



**Oregon State**  
**University**

## **Peer-Review of Online Teaching Guidelines**

Online Education Committee 2017-2018  
Peer-review of online/hybrid teaching guidelines sub-committee:

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## Introduction

This Peer Review of Online Teaching document is intended as a guide for Oregon State University faculty teaching online courses who need a peer-review of an online course<sup>1</sup>. It is designed to help the instructor prepare for the online peer-review and guide the peer-reviewer in writing the final peer-review of teaching letter. It is intended as a model and is not proscriptive. Throughout this document the person being observed is referred to as “instructor” and the person conducting the review is referred to as the “peer-reviewer.”

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There are five parts to the peer-review process.

Steps	Instructions
1. Pre-review	To be completed by the instructor using <b>Step 1. Pre-Review</b> guidelines. Sets the context and teaching philosophy.
2. Meeting	<b>Step 2. Meeting</b> is between the Peer-reviewer and Instructor to clarify pre-review materials and arrange for access to the course
3. Overview of Canvas Course Site	Completed by the Peer-reviewer using <b>Step 3. Overview of Canvas Course Site</b> guidelines
4. Course Module or Section Review	Completed by the Peer-reviewer using <b>Step 4. Canvas Modules or Section Review</b> guidelines based on the <i>Seven Principles of Effective Teaching</i>
5. Peer-Review of Teaching Letter	Completed by the Peer-reviewer using data gathered in Steps 1-4. May follow <b>Peer Review Teaching Letter Guidelines</b>

<sup>1</sup> This form has been adapted from a variety of open resources, including A Peer-Review Guide for Online Courses (Penn State) at [https://facdev.e-education.psu.edu/sites/default/files/PeerReview\\_OnlineCourses\\_PSU\\_Guide\\_13June2017.pdf](https://facdev.e-education.psu.edu/sites/default/files/PeerReview_OnlineCourses_PSU_Guide_13June2017.pdf), [Quality Matters](#) Rubric Standards, and the [Online Learning Consortium](#) Quality Course Teaching and Instructional Practice Scorecard.

## Step 1. Pre-Review Guidelines

**Instructor:**  
**Course:**

**Peer-reviewer:**  
**Date:**

**General Directions:** The Pre-Review sets the context for the review and allows the peer reviewer access to the course. The Pre-Review form is to be completed by the instructor and then discussed with the peer reviewer in **Step 2. Meeting**. (Suggested time 1.5 hours)

The pre-review list sets the context of the review and allows the peer reviewer access to the course. The narrative section encourages instructor reflection.

**Purpose of Review:** Identify the purpose and goals for the review.

- Promotion,  promotion and tenure,  annual review of teaching,  other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- Why did you choose this course to be assessed?

**Course Overview:** Provide the peer-reviewer with course overview information pertinent to the observation. **Attach a copy of the syllabus to this document.**

Undergraduate                       Graduate                       Other (specify)  
 Elective                                       Core course

Is this course part of a sequence of courses? \_\_\_\_\_

Number of students \_\_\_\_\_      How many times have you taught the course? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any TAs? If yes, how many? \_\_\_\_\_

Any additional information to share?

**Instructor's Role(s) in Course Design and Content Development:** This section helps the peer-reviewer to understand the extent of the instructor's contributions to course design and content development.

**Course design:** What is the extent of your contributions to Canvas course design? Was the course developed through Ecampus with the help of an instructional designer? If yes, approximately when was it last updated?

**Content development:** What is the extent of your contribution to content development? Are there aspects of the course content that you cannot change due to program policy or other factors?

**Canvas Module or Section for observation:** Identify which module or section will be reviewed. Select one module or section for observation<sup>2</sup>.

**External Technology Tools:** Identify any external technology tool(s) used in the course outside of Canvas for the purpose of instruction and/or communication. *Contact Academic Technologies for assistance with making course content available*

**Peer Reviewer Access to Canvas Site:** Describe the most appropriate way(s) for the peer reviewer to gain access to the course. *If needed, contact Academic Technologies for assistance with making course content available*

**Observation Principles Evidence:** Review the section **Step 4. Canvas Module or Section Review. Principles 1-7** of this document. If the peer-reviewer is unable to view evidence of the principles within Canvas, such as instructor-student correspondence or instructor feedback, consider preparing anonymized (names and grades redacted) examples. Supplementary materials may include:

- Examples of anonymized emails
- Examples of anonymized student responses to the Discussion board.
- Examples of anonymized feedback to student work

**Other:** Is there any additional information that would aid the reviewer in completion of the observation?

**Teaching Narrative<sup>3</sup>.** Please construct either a brief written narrative or include a conversation in **Step 2. Meeting** in which you address the following:

**Teaching Philosophy:** Briefly describe how your approach to teaching this course embodies your teaching philosophy?

**Creating Community:** Explain steps you take to foster a learning environment that is supportive, inclusive and motivates students to learn. Describe how you encourage student-to-student interaction in course assignments and other learning activities. Discuss how you communicate your expectations for participation and collaboration.

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<sup>2</sup> Rationale: In a face-to-face observation, one class period is typically observed; similarly, the online observation should focus on a specified time in the course as to provide a snapshot

<sup>3</sup> The narrative section encourages instructor reflection

**Motivating Students:** Explain strategies you use to encourage students to take responsibility for their learning. Describe your approach to delivering timely and appropriate constructive feedback.

**Communication and Responsiveness:** Describe ways in which you model positive and clear communication. Discuss your approach to responding to student concerns and course-related issues.

**Scaffolding Content:** Describe how you scaffold content to meet learning outcomes. Please provide a specific example.

**Ongoing Reflection and Improvement:** Explain how you evaluate the effectiveness of your course and your strategy for updating and refining course content and assignments. Describe ways in which you seek out student feedback to improve your course.

Complete this form and the narrative and submit it along with any supplementary material to your peer-reviewer prior to proceeding to **Step 2. Meeting**.

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## Step 2. Meeting

The instructor and peer-reviewer should meet either virtually or face-to-face before the observation takes place. This is an opportunity for the peer-reviewer to ask for clarification on anything the instructor submitted from **Step 1**. The peer-reviewer should feel free to ask questions of the instructor any time if clarification or information is needed during the review process.

After **Step 2** is completed, the peer-reviewer continues on to **Step 3. Overview of Canvas Course Site**.

## Step 3. Overview of Canvas Course Site Guidelines

Use the checklist to gain an overview of effective practices. The checklist includes principles that should be in evidence in every online course. If some of these are not easy to find, make note of it. Check the box if the instructor meets effective practice standards and provide comments. You should focus comments on both what was done well and how to improve areas in need of revision. (Suggested time 1 hour)

### Course Layout and Design:

- Course design is consistent (e.g., course content is arranged in sequential weekly modules with similar structure).
- Course layout allows for ease of navigation.
- Canvas homepage tells students how to begin the course.
- A "welcome message" sets the tone for the course and encourages student-to-instructor contact for course-related discussions or concerns.
- Any instructor-created lecture videos are captioned or transcripts are provided to enhance accessibility.
- Syllabus contains Disability Access Services contact information and statement on accommodations for students with disabilities

### Course Learning Outcomes:

- Course learning outcomes are prominently stated.
- Course learning outcomes are measurable and readily understood.

### Course Content, Activities and Assignments:

- Instructions for activities and assignments are clear and precise (e.g., how to participate, due dates, and how work will be assessed).
- Course syllabus sets a positive tone for learning and engaging the student.
- The syllabus includes course grading policy and a schedule of assignments.
- Instructor provides guidelines for netiquette.
- If discussions are used, they are designed to facilitate student-to-student interaction.
- A "meet one another" introduction discussion or other activity at the beginning of the course allows students to make personal connections.
- The course includes an appropriate variety of instructional materials and methods.

### Comments and Feedback on Step 3. Overview of Canvas Course Site

(Peer-reviewer may attach a separate sheet of paper)

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## Step 4. Course Module or Section Review Guidelines<sup>4</sup>

This section is to be completed by the peer reviewer and focuses on at least one module or section of the course. It is intended to help the peer reviewer write the final peer review of teaching letter. Use this chart to note areas of strengths and improvements for each of the *Seven Principles of Effective Practice*. Note specifically where this evidence is found in the Canvas course site. While, ideally, an online course supports all seven principles, variations in course format, size, and faculty teaching experience need to be considered.

### Principle 1: Encourages faculty/student communication and evidence of strong instructor presence

Evidence	Strengths	Areas for Improvement

### Principle 2: Builds learning community among students

Evidence	Strengths	Areas for Improvement

### Principle 3: Engages students in active learning

Evidence	Strengths	Areas for Improvement

### Principle 4: Assessment and instructor feedback is prompt and meaningful.

Evidence	Strengths	Areas for Improvement

### Principle 5: Paces content, assignments and learning activities.

Evidence	Strengths	Areas for Improvement

### Principle 6: Communicates expectations for the course that are reasonable and clear.

Evidence	Strengths	Areas for Improvement

**Principle 7: Fosters an inclusive learning environment.**

Evidence	Strengths	Areas for Improvement

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<sup>4</sup> Chickering, A. & Gamson, Z. (1987). Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. *AAHE Bulletin* (39)7.

## Seven Principles of Effective Practices

Please note that *Examples of evidence* and *Examples of where to look* are examples of different ways to identify evidence of the principles. This is NOT a checklist.

### Principle 1: Encourages faculty/student communication and evidence of strong instructor presence

Examples of evidence to look for	Examples of where to look
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Announcements are used as an effective communication tool.</li> <li>▪ Instructor contact information and communication policy is easy to find.</li> <li>▪ Introduction at the beginning of the module that sets context.</li> <li>▪ Responds to student inquiries in a timely manner.</li> <li>▪ Uses text or media to personalize and enhance instructor presence in the course.</li> <li>▪ Fosters a learning environment that invites multiple perspectives.</li> <li>▪ Engages students in the content (e.g., connects to prior learning, asks compelling questions).</li> <li>▪ Encourages students to share their questions, examples, and experiences.</li> <li>▪ Space for students to ask instructor question</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Announcements</li> <li>▪ Module overview</li> <li>▪ Course content</li> <li>▪ Discussion forums</li> <li>▪ FAQs, Q&amp;A, and/or discussion chat space</li> <li>▪ Instructor contact information</li> <li>▪ Syllabus</li> </ul>

### Principle 2: Builds learning community among students

Examples of evidence to look for	Examples of where to look
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prompts that guide and elicit student participation in discussion activities.</li> <li>▪ Clear expectations for discussion participation.</li> <li>▪ Modeling of good discussion participation practices by the instructor.</li> <li>▪ Instructor facilitation of class discussions by encouraging, probing, questioning or summarizing.</li> <li>▪ Opportunities for students to engage in one or more of the following activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Formal and/or informal discussions of course topics</li> <li>○ Collaborative course assignments</li> <li>○ Study groups or use of Canvas discussion groups</li> <li>○ Peer reviews</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Clear expectations when an assignment requires group work or student-to-student interaction.</li> <li>▪ Encourages students to share ideas, experiences, and resources related to course content.</li> <li>▪ Provides students with interaction space for study groups or "hallway conversations".</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assignment directions</li> <li>▪ Discussion forums</li> <li>▪ Peer reviews</li> <li>▪ Course syllabus</li> </ul>

### Principle 3: Engages students in active learning

Examples of evidence to look for	Examples of where to look
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Student activities that involve one or more of the following:</li> <li>▪ Engagement in collaborative learning activities (e.g., group projects) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Opportunity for information gathering, synthesis, and analysis in solving problems (including the use of library, technologies and other resources, and quantitative reasoning and interpretation, as applicable)</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Opportunities for students to "customize" their learning by tailoring assignments to their personal and professional interests and needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Syllabus</li> <li>▪ Course materials</li> <li>▪ Assignment directions and rubrics</li> <li>▪ Other learning activities such as e-Portfolios, blogs, journals, podcasts</li> <li>▪ Discussion forums</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Examples of student work where they             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Think, talk, or write about their learning (e.g., discussion, how it relates to real life applications of course content)</li> <li>○ Reflect, relate, organize, apply, synthesize, or evaluate information</li> <li>○ Participate in research, lab, studio, or physical activities</li> <li>○ Participate in simulations, educational games, role play, etc.</li> <li>○ Engage in experiential learning (e.g., community service project, field trip or internship)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
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**Principle 4: Assessment and instructor feedback is prompt and meaningful.**

Examples of evidence to look for	Examples of where to look
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Informal and formal assessments gauge student progress in meeting learning outcomes.</li> <li>▪ Student choice is included in assessments (e.g., discussion questions with more than one prompt, students may submit a video or a written assignment).</li> <li>▪ Students are encouraged to reflect on their learning through self-assessments and/or instructor feedback.</li> <li>▪ Students are provided opportunities to learn from mistakes (e.g., drafts of assignments for instructor feedback).</li> <li>▪ Feedback on student assignments is provided within a publicized, and reasonable, time frame.</li> <li>▪ Feedback is clear, constructive, specific, and focused on observable behavior that can be changed.</li> <li>▪ Feedback offers specific suggestions for those struggling and encourages deeper application of course content for all.</li> <li>▪ Instructor uses assessment results to inform instruction by further scaffolding upcoming assignments, providing additional resources and/or activities, etc.</li> <li>▪ An open discussion forum where students can ask questions and receive instructor feedback about course content and activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assignment directions and rubrics</li> <li>▪ Discussion forums</li> <li>▪ Announcements</li> <li>▪ Course content</li> <li>▪ Syllabus</li> <li>▪ Up-to-date, student- accessible course gradebook</li> </ul>

**Principle 5: Paces content, assignments and learning activities.**

Examples of evidence to look for	Examples of where to look
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assignment due dates are clear and easy to find.</li> <li>▪ Announcements addressing upcoming assignments.</li> <li>▪ Time-to-completion information on course assignments (e.g., “This assignment should take you approximately 2 hours to complete.”).</li> <li>▪ Multi-part assignments include guidance on how students should organize their time.</li> <li>▪ Assignment feedback guides students where to focus their studies.</li> <li>▪ Assignment due dates allow for reasonable accommodations (e.g., adequate time is given for students to access and acquire library resources).</li> <li>▪ Student population is considered in assignment time frames (e.g., a course targeted to working adult professionals might incorporate a weekend into an assignment time frame).</li> <li>▪ Study tips that provide students with strategies for utilizing their time well.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Module overview</li> <li>▪ Assignment directions and rubric</li> <li>▪ Syllabus</li> <li>▪ Announcements</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Opportunities and time for students to practice.</li> <li>▪ Pacing is adequate for the content, class timing, and student engagement (e.g., gives time for processing and questions).</li> </ul>	
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**Principle 6: Communicates expectations for the course that are reasonable and clear.**

Examples of evidence to look for	Examples of where to look
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Module/unit level learning objectives that are measurable and appropriate to course scope/level.</li> <li>▪ Assignment directions or rubrics that clearly outline expectations and relate to grading criteria.</li> <li>▪ Motivating and encouraging narratives that inspire and direct students to meet learning objectives.</li> <li>▪ Student work samples or descriptions of them that show high quality and low quality work.</li> <li>▪ Use of critical questions to communicate expectations and direct students toward achieving them.</li> <li>▪ Explicit communication of the skills and knowledge needed in order to be successful in the course.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Module overview</li> <li>▪ Course content</li> <li>▪ Assignment directions and rubrics</li> <li>▪ Announcements</li> <li>▪ Discussion forums</li> <li>▪ Syllabus</li> </ul>

**Principle 7: Fosters an inclusive learning environment.**

Examples of evidence to look for	Examples of where to look
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provides a variety of examples and contexts to evoke interest for diverse students.</li> <li>▪ Assignment prompts invite multiple perspectives.</li> <li>▪ Use of a variety of assessments, allowing students to demonstrate progress in meeting learning outcomes.</li> <li>▪ Alternative assignment options (e.g., a multimedia project might be allowed as learning evidence instead of a written paper).</li> <li>▪ Learning materials are presented in a variety of modalities (written, video, audio).</li> <li>▪ Use of more than one form of instruction.</li> <li>▪ Diverse backgrounds are valued (e.g., culturally sustaining materials, discussions that create just and equitable spaces).</li> <li>▪ Identifies diverse sources, perspectives, and authorities of the field.</li> <li>▪ Students are encouraged to seek assistance with course content and learning activities if needed.</li> <li>▪ Instructor demonstrates inclusive communication.</li> <li>▪ Instructor has screened course content with Accessibility Check in Canvas (e.g., there is sufficient contrast between text and background).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Syllabus</li> <li>▪ Assignment directions and rubrics</li> <li>▪ Discussion forums</li> <li>▪ Course Content</li> <li>▪ Announcements</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Feedback is clear, constructive, specific, and focused on observable behavior that can be changed.</li> <li>▪ Feedback offers specific suggestions for those struggling and encourages deeper application of course content for all.</li> <li>▪ Instructor uses assessment results to inform instruction by further scaffolding upcoming assignments, providing additional resources and/or activities, etc.</li> <li>▪ An open discussion forum where students can ask questions and receive instructor feedback about course content and activities.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Principle 5: Paces content, assignments and learning activities.</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assignment due dates are clear and easy to find.</li> <li>▪ Announcements addressing upcoming assignments.</li> <li>▪ Time-to-completion information on course assignments (e.g., “This assignment should take you approximately 2 hours to complete.”).</li> <li>▪ Multi-part assignments include guidance on how students should organize their time.</li> <li>▪ Assignment feedback guides students where to focus their studies.</li> <li>▪ Assignment due dates allow for reasonable accommodations (e.g., adequate time is given for students to access and acquire library resources).</li> <li>▪ Student population is considered in assignment time frames (e.g., a course targeted to working adult professionals might incorporate a weekend into an assignment time frame).</li> <li>▪ Study tips that provide students with strategies for utilizing their time well.</li> <li>▪ Opportunities and time for students to practice.</li> <li>▪ Pacing is adequate for the content, class timing, and student engagement (e.g., gives time for processing and questions).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Module overview</li> <li>▪ Assignment directions and rubric</li> <li>▪ Syllabus</li> <li>▪ Announcements</li> </ul>
<p><b>Principle 6: Communicates expectations for the course that are reasonable and clear</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Module/unit level learning objectives that are measurable and appropriate to course scope/level.</li> <li>▪ Assignment directions or rubrics that clearly outline expectations and relate to grading criteria.</li> <li>▪ Motivating and encouraging narratives that inspire and direct students to meet learning objectives.</li> <li>▪ Student work samples or descriptions of them that show high quality and low quality work.</li> <li>▪ Use of critical questions to communicate expectations and direct students toward achieving them.</li> <li>▪ Explicit communication of the skills and knowledge needed in order to be successful in the course.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Module overview</li> <li>▪ Course content</li> <li>▪ Assignment directions and rubrics</li> <li>▪ Announcements</li> <li>▪ Discussion forums</li> <li>▪ Syllabus</li> </ul>
<p><b>Principle 7: Fosters an inclusive learning environment</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provides a variety of examples and contexts to evoke interest for diverse students.</li> <li>▪ Assignment prompts invite multiple perspectives.</li> <li>▪ Use of a variety of assessments, allowing students to demonstrate progress in meeting learning outcomes.</li> <li>▪ Alternative assignment options (e.g., a multimedia project might be allowed as learning evidence instead of a written paper).</li> <li>▪ Learning materials are presented in a variety of modalities (written, video, audio).</li> <li>▪ Use of more than one form of instruction.</li> <li>▪ Diverse backgrounds are valued (e.g., culturally sustaining materials, discussions that create just and equitable spaces).</li> <li>▪ Identifies diverse sources, perspectives, and authorities of the field.</li> <li>▪ Students are encouraged to seek assistance with course content and learning activities if needed.</li> <li>▪ Instructor demonstrates inclusive communication.</li> <li>▪ Instructor has screened course content with Accessibility Check in Canvas (e.g., there is sufficient contrast between text and background).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Syllabus</li> <li>▪ Assignment directions and rubrics</li> <li>▪ Discussion forums</li> <li>▪ Course Content</li> <li>▪ Announcements</li> </ul>

## Step 5. Peer-Review of Teaching Letter Guidelines

In this final step in the process, the peer reviewer writes a letter for the instructor's dossier or annual review. (See also the [OSU Promotion and Tenure Guidelines](#))

### Suggested Letter Structure<sup>5</sup>

#### Introductory paragraph

- Indicate the purpose of the letter (P&T, Promotion, Annual Review)
- Include here the class identifier, the title and subject of the class as well as number of students and presence of TAs.

#### Paragraph 1: Pre-observation meeting

- Summarize your observations and content from **Step 1. Pre-Review and Step 2. Meeting** in this section. Use the notes from the instructor and your notes from the meeting to identify areas of the class you chose to observe.
- Explain any context of the course that may be significant in its design and content.

#### Paragraph 2: Course Overview

- Use your notes from **Step 3** to summarize the positive and negative aspects of the course overview. Provide specific examples of where the instructor has done well and any areas that might need improvement

#### Paragraph 3+: Module or Section Observation

- Use your notes from **Step 4** to detail more specifically how the instructor meets or does not meet good online teaching practices. Consider the course delivery primarily and the course design and layout if appropriate.

#### Concluding Paragraph

- Summarize your overall observation of the instructor's teaching skills. Include a summary of effective practices used by the instructor. Offer constructive suggestions about how the instructor might improve.

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<sup>5</sup>Based in part on the Template letter for peer review of teaching evaluation (Cornell University)  
<http://www.cte.cornell.edu/faculty/peerreview.html>