

# BEST PRACTICES IN ONLINE LEARNING & TEACHING

## Rationale

The purpose of these best practices is to provide faculty with ideas and resources on how to design a quality online course, one that is easy to navigate and promotes student engagement. This document offers 20 overall best practices: 17 highly recommended ones (divided into four categories: Course Organization & Design, Instructional Design & Delivery, Assessment & Evaluation of Student Learning, and Effective Use of Technology) and 3 recommended ones (referring to Faculty Use of Student Feedback).

A task force composed primarily of faculty members drafted this document, which was then shared with Department Chairs, the Provost's Academic Council, and the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate for feedback and endorsement. *This document is not intended to be used as a criteria for online course evaluation*, but is designed to offer resources to faculty and a framework to discuss various approaches to online education that can help provide evidence of teaching effectiveness.

These best practices were originally informed by The Rubric for Online Instruction, developed at CSU, Chico in 2003. They were also shaped by tools and resources shared during the Go Virtual Summer Institute. Lastly, these practices have been mapped around the [Quality Learning and Teaching](#) instrument (QLT), specifically the Core 24 standards, which is the official framework for Quality Assurance adopted at CSU, Chico.

## General Resources

[Keep Teaching](#) (resources for instructors)

[Keep Learning](#) (resources for students)

[Go Virtual Summer Institute](#) general resources

[Keep Teaching Virtual Conference](#)

Go Virtual Faculty Videos (examples of quality course design, coming soon)

[Syllabi repository](#)

[Quality Learning and Teaching Instrument](#)

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	BEST PRACTICES IN ONLINE LEARNING & TEACHING	RESOURCES	QLT Core 24 standards
HIGHLY RECOMMENDED	<b>Course Organization &amp; Design</b> <i>Course design is the process of creating welcoming learning environments and quality learning experiences for all students. Effective design ensures all information are easily available and accessible to all students.</i>		
	<p>The structure of the course is laid out and communicated to the students. Course organization is consistent and easy to navigate. Course components are visually and functionally consistent (modules, font, size, structure, color, hyperlinks, text, headings, headers, etc.)</p>	<p><a href="#">Course Development with TLP</a> (set up a meeting to learn how to use folders, learning modules, course links, etc.)  <a href="#">Sample Course Design</a> (link to video presentation)  <a href="#">Blackboard Shell Course Design</a> (PPT presentation)  <a href="#">Blackboard Learn Navigation</a>  <a href="#">How to Make Your Online Course Navigation 10x Better</a>  <a href="#">How to make headers/headings in BBL</a></p>	1.1, 4.3, 6.2
	<p>Key information (course name, number, section, meeting times, instructor name, office hours, textbook information, software requirements) is available to students and easy to access. Course provides content-specific resources and contact information for instructor, department, program, etc.</p>	<p>Course-specific resources may include: tutoring resources, writing guides, OneSearch, just-in-time video tutorials, additional online tutorials (.e.g, <a href="#">Khan Academy</a>), homework hotlines, open-help discussion board threads.  <a href="#">Syllabus repository</a>            FPPP 1.1.5</p>	1.1, 1.2, 3.1
	<p>Course syllabus identifies and delineates the role the online environment will play in the course (including information about expected synchronous or asynchronous participation).</p>	<p>Resources include additional tech help on campus for students: <a href="#">IT Support Services</a>, <a href="#">Library Resources for Teaching and Learning</a>  <a href="#">Syllabus repository</a>, <a href="#">TLP Syllabus Accessibility with Template</a></p>	1.3, 2.4
	<p>Course contains information for online learner support and links to campus resources. Course also offers access to resources supporting different learning abilities.</p>	<p><a href="#">Keep Learning</a>, <a href="#">ITSS</a>, <a href="#">Zoom</a>, <a href="#">Blackboard</a>, <a href="#">OATS</a>, <a href="#">TLP Division of Student Affairs</a></p>	7.2, 7.3
	<p>Content, material, technology, and processes are accessible to all students.</p>	<p><a href="#">Ally pdf accessibly check</a>  <a href="#">Word doc accessibility check</a>  <a href="#">Office of Accessible Technology &amp; Services (OATS)</a>  <a href="#">TLP: Accessible Course Materials</a></p>	6.4, 8.5

## Instructional Design & Delivery

*Instructional design is the process by which learning materials, activities, and experiences are designed, developed, and delivered. Effective design offers students easy access to information, possibilities for meaningful interaction and engagement, and opportunities for active learning. The [Technology and Learning Program](#) provides opportunities for consultation and workshops with instructional technology consultants and instructional designers.*

Course offers opportunities for interaction student to student and student to instructor, and promotes the creation of a dynamic learning community.	<i>Synchronous:</i> Zoom breakout rooms, Google Drive (docs, slides) <i>Asynchronous:</i> Blackboard Tools (discussion forum, <a href="#">Wiki</a> , blogs, journals), Google Drive <a href="#">Discussion Boards: Valuable? Overused? Discuss</a> (Inside Higher Ed) <a href="#">12 Ways to Increase Student Participation in Online Discussions</a>	4.1
Course goals and activities align with learning objectives.	<a href="#">Using Bloom's Taxonomy to Write Effective Learning Objectives</a> <a href="#">Go Virtual: Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes</a>	2.3
Course provides opportunities for all students to engage with the material.	<a href="#">College students' preferences of instructional material formats</a>	3.5
The instructor addresses student questions (synchronously or via asynchronous feedback).	Email, Zoom meeting, Zoom breakout rooms, Zoom chat, Google docs, Online learning tools (discussion forum, wiki, blogs, journals)	4.7, 5.6

## Assessment & Evaluation of Student Learning

*Assessment and Evaluation of Student Learning refers to the process used to gather data about and evidence of the achievement of the Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes (SLOs). Instructors can contact their Department and College Assessment Coordinator for assistance with establishing an effective course assessment plan. Instructors are also encouraged to explore resources available in the Academic Assessment Council [webpage](#).*

Course learning objectives are well-defined, measurable, and allow for formative assessment of student learning. Grading policy clarifies the expectations for the overall course and specific assignments.	<a href="#">Backwards design</a> <a href="#">Formative vs. Summative Assessment</a> <a href="#">Go Virtual: Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes (resources)</a> <a href="#">Go Virtual: Authentic Assessment</a> (video presentation)	2.1, 2.2
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<p>Learning activities are used to assess content knowledge, attitudes, and skills.</p>	<p>BBL: Quizzes, Discussion Boards, Blogs, Journals, <a href="#">Wiki</a>  Non-BBL Ideas: <a href="#">3rd Party tools: e.g., Kahoot, Graphic Organizers</a>: e.g., <a href="#">KWL</a> charts, Venn Diagrams  <a href="#">Campus supported software</a></p>	<p>2.3, 4.7</p>
<p>Regular and substantive feedback about student performance is provided in a timely manner throughout the course.</p>	<p>Various tools: Croc-a-doc, Turnitin, Discussion Boards, Journals, Blogs, Gradebook, Email</p>	<p>5.6</p>
<p>Course provides opportunities for students' self-assessments and/or peer feedback opportunities.</p>	<p>BBL Tools- Self-quizzes; Turnitin Peer Reviews (others)  <a href="#">Teaching Students to Evaluate Each Other</a></p>	<p>2.5, 4.4</p>
<p><b>Effective Use of Technology</b>  <i>Effective Use of Technology refers to utilizing technology to deliver course content, engaging students in learning activities (individual, student-to-student, and instructor-to-student), and allowing students to express themselves through different media. Instructors can contact <a href="#">Faculty Development</a> and the <a href="#">Technology and Learning Program</a> for additional resources and workshops.</i></p>		
<p>Technology choices facilitate communication and learning.</p>	<p><a href="#">Kaltura</a>, Discussion Boards, Blogs, Journals, <a href="#">Wiki</a>, Announcements, email  Non-BBL Ideas: 3rd Party tools, YouTube  <a href="#">Campus Supported Software</a></p>	<p>4.1, 6.2</p>
<p>Technology choices facilitate active learning and/or student engagement.</p>	<p><a href="#">What is Active Learning?</a> (UMN link)  <a href="#">What is student engagement?</a> (Definition)  Discussion board/forum, google docs, Kaltura videos, Wiki</p>	<p>4.4, 6.2</p>
<p>Course materials and tools are provided in formats that accommodate different learning preferences.</p>	<p>Connections to accessibility. Online learning tools: <a href="#">Kaltura</a> and YouTube (video), Items (for text), Embedded images (text/visuals)  Vimeo (video), Discord (audio), podcast apps (audio)</p>	<p>3.5, 8.5</p>
<p>Course provides information about accessibility services and addresses concerns related to the digital divide. Course utilizes Universal Design for Learning to effectively engage all students in the learning process.</p>	<p><a href="#">UDL</a> information website  <a href="#">How the COVID-19 Pandemic Shed Light on the Digital Divide</a>  <a href="#">Digital Divide, Equity, Access, Inclusion &amp; Diversity</a> (video presentation)</p>	<p>8.1, 8.3</p>

RECOMMENDED	<b>Faculty Use of Student Feedback</b>		
	<i>Regular feedback opportunities allow students to reflect on their learning throughout the semester, establish connections among various courses, provide information on how to improve a course, and share their experience about the online learning environment.</i>		
	Instructor offers opportunities for students to give feedback on course content throughout the semester.	BBL: surveys, <a href="#">Google forms</a> (link to video presentation), Discussion Board	2.5
	Instructor offers opportunities for students to give feedback on ease of online technology and accessibility of course.	BBL: surveys, <a href="#">Google forms</a> (link to video presentation), Discussion Board	2.5
	Instructor requests and uses student feedback during the semester to help plan instruction and assessment of student learning for the rest of the semester.	BBL: surveys, <a href="#">Google forms</a> (link to video presentation), Discussion Board	2.5