

Purpose of OTC Online Course Development Review and Course Delivery Review

OTC Online Course Development Review

The purpose of the OTC Online Course Development Review is to ensure quality of online course development and design to meet the requirements of the Higher Learning Commission and consistency initiatives within OTC Online.

Navigation is consistent and predictable.

A1. **Course menu** includes recommended buttons (if applicable) in order to provide consistency between courses to help students navigate.

- Announcements
- Faculty (or Instructor)
- Syllabus
- Lessons (or Modules, Seminars, Units)
- Discussions (or Forums)
- Groups (or Teams)
- Dropbox
- Grades
- Resources
- Tools

Other buttons (e.g., Labs, Blogs, Wikis, Journals, etc.) are included only as needed and placed in logical order. Unused buttons and tools are removed or hidden.

Why? The purpose is consistency for students with the needed flexibility for instructors. Student response: "There are times when I have had problems finding assignments and if the buttons are in same order that will create less confusion, especially if the student is taking more than one online course at a time. I think that consistency is the key and that this will benefit the students and the instructors."

A2. **Consistent textual formatting** is used. Internal, external, and folder links are identified in blue. Overused colored text, excessive highlighting, and all caps are avoided.

Why? Font size should be readable in the online format. When a heading is a link (such as a content folder), the heading appears underlined. The color of the link should be changed to blue to help indicate that the heading is a link. The color that is the closest match to the standard link color in Blackboard is "Obscure Dull Azure" –located in the second column from the left and third square from the bottom (two over, three up)—or enter 003366 in the "Color value #" field. A different color may be used, but it should be blue and used consistently throughout all of the heading links in a course. Overused colored text and highlighting can detract from the professional appearance of a course site. The use of all caps does not follow rules of netiquette.

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A3. Course elements—including banner, images, multimedia, and text present a **unified visual design**.

Why? A course banner identifies the course and can add to the visual appeal of a course site. A unified visual design is consistent with subject matter, contributes to cognitive and affective goals of course, develops visual literacy skills for subject area, aids communication, and is free of visual distractions.

Announcements and Faculty areas assist with navigation, direct students, and introduce the instructor.

B1. **Welcome announcement** provides instructions for beginning the course. **Announcements** from previous semesters are hidden/removed (click on View All).

Why? Announcements from previous semesters can present problems with navigation. A welcome announcement sets the tone for the course and can assist students with navigation. An audio or video welcome may be included. If you choose to use a Blackboard tutorial, please use: <http://www.otc.edu/online/11039.php>.

B2. **Faculty information** area includes bio and photo. Instructor contact information with approximate turnaround time is included.

Why? The instructor bio introduces the instructor, can promote credibility, and establishes expectations for instructor response time and turnaround time on feedback.

Syllabus is up-to-date and includes essential information.

C1. **Current online syllabus template** is used, including current course abstract.

Why? The current online syllabus template is required and includes updated information from Curriculum and Instruction (abstract information) as well as OTC Online.

C2. **Syllabus** is directly integrated (embedded) or attached as a PDF and titled. Information is intuitive and in a consistent format. Links open in new windows. Syllabus is printable or includes printing instructions. Printable **course calendar** aligns with course objectives.

Why? Directly embedding or attaching the syllabus and calendar as a PDF allow for accessibility. Having links open in a new window helps prevent students from being “kicked out” of a class when navigating. Alignment of course objectives with the course calendar creates a self-check for course objectives.

Lessons (Modules, Seminars, or Units) are organized and relate to course objectives.

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D1. **Lessons** (Modules, Seminars, or Units) are based on **course objectives** rather than textbook chapters and are labeled with lessons that include titles rather than numbered weeks.

Why? By developing a course based on course objectives, the emphasis is on the intended outcomes for the course. Due to a growth in the number of eight-week course offerings that are sometimes added late, there is a need for a course to be easily adapted between sixteen weeks, eight weeks, and possibly other session offerings in the future. Including a title with the lesson helps students identify objectives and where they are in the course.

D2. An icebreaker provides a **course introduction**.

Why? Online course retention can be promoted in early familiarization with the course structure and interaction with the instructor as well as other learners. If you choose to use a Blackboard tutorial, please use: <http://www.otc.edu/online/11039.php>.

D3. Lesson materials are "**chunked**" in learning modules or folders. Multiple folders within folders are avoided. Multiple paragraphs of text utilize bulleted/numbered lists.

Why? Arranging information in manageable parts and providing some white space contributes to visual appeal and ability to organize concepts.

D4. External **links** open in new windows. Internal course links promote efficient navigation.

Why? Students can click out of a link without being "kicked out of" a class. Click the "open in new window option" when adding an external link. Internal links can allow students to navigate more efficiently.

D5. Assignment **instructions are intuitive**.

Why? Students are able to focus on learning rather than trying to interpret instructions.

D6. Each lesson includes an **assignment checklist**, a list, or a table at the end. Dates are in bold or other format for updates.

Why? Students know expectations. Dates that are included stand out as clues for students on deadlines (included in students' comments on instructor evaluations) and as clues for instructors as they update courses semester-to-semester.

Lessons (Modules, Seminars, or Units) include instructional content to engage students in active learning.

E1. Instructional content includes **instructor-directed** learning content.

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Why? From lecture notes, to audio, to videos, to slides, to online sources, instruction is given related to course objectives.

E2. Instructional content includes **active learning** and **individualized learning** experiences.

Why? Active learning engages the learner in being able to apply, synthesize, and evaluate information, all higher-level thinking skills.

E3. Content is **integrated (embedded)**. File attachments are avoided when possible. Alternatives to PowerPoints and Word files are used with titles (e.g., SlideShare, iSpring, screencasting, mp4, Jing, PDFs, etc.).

Why? Embedded content is an effective online practice. PowerPoints are not designed for online viewing and access. Alternatives are more accessible and can more effectively engage the learner.

E4. Lessons make use of relevant **multimedia** (video, podcasts, audio-scripted text, etc.).

Why? Multimedia can engage the senses of the learner, provide a current delivery format, and move the learning beyond text on a screen.

E5. **Interactive** exercises/activities are included (e.g., online software, links, learning objects). If online software or other external content requires a password, provide access information for reviewer.

Why? Immediate and ongoing feedback promotes interaction and continued learning.

E6. Content relates to **learning objectives**.

Why? The course must meet the learning objectives that are tied to assessment (departmental requirements).

Communication tools encourage interaction and higher-order thinking skills.

F1. Communication tools provide opportunities to ask questions, build **online community**, and **engage in course content**.

Why? Asking questions related to course content and interactions with other learners as well as the instructor can promote active learning and retention.

F2. Communication tools provide ongoing opportunities for **student-student** and **student-instructor** interaction (e.g., discussion forums, blogs, wikis, journals, interactive classrooms, or other tools).

Why? Ongoing student-to-student and student-to-instructor communication opportunities can promote active learning and retention.

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F3. Communication tools contain **intuitive language** about use and intuitive assignment instructions.

Why? *Students need to know how to use the course tools as well as the expectations for communicating and completing course work.*

F4. Questions or prompts require **higher-order thinking** (e.g., problem-solving, critical thinking), and **use of evidence**.

Why? *College-level learning extends beyond lower-level recall of information.*

F5. Prompts for communication tools are **current** and **relate to course objectives**.

Why? *Relevance to course objectives is vital to meeting departmental requirements. Use of current prompts can enhance student engagement.*

Groups or other areas foster the development of communication skills and the ability to collaborate.

G1. Group discussion or collaboration design contributes to **course objectives**.

Why? *Providing at least one opportunity for students to communicate or collaborate in a small group can promote higher levels of interaction.*

G2. Group discussion or collaboration includes detailed **instructions**.

Why? *As with any other area of instruction, clear expectations are critical to completion of course work.*

Student learning is assessed on an ongoing basis through a variety of methods.

H1. Assignments promote **academic integrity** and **authentic assessment**.

Why? *Specific guidelines can help with originality of student work.*

H2. Assessment **criteria** (e.g., rubrics or scoring guides) align with course objectives.

Why? *Students need to know how they will be assessed, and assignments must help meet course objectives.*

H3. **Multiple assessment methods** measure application of content and higher-order thinking (e.g., problem-solving, critical thinking).

Why? *Application of course content can take place in a variety of modes to help ensure students are able to apply course content.*

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H4. Assignments build upon one another with **opportunities for feedback and mastery learning**. Depth, timing, and number of assignments are appropriate to **course level**.

Why? [Scaffolding of assignments can help with mastery of course objectives. Expectations are tied to course level and department.](#)

H5. **Assessment requirements** are present (e.g., 7-day proctoring window, required departmental final exam questions or prompts).

Why? [Each online class must have one proctored activity with a 7-day window that is clearly communicated to students in advance. College and department assessment requirements must be in place for tracking data.](#)

H6. Assessment can be **tracked**. Assignments are *not* submitted via email. Grade Center columns are linked to designated coursework (e.g., assignment or discussion), and there are no extra hidden or visible grade columns.

Why? [Students need an accurate and up-to-date understanding of where they stand in a class through feedback as well as being able to access current grades. This can affect a student's eligibility for some programs of study, financial aid, and other areas.](#)

The Resources area provides access to course and campus resources to facilitate learning and assistance.

I1. Relevant campus and course **resources** (with brief descriptions) open in new windows.

Why? [Part of promoting student success in online courses is to provide ready access to campus support \(e.g., OTC Online, Help Desk, Writing Center, Math Tutoring, Speckman Tutoring and Learning Center, etc.\). Course resources may be links to online resources, videos, a social bookmarking site, etc.](#)

The course meets universal design principals, section 508 standards, and W3C guidelines.

J1. Sans-serif **fonts** are used (e.g., Arial). Bold or italics are used for emphasis. **Course buttons** are one-word titles. External **links** are titles rather than "click here" format.

Why? [Online courses need to demonstrate awareness of accessibility for the benefit of students.](#)

J2. **Visual content** includes tags or titles unless it is purely decorative. (Add a title when including links, images, or videos. Add a caption when creating a table.)

Why? [Adding an Alt tag is as simple as filling in a blank when adding in an image through the LMS. Screen readers can then read the title of the image or table.](#)

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J3. **Audio content** also includes text-based content, such as a transcript. **Video content** includes closed captions or a transcript.

Why? [Providing a transcript or closed captioning for audio content is a measure of accessibility. If you have content and would like assistance with a transcript, you may email your request to \[online@otc.edu\]\(mailto:online@otc.edu\).](#)

K1. Instructor should include a statement that **course development is authentic**. (Resources and materials used are linked or cited.) Reviewer should include comments and a total score, noting specific areas that are exemplary.

Why? [Resources and materials used are linked or cited. In addition to comments by reviewer in individual sections, there may be additional course design components that are exemplary.](#)

OTC Online Course Delivery Review

The purpose of the OTC Online Course Delivery Review is to ensure quality of online course delivery and facilitation to meet the requirements of the Higher Learning Commission and consistency initiatives within OTC Online.

Announcements assist with navigation, direct students, and introduce the instructor.

L1. Announcements guide students through ongoing **instructions/reminders/updates** that are posted throughout the course duration.

Why? [Regular and timely announcements also assist with instructor presence, a benchmark of online course delivery.](#)

The course content is personalized to promote student success and academic integrity.

M1. **Current dates** are included. College closures and college-recognized holidays are noted.

Why? [Current dates reveal the level of professionalism students expect. It is policy that no assignments be due on college closures and college-recognized holidays.](#)

M2. Current readings, notes, external links open in new windows, and other **current course** and **campus resources** are added.

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Why? Current and timely connections to concepts studied can promote student engagement as well as enhance instructor credibility. Promoting student success means raising awareness about campus and course resources.

M3. **Multimedia, integrated (embedded) content, and PDFs** (alternatives to PowerPoints and Word file attachments) are used.

Why? Embedded content is an effective online practice. PowerPoints do “not travel well” online. Alternatives are more accessible and can more effectively engage the learner. Multimedia can engage the senses of the learner, provide a current delivery format, and move the learning beyond text on a screen.

M4. **Prompts for collaboration tools** (e.g., discussions, blogs, journals, wikis, interactive classrooms) are personalized to be current for the course (e.g., dates are current, posts/replies from course copy are removed, relevant questions are added).

Why? Adapting and updating prompts can promote academic integrity, relevance, and real-world application.

M5. Instructor personalizes the course by updating or modifying **assessment** (assignments quizzes, tests, application of content, group collaboration, and other activities) to promote academic integrity, relevance, and real-world application. Feedback or a student survey during the course is used to guide the course.

Why? Updating or modifying assessment can promote academic integrity, relevance, and real-world application. Seeking feedback through surveys or another means during the course can help instructors respond to student needs and approaches to learning.

The instructor models personal attributes that support a learning environment in online interactions.

N1. Instructor interactions model the use of **examples and evidence** in discussion, raising the level and broadening the scope.

Why? Instructor presence guides discussion and promotes application of concepts.

N2. Instructor assumes a **facilitative role** on a consistent basis in discussion forums (or blogs, journals, wikis, interactive classrooms, or other collaborative tools).

Why? Instructor presence guides discussion and provides instructor-student interaction.

N3. Instructor participation in discussion or chat is **timely and useful**.

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Why? Instructor presence is ongoing to provide questions and feedback throughout interactions, so learning can be applied.

N4. Instructor reinforces **learning objectives** and displays subject-matter knowledge.

Why? Instructor credibility is enhanced and attention to learning of course objectives guides the course.

N5. Instructor sets a **professional, approachable tone** that promotes enthusiasm for the course.

Why? Instructor presence and interaction can promote retention.

N6. **Intuitive instructions** model appropriate conventions of grammar and mechanics.

Why? Students need clear instructions for participation and clear expectations.

The course strives to create a "community of learners" where students actively participate in student-to-student as well as student-to-instructor interactions, including regular, sustained, and guided interaction and other collaborative activities.

O1. Instructor responds to **student questions** and an icebreaker or informal discussion.

Why? Instructor connections to students and professionalism can demonstrate instructor presence.

O2. **Communication is ongoing** in discussion forums, blogs, wikis, journals, interactive classrooms, or other collaboration tools.

Why? Ongoing instructor-student and student-student interaction opportunities can promote retention.

O3. **Student-instructor dialogue** is evident throughout the course. (i.e., Instructor poses questions for open-ended discussion, advances discussion, and invites questions/comments.)

Why? Instructor presence can raise engagement level of students and retention.

O4. **Student-student dialogue** is encouraged.

Why? Feedback and answers to questions by students can promote learning and retention.

The course fosters the development of communication skills and the ability to collaborate online through Groups or other collaborative areas.

P1. Instructor personalizes the course through **group collaborations/group discussions** that contribute to **course objectives**.

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Why? Providing timely and relevant group interactions can enhance student-student interactions and real-world application of learning.

P2. **Group collaborations/group discussions** are personalized and updated with **intuitive instructions**. Activities relate to course objectives and include intuitive instructions that address every aspect of the assignment (objectives, logistics, assessment criteria, etc.).

Why? Clear and current instructions allow for professionalism in the tone and clear expectations.

P3. Instructor gives **direction and guides progress** for group collaboration.

Why? Ongoing instructor feedback during collaboration process can assist students in meeting assignment guidelines and course objectives.

Assessment of student work is personalized to promote student success.

Q1. **Instructor feedback** demonstrates awareness of cognitive strategies by making use of the robust capabilities of the online medium (streaming video, podcasts, audio-scripted text, etc.).

Why? Written feedback as well as other feedback methods can provide detailed feedback for improvement and engage the learner's senses.

Q2. Feedback relates to **measurable grading criteria and course objectives**.

Why? Expectations are communicated in advance and help students achieve course objectives.

Q3. Instructor feedback for assignments is **constructive**. (Errors are identified, strengths are recognized, and strategies for improvement are identified.)

Why? Specific feedback promotes improvement on future course assignments.

Q4. Instructor provides **feedback** (to promote further learning and mastery of course objectives) that is **available** before another same-type assignment is due.

Why? Feedback is timely, so a student is able to apply feedback before completion of another same-type assignment.

Q5. Assessment strategies and feedback make students continuously aware of their **progress and mastery of content** beyond grades. **Individual learning pathways** are evident (e.g., remediation, advanced study). If online software or other external content requires a password, provide access information for reviewer.

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Why? Students understand course standing for program entry requirements, financial aid purposes, and other reasons. Feedback offers examples of strengths, areas to improve, and strategies for improvement, so the goal is student mastery of course objectives. Non-linear learning is included.

R1. Instructor should include a statement that **course delivery is authentic**. (Resources and materials used are linked or cited. The instructor delivered the course via participation, feedback, etc.) Reviewer should include comments and a total score.

Why? Resources and materials used are linked or cited. The instructor delivered the course via participation, feedback, etc. In addition to comments by reviewer in individual sections, there may be additional course delivery components that are exemplary.

References:

[Blackboard Exemplary Course Program Rubric](#)

[Chico State Rubric](#)

[Quality Matters Rubric](#)