



California
Community
Colleges

California Virtual Campus
Online Network of Educators

Online Course Design Rubric

Sections 1–4 with Accessibility Verification

June 2027

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Accessibility Expectation

Courses reviewed using this rubric are expected to meet all applicable federal and state digital accessibility requirements. If a course relies on third-party technologies, publisher content, or Open Educational Resources (OER) materials that are not accessible by default, those materials must be remediated or an accessible alternative provided before review begins.

Note: To be marked as Exceptional, an element must first meet all expectations in the Aligned column.

Section 1: Policies & Support

*Note: To be marked as **Exceptional**, the element must first meet all expectations described in the Aligned level. The higher rating reflects design choices that go beyond the baseline to further support student learning, engagement, and access.*

Rubric Element	Incomplete	Approaching Alignment	Aligned	Exceptional
1.1 Course Policies	Required items not present or seen.	May need revision to reach aligned	Course policies that support student success, such as academic honesty, withdrawal, work submission, communication, and participation, are clearly stated and located in multiple locations.	Relevant course policies are also included within units or activities where they are most useful, helping students apply expectations as they move through the course.
1.2 Equitable Use of Technology	Required items not present or seen.	May need revision to reach aligned	The instructor explains how the required technology supports learning and meets institutional accessibility requirements. The explanation provides guidance for accessing the tool and tech support.	The course offers flexible or alternative options when possible and appropriate to support equitable access to technology. Students are also invited to provide anonymous feedback about their technology experience to help improve access for all.
1.3 Artificial Intelligence (AI)	Required items not present or seen.	May need revision to reach aligned	A student-centered, course-specific AI policy is clearly stated, easy to find, and includes clear expectations for how AI may or may not be used in the course. The instructor explains if/how they will be using AI within the course	AI guidelines and resources are integrated into specific course activities and assignments, with any instructor AI use clearly indicated.

*Note: To be marked as **Exceptional**, the element must first meet all expectations described in the Aligned level. The higher rating reflects design choices that go beyond the baseline to further support student learning, engagement, and access.*

Rubric Element	Incomplete	Approaching Alignment	Aligned	Exceptional
1.4 Data Privacy and Security	Required items not present or seen.	May need revision to reach aligned	The course links to institutional privacy and security policies and provides students with guidance on safe technology use and protecting their data when using course-related tools or platforms.	The course provides opportunities and resources for students to understand digital privacy and data security best practices and to learn about their rights in the online learning environment. Information about how student data is collected, used, and protected is clearly communicated.
1.5 Student Resources and Support	Required items not present or seen.	May need revision to reach aligned	Links to institutional support services: disability services, counseling, tutoring, library, basic needs, and technology help, are clearly labeled and easy for students to find.	Institutional support resources are purposefully integrated into relevant parts of the course. The course highlights how these services can support student success and proactively reminds students to use them throughout the term.
1.6 Learning Support	Required items not present or seen.	May need revision to reach aligned	The course includes support resources to assist students in successfully completing assignments and activities, such as tips, reminders, or helpful resource links.	The course also provides additional resources that allow students to explore content more deeply. These are placed within units or activities where they best support extended learning.

Section 2: Course Structure

*Note: To be marked as **Exceptional**, the element must first meet all expectations described in the Aligned level. The higher rating reflects design choices that go beyond the baseline to further support student learning, engagement, and access.*

Rubric Element	Incomplete	Approaching Alignment	Aligned	Exceptional
2.1 Structure and Navigation	Required items not present or seen.	May need revision to reach aligned	Canvas tools and modules are used in a consistent way to organize content and help students move through the course. The course has a clear structure that is easy to navigate and uses accessible navigation and formatting practices.	The course is designed to be inclusive and easy to navigate across multiple devices, as appropriate. There are helpful technology recommendations throughout the course.
2.2 Module Objectives	Required items not present or seen.	May need revision to reach aligned	Module learning objectives are consistently placed and describe specific, measurable outcomes that align to the course-level objectives.	Module objectives are written in student-centered language that clearly explains what students will be able to do, why it matters, and how it connects to future learning or real-life situations.
2.3 Module Alignment	Required items not present or seen.	May need revision to reach aligned	Module content and assessments align with the module objectives and are adequate to support achievement.	Module content and assessments are intentionally mapped to each module objective and connections are clearly explained to students
2.4 Canvas Tools and Apps	Required items not present or seen.	May need revision to reach aligned	Canvas tools and institutionally approved apps are used to ensure accessibility, reduce the labor intensity of learning, and streamline access to the materials and activities for students.	Canvas tools and apps are often used to support student voices and encourage connections with classmates, the college, the community, or professionals in the field.

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Rubric Element	Incomplete	Approaching Alignment	Aligned	Exceptional
2.5 Use of Multimedia	Required items not present or seen.	May need revision to reach aligned	The course consistently uses different types of media that meet accessibility standards—such as text, audio, video, and images—to support student learning. Visuals and examples represent diverse cultural identities, lived experiences, and social contexts. If diversity is limited due to content, this is acknowledged and explained.	The course facilitates student access to a wide range of low-burden media. These materials are used creatively and intentionally to support learning and deepen understanding.
2.6 Guidance for Working with Content	Required items not present or seen.	May need revision to reach aligned	The course provides clear instructions that guide students in engaging with content, such as prompts for note-taking during videos or guidance on what to focus on in readings.	Instructions explicitly explain to students how the content supports learning. Instructions anticipate common challenges and guide students.

Section 3: Regular & Substantive Interaction (RSI)

*Note: To be marked as **Exceptional**, the element must first meet all expectations described in the Aligned level. The higher rating reflects design choices that go beyond the baseline to further support student learning, engagement, and access.*

Rubric Element	Incomplete	Approaching Alignment	Aligned	Exceptional
3.1 Initial Course Contact	Required items not present or seen.	May need revision to reach aligned	The instructor provides a welcome message that gives students the key information they need to start the course. This may include first-week requirements, a brief overview of any technology used in addition to Canvas, alternative access options (if needed), and links to Canvas support.	The instructor sends more than one welcome message—such as a pre-course introduction and a first-day reminder. The messages are student-centered and foster a sense of belonging.
3.2 Instructor-Initiated Interaction	Required items not present or seen.	May need revision to reach aligned	The course includes a clear explanation of when and how the instructor will initiate regular interaction with students (e.g., in module 0 and syllabus) and is evident throughout the course design.	The explanation facilitates student understanding of why RSI matters and provides deeper interaction throughout the course.
3.3 Student-Initiated Interaction	Required items not present or seen.	May need revision to reach aligned	Students can easily locate instructor contact information and details about regular opportunities for interaction during the course and expected response times.	Students are given multiple ways to contact the instructor and are actively encouraged to reach out at different points throughout the course or within relevant assignments.

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Rubric Element	Incomplete	Approaching Alignment	Aligned	Exceptional
3.4 Facilitation of Student Interaction	Required items not present or seen.	May need revision to reach aligned	The course includes opportunities for student-to-student interaction focused on course content. The instructor's role in facilitating these interactions is explained.	The instructor expects, encourages, and facilitates regular student-to-student interaction through structured activities and thoughtful prompts that include clear guidelines to help students stay engaged and foster inclusivity.

Section 4: Assessments

<i>Note: To be marked as Exceptional, the element must first meet all expectations described in the Aligned level. The higher rating reflects design choices that go beyond the baseline to further support student learning, engagement, and access.</i>				
Rubric Element	Incomplete	Approaching Alignment	Aligned	Exceptional
4.1 Variety & Frequency	Required items not present or seen.	May need revision to reach aligned	The course provides relevant formative and summative assessments throughout the term, offering different ways for students to show what they know and stay engaged.	Most assessments support higher-order thinking, connect to real-world situations, and promote inclusive, engaging learning experiences.
4.2 Scoring Criteria	Required items not present or seen.	May need revision to reach aligned	Assessments include a clear explanation of how student work will be evaluated—such as rubrics or defined expectations.	The assessments include examples or models of student work to help clarify expectations and support student success.
4.3 Assessment Instructions	Required items not present or seen.	May need revision to reach aligned	Accessible instructions clearly explain what students need to do to complete the assignment successfully and provide relevant resources.	Instructions are offered in multiple formats—such as written, visual, or audio—to support different learning needs. Instructions offer alternative options to reduce barriers.
4.4 Assessment Feedback	Required items not present or seen.	May need revision to reach aligned	Assessments clearly explain how and when students will receive feedback on both formative and summative assessments.	The assessments provide clear instructions for how students can access their feedback in Canvas and may also include opportunities to use the feedback to improve future work.

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Rubric Element	Incomplete	Approaching Alignment	Aligned	Exceptional
4.5 Learner Self-Reflection	Required items not present or seen.	May need revision to reach aligned	The course provides multiple opportunities for students to reflect on their learning and receive formative feedback from the instructor as appropriate.	Reflection opportunities in the course help students connect their effort to results and plan for improvement.
4.6 Learner Feedback Survey	Required items not present or seen.	May need revision to reach aligned	At the end of the course, learners have the opportunity to give anonymous feedback to the instructor regarding course design and/or course content.	There are opportunities throughout the course to give anonymous feedback regarding course design and/or course content.

Accessibility Verification

This aligned course has been checked using the accessibility tools and procedures provided by the college and any identified issues have been addressed by the course author to meet digital accessibility requirements at the time of review.

- Course Author
- POCR Lead

Any educational technology tools present in the course have been vetted through the institution's accessibility review and approval process.

- Course Author
- POCR Lead