**I. COURSE OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION**

General Review Standard: The overall design of the course, navigational information, as well as course, instructor and student information are made transparent to the student at the beginning of the course.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Specific Review Standards** | **Annotation: Explanation** |
| I.1 Navigational instructions make the organization of the course easy to understand. | Instructions provide a general course overview, guide the new student to explore the course website, and indicate what to do first, rather than list detailed navigational instructions for the whole course.  Instructors may choose to incorporate some of this information in the syllabus. If so, 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:  • A course “tour”  • Clear statements about how to get started in the course  • A “Scavenger hunt” assignment that leads students through an exploration of the different areas of the course |
| I.2 A statement introduces the student to the course and to the structure | The instructor’s statement gives the new student an idea of how the learning process is structured including schedule, communication modes, types of activities, and assessments. Look for some or all of the following:  • The course schedule  • Types of activities the student will be required to complete (written assignments, online self- tests, participation in the discussion board,)  • Preferred mode of communication with the instructor (email, discussion board, etc.)  • Preferred mode of communication with other students  • Testing procedures (online, proctored, etc.)  • Procedure for submission of electronic assignments   * A statement about plagiarism and citing sources. |
| I.3 Netiquette expectations with regard to  discussions and email communication are  clearly stated. | Expectations of student conduct online are clearly stated. The expectations themselves are not evaluated.  Examples:  • Rules of conduct for participating in the discussion board  • Rules of conduct for email content  • “Speaking style” requirements, (i.e. use of correct English required as opposed to net acronyms)  • Spelling and grammar expectations, if any |
| I.4 Students are requested to introduce themselves to the class. | 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.) |

**II. LEARNING OBJECTIVES (COMPETENCIES)**

General Review Standard: Learning objectives are clearly defined and explained. They assist the student to focus learning activities.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Specific Review Standards** | **Annotation: Explanation** |
| II.1 The learning objectives of the course describe  outcomes that are measurable. | Measurable learning objectives ensure instructors 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 is not possible, (e.g., internal cognition, affective changes), check for clear indications that the learning objective is meaningfully assessed.  **Examples of measurable objectives:**  1. Critically review the methodology of a research study published in a Sociology journal.  2. Design a Web site using HTML and JavaScript. |
| II.2 The learning objectives address content  mastery, critical thinking skills, and core  learning skills. | Examine the learning objectives (course and unit level) as a whole for all three types of skill. Every single objective may not contain all three components.  Content mastery should be appropriate for the type and level of the course.  Critical thinking skills may include the ability to:  • Distinguish between fact and opinion  • Distinguish between primary and secondary sources  Core learning skills may include:  • Written and oral communication skills  • Manipulation and organization of information in various ways or using different tools |
| II.3 The learning objectives of the course are clearly stated and understandable to the student. | Students can easily grasp the meaning of the learning objectives. Use of jargon, confusing terms, unnecessarily complex language, and puzzling syntax are avoided. |
| II.4 Instructions to students on how to meet the  learning objectives are adequate and easy to understand. | Instructions may take various forms. Instructions are clear and complete.  Examples:  • Module-based or weekly assignment pages indicate a list of steps that guide the student to meet learning objectives for each week  • Information indicates which learning activities, resources, assignments, and assessments support the learning objectives. |

**III. ASSESSMENT AND MEASUREMENT**

General Review Standard: Assessment strategies use established ways to measure effective learning, assess student progress by reference to stated learning objectives, and are designed as essential to the learning process.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Specific Review Standards** | **Annotation: Explanation** |
| 111.1 The types of assessments selected  measure the stated learning objectives and are consistent with course activities and resources. | Assessments, learning objectives, and learning activities align in a clear and direct way. The assessment formats provide a reasonable way to measure the stated learning objectives.  Examples of inconsistency:  • The objective is to be able to “write a persuasive essay” but the assessment is a multiple choice test.  • 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.  Examples of objective/assessment alignment:  • A problem analysis evaluates critical thinking skills  • Multiple choice quiz tests vocabulary knowledge  • A composition assesses writing skills |
| III.2 The grading policy is transparent and easy to  understand. | Review the clarity of 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.  Example:  • A list of all activities, tests, etc. that will affect the students’ grade is included at the beginning of the course. |
| III.3 Assessment and measurement strategies  provide feedback to the student. | Students learn more effectively if they receive frequent, meaningful, and rapid feedback. This feedback may come from the instructor directly, from assignments and assessments that have feedback built into them.  Examples:  • Instructor participation in a discussion assignment  • Writing assignments that require submission of a draft for instructor comment and suggestions for improvement |

**IV. LEARNER INTERACTION**

General Review Standard: The effective design of instructor-student interaction, meaningful student cooperation, and student-content interaction is essential to student motivation, intellectual commitment and personal development.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Specific Review Standards** | **Annotation: Explanation** |
| IV.1 Learning activities foster instructor student,  Content student, and if appropriate to this  course, student-student interaction. | All online courses should include interaction between the instructor and the students and between the students and the content. The degree and type of student to-student interaction may vary with the discipline and the level of the course.  Examples of learning activities that foster the following types of interaction:  • Instructor – student (consider for ALL courses): Self-introduction; discussion postings and responses; feedback on project assignments; evidence of one-to-one e-mail communication.  • Student – content (consider for ALL courses): Essays, term papers, group projects, etc. based on readings, videos.  • Student – student (if appropriate to this course): Self-introduction exercise; group discussion postings; group projects; peer critiques, etc.  Where possible, include recommendations and comments where student-student interaction can be incorporated in this course. |
| lV.2 Clear standards are set for instructor response and availability (turnaround  time for email, grade posting, etc.) | Information clearly indicates how quickly the instructor will respond, when feedback will be provided, and when the instructor is available to meet, including e-mail turnaround time, time required for grade postings, discussion postings, etc. degree of participation in discussions, and availability via other media (phone, in-person). |
| lV.3 The requirements for course interaction are  clearly articulated. | A clear statement of requirements should indicate the criteria for interaction.  For example, students required to participate in discussions are told how many times each week they must post original comments, how many times they must post responses to other’s comments, the quality of the comments, how the comments will be evaluated, what grade credit they can expect for various  levels of performance, and whether the interaction is required or optional. |

**V. LEARNER SUPPORT**

General Review Standard: Courses are effectively supported for students through fully accessible modes of delivery, resources, and student support.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Specific Review Standards** | **Annotation: Explanation** |
| V.1 The course instructions articulate or link to a  clear description of the technical support  offered. | Technical support includes information about such topics as how to log in, how to use the software, and how to upload files. It does not include help with course content, assignments, academic or student support services. Look for evidence that students have access to technical support services from within the course.  Examples:  • A clear description of the services, including a link to a technical support website  • An email link to an online learning helpdesk  • A phone number for an online learning helpdesk |
| V.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. | Academic support includes access to library resources, readiness assessment, testing services, tutoring, a writing center, a math center, and supplemental instruction programs.  Look for evidence that students have access to academic support services from within the course. |
| V.3 Course instructions articulate or link to an  explanation of how the institution’s student  support services can assist the student in  effectively using the resources provided. | Look for evidence that students have access to student support services from within the course. .  Examples:  • A clear description of student support services and how to access them  • A link to the student support website, along with a definition of student support services |

**VI. ACCESSIBILITY**

General Review Standard: The course is accessible to all students.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Specific Review Standards** | **Annotation: Explanation** |
| VI.1 The course acknowledges the  importance of ADA requirements. | All online courses should direct students to the institution’s Americans with  Disabilities Act (ADA) services on their campus. There should be a statement in  the course that tells students how to gain access to ADA services at their institution. |
| VI.2 Web pages provide equivalent  alternatives to auditory and visual  content. | Alternative means of access to course information are provided for the vision or hearing impaired student, such as, equivalent textual representations of images, audio, animations, and video in the course website. Presenting information in text format is generally acceptable because screen reader software (used by the vision impaired) can read text.  Examples:  • Audio lecture has a text transcript available  • Video clip, image, or animation is accompanied by text transcript |
| VI.3 The course demonstrates sensitivity to  readability issues | The course employs appropriate font, color, and spacing to facilitate readability and minimize distractions for the student.  Examples:  • Formatting such as bold or italics in addition to color coding text  • Web page provided in an alternate, non-color-coded format  • Formatting and color coding serve instructional purposes. For example,  format and color are used purposefully to communicate key points, group like items and emphasize relevant relationships, etc. |