

John A. Logan College  
Guidelines for Online Course Development  
and  
Assessment Rubric for Online Courses

The two documents, *Guidelines for Online Course Development* and *Assessment Rubric for Online Courses*, have been developed as tools to aid faculty in ensuring that online courses meet the highest possible standards.

The College is applying to the Higher Learning Commission to offer online degrees and certificates. Both the College and the Higher Learning Commission recognize the need for best practices and assessment in online classes. The *Guidelines* have been created as a set of best practices that can be followed in developing an online class. The *Assessment Rubric* assesses how well those best practices are being followed and are a tool for ensuring continuous self-study and improvement.

The *Guidelines* are to be used as a checklist by faculty developing online classes. They can also be used to revise an existing course. The *Assessment Rubric* follows the *Guidelines* point-by-point. It can and should be used for self-assessment. However, it is intended for use by an independent reviewer who can then make suggestions for course improvement. The rubric is not an evaluation of the faculty member teaching the course and has no assessment tools pertaining to the faculty member.

Training on how to effectively use both the *Guidelines* and the *Assessment Rubric* will be offered in the Teaching & Learning Center.

Acknowledgement: The *Guidelines for Online Course Development* and *Assessment Rubric for Online Courses* were adapted from materials originally developed by the Michigan Community College Virtual Learning Collaborative and the De Paul University Online Teaching Institute. However, the finished product is unique to this institution.

**John A. Logan College**  
**Assessment Rubric for Online Courses**  
**Course Name** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Course Section Number** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Semester** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Instructor** \_\_\_\_\_

Learner Analysis/Support

Principle: Careful analysis of the target student population lays the groundwork for building an effective distance learning course. Areas worth considering are (a) demographics, (b) previous experience and coursework, (C) technological skill and access, (d) learning preferences/styles, and (e) possible special needs.

Indicators:

- A. Welcome message in the announcement
- B. Information on online etiquette
- C. Statement of required software and/or materials/special requirements
- D. Links/phone numbers for technical support
- E. Complete staff information
  - 1. Name, degrees, office number and hours, telephone, email address, college postal address

<b>Guidelines</b>	<b>Rubric</b>				
Course Outcomes:	Exemplary 4	Accomplished 3	Developing 2	Beginning 1	Score
Learner Analysis/Support Indicators (A, B, C, D, E)	Free from grammar and spelling errors (A, B, C, D, E); Textbook and buying information identified (A, C); Instructor response time indicated (A); Online etiquette information (B); Required software/special requirements identified (C); Technical support information (D); Staff information (E)	Most of the exemplary requirements are met.	Many of the exemplary requirements are met.	Some of the exemplary requirements are met.	

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Content/Course Organization

Principle: Clear learning objectives provide a useful framework for the courses' content, activities, and learning assessments. Construction units or modules around discrete objectives help structure students' learning, making the course more unified and coherent.

Indicators:

- A. A complete course syllabus with:
  - 1. Measurable course objectives
  - 2. Course materials (including purchasing information for distance learners)
  - 3. Course schedule/course organization
  - 4. Grading policy (appropriate for the online environment – easy to comprehend)
  - 5. Required software/materials/special requirements clearly stated
- B. A clear structure of course content:
  - 1. Module based? Unit based? Weekly-based? Chapter/Lesson-based?
  - 2. Clear and measurable objectives for each learning unit
  - 3. A clear timeline for the learning process (e.g. due dates for each assignment)

<b>Guidelines</b>	<b>Rubric</b>				
Course Outcomes:	Exemplary 4	Accomplished 3	Developing 2	Beginning 1	Score
Content/Course Organization Indicators (A, B)	Course syllabus includes measurable objectives, course materials, course schedule/course organization, grading policy, and required software/special requirements (A); Course content is structured (B1); Learning units contain measurable objectives (B2); Clear learning process timeline (B3)	Most of the exemplary requirements are met.	Many of the exemplary requirements are met.	Some of the exemplary requirements are met.	

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Active Learning Design

Principle: Engaging students in application activities—case studies, journal writing, role playing, problem-solving, class discussions—encourages active learning and continual involvement with course content.

Indicators:

A. Activities that promote active learning:

1. role playing
2. problem-solving
3. online discussion
4. case study
5. journal writing
6. group work
7. other \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Guidelines</b>	<b>Rubric</b>				
Course Outcomes:	Exemplary 4	Accomplished 3	Developing 2	Beginning 1	Score
Active Learning Design Indicators (A)	Activities promote active learning through role playing, problem-solving, online discussion, case study, journal writing, group work, or other activities (A)	Most course activities promote active learning.	Many course activities promote active learning.	Some course activities promote active learning.	

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Learning Assessment

Principle: Frequent learning assessments –either graded or ungraded—can help students evaluate and guide their own learning, and can help instructor adjust to learners’ needs throughout the course. Tying assessments closely to objectives adds further consistency and clarity to the course.

Indicators:

A. Assessment for each learning unit should include one or more of the following:

1. quiz
2. survey
3. online discussion
4. case study
5. project
6. group work
7. paper
8. other \_\_\_\_\_

B. Evaluation criteria or rubrics for all assessment methods used in the class:

<b>Guidelines</b>	<b>Rubric</b>				
Course Outcomes:	Exemplary 4	Accomplished 3	Developing 2	Beginning 1	Score
Learning Assessment Indicators (A, B)	Learning units are assessed by one or more of the following: quiz, survey, online discussion, case study, project, group work, paper, or other assessment (A); Evaluation criteria or rubrics identified for all assessment methods (B)	Most learning units utilized one or more of the assessment tools and most assessment methods include evaluation criteria or rubrics.	Many learning units utilized one or more of the assessment tools and many assessment methods include evaluation criteria or rubrics.	Some learning units utilized one or more of the assessment tools and some assessment methods include evaluation criteria or rubrics.	

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Communication and Collaboration

Principle: Communication and collaboration foster strong learning communities, counteracting the often-isolated nature of distance learning. Providing a variety of communications channels —email, telephone, video, discussion forums, online chats, etc. —encourages student/teacher and student/student interaction, particularly if that communication is integrated well into assignments.

Indicators:

A. Communication method(s) used in the class, such as:

1. email
2. online discussion forums
3. online chat
4. video/audio
5. other \_\_\_\_\_

B. Instructor's availability:

1. office hours
2. email turn around time (no more than 24 hours, without prior notification)

<b>Guidelines</b>	<b>Rubric</b>				
Course Outcomes:	Exemplary 4	Accomplished 3	Developing 2	Beginning 1	Score
Communication and Collaboration Indicators (A, B)	Class utilizes communication method(s), such as: email, online discussion forums, online chat, video/audio, or other forms of communication (A); Instructor availability and email turn around time is clearly identified (B)	Most of the exemplary requirements are met.	Many of the exemplary requirements are met.	Some of the exemplary requirements are met.	

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Course Evaluation

Principle: Course evaluations by students can identify strengths and weaknesses in the course. Open-ended questions can provide valuable contextualized information that will help in improving the course.

Indicators:

- A. An evaluation of the class is conducted by the students.
  - 1. Evaluation is easy to understand and submit
  - 2. Questions are relevant to the class
  - 3. Some questions provide opportunities for students to provide open-ended answers.

<b>Guidelines</b>	<b>Rubric</b>				
Course Outcomes:	Exemplary 4	Accomplished 3	Developing 2	Beginning 1	Score
Course Evaluation Indicators (A)	Student evaluation is easy to understand and submit, relevant to class content, and provides opportunities for open-ended answers (A)	Most of the exemplary requirements are met.	Many of the exemplary requirements are met.	Some of the exemplary requirements are met.	

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Online Resources

Principle: Use of online resources—academic journals, professional organizations, etc.—are fully integrated into assignments and course schedules, making full use of existing services.

Indicators:

A. Online Resources

1. Academic resources (e.g. stable links to database articles)
2. Web sites (e.g. professional organizations, educational resources)

<b>Guidelines</b>	<b>Rubric</b>				
Course Outcomes:	Exemplary 4	Accomplished 3	Developing 2	Beginning 1	Score
Online Resources Indicators (A)	Links to online resources are stable and relevant to the content (if applicable) (A)	Most of the exemplary requirements are met.	Many of the exemplary requirements are met.	Some of the exemplary requirements are met.	

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Legal and Ethical Use

Principle: Resources are included in the course in accordance with copyright regulations and ethical use policies.

Indicators:

A. Legal and Ethical Use

1. Online resources, embedded graphics, videos, other material (e.g. copyright permission sought)
3. The instructor clearly states ethical and legal expectations for student work (e.g. plagiarism)

<b>Guidelines</b>	<b>Rubric</b>				
Course Outcomes:	Exemplary 4	Accomplished 3	Developing 2	Beginning 1	Score
Legal and Ethical Use Indicators (A)	Copyright permission obtained and included for any online resources, graphics, videos, or other material (A1); Ethical and legal expectations for student work clearly stated (A2)	Most of the exemplary requirements are met.	Many of the exemplary requirements are met.	Some of the exemplary requirements are met.	

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Course Design Standards, Graphics

Principle: Multi-media materials—video, audio, graphics, and presentations—are optimized for online delivery. All materials are targeted to support learning objectives.

Indicators:

- A. Web Design
  - 1. Reliable links to course materials are maintained
  - 2. All materials are compatible with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (See Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliancy Checklist).
- B. Materials are optimized for web delivery:
  - 1. Visual presentations, video and audio files are compressed
  - 2. Graphics, photographs use web resolution and compression standards
- C. Multimedia materials support learning goals:

Guidelines	Rubric				
Course Outcomes:	Exemplary 4	Accomplished 3	Developing 2	Beginning 1	Score
Course Design Standards, Graphics Indicators (A, B, C)	Links to course materials are reliable (A1); Web pages are accessible, easy to understand and navigate – ADA accessible (A2); Web resolution and compression standards are incorporated (B); Direct relationship evident between multimedia materials and learning goals (C)	Most of the exemplary requirements are met.	Many of the exemplary requirements are met.	Some of the exemplary requirements are met.	

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**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliancy Checklist**

- Use the **ALT tag** on all images, image maps (the map and all regions), applets, and objects or the LONGDESC tag and/or D-link if necessary.
- Text transcripts should be available for all **audio** information.
- A **multimedia presentation** needs a synchronized transcript for the audio and a synchronized auditory description of the visual track.
- All information conveyed with **color** should also be available without color.
- The background and foreground **colors** should provide good contrast.
- Make sure that your **style sheet** does not generate text or images that are not available elsewhere or override user-defined style sheets.
- Use client-side **image maps** instead of server-side image maps and provide alternate text for each region.
- In a **data table**, identify row and column headers, associate the header cells with the data cells, and provide a summary.
- Make sure that any table used for layout linearizes properly.
- TITLE and NAME all **frames**, use NOFRAMES, and make sure each frame page has a page TITLE.
- No **flickering** or blinking (no BLINK or MARQUEE elements).
- Provide links to all needed **plug-ins**.
- Test all **scripts** and **forms** for accessibility, make sure they are input device-independent, and include a logical tab order, keyboard shortcuts, and associate labels with their controls.
- Allow repetitive **navigation links** to be skipped.
- Clearly identify all **links** and don't use duplicate text for different links.
- Create a logical tab order through **links**, provide keyboard shortcuts to important links, and clearly identify the target of each link.
- Do not cause **pop-up windows**.
- Alert to **timed responses** and allow for more time.
- Do not create **auto-refreshing** or **redirecting** pages.
- Include a **document type declaration** at the beginning of your page and validate.
- Use **relative** rather than absolute units, such as for font and table sizes.
- Use **heading tags** correctly.
- Mark up **lists** properly.
- Do not use **quotation** markup for formatting effects.
- Do not use the <PRE> element.
- Identify the primary **language** of a page and identify any changes in the language of the text.
- Denote and expand any **abbreviations** and **acronyms** that are present.
- Include a page **title** on every page.
- Create an **alternative text-only page**, if necessary.
- Be consistent with your **navigation** system and style of **presentation**.