

A Peer Review Form for Online Courses at Windward Community College

Participants

Name of Instructor _____

Name of Evaluator _____

Observation Date _____

Evaluator's Title _____

Class/Section _____

Evaluator's Email

Instructor Status:

Probationary _____ Lecturer _____ Tenured _____

I hereby certify that I have read the preceding report and have had an opportunity to discuss it with the evaluator. Instructor's signature does not necessarily mean complete agreement on the part of the instructor.

Instructor's Signature Date

Evaluator's Signature Date

Suggested Areas of Evaluation— Evaluator's Comments
1. Encourages contact between students and faculty.
2. Develops reciprocity and cooperation among students.
3. Encourages active learning.
4. Clearly organized course schedule.

5. Communicates high expectations.
6. Offers diverse ways of learning.
7. Connects students to external resources.
8. Overall presentation of course materials is coherent and clear.
9. Additional comments

A Peer Review Guide for Online Courses at Windward Community College

Background

In addition to other metrics, such as student success rates, time on task, and student evaluations, peer reviews of courses offer guidance to faculty to improve student learning outcomes. A peer review will tend to focus on recommended practices and possible ways of designing student learning activities to the educational effectiveness of the course. The peer review form is organized in terms of seven aspects of good course design.

1. Encourages contact between students and faculty;
2. Develops reciprocity and cooperation among students;
3. Encourages active learning;
4. Gives prompt feedback;
5. Emphasizes time on task;
6. Communicates high expectations; and
7. Respects diverse talents and ways of learning.
8. While every course will likely include all seven aspects, it also should be understood that some topics will tend to emphasize some design elements more than others.
9. Other feedback can be included through additional pages or through less formal modes such as email or verbal feedback.

Recommended Peer Review Process

Peer reviews of teaching are required for promotion and tenure at Windward Community College. We also need to conduct peer reviews for our part-time faculty members who teach online and at a distance. University Policy HR23 states, "Each academic unit (e.g., department, college, and University Libraries) of the University should take responsibility for developing detailed review procedures, supplemental to and consonant with general University procedures, as guidelines for promotion and tenure." To help facilitate the peer review of online courses, we recommend the following peer review process:

1. The department chair, or, where appropriate, Chancellor or Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, may help to identify a faculty peer ("peer reviewer") to conduct the peer review of teaching.
2. The course instructor will provide STUDENT access (in compliance with FERPA laws) to the peer reviewer for the courses being reviewed.
3. The peer reviewer uses the "Peer Review Guide for Online Courses" to work through the online course. The reviewer notes the instructor's strengths and areas for improvement in the space provided. Reviewers should feel free to ask questions of the instructor any time clarification or information is needed during the review process.
4. The peer reviewer provides a copy of the completed Peer Review Form to the instructor, which may be included in the Instructor's dossier or self-assessment.

References

Chickering, A. & Gamson, Z. (1987). Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. *AAHE Bulletin* (39) 7. [Chico State Online Rubric](http://www.csuchico.edu/celt/roi/). <http://www.csuchico.edu/celt/roi/>

1. Encourages contact between students and faculty

Frequent and timely student-faculty contact is the most important factor in student motivation and involvement, particularly in a distance education environment. Evidence of faculty concern helps students get through challenging situations and inspires them to persevere. Knowing a few faculty members well enhances students' intellectual commitment and encourages them to think about their own values and future plans.

Examples of evidence to look for:

- A "welcome" email is provided at the beginning of the course that encourages course-related student-to-instructor contact.
- The instructor encourages a healthy exchange of ideas and sharing of experiences among course participants.
- The instructor initiates contact with, or respond to, students on a regular basis in order to establish a consistent online presence in the course (and prior notice is given to students in the event that the instructor will be unavailable for more than a few days, such as might be the case during professional travel).
- A prominent announcement area in the course management system is used to communicate important up-to-date course information to students, such as reminders of impending assignment due dates, curriculum changes, scheduled absences, etc.
- The instructor holds regular and by appointment office hours online.
- Student inquiries are responded to in a timely manner.
- The instructor provides students with virtual interaction spaces for study groups, conversations, etc.

Where to look:

- Discussion forums
- E-mail messages
- Posted announcements
- Course syllabus
- Chat and other synchronous communication tools

Resources:

- "[What to do when opening a course](https://www.e-education.psu.edu/facdev/pg3)" - <https://www.e-education.psu.edu/facdev/pg3>
- "[Using online icebreakers to promote student/teacher interaction](http://www.southalabama.edu/oll/jobaidfall03/Icebreakers%20Online/icebreakerjobaid.htm)" - <http://www.southalabama.edu/oll/jobaidfall03/Icebreakers%20Online/icebreakerjobaid.htm>

2. Develops reciprocity and cooperation among students

Learning is enhanced when it is more like a team effort than a solo race. Good learning, like good work, is collaborative and social, not competitive and isolated. Working with others often increases involvement in learning. Sharing one's own ideas and responding to others' reactions sharpens thinking and deepens understanding.

Examples of evidence to look for:

- Regular opportunities for students to engage in one or more of the following activities:
 - Formal and/or informal discussions of course topics
 - Collaborative course assignments
 - Study groups
- A "meet one another" activity at the beginning of the course so students can begin to make personal connections.
- Encouragement to students to strengthen their online presence in the course by sharing links to their e-portfolio, personal Website, and/or posting a photo of themselves to the class Web space (e.g., their ANGEL profile).
- Group assignments that follow the basic tenets of cooperative learning in order to avoid the common pitfalls of "group work."
- An explanation of the criteria for "good" discussion participation.
- Modeling of good discussion participation practices by the instructor.
- Discussion prompts that help to guide and elicit student participation in class discussion activities.
- Instructor *facilitation* of class discussions by encouraging, probing, questioning, summarizing, etc.
- Student interaction space(s) for study groups, "hallway conversations," etc.

Where to look:

- Instructional materials and assignment directions
- Discussion forums
- E-mail messages
- Chat

Resources:

- "[An Overview of Cooperative Learning](http://www.co-operation.org/pages/overviewpaper.html)" - <http://www.co-operation.org/pages/overviewpaper.html>
- "[Strategies to Promote Online Discussion](http://members.shaw.ca/mdde615/howcommunicate.htm)" - <http://members.shaw.ca/mdde615/howcommunicate.htm>
- "[Ice-breakers](http://www.ion.uillinois.edu/resources/pointersclickers/2002_01/index.asp)" - http://www.ion.uillinois.edu/resources/pointersclickers/2002_01/index.asp
- "[Leading and Facilitating Discussion](http://www.princeton.edu/~aiteachs/handbook/facilitating.html)" - <http://www.princeton.edu/~aiteachs/handbook/facilitating.html>

3. Encourages active learning

Active learning methods engage students in the learning process by encouraging them to discover, process, and apply information. Empirical support for the positive impact of active learning on student achievement is extensive.

Examples of evidence to look for:

- Student activities that involve one or more of the following:
 - Active use of writing, speaking, and other forms of self-expression
 - Opportunity for information gathering, synthesis, and analysis in solving problems (including the use of library, electronic/computer and other resources, and quantitative reasoning and interpretation, as applicable)
 - Engagement in collaborative learning activities
 - Application of intercultural and international competence
 - Dialogue pertaining to social behavior, community, and scholarly conduct
 - For General Education courses, three or more of these activities are integrated into courses offered in the knowledge domains (<http://www.psu.edu/ufs/geic/framework.html>):
 - Opportunities for students to "customize" their learning by tailoring assignments to their personal and professional interests and needs.
- Examples of student work where they
 - Think, talk, or write about their learning
 - Reflect, relate, organize, apply, synthesize, or evaluate information
 - Perform research, lab or studio work, or physical activities
 - Participate in, design, or develop educational games and simulations.

Where to look:

- Course syllabus
- Instructional materials
- Assignment dropboxes
- e-Portfolios
- Discussion forums

Resources:

- [Active Learning](http://www.cat.ilstu.edu/additional/tips/newActive.php) (Illinois State University) - <http://www.cat.ilstu.edu/additional/tips/newActive.php>
- "[How Can Teachers Promote Learning and Thinking?](http://www.pgcps.pg.k12.md.us/~elc/theory9.html)" - <http://www.pgcps.pg.k12.md.us/~elc/theory9.html>
- "[Inquiry-based Learning](http://www.schreyerinstitution.psu.edu/pdf/IBL.pdf)" - <http://www.schreyerinstitution.psu.edu/pdf/IBL.pdf>

4. The course schedule is clearly organized

The frequency and duration of study, an understanding of the timing for tasks, and effective time management skills, are critical for students and professionals alike. Students need help in learning to manage and prioritize their study time.

Examples of evidence to look for:

- A published course schedule that outlines topics to be covered and assignment due dates so students can plan their workload accordingly.
- Information on the course syllabus that provides an estimate of the amount of time students should spend on the course (e.g., "On average, most students spend eight hours per week working on course assignments. Your workload may be

more or less depending on your prior experience with computing and the Web in general, and with this subject in particular.”)

- Time-to-completion information on course assignments (e.g., “This assignment should take you approximately 2 hours to complete.”)
- Course-specific study tips that provide students with strategies for utilizing their time well.
- Assignment feedback that provides students with information on where to focus their studies.
- Assignment due dates and timeframes that take into account the nature of the target audience. For example, a course targeted to working adult professionals might incorporate a weekend into an assignment timeframe.
- Course statistics that demonstrate that time-to-completion and weekly time-on-task estimates are on target.

Where to look:

- Course syllabus
- Course website
- Instructional materials and assignment directions
- Use of modules or website

Resources:

- [Emphasize Time on Task](http://www.oln.org/ILT/7_principles/time.php) (Ohio Learning Network) - http://www.oln.org/ILT/7_principles/time.php
- [iStudy Module \(for students\) on Time Management](http://istudy.psu.edu/modules.html): <http://istudy.psu.edu/modules.html>

5. Communicates high expectations

Effective instructors have high, but reasonable, expectations for their students. They clearly communicate those expectations and provide support to their students in their efforts to meet those expectations.

Examples of evidence to look for:

- Explicit communication of the skills and knowledge every student needs to have in order to be successful in the course.
- Explanation of course learning goals and how assignments are designed to help students achieve those goals.
- Frequent feedback provided to students through written explanations and detailed feedback on assignments.
- Motivation and encouragement that inspires students to move past the easy answers to more complex solutions.
- Routine use of critical and probing questions when communicating with students about course assignments and activities.
- Examples and non-examples of high quality work, along with a discussion of the differences between these.
- Examples of student work that demonstrate advancement toward learning goals.

Where to look:

- Course syllabus
- Instructional materials and assignment directions
- Assignment dropboxes and e-portfolios

Resources:

- [“Student Learning Goals and Outcomes”](http://www.schreyerinstitute.psu.edu/pdf/DevelopingStudentLearningOutcomes.pdf) - <http://www.schreyerinstitute.psu.edu/pdf/DevelopingStudentLearningOutcomes.pdf>
- [“Checklist for a Course Assignment and Associate Grading Criteria”](http://www.schreyerinstitute.psu.edu/pdf/assignments_grading_checklist.pdf) - http://www.schreyerinstitute.psu.edu/pdf/assignments_grading_checklist.pdf

6. Offers diverse ways of learning

People bring different talents and styles of learning to the learning environment. Some bring a wealth of relevant experience to a course, while others may new to the topic at hand. Likewise, students who are strong in a discussion situation may be less adept at lab or studio work. Students need the opportunity to demonstrate their talents and to “personalize” their learning so that it is relevant to them. It is also important to give students opportunities to learn in ways that may be less comfortable in order to improve their learning skills.

Examples of evidence to look for:

- Use of a variety of assessment tools that gauge student progress.
- Alternative assignment options that allow students to demonstrate their progress in a manner that is best conducive to their talents. For example, a podcast might be allowed as learning evidence instead of a written paper.
- Supplemental online materials are provided to students who lack prerequisite knowledge or who would benefit from having content presented in an alternative manner.
- Timely, corrective feedback for online activities.
- A positive online climate where students are encouraged to seek assistance with course content and learning activities if needed.
- A policy for accommodations that is stated on the course syllabus.
- Accommodations are proactively offered for students with disabilities.

Where to look:

- Course syllabus
- Instructional materials and assignment directions
- Assignment dropboxes and e-portfolios
- Discussion forums

Resources:

- [“Learning effectively by understanding your learning preferences”](http://www.mindtools.com/mnemlsty.html) – <http://www.mindtools.com/mnemlsty.html>
- [“Classroom assessment techniques”](http://www.ntlf.com/html/lib/bib/assess.htm) - <http://www.ntlf.com/html/lib/bib/assess.htm>
- [Accessibility in course design forum on PSU Learning Design Community Hub](http://ets.tlt.psu.edu/learningdesign/forum/4) - <http://ets.tlt.psu.edu/learningdesign/forum/4>
- [Office of Disability Services Faculty Handbook](http://www.equity.psu.edu/ods/faculty/overview.asp) – <http://www.equity.psu.edu/ods/faculty/overview.asp>

7. Connects Students to external resources

An effective online course will connect students to outside resources that would be typically available for students in face-to-face classes. Some of these resources are support services such as counseling, tutoring, and library reference. Other resources expand the content of the course, such as additional readings and activities that augment the primary course goals.

Examples of evidence to look for:

- Information is prominent for how to find college support, including counselors, mental health services, tutoring, library services, and computing.

Where to look:

- Course syllabus
- Assignments
- Resource pages

Resources:

- [Online Resources for Windward CC Students](http://windward.hawaii.edu/): <http://windward.hawaii.edu/>

8. Overall presentation of course materials is coherent and clear

Examples of evidence to look for:

- Navigation system is well designed
- Only tools that are used are activated.
- It is easy to find key pages and tools such as the syllabus, the timeline, the mail tool, and learning resources

Where to look:

- Course website

Resources: N/A

9. Additional Comments:

- Feedback on anything not covered in previous categories can be provided here. You may attach additional sheets if necessary.