

Instruction Design Tips for Online Learning

Instructional Design Tips for Online Learning was developed by Joan Van Duzer of Humboldt State University to be used in conjunction with the *Rubric for Online Instruction* developed by CSU, Chico, c 2002.

Categories one through six, below, correspond to the categories of the Rubric for Online Instruction, developed by CSU, Chico.

Both instruments are available online, www.csuchico.edu/celt/roi.

Category 1 - Learner Support and Resources

Category 2 – Online Organization and Design

Category 3 – Instructional Design and Delivery

Category 4 – Assessment and Evaluation of Student Learning

Category 5 - Appropriate and Effective Use of Technology

Category 6 – Faculty Use of Student Feedback

Category 1 - Learner Support and Resources

A. Information about being an online learner

- ☐ Tips for being a successful online student
- ☐ Quiz to self-assess readiness to be an online student
- ☐ Link to Library resources
- ☐ Instructions for how to conduct online research
- ☐ Instructions on how to write a research paper
- ☐ Guidelines for APA/MLA format of papers and/or citations
- ☐ Link to the testing center
- ☐ Link to campus remedial resource center
- ☐ Link to student disability resource center
- ☐ Information/tutorials on how to use software required by class assignments
- ☐ Contact information for technical support or Help Desk
- ☐ Checklist or other method for common troubleshooting tips
- ☐ Minimum computer hardware and software requirements
- ☐ Tips for avoiding and dealing with computer viruses
- ☐ Sources for any required plug-ins (and links)
- ☐ Tutorial(s) or job aids for how to use the LMS tools
- ☐ FAQs for LMS
- ☐ Netiquette guidelines

B. Course specific resources

- ☐ Contact information for the instructor
- ☐ Contact information for academic department or advisor
- ☐ Information on additional related courses
- ☐ Pre-requisites of course
- ☐ Link(s) to Bookstore(s) to order textbooks or other instructional materials
- ☐ FAQ site on course information
- ☐ Estimated amount of time needed for completing course requirements

C. Resources supporting course content

- ☐ Link(s) to web sites with supporting information relevant to course content
- ☐ Link(s) to web sites of organizations or associations related to course content
- ☐ Glossary of terms or links to definitions of new vocabulary
- ☐ Link(s) to learning objects (external to course, such as MERLOT)

Category 2 – Online Organization and Design

A. Course navigability and organization

- ☐ Syllabus is easily located
- ☐ Links to other parts of the course or external sources are accurate and up-to-date
- ☐ Instructional materials required are easily located
- ☐ Numbers identify sequenced steps; bullets list items are not prioritized or sequential
- ☐ Course content is organized in a logical format
- ☐ Topics are clearly identified and subtopics are related to topics
- ☐ Sequential (vs. concurrent) topics are annotated with dates
- ☐ Course schedule is available in a printer-friendly format for student convenience
- ☐ Organization and sequencing of the course content is logical and clear
- ☐ Resources are separated into “required” and “optional” categories

B. Syllabus includes

- ☐ Course objectives
- ☐ Course completion requirements
- ☐ Expectations of students’ participation, honesty, etc.
- ☐ Timeline for student participation is clear
- ☐ Faculty member(s) introductory information
- ☐ Expectations of availability of and turnaround time for contact with instructor
- ☐ Course schedule is summarized in one place

C. Aesthetic design

- ☐ Typeface is easy to read
- ☐ Sufficient contrast between text and background makes information easy to read
- ☐ Appropriate images supporting course content add visual interest
- ☐ Design keeps course pages to a comfortable length with white space.

D. Consistency in course

- ☐ Layout of course is visually and functionally consistent
- ☐ Navigability is clear, simple and user friendly
- ☐ Spelling and grammar are consistent and accurate
- ☐ Written material is concise
- ☐ Language of written material is friendly and supportive
- ☐ Clear directions are given for each task or assignment
- ☐ Sentences and paragraphs brief

E. Universal accessibility

- ☐ Universal accessibility concerns are addressed throughout the course, including transcripts of any non-text objects
- ☐ Images are optimized for speedy display and include alternative text
- ☐ Alternative formats of materials provided, when possible (e.g., optional print packet of extensive reading materials, CD of audio clips used in course, etc.)
- ☐ Use of color adds interest but does not disadvantage those with color blindness

Category 3 – Instructional Design and Delivery

A. Promote interaction and communication

- ☐ Students introduce themselves
- ☐ Students are encouraged to respond to classmate introductions
- ☐ "Ice-breaker" activity to get acquainted
- ☐ Instructor introduces himself/herself to model interaction
- ☐ Students' input is not evaluated as "right" or "wrong"
- ☐ Netiquette described and enforced
- ☐ Student participation is tracked and "wallflowers" drawn in to the discussions
- ☐ Students are prompted by facilitator to expand on relevant points
- ☐ Facilitator may play "devil's advocate"
- ☐ Reading and writing requirements are consistent with student abilities and course unit load

B. Goals and alignment to learning objectives

- ☐ Pace of delivery of course content is managed
- ☐ Course content is "chunked" for more manageable learning
- ☐ Instructional design is made clear (e.g., is it self-paced, or group-paced)
- ☐ Expectations for synchronous vs asynchronous activities are clearly spelled out

C. Learning objectives and activities are integrated

- ☐ Reading assignments match learning objectives
- ☐ Activities lead to learning desired concepts
- ☐ Tasks and activities are designated as synchronous or asynchronous; sequential or may be completed in any order (clarified)
- ☐ Instructional material may be reviewed repeatedly (built-in redundancy)
- ☐ Summary provided frequently, particularly at the end of topics, to reinforce learning

D. Activities to enhance student learning (addressing multiple learning styles)

- ☐ Video clips of interviews, movements
- ☐ Historical audio clips of famous speeches
- ☐ Screen animations for instructional exercises using software
- ☐ Personal interview reports
- ☐ Crossword or word search puzzles
- ☐ Matching and game-show-style trivia games
- ☐ Online scavenger hunt / WebQuest
- ☐ Annotated bibliography
- ☐ PowerPoint presentations as assignments
- ☐ Flash simulations

E. Activities to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills

- ☐ Discussions center on questions without a single correct answer
- ☐ Compare and contrast exercises
- ☐ Case studies
- ☐ Critique classmates' assignments
- ☐ Collaborative exercises
- ☐ Portfolios (building one activity upon another) to share/peer review

Category 4 – Assessment and Evaluation of Student Learning

A. Assess student readiness for learning

- ☐ Pre-requisites are defined and enforced
- ☐ Acceptable methods for completing assignments are identified (group work, open book, etc.)
- ☐ Consequences of cheating or plagiarism

B. Assessment activities are aligned with learning objectives

- ☐ Criteria used to evaluate participation in online discussion groups
- ☐ Study questions
- ☐ Quantity and scope of graded assignments is reasonable
- ☐ Authentic assessments

C. Multiple assessment strategies

- ☐ Students' bibliography or reference list includes a variety of materials such as URLs, books and journals, and videos
- ☐ When possible, options among assignments are provided to allow for different interests, backgrounds, and personal learning styles

- ☐ Students are not assessed solely on tests/quizzes but are provided ample opportunity to demonstrate proficiency in different ways

D. Regular feedback

- ☐ Rich and rapid feedback – self-grading assignments released immediately
- ☐ Frequent and substantial feedback from the instructor
- ☐ Samples of assignments illustrate instructor's expectations
- ☐ Detailed instructions and tips for completing assignments
- ☐ Due dates for all assignments
- ☐ Rubrics for all assignments identify assessment guidelines
- ☐ Grading scale
- ☐ Instructor models assignment

E. Self-assessments and peer feedback

- ☐ Self-tests similar to the final evaluation instruments
- ☐ Students pose discussion questions, respond to others' discussion topics, later post answers to their own questions and respond to others' comments on their discussion topic
- ☐ Peer review opportunities
- ☐ Students apply rubric to their own work and describe/defend their score
- ☐ Clear guidelines for peer review, if applicable

Category 5 - Innovative Teaching Technology

A. Appropriate tools to facilitate communication

- ☐ Discussion boards
- ☐ Synchronous "chats"
- ☐ Email
- ☐ Listserv
- ☐ Teleconferencing
- ☐ Group discussion areas, when appropriate for group activities
- ☐ Instant messaging

B. New teaching methods

- ☐ Instructor is open to trying new methods of delivery of instruction
- ☐ Instructor is open to accepting new methods of students preferred learning styles

C. Multimedia elements

- ☐ Flash animations
- ☐ Tutorials with screen captures and voice over
- ☐ Audio clips
- ☐ Graphics
- ☐ Video clips
- ☐ PowerPoint presentations
- ☐ CD-Rom or DVD supplemental materials
- ☐ Other learning objects, simulations or interactivities

D. Engage students throughout the course

- ☐ Students off-campus with modems are provided with low-bandwidth alternatives for downloading media
- ☐ Technology is used to engage students in learning, not just for viewing but for interacting with other students or with the course content

Category 6 – Faculty Use of Student Feedback

A. Course content

- ☐ Evaluation survey at end of course
- ☐ Student input sought at regular intervals
- ☐ Open ended questions
- ☐ Students falling behind are prompted to determine what might be delaying their progress
- ☐ Students prompted to find web-based resources supporting the topic to share with classmates; the highest quality resources incorporated into the course

B. Online technology

- ☐ Instructor has an open door to students to point out flaws of delivery of instruction using technology
- ☐ Instructor solicits feedback on how delivery can be more effective for student learning (e.g., a Discussion Topic for Feedback)

C. Instruction and assessment

- ☐ Instructor is willing to modify course (live) as needed to improve or fix inadequacies
- ☐ Instructor is able to modify elements (e.g., fix bad quiz questions, extend deadlines, review methods of achieving course objectives)

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