived audio, a transcription may be sufficient. 5. Form elements (text field, checkbox, dropdown list, etc.) have a label associated to the correct form element using the <label> tag. The user can submit the form and recover from any errors, such as the failure to fill in all required fields.
8.3 Course pages have links that are self-describing and meaningful.	2	The course provides Internet links that include useful descriptions of what students will find at the linked sites. These descriptions enable vision-impaired student to use screen reader software to understand links. In addition, instructors provide directions that clearly direct students to the appropriate sub-pages within an external website. Examples: 1. All file names and web hyperlinks have meaningful names. For instance, the link to take a quiz should say “Take Quiz 1,” not “Click Here.” 2. Icons used as links should also have HTML tags or an accompanying text link. 3. To facilitate access to Internet sites by screen readers, links are arranged in numeric or alphabetic order, rather than simple bulleted form.
8.4 The course ensures screen readability.	1	The course employs appropriate font, color, and spacing to facilitate readability and minimize distractions for the student. Presenting information in text format is generally acceptable because screen reader software (used by the vision-impaired) can read text. When reviewers note readability problems, they should refer the course developer(s) to appropriate tips from the list below: 1. If using color-coding, use additional means to communicate information, such as bold or italics in conjunction, with color-coding. 2. Sufficient contrast is used in the font and background colors 3. Text size is consistent with typical View,Text, and Size settings. 4. Course pages provide an alternate, non-color-coded format. 5. Formatting and color coding are used to serve specific instructional purposes. For example, format and color are used purposefully to communicate key points, group like items, emphasize relevant relationships, etc. 6. Tables are used online for layout and to organize data. Tables that are used to organize tabular data should have appropriate table headers

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		(the <th> element). Data cells should be associated with their appropriate headers, making it easier for screen reader users to navigate and understand the data table. 7. PDF documents and other non-HTML content should be as accessible as possible. If they are not, using HTML could be considered. PDF documents could also include a series of tags to make them more accessible. A tagged PDF file looks the same but is likely to be more accessible to a person using a screen reader. 8. Provide a method that allows users to skip navigation or other elements that repeat on every page. This shortcut is usually accomplished by providing a "Skip to Content," "Skip to Main Content," or "Skip Navigation" link at the top of the page that goes to the main content of the page. 9. Ensure JavaScript event handlers are device-independent (e.g., they do not require the use of a mouse) and make sure that the page does not rely on JavaScript to function. 10. HTML-compliant and -accessible pages are more robust and provide search engine optimization. Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) allow separation of content from presentation and thus provide more flexibility and accessibility of content.

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