

Meeting the QM Standards Concept Paper—Full Version

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EME 5456: Online Pedagogy and Course Design

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7 October 2021

Course Overview and Introduction

To meet the course overview and introduction standards, I created an additional unit, a pre-module, titled “Course Welcome,” for learners to explore first. The Course Welcome module is intended to help learners orient themselves in the online learning space and get a feel for the course structure and flow. The Course Welcome module begins with an introduction video that welcomes learners and introduces first week activities and start up items that need to be completed. A syllabus and discussion guidelines are included, outlining course expectations and communication guidelines. The syllabus is offered in two formats—a downloadable pdf as well as a Canvas version syllabus that includes Canvas help links to aid learners using the Canvas Learning Management System (LMS) for the first time. An introduction discussion thread is provided for learners to introduce themselves and get to know their classmates and instructor. Finally, a brief “Introduction Survey” is included to check-in with learners and gather information that will guide the instructor on how to best support individual learners prior to the commencement of learning. As a learner, I value clarity in course overviews and the opportunity to connect with classmates early on in a course. Therefore, I invested time and careful thought to design my Course Welcome to incorporate these aspects and I believe my LMS shell meets all course overview and introduction standards.

Learning Objectives (Competencies)

Learning objectives for the course are outlined in the course syllabus which is introduced to students in the first week of learning. Each module includes a module overview that outlines weekly learning objectives for the module so learners are aware of what will be taught and how it will be evaluated. I used backwards planning to ensure learning objectives align with the

‘show’ and ‘do’ activities and assessments and consistency and connections are remained across the course. I believe learning objectives are well-suited to a graduate level course since learning objectives focus on learners’ application of learning to their teaching context.

Assessment and Measurement

Assessment and measurement have been set up to meet the stated learning objectives. In particular, ‘show activities’ are designed to allow students to demonstrate their understanding of readings and participate in discussions on the course topics and ‘do activities’ are designed to allow students to apply their learning by creating and making learning resources, guides and other artifacts related to course topics. ‘Do activities’ also assist learners in solving the course Mega Challenge. To meet QM standard 3.3, a rubric is included for ‘do activities.’ If I were to build the course out completely, there would be a separate rubric for ‘show activities’ since they assess different learning outcomes, as well as rubrics for peer evaluations and the final portfolio project. The QM standard 3.2 is met by including the course grading policy in the course syllabus that outlines the grading scheme as well as the time frame for feedback and grades. Throughout the course, learners are able to track their progress and view individual feedback through the ‘Grades’ section which lists student grades for each activity. Feedback will also be given in the form of peer reviews three times throughout the course.

Instructional Materials

I believe instructional materials contribute to the achievement of learning objectives since instructional materials introduce learners to course content and assist learners in identifying and analyzing essential topics in the field of English Language Learners. Instructional materials have

been carefully selected to provide the knowledge required to complete the weekly ‘show’ and ‘do’ activities, which meets QM standard 4.2. All resources included follow copyright usage—blogs and online websites are linked to the original source and academic articles are cited using APA format (7th edition). While selecting articles and resources, I gave careful attention to the date of publication, to ensure that there were recent and relevant resources included in course readings. Throughout the course, instructional materials are presented in a variety of ways—academic articles, blogs, websites, educational government guides and resources and videos.

Learning Activities and Learner Interaction

Learning activities include ‘show’ and ‘do’ activities, discussions and a final portfolio project. The ‘show activities’ are prompted discussions that allow learners to reflect on, discuss and analyze course topics and learning, while the ‘do activities’ and portfolio project provide opportunities for students to develop and design learning supports and resources that will be useful to their current and future teaching practices. I believe this learning activity structure, in addition to the weekly discussions that promote active learning, meet QM standards 5.1 and 5.2. To meet QM standards 5.3 and 5.4 a communication policy is included in the syllabus that outlines student expectations and instructor expectations stating how the instructor will participate and monitor weekly discussions. Learners are also given discussion guidelines that outline interaction expectations.

Course Technology

The course discussion tools allow learners to share their learning artifacts as well as discuss and analyze course readings and topics. The use of Diigo supports collaboration and

resource sharing throughout the course. Within the ‘show’ and ‘do’ activities, learners are encouraged to use different tools like Canva and Bubbl.us, which engages learners and provides opportunities for active learning. I do not feel that I have addressed 6.4 in my LMS shell because I do not provide information on privacy or data concerns. This may be an aspect that I can address in the weekly course announcements. If the week’s activities require using tools outside of the Canvas LMS, I can offer some information on privacy and data issues and ask learners questions that can help them consider and reflect on potential concerns.

Learner Support

Learner support is addressed by providing learners with Canvas support linked under the Syllabus in the Course Welcome module. However, since my course is not associated with a particular university, QM standards 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4 are not addressed. Accessibility policies and services, academic support services and resources and institution student services and resources are standards that the institution typically supplies, and instructors incorporate and link this information in their course.

Accessibility and Usability

To meet accessibility standards, I tried to design the course navigation to facilitate ease of use and provide readability by ensuring text is clear, concise and in a consistent font and layout. I added alternative text and image descriptions to all my images and re-designed graphics to ensure images’ contrast was accessible. For the Course Welcome Video, I was unable to insert captions primarily because I do not know how to create caption files. To address this, I transcribed my video and pasted the text below. Next time, I want to try using Kaltura, which

provides more accessible video transcription. While my LMS shell meets 8.4 and 8.5 and a variety of multimedia is used throughout the course, I was not able to meet all sub-standards in this section. The Canvas FSU accessibility meter indicated that many of my PDF files did not meet accessibility standards. While I was able to change some original files to make them more accessible, I did not have the option to edit other PDF files like academic articles.

Conclusion

Obstacles I encountered while designing my LMS shell involved a lack of knowledge of certain tools and at other times, limitations of Canvas capabilities. As someone designing a course LMS shell for the first, there was a lot of information and skills to learn. I found it helpful to see how others design their courses through example videos and tutorials which demonstrated not only how to do something, but also illustrated what can be done. For myself, this experience truly exemplified the importance of professional development when designing high-quality online courses. As I was designing my LMS shell, I reflected on a statement by Feldman et al. (2010), “a lack of quality controls could jeopardize an institution’s effort to implement a successful online education program (as cited in Baldwin et al., 2017). The QM standards offer a helpful guide to produce a holistic and accessible course. While designing my LMS shell, the QM standards were like the North Star that guided me through the process and ensured I was following a design path that would provide a high-quality, interactive and engaging online course for my learners.

References

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