

Essential Online Course Features Checklist

Essential Feature	OSCQR* Standard	Resources and Ideas	Recommended Equity Practices	X
Orientation Activities - Video Tutorial on Features #1-4				
1. Post a welcome announcement, including what students need to do to get started in the class.	No. 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating an Announcement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greet your students with enthusiasm to show caring and create a welcoming presence • Address the classroom climate right away; be explicit about creating a safe and inclusive place for learning** • Provide an explanation of how to log into the course as well as the student support desk number (don't assume they know how) • If possible, send an announcement with course information and open the course shell before the start date to allow students to gain familiarity with the layout and requirements • Include multiple ways to access or obtain course materials; allow older editions of textbooks and provide low and no cost options for materials when available 	
2. Attach your syllabus inside the course in a visible area (such as a Syllabus tab) in both a PDF and accessible Word format.	No. 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harper College Syllabus Template • Adding a Syllabus to Your Course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use welcoming language and address students directly (I and you) as opposed to a stern, formal tone (instructor and students) • Share cultural capital by providing academic coaching; show students how to engage in the discipline and access relevant resources and campus services; provide opportunities for students to utilize services as part of the course structure** • Advise students of when you will be available and how they can best reach you; provide a template on email etiquette to guide students • Include a syllabus activity such as a quiz, an active reading/annotation assignment, a 	

			<p>syllabus scavenger hunt, or a statement of understanding form with questions to ensure students have read the syllabus and are aware of important course information</p>	
<p>3. Provide a written message or orientation video (with script attached) that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Faculty introduction ○ Course goals & expectations ○ Where to find things in the course ○ How to ask questions 	<p>No. 2 No. 40</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record and Share a Screencast in Collaborate Ultra 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include a brief welcome video (7-10 minutes) with captions and/or a transcript • Humanize yourself by sharing a story of your previous academic struggles and how you overcame them to demonstrate a growth intelligence mindset and convey approachability** • Address challenges of online learning and provide tips for success, particularly that support students with managing potentially limited time and building efficacy for navigating a self-driven learning experience 	
<p>4. Include a “Getting to Know You” discussion board or other introductory activity in which students can interact and introduce themselves.</p>	<p>No. 41</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building a Community in Your Online Class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask students to include an image of themselves or something that represents them to establish identity (to avoid feelings of invisibility) • Recommend students add an image to their Blackboard profiles that appears with their posts and in Collaborate • Include instructions and/or a short video on how to post in Discussion Board • Post an example introduction from yourself with an image to get students started • Consider creative options for building community including short video introductions • Create a Discussion Board or other space for students to anonymously post questions and get help from you and their classmates • Establish small study groups within the course for students to support one another (promote 	

			check-ins, help with instructions and assignments, sharing class notes, etc.)**	
Learning Activities - Video Tutorial on Features #5-8				
5. Have a clear organizational structure for each week/learning module so that students know where to find resources, assignments, and due dates.	No. 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laying Out Your Online Course and Providing Quality Content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an orientation module that prompts students to preview the course menu and layout and practice using some basic assignment submission tools; provide a link to a tutorial on how to submit each type of assignment Conduct an anonymous survey or diagnostic to determine student needs and provide review and instruction on foundational skills Add a guide or short video to overview each module to introduce and increase understanding of learning objectives; consider adding relevant stories, examples, vignettes, and analogies that you might share in class that don't typically find a place in an online course Provide students with slides, lecture outlines, or guided notes to preview before any online learning (lecture, video, activity, or discussion) Set up a shared document for students to use an interactive notetaking method during lectures, discussions, or videos—students can take a shift for note-taking or be assigned roles or designated areas in a table; encourage students to share their questions and comments in the chat as a backchannel ** Create short videos between 6-9 minutes long to keep students engaged in the content 	
6. If possible, create a consistent "rhythm" for the course, with activities and assignments due at the same day/time each week.	No. 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laying Out Your Online Course and Providing Quality Content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the Blackboard calendar or other visual to share a regular, predictable schedule for course activities and assignments 	

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post reminders with just in time coaching on assignments to help students improve their work and stay on schedule • Make checking-in a regular occurrence and develop policies and communication protocols that will allow students who are unable to engage with the course for days at a time to successfully complete assignments; mentor students on how to communicate when needing more help or an extension** 	
<p>7. Provide frequent, low-stakes assessments in addition to large projects, tests and assignments to allow you and students to assess learning regularly.</p>	<p>No. 45</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating and Grading Assignments • Creating, Deploying & Grading Tests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize different methods of discussion to increase active participation and build community in the class (Collaborate, Webex, Discussion Board, groups, video discussion posts like Flipgrid, GoReact) • Offer students choice in assignments or multiple modes for projects (Video, Memes, Podcasts, etc.) that honor diverse ways of making meaning and communicating learning.** • Provide short, mini-lessons with an activity to reinforce learning as opposed to long slideshows or lectures • Create small assignments or quizzes that students can retake until they achieve mastery • Allow students to resubmit assignments or retake exams after remediation such as tutoring or a study guide • Give students opportunities to complete self-assessments and reflections to promote active engagement and metacognitive awareness • Give students reflective journal assignments, unrelated to course content, that just ask students to discuss how they feeling/doing 	

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives students low stakes assignments that ask them to inquire or explore student services on campus 	
8. Provide clear labels, descriptions, and instructions for all activities, especially assignments. Avoid attaching items with no description.	No. 19 No. 46	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bringing Your Course Activities and Assignments Online 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include Transparent instructions that explain the purpose for each activity to increase student understanding of the learning experience and their perceptions of its value; clarify specific tasks required and steps to complete them along with criteria for successful completion and exemplars ** • Utilize rubrics and examples that demonstrate desired criteria • Chunk materials into folders by topic to provide a reasonable amount of information to process and to keep the course shell uncluttered • Carefully select materials to support learning without overloading students • Explain the purpose of any video clips, images, graphs, or other materials posted and how that information will be applied 	
Feedback & Instructor Presence - Video Tutorial on Features #9-10				
9. Set expectations for timing and methods of providing feedback, grades, and responses to student questions and clearly state those within the course and in the syllabus.	No. 38 No. 39	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing Feedback and an Organized Gradebook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate when assignments are graded and the types of feedback available so that students will know to look for scores and feedback • If you need more time for grading, communicate when you expect to finish and be flexible if students need feedback before completing the next assignment • Encourage students to post questions to Discussion Board with an option to post anonymously or email you directly 	

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide live troubleshooting sessions as student issues arise and post the recordings** • Consider mobile friendly resources and supplemental resources that can be easily accessed on multiple devices 	
<p>10. Maintain a clear instructor presence in the course by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Posting regular announcements ○ Completing the Faculty Information tab ○ Providing written or video overviews and/or lectures each week/module ○ Keeping active in discussion boards ○ Responding to student questions within established time frames ○ Providing customized feedback on student work 	<p>No. 38 No. 39 No. 40 No. 41</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building a Community in Your Online Class • Blackboard Collaborate Ultra: The Basics • Record and Share a Screencast in Collaborate Ultra • Creating a Rubric • Assigning a Rubric 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use digital tools to provide students with feedback. Make a video to address student questions. Create an audio recording. Use the Content Library in Blackboard to provide more detailed comments with resource links. Use GoReact.com for communications, presentations, observations or performances. • Let students know how long videos will be and identify key segments for students pressed for time • Set up individual or small group conferences with students • Model appropriate engagement in controversial issues to promote critical pedagogy and the conception that knowledge is co-constructed** • Provide feedback that recognizes something done well, something specific to improve, and some resources for support • Use the Kudos feature in Starfish to acknowledge students' accomplishments or achievements • Follow up with students who are absent from class and let them know you genuinely care about how they are doing • Respond to notifications from ADS when you receive them; contact the Access Advocates and ask questions about making your online course more accessible 	

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give students multiple ways to contact you such as email, voice/web call such as Google voice or WebEx, Remind (text/messaging), Discussion Board forum for questions • Allow anonymous posts in a “Question and Answer” Discussion Board so that students feel more comfortable asking questions 	
Accessibility - Video Tutorial on Features #11-15				
11. Ensure all text is a standard, sans-serif font and is in the default color. Text should be cleared of formatting if copying and pasting into Blackboard.	No. 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blackboard Accessibility Checklist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach students to create projects that are accessible to increase their awareness and technology skills** • Utilize accessibility guides and checkers for the tools that you are using such as Microsoft, Adobe etc. . . • Use heading styles and bolding for emphasis, which is better for screen readers and make documents easier to visually navigate as well 	
12. Ensure all images added to Blackboard or course documents have an alternative text provided.	No. 35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adding Images with Alt Text in Blackboard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that materials including weblinks and documents are all viewable and working to conserve student bandwidth** • Add alternative text descriptions all images including icons to explain their meaning 	
13. Provide a text alternative, such as a script or captions, to all video and audio files.	No. 35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Videos and Audio Media Accessibility Checklist • Editing Captions on YouTube Videos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record synchronous sessions for students to view or review on their own time; pause in between topics to create short videos • Be aware of your speaking rate and volume in recorded instructional material • Use live caption options in Power Point or Google Slides • Use tools or resources to create captions for your videos such as YouTube auto-captioner or OtterAI, which you can edit; Web Captioner can also create transcripts for audio** 	

<p>14. Build links with descriptive text.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Correct: Harper College Library Website ○ Avoid: https://harpercollege.edu/library/index.php or Click Here 	<p>No. 37</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laying Out Your Online Course & Providing Quality Content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check your hyperlinks every semester to ensure they are still working in order to conserve student bandwidth that is consumed when resources are not functioning properly • Maintain a balance of providing enough carefully selected material with ample instructions without providing too much material with respect to students' cognitive load limitations** • Provide instructions that explain the purpose of the online resource and what students will be doing with the information 	
<p>15. Format all documents with titles, headings, and other styles that allow clear navigation and readability.</p>	<p>No. 21</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adobe PDF Accessibility Checklist • Excel/SpreadSheet Workbooks Accessibility Checklist • PowerPoint/Electronic Presentations Accessibility Checklist • Word Documents Accessibility Checklist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When creating a video, provide recap of the session with an index of topics in order and a timestamp guide to important topics so that students can navigate to topics as needed** • Include a unique title on each slide in a presentation for clear navigation, particularly for screen readers • Use the headings and subheadings styles available in Word, Google Docs, and other programs for visual and screen reader navigability • After you create your documents, use the tab button to navigate through your document to ensure that it is accessible 	

For additional resources, please see the [Transition to Online Instruction](#) page on the Academy for Teaching Excellence website: harper-academy.net.

*OSCQR refers to the [Open SUNY Course Quality Review rubric](#), adopted by Harper College as the guiding standards for designing quality online/blended courses.

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