

Quality **2.0** Standards

eLearning Rubric

A resource for quality online curriculum development.

The eCampusAlberta eLearning Rubric is designed to support the creation of quality online curriculum. The original standards were reviewed and updated in 2013 and this rubric reflects the updated Quality Standards 2.0. These standards are employed by eCampusAlberta member institutions and across the post-secondary education system.

This rubric may be used to assess existing courses or those under development. It may also be used as a guide by faculty and online curriculum developers for planning purposes.

Revised February 22, 2017



Course Standards

Support Standards

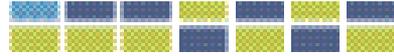
Institutional and
Administrative Standards



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported License.



eLearning Rubric Quality Standards



The eLearning Rubric is one of four components of the eCampusAlberta Quality Suite. The suite was created to assist faculty and instructional designers with online curriculum development. The four components are the eLearning Rubric available in print and online, the Rubric Self-Assessment Checklist, the Quality eToolkit web site, and the Essential Quality Standards (EQS).

How to Use the Rubric Self-Assessment Checklist

Use the checklist to guide you through your course development. Place a check mark beside each standard that has been met. To ensure the course meets the required Essential Quality Standards, identify any Essential level standards that have not been met and make course revisions to address these.

How are the standards ranked?

The course standards are ranked as one of three levels – Essential, Excellent, or Exemplary.

Essential

These standards are integral to a successful online course. This is the minimum level that every course offered through eCampusAlberta must meet. These standards are known as the Essential Quality Standards (EQS).

Excellent

These standards contribute to the efficiency or effectiveness of a learner's online experience. In order to achieve the Excellent level, all indicators for the Essential Level are evident, along with the indicators for the Excellent Level.

Exemplary

These standards enhance the quality of a learner's online experience and increase accessibility for all learners. In order to achieve the Exemplary level, all indicators for the Essential and Excellent Levels are evident, along with the indicators for the Exemplary Level.

COURSE STANDARDS

Web Design Standards

Format: The course elements use a logical and consistent structure and design format.

Essential:

- a) Movement through the course is logical and a consistent layout design orients users throughout the course.
- b) Font, colour, graphics and icons are consistent throughout the course.
- c) The course site design uses consistently formatted sections, pages or units that incorporate the same writing style, layout, graphic design, and organizational levels.
- d) All naming conventions are appropriate, logical and consistently applied throughout the course.

Excellent:

- a) A minimum of three format options are provided to learners (e.g., all information conveyed by colour is also available without colour; a text equivalent is provided for all non-text information; audio presentations include transcripts; videos include transcripts or captions; PDF documents are also available in MS Word or a properly formatted HTML document; all text and images are large or enlargeable; ALT tags are used with images, etc.).

Exemplary:

- a) The course addresses WAI Accessibility Guidelines (www.w3.org) or other recognized accessibility guidelines and displays the appropriate validation (e.g., WAI WCAG, Worldspace, Firefox or Chrome Accessibility Extensions, CynthiaSays) on the home page or other prominent location within the course.

Legibility and Readability: The course is designed to facilitate legibility and readability.

Essential:

- a) Design strategies include use of visual contrast between the text colour and background, use of sans serif font for body text, appropriate use of typographical emphasis (e.g., bolding, underlining, colour changes, etc.) and appropriate use of white space and alignment.
- b) Text and graphics are easily read on screen and in print where relevant (e.g., minimum font size of 11 to 13 pt. or equivalent for text except for footnotes, credits or referencing; clear resolution and appropriate size of graphics, etc.).

Excellent:

- a) Course documents are compatible with assistive technology.

Exemplary: N/A

Navigation: Navigation throughout the course is consistent, predictable and efficient.

Essential:

- a) A consistent, predictable and efficient navigation scheme is used throughout the course (e.g., pages have navigation options, breadcrumbs or other visual displays of the path are used with meaningful naming conventions to help learners navigate throughout the course, learners can easily locate specific topics or course components and navigate to them from any page, etc.).
- b) Hyperlinks and internal links are clearly identified by underlining or other differentiation.
- c) It is easy for the learner to move from the course to outside links and back again.
- d) All links function properly. **Reviewed for information only.**

Excellent:

- a) A table of contents, options to expand and contract pages or sections, or other strategies are used to minimize scrolling.
- b) All hyperlinks have text descriptions.

Exemplary:

- a) Proper heading structure and scaffolding is used for access.
- b) Alt text is used for visual displays of pathways.
- c) Robust navigation alternatives are used.
- d) Location supports such as page numbers are included.

Course Information Standards

Course Outline/Syllabus: A course outline/syllabus and course description is provided.

Essential:

- a) The approved course outline/syllabus is included in the course. If the current course outline/syllabus is not available during the review process, a past course outline/syllabus or placeholder for such is provided and is identified as such.

Excellent:

- a) The course outline/syllabus and other course information provided relates directly to the online course, including credit hours, course description, required materials, course grading, assignments and online participation requirements (e.g., discussions, checking e-mail regularly, logging in regularly, etc.).
- b) Departmental and/or program information and relevant institutional academic policies are included in the outline or other location in the course.

Exemplary:

- a) The course outline/syllabus is learner-centred (focused on learner needs and their learning process).
- b) The outline/syllabus is reviewed with the learners by the instructor at the beginning of the course (e.g., in an asynchronous or synchronous discussion, presentation, etc.).
- c) The outline/syllabus includes a statement on the availability of accessibility services from the institution.

Instructor Communication: Learners are informed of the ways in which they can communicate with the instructor.

Essential:

- a) Instructor contact information is provided, which includes, as a minimum, a phone number and an email address. If the course version being reviewed does not include specific instructor information, a placeholder is included for these items.

Excellent:

- a) Information about instructor office hours is provided or a placeholder is included for this information.
- b) Professional biographical information about the instructor is provided or a placeholder is included for this information.

Exemplary:

- a) The course includes a welcome or introductory session (synchronous or asynchronous) designed to allow learners to meet the instructor, and/or a description of how individual contacts will be made by the instructor with the students early in the course (e.g., e-mail, phone call, etc.).

Learning Outcomes/Objectives: Learning outcomes/objectives are achievable, measurable, relevant, clearly stated, and concise.

Essential:

- a) The learning outcomes/objectives are achievable by the learner within the context of the course.
- b) They are measurable in terms of assessing the desired performance.
- c) They are relevant, clearly stated from the learner's perspective, and concise.
- d) The learning activities and assignments are aligned with the learning outcomes/objectives and match those provided in the course outline/syllabus.
- e) Module level objectives are consistent with course level outcomes (where provided).

Excellent:

- a) The learning outcomes/objectives are found within each course module.

Exemplary: N/A

Grading Information: The grading information is presented to the learners at the very beginning of the course, and is easily accessible throughout the course.

Essential:

- a) The grading information (breakdown of marks for all assignments) is presented early in the course and is easy to refer to later on.
- b) The weighting of each graded activity is identified.

Excellent:

- a) Learners are able to track their overall grade in the course using an LMS grade book or other convenient method.
- b) Individual assignment grading information is provided on each assignment.

Exemplary:

- a) N/A

Role of Instructor and Learners: The respective roles of the instructor and the learners in the course in achieving the learning outcomes/objectives are explained.

Essential:

- a) The instructor's role in supporting student learning is explained in the introductory or orientation section of the course.
- b) The learner's role is explained, noting the learner's responsibilities for actively participating in the course, the need to meet deadlines, the importance of communicating online with the instructor and other learner/peers, and any other expectations that the instructor has of the learners.

Excellent:

- a) Learners are informed of the preferred method to ask questions.
- b) Learners are informed of the expected response time from the instructor.
- c) The instructor has a specific discussion forum or forums in which learners may post questions both related to the course content and for other matters.
- d) If synchronous delivery is used in a course, the expectations for the learner's active participation and responsibility for the content covered if a session is missed are explained.

Exemplary:

- a) Learners are encouraged to provide peer support and contribute to the learning community through sharing questions and answers in discussion sessions.
- b) All role expectations are inclusive, accessible and flexible so that all students can participate.

Writing Standards

Bias: The content is free of bias related to age, culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, or disability.

Essential:

- a) The course uses inclusive language to promote an atmosphere of respect and equality.
- b) Writing is clear, objective and specific.
- c) All content provides a balance of inclusivity in terms of incorporating appropriate societal and cultural groups.

Excellent and Exemplary: N/A

Tone: The positive tone of the writing contributes to a supportive learning environment.

Essential:

- a) The course language (e.g., announcements, instructions, documents, etc.) uses a positive and supportive tone to model appropriate online communication and foster a supportive course climate.

Excellent:

- a) Information on appropriate online communication strategies is provided.
- b) The course includes a welcome note or message to the learners.

Exemplary:

- a) Learners are oriented to online communication strategies through non-graded, hands-on activities that provide instruction, opportunities to practice, and feedback.

Citations: All academic content in the course is appropriately cited to give credit for others' ideas and to model appropriate academic practice for learners.

Essential:

- a) All quotations and other material, including graphic images, videos, online documents, Wikipedia articles, etc., used from outside sources are cited and attributed according to a consistent style within the course materials (e.g., using APA, MLA, or other consistent format).
- b) A reference list, works cited list, or bibliography includes all citations appropriately formatted following a standard citation style (e.g., APA, MLA, etc.). This can be presented in one location for the entire course, broken down for each module, or in other appropriate methods that allow learners to view the sources of course content.

Excellent and Exemplary: N/A

Clear Language: The language is clear and readily comprehensible.

Essential:

- a) Readability statistics generated using the Microsoft Word checker or other tool show that the course readability level is appropriate for the level of the course (e.g., academic upgrading or college level).

Excellent:

- a) One or more supports to aiding comprehension are provided (e.g., glossaries, definition of terms, links to accessible web pages that build on concepts, pre-reading activities).

Exemplary:

- a) All key concepts are provided in more than one representation (e.g., text and audio, video and sign language, embedded explanations of vocabulary).

Mechanics of Writing: The course uses correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

Essential:

- a) The course has no grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors.
Reviewed for information only.

Excellent and Exemplary: N/A

Resources Standards

Currency: Learning materials are current.

Essential:

- a) The learning resources accommodate current technologies.
- b) Resources are a maximum of seven years of age. If older resources are used for historical or other purposes, the rationale for their use is provided to students.

Excellent and Exemplary: N/A

Authority: The authority of learning materials is apparent.

Essential:

- a) The required learning resources are from credible and authoritative sources documented in the course (e.g., recognized experts and practitioners, respected organizations or institutions, peer-reviewed journals) and accurately portray the necessary information.
- b) Where apparently non-authoritative sources are used (e.g., non-reviewed articles from Wikipedia, non-reviewed YouTube videos, anonymous Internet sites, anonymous articles, etc.) their authority and the rationale for their use is explained to the student.

Excellent and Exemplary: N/A

Varied Content Resources: Learners are provided with various types of learning materials.

Essential:

- a) There are at least three content-related resources (in addition to the required materials, such as the textbook) that support the learning outcomes/objectives help to provide a balanced view (e.g., describe different theories, techniques or approaches) and are from varied sources and formats. Examples could include multimedia, web-based documents, web sites, supplementary readings, tutorials, etc.
- b) Information is provided to the learners as to how to use these resources.

Excellent:

- a) A list of supplementary and/or optional learning resources is provided to learners along with an overview of each that addresses their alignment with the learning outcomes/objectives.
- b) These resources are clearly identified as supplemental. Learners are encouraged to use these materials as their time and interest permits.
- c) Where online publisher materials are included, learners are told what to use, how to use them, and are directed to appropriate areas of study on publisher websites.

Exemplary:

- a) Learners are provided with the opportunity to add to the course learning resources through their own research, projects or assignments.
- b) Guidelines are provided for this collaborative building of content.

Learner Support: A list of learner support resources with links to the sources is provided.

Essential:

- a) The resources include technical support services, library, tutoring services, counseling services, accessibility and disability services, information on how to be a successful online learner, and other available learner support resources.
- b) Learners are provided with appropriate explanations of these resources.
- c) The resources are readily available to the learner in the course and are appropriately organized.

Excellent:

- a) Learners are directed to the appropriate support resources within the course content (e.g., a link to library services is provided within the module where learners are asked to conduct library research; information on how to handle technical problems during online examinations is provided when the learner opens the examination, etc.).

Exemplary:

- a) The link to the eCampusAlberta web site which lists contact information for all member institutions is provided.

Organization Standards

Learning Path: The learning path guides learners through the entire course. It explains the learning activities and how they are to be used to fulfill the learning outcomes/objectives.

Essential:

- a) Clear and concise instructions are readily available to the learner on how to proceed through the course.
- b) There is a course schedule which includes all learning activities and deadlines or other guidelines for when activities and assessments are to be completed.
- c) Information is provided on the delivery strategies (i.e., if the course is synchronous, asynchronous, or a blend of both) and whether the course is cohort-based or independent study.
- d) Details on the technology used for the various activities are explained if new or specialized technologies are introduced (e.g., web or video conferencing, web logs).

Excellent:

- a) Learners are provided with some options in the learning activities that accommodate their individual needs and interests (e.g., an assignment may be submitted as a video presentation or an essay; learners can complete a pre-test before a module that allows them to skip the module if their knowledge is sufficient).
- b) The course schedule includes delivery mode information for each learning activity.
- c) All synchronous activities are pre-scheduled and clearly communicated to learners prior to course commencement or scheduling is negotiated with the learners and then confirmed in the course calendar/schedule.
- d) If learners are given options for how they sequence activities, this is reflected in the course information and schedule.

Exemplary:

- a) The course is flexible. Material is presented in multiple representations and learners have alternative means of accessing and interacting with the material and demonstrating their knowledge.
- b) Instruction is designed to meet the needs of a broad range of learner needs.
- c) The flexible options and means of accommodation for special needs are explained.

Learning Material: The learning material is organized to show learners the relationship of the course components to the achievement of the learning outcomes/objectives.

Essential:

- a) The learning material is presented in coherent learning segments (e.g., modules, lessons, tutorials).
- b) Bridging statements or other strategies are used to identify relationships between learning segments.

Excellent:

- a) The learning material is presented in a logical order with appropriate sequencing (e.g., by time, topic, simple to complex).

Exemplary:

- a) Learners are provided with strategies to work with the learning material through advanced organizers, concept maps, pre-reading, pre-tests, etc.

Time Commitment: Learners are informed of the time commitment expected for them to complete all the learning activities.

Essential:

- a) Time commitment includes estimated time (e.g. hours per week or percentage of total course hours) learners are expected to spend on the learning activities.
- b) The information is provided to the learner at the beginning of the course in a readily available way.

Excellent:

- a) For each learning segment within the course, learners are informed of the expected time commitment to complete the segment.
- b) This is included at the beginning of each segment or identified on the course schedule.

Exemplary:

- a) Learners are informed about the procedures to follow if they need to take more time to complete assigned activities, due to special requirements or situations.

Pedagogy Standards

Instructions: Instructions for all activities, graded and non-graded, are clear and complete.

Essential:

- a) Instructions are clear and explain what is to be done, how activities are to be completed, and how work is to be submitted.
- b) Instructions for each activity are easy to locate.
- c) For invigilated exams, details are provided on how to make arrangements for these.

Excellent:

- a) Each activity is given an appropriate title that summarizes the activity.
- b) A brief overview statement is provided that outlines the main idea or purpose of the activity.
- c) Instructions are in a logical order.
- d) Sequential steps are in numbered lists and non-sequential steps are bulleted lists.
- e) Only one instruction is included in each step of a procedure.

Exemplary:

- a) All instructions are provided in alternative formats.
- b) Important announcements are provided in both audio and text.

Marking Criteria: Learners are provided clear details of the marking criteria that will be used for all graded activities.

Essential:

- a) Clearly stated, detailed scoring rubrics or equivalents describe the important performance criteria expected of the learners (e.g., rubrics include description of desired performance and the available marks for each section, short answer questions include available marks for each question, etc.).
- b) This is provided to learners prior to beginning the activity.
- c) The performance criteria align with the learning outcomes/objectives, and with activity requirements that are stated in the activity directions.
- d) Learners are told which activities are graded and which are not.

Excellent:

- a) Marking criteria is located with each graded activity.
- b) Learners are encouraged to review the criteria prior to beginning the activity and again after completing the activity as a self-assessment.
- c) Where peer-review is used, learners are informed about how this will be marked.

Exemplary:

- a) Models of “good work” are provided, along with clear marking criteria and results.
- b) These models are similar enough to the graded activities to demonstrate what high performance looks like, but do not provide answers to the graded activity.

Interactivity: Interactive activities are incorporated into the course, all of which facilitate deeper understanding of the content.

Essential:

- a) Types of interactivity include learner-learner (or learner-peer), learner-instructor, and learner-content.
- b) In cohort-based courses, learners regularly (at minimum once per month) interact with each other through directed asynchronous or synchronous discussions (e.g., chats, webinars) and/or other types of interactive group activities.
- c) In individual study courses, learners interact with fellow students, peers or others (e.g., colleagues, community members, experts, practitioners) at least three times during the course.
- d) The course design prompts the instructor to be present, active, and engaged with the students throughout the course.

Excellent:

- a) Guidelines for interactivity are provided.
- b) Collaboration with other learners or other peers (e.g., fellow employee at place of employment) along with peer feedback is utilized in at least one graded learning activity.

Exemplary:

- a) The course fosters a learning community by actively engaging learners with their peers and the instructor throughout the course.
- b) Learners share their perceptions and experiences gained through reflection and critical thinking with their peers.
- c) Networking, teamwork, cooperation, negotiation, and consensus-building skills are built throughout the course.
- d) Guest speakers (e.g., professionals in the field, community leaders, practitioners) are included in the course.
- e) All formats, platforms and activities for interactivity are accessible.

Instructional Strategies: Instructional strategies are designed to be compatible with learners' different interests, learning needs and preferences.

Essential:

- a) Opportunities for varied learning experiences are provided through at least three different types of instructional method (e.g., reading, practice activities, group work, viewing videos, etc.).

Excellent:

- a) Instructional strategies include a combination of instruction types (e.g., direct instruction, indirect instruction, experiential learning, independent study, interactive instruction, etc.).
- b) Instructional strategies include the use of various tools, including three or more of the following: visual and audio learning tools, simulations, games, modelling, drills, tools for interactivity, tools for research and documentation, etc.

Exemplary:

- a) Supplementary learning activities (e.g., external visits to practitioners, field trips, access to external workshops, optional study groups) are provided to allow learners to further develop or reinforce knowledge or practice skills.

Feedback: Formal and informal feedback to learners is incorporated throughout the course.

Essential:

- a) The course is designed to ensure feedback is prompt, timely, frequent, ongoing, appropriate, and has value to the learners.
- b) Information is provided on how and when the instructor will provide feedback on assignments, exams, discussions, and other activities.
- c) Learners will be informed if self-tests, exams/quizzes and other learning activities provide automated feedback upon submission or completion.

Excellent:

- a) The course offers some opportunity for learners to self-assess early in the course (e.g., self-checks, self-tests).
- b) The course explains how the instructor will contact learners on an individual basis, early in the course to discuss learner progress and facilitate learner retention.

Exemplary:

- a) Peer feedback is expected from fellow learners or others (e.g., external contacts, practitioners, experts).
- b) Clear guidelines are included on how to provide peer feedback.
- c) There are opportunities to receive feedback and coaching from the instructor during assignment preparation before assignments are submitted for final grading.

Technology Standards

Multimedia: Multimedia functions well. The course uses basic hardware, and free software plug-ins where required. Learners are informed of any specialized technology requirements.

Essential:

- a) Audio and video is audible and clear.
- b) Audio/video hardware requirements do not extend beyond basic sound cards, speakers, and video players unless appropriately needed to meet course goals and learning outcomes/objectives.
- c) Any necessary plug-ins are identified and readily available to the learners in the course.
- d) Audio/video software requirements are compatible with multiple operating systems and require only a standard, free plug-in.
- e) If other specialized technology requirements are needed, this information is provided to the learner.

Excellent:

- a) N/A

Exemplary:

- a) All multimedia is available in captioned or interpreted formats.
- b) Learners with special requirements are advised whether external web sites offering multimedia resources are accessible by them. Alternative resources are provided in those instances.

Orientation: An orientation to the delivery technologies used in the course is provided.

Essential:

- a) An orientation to the learning technology is readily available.
- b) Learners are directed to the orientation at the beginning of the course.

Excellent:

N/A

Exemplary:

- a) Within the course, learners are given information on how to access alternative orientation materials that conform to accessibility standards.

Support Standards

The original Support Standards and Institutional and Administrative Standards have been temporarily removed from the quality rubric. They are being evaluated in terms of alignment with current literature and will be revised and validated accordingly. Once this is complete the updated standards will be added to the Quality 2.0 Rubric.

Institutional and Administrative Standards

The current eCampusAlberta Quality Suite Rubric and Essential Quality Standards are the result of considerable research and evolution of the standards originally developed in 2000. Elements of the Quality 2.0 suite were developed through significant consultation and review and analysis of many provincial, national and international standards.

A formal comparison was also done with the ***Campus Alberta Quality Council Program Quality Assessment Standards*** and the ***Additional Quality Assessment Standards for Programs Delivered in Blended, Distributed or Distance Modes***. These are the standards followed by Alberta post-secondary institutions.

eCampusAlberta would like to thank the member institutions for their assistance with the development and adoption of these standards.

Visit [Wikipedia](#) to learn more about eCampusAlberta.



Quality **2.0** Standards

eLearning Rubric

A resource for quality online curriculum development.

For more information about eCampusAlberta and its quality standards visit our wikipedia page at:

eCampusAlberta would like to thank the member institutions for their assistance with the development and adoption of these standards.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported License.

