

Autumn Checklist - OCTBR

This checklist is based on the OCTBR (Online Course Teaching and Building Rubric), and built to help a faculty member rapidly update a course, within a few weeks, shortly before the semester begins. It is not prescriptive – some scenarios or aspects won't suit your class or program – but a tool to help update courses with best practices.

Course Overview

Introduction to Instructor and Program

- My site lists my email and office telephone and best times to be reached.
- I have listed specific times & locations through semester for both my online and face-to-face office hours.
- I have a list of email addresses and office telephone numbers for my program and/or department.
- I confirm what the expected turnaround time will be for email replies, such as “within 48 to 72 hours, Monday through Friday”.

Course Introduction

- I have an overview of my course, explaining the course's purpose and objectives, and its format (online, hybrid, PBL, etc).
- Rules of online conduct, or netiquette, are defined for learners.
- I have stated the expected turnaround for feedback on assignments.
- There's a clear site “entrance” with an introduction to the course, on the main landing page or as a top-level folder (“Start Here: Introduction”), allowing my students to quickly and repeatedly find time-sensitive, organized materials.
- My syllabus is provided in Word and PDF format (using the official school or department template if required); it includes my contact information and office hours, a summary of course goals and objectives, expectations for student work, and due dates. I will link any policies on late work including at the department and university levels.

Course Organization

- My content is structured to be easily navigated, and intuitive. The course navigation structure is consistent, using both text and icon information.
- Navigation text labels are descriptive yet concise (“The Circulatory System” is better, both descriptive and concise, than “Week 2” [not descriptive, but concise] or “A Thorough Introduction to the Circulatory System and the Wonders Therein” [descriptive, but not concise])
- All sequenced content is listed in the course (for example, a folder of materials that goes live in seven weeks says so: “Nutrition for Professional Athletes: Opens March 17th”).
- Full materials (content readings, assessments, assignments) are available for at least the first **four weeks** of the course, and I clarify when additional material will go live.
- Tools or links I won't be using in the course have been removed from the menu.

Accessibility & Usability Information

- For students who have accessibility concerns, I have linked to my school's Disabilities page, and included text that explains how to request accommodation through the campus ADA officer.
- To help students with visual impairments, I have [alternative or "alt" text for graphics](#).
- Since color-blindness is common (4-8% among different populations) I don't use color alone to convey information – for instance, instead of having crucial words highlighted in red only, I use red text with underlining.
- My menu items are easy to read and high contrast.
- If I have text that students must read at length online, [it's in a sans-serif font like Tahoma, Futura, or Verdana](#).
- Transcripts or captions are provided for audio or videos linked into the course.
- No multimedia or element in the course requires [mouse interaction](#); for instance, a key can be pressed OR the mouse used to interact with embedded multimedia.
- Wherever possible, I mention that content will open in a new window or tab.
- I'm avoiding flickering, blinding, scrolling and auto-updating items on my course, including embedded items and videos.
- I also, [when creating a form in my course](#), use labels ("First name") rather than placeholder text ("What is your first name?"), and they can be completed using tab keys.
- My [Word documents](#) are designed with styles (such as headings and subheadings), and alternative text, and I use Word's built-in accessibility checker.
- My [PowerPoint documents](#) avoid vertically merged cells, placeholders and text boxes that cause issues for screen readers.

Instructional Design

- My course's learning activities, practice and assessments are consistent with any student outcomes or objectives (SLOs) in my course, and have a basic structure from one content folder to another that's easy for students to follow.
- I state how assignments, practice, and activities connect to student learning outcomes, so my students better understand why, not only what, they're learning.
- I make standards and requirements for succeeding in assignments, including technical needs (e.g. "You must download Skype for Business to complete this assignment"), both where students are submitting their work or taking assessments, and in the syllabus. That way, my students can prepare better, or download needed software, as soon as possible.

Our Academic Community

- I have links on my course to help my students, especially those who are distance students, participate in our academic community. These resources may have been created by my school, on a resources page, or course, making them easy to add. For instance, one OCTBR resources course includes the school's Honor Code, academic success resources like "Seven Habits of Highly Effective College Students", links to the Student Ombudsman, Testing Center, Office of Student Affairs, Parking Services, a campus map and a summary of FERPA and HIPAA. All can be easily copied into a course.
- I also have a bookstore link, a list of required books, and a link to our department, and advising.
- I link to other third party documents that help students organize time, energy and succeed in school.



Resources for Student Health

- In support of student wellness, I can also copy in OCTBR resource page links to the main Student Health page, the Mental Health Crisis line, a link to suicide prevention information, [information regarding Veterans](#), and a link to an [alcohol and substance abuse awareness page](#).
- Any third-party resources I believe will help my at-risk students can also be linked.

Information Literacy

Library Skills and Resources

- The library website is linked into my course's main menu.
- I have links and PDFs that help students use the library off-campus, which helps all students, as well as my distance learners.
- All my library resource links – articles, ebooks, projects, etc. – feature the school's proxy prefix, so students can access the materials off-campus, while content owners who have licensed material to the library can also see how often items are used.

Evidence Based Practice

- Due to the limited time I have for course development, and the fact that my students may not have already been taught EBP in the sequence of their program, EBP exists in my course through basic “scaffolding”, which introduces students to core concepts they'll learn more formally later.
- For instance, instead of having my students learn how to write an entire PICO question, my assignment for them has them reflect on different types of “O” – Outcomes – only. Or I provide them with a pre-written PICO question to begin an assignment. Because the assignment is very basic, early scaffolding for more formal EBP learning later, I may create this assignment as a group assignment featuring group reflection, rather than considerable analysis or individual work.

Social Media

- I've shared the school's social media policies as a link in the course.
- I've included a statement that reminds students that when they use social media, they can't share anything that is covered under FERPA and HIPAA law.
- I've checked any third-party podcasts, blogs or social media sites I plan to use for content issues and conflict of interest. If time permits, I use the [Quality Checklists for Health Professions Blogs and Podcasts](#) (Colmers et al, 2015) or a similar tool.

Copyright, Fair Use and Creative Commons

- I've confirmed that all materials and resources in my course cite their original source, from texts to websites, to multimedia.

Plagiarism

- I've included a definition of plagiarism, and the school and department policy on plagiarism.

Professionalism and Community Practice

Community Creation & Group Relations

- I offer an icebreaker or similar exercise, for distance learners, encouraging introductions and questions on the course discussion board, or on a tool like Voicethread.
- Discussion topics are open-ended, reflective and avoid “I agree/me too” responses.
- A rubric defines participation standards in the class, and how I would like peers in the course to interact with one another.

Student Self-Reflection and Metacognition

- A self-assessment helps students and other learners consider how prepared they are to learn online.
- There is an assignment where students can discuss cases online with one another.
- I have specific reflective questions in mind that I will be asking learners in response to their posts on discussion boards, blogs, and journals in the course.

HIPAA and FERPA

- There are links to HHS.gov’s Health Information Privacy website, HIPAA website, and the FERPA summary provided by the Department of Education.

Professionalism

- I have a link to my school’s professionalism page, any fraud and abuse hotline, and additional pages regarding disrespectful behavior.

Assessments

- I have a template, and a rubric, for the most challenging assignment(s) in my course.
- Where group work is expected, I’ve also provided learners with a group rubric, specifying how the assignment should be completed. If necessary, I state expectations for different roles in the group.

Media and Technologies

Tech Literacy

- I define any necessary technology my learners will need to use in the course, along with any resources that will help learners pick up the new skill rapidly.

Multimedia

- My videos and animations use multimedia learning principles. For instance, instead of creating one long video, I chunk my videos so they have shorter running times.
- My videos and animations can feature narration, but don’t have a lot of visual text on the screen. For accessibility reasons, I do have a transcript or captions available for turning on or off, but having titles that fill up the screen in my videos breaks best practices based on cognitive load theory ([Mayer and Moreno, 2003](#)). My learners will find it more difficult to remember text if it’s both posted on the screen and spoken aloud; it’s best that it just be narrated with animations, motion, or images only.



Media and Technologies (continued)

Tech Support

- I have also listed the email, telephone number and websites for technical support, to assist with student tickets and emergencies.
- Wherever there are user support pages produced by vendors (Blackboard, Canvas, Voicethread, Tegrity, etc.) I have linked these for student users.

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