

# Best Practices Guidelines for Online and Hybrid Courses

---

Instructional Technology and Design • North Shore Community College

*Our best practices guidelines are modeled after the standards in the Quality Matters Higher Education Rubric (<https://www.qualitymatters.org/rubric>).*

## Course Design and Accessibility

- The course is designed with universal design for learning principles in mind.
- The course is designed following *NSCC's Online and Hybrid Course Accessibility Guidelines*.
- The course provides guidance on how to obtain an accommodation (inclusive syllabus statement).
- The course is easy to navigate. Navigation is logical, consistent and efficient.
- Technical aspects of the course are consistent with regards to such elements as naming conventions, font type, font color, and link destination.
- Module learning sequences are consistent in design and format.
- Course calendar and due dates are consistent from week to week.

## Course Kickoff

- Instructions are included that clearly let students know how to get started in the course and where to find various course components.
- Orientation/Start Here materials are included in the course with:
  - Course orientation (following provided PowerPoint template)
  - Syllabus
  - Course schedule
  - Instructor introduction
  - Information on how to work through the weekly content
  - Communication expectations around how students communicate with the instructor and classmates (e.g. email, discussion forums, group projects) and how the instructor will communicate with the students (e.g. avenues, times, and turnarounds with communications and feedback for assignments) are clearly identified.
  - Course and institutional policies - academic integrity, late submissions, etc.
  - Minimum technical skills expected of students to be successful in course
  - Technical support available and how to access it
  - Information on or links to institutional student support services and resources (Disability Services, Academic Support, Library, etc.)

## Course Materials

- Each module contains a learning guide. Each learning guide contains:
  - Clear and measurable learning objectives written in student-friendly language.
  - Original contextual information from instructor whether in the form of written lectures or remarks, audio lectures, study guides, PowerPoints, narrated lectures, etc.
  - A list of learning materials, activities and assessments.

- Course learning materials have sufficient breadth, depth, and currency for the students to learn the topics. The distinction between required and optional materials is explained.
- Resources and materials are appropriately cited and meet appropriate copyright usage.

## **Assessment Strategies**

- Assessments are varied and frequent.
- Opportunities for students to receive frequent, meaningful and timely feedback are included.
- Regular self-check or practice assignments are provided.
- Grading policy is clear including information on how a grade on an assignment or activity will be calculated.
- All assignments (e.g. discussions, group projects, and research papers) should have guidelines that include criteria, rubric, grade calculation, technical standards, and specific method of submission.

## **Learning Engagement**

- Students are asked to introduce themselves to build learning community.
- Learning activities are varied and foster instructor-student, content-student, and student-student interaction.
- Learning activities should actively engage students with the course content.
- Technology tools and media should support student engagement and guide the students to become active learners.
- Expectations and requirements for student interaction are clearly articulated.

## **Alignment of Objectives, Assessments, and Activities\***

- The instructional materials, technology tools, and learning activities should enable students to achieve the stated course and module/unit learning objectives.
- Assessments measure the stated objectives and are consistent with course activities.
- Instructors identify how activities and assessments connect with objectives.

---

\*Because we are not subject matter experts, we cannot fully evaluate whether your objectives, assessments and activities are in alignment. However, we will provide some general recommendations if we see any areas where we think we can be helpful.

---

## **Additional Practices for Hybrid Courses**

- Online and F2F activities are integrated. Decisions about putting activities online or F2F should be intentional, appropriate and have pedagogical rationales.
- The relationship between the F2F and online components is explained. Students should understand what they are expected to do before, during and after each F2F meeting.
- Assessments are appropriately balanced between online and F2F modules.
- The specific hybrid format is explicitly addressed within in the course material (and when relevant, communicated in advance of the start of the course).

This workforce product was funded by a grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration. The product was created by the grantee and does not necessarily reflect the official position of the U.S. Department of Labor. The U.S. Department of Labor makes no guarantees, warranties, or assurances of any kind, express or implied, with respect to such information, including any information on linked sites and including, but not limited to, accuracy of the information or its completeness, timeliness, usefulness, adequacy, continued availability, or ownership. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.