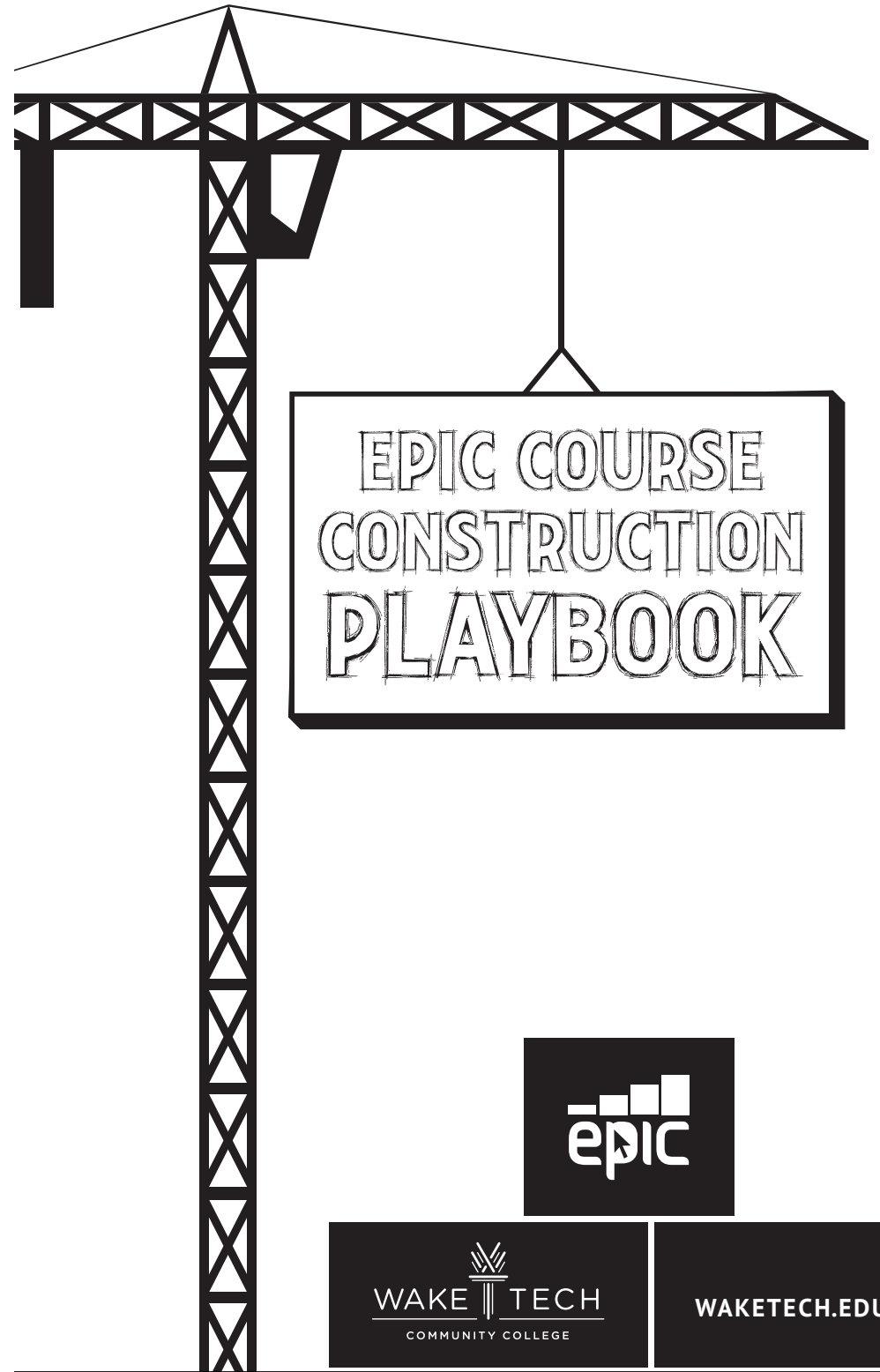



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EPIC COURSE
CONSTRUCTION
PLAYBOOK





How to Use this Publication

Included in the *EPIC Course Quality Construction Playbook* are the summaries of major points covered in EPIC 101, EPIC 102, and EPIC 103. If you have taken these courses prior to Fall Semester 2018, you may consider repeating one or all of them. These courses have been enhanced with more material, videos, summaries, and helpful tools like course icons. Use these summaries to refresh your memory of the foundations of quality online course construction.

The *EPIC Online Course Checklist* lists the items to include in your online course. Using this tool helps to ensure your course will meet the *EPIC eLearning Quality Standards* (approved 8/19/2018).

To find this and other EPIC publications, visit the EPIC website at epic.waketech.edu.

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NOTES

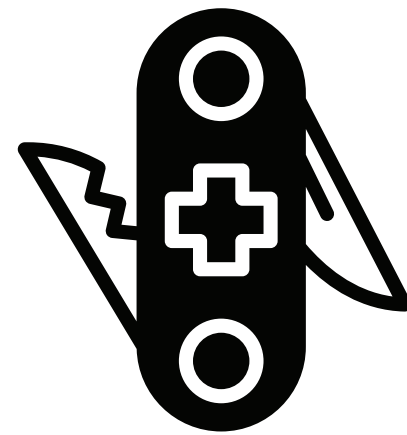
EPIC COURSE SUMMARIES

This section provides a summary of major concepts presented in the following EPIC courses:

EPIC 101: Best Practices in Course Navigation & Design

EPIC 102: Best Practices in Online Communication & Collaboration

EPIC 103: Best Practices in Online Assessment





STUDENT TESTIMONIALS

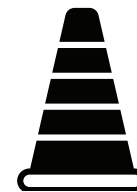
“The navigation of the course was easily accessible and made learning super-efficient. Expectations were made known from day one and communications with the instructor were timely and sincere. The various assignments allowed for several ways to apply learning concept with real-life experiences. I very much enjoyed this course. Thank you.”

“I like how my instructor conducted the class. She made sure that everyone showed respect to one another and that made me really comfortable to share my thoughts in the discussion board.”

“I liked the variety of assignments. The mixture of chapter exercises, quizzes, and group discussions kept each week interesting. I really enjoyed my instructor’s announcements and descriptions. I always felt like I was prepared for what was coming up and confident in what was expected. I wouldn’t make any changes to this course.”

“I really enjoyed the collaboration, which I did not think I would like very much at first. I liked that I could help my classmates while they did the same for me, and I also learned from myself during the peer review process.”

“The learning environment was very positive and the instructor provided constructive feedback on all assignments. Students were helpful especially when it came to interacting with the discussion board and sharing ideas on assignments. Overall, this class was a good experience and the instructor pushed students towards success in the class.”



Part E – Grade Center and Faculty Presence

Grade Center

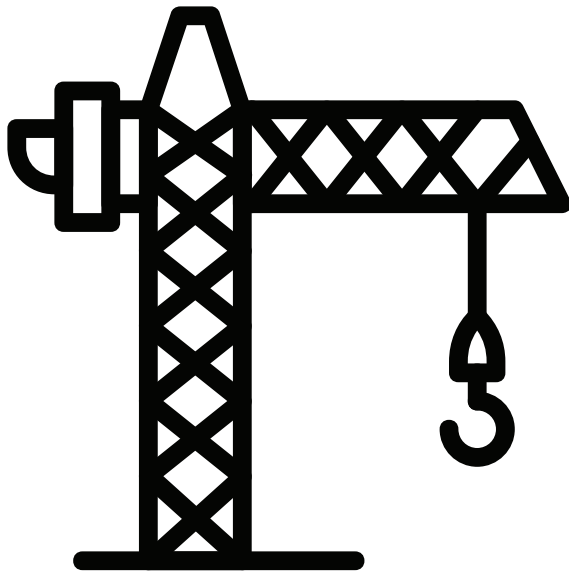
- Faculty adhere to stated and/or departmental grading expectations (e.g., 7 days after due date has passed).
- An accurate weighted grade is available for students to determine their course grade, without having to perform any calculations, which will allow them to keep up with their course progress. *The grade weighting or total points should match what is stated on the syllabus or in the course resources section. If a third-party grading system is used, students should be referred to the location that contains their current average in the course.*
- Unused rows and columns are hidden from student view or deleted.

Faculty Presence

- Regular faculty presence and responsiveness are evident throughout the course, achieved through announcements, participation on discussion forums, and/or detailed feedback on assessments, etc.

Mechanics

- The course grammar and mechanics do not negatively affect readability and expression of main ideas.
- The course does not contain broken links (i.e., files, website, document, Soft Chalk, NCLOR, video, etc).



EPIC 101: Best Practices in Course Navigation & Design Summary

Lesson 1 Navigation Menu Summary

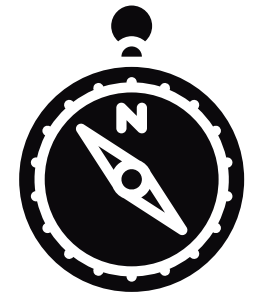
Best Practices

- A course menu should contain a limited number of items to make the course easier for students to navigate.
- A course menu should be simple, with related information posted under appropriate menu items.
- A course menu should not require students to scroll to see menu items.

Standard Navigation Menu

Includes:

- Announcements
- Getting Started
- Faculty Information
- Lessons
- Collaboration
- Course Resources
- Tools
- My Grades
- Student Support



Lesson 2 Announcements, Getting Started & Faculty Information Summary

Announcements

Why use announcements?

- Provide a connection between faculty and students
- Provide a sense of community in the online environment
- Instill a sense of faculty presence in the course

Common uses of announcements:

- Welcome Message
- Changing a course due date
- Answering questions from multiple students
- Clarifying issues
- Providing a reviewable record that you provided students information in a timely manner
- Sharing with all of your students via email

Getting Started

The purpose of this area of the course is to introduce students to the purpose and structure of the course and how best to succeed in an online learning environment.

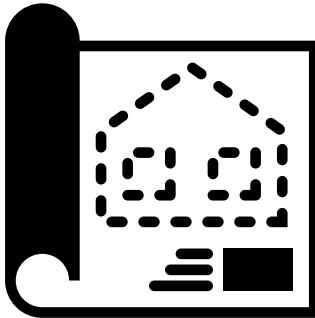
What's included in Getting Started:

- Clear directions on how to get started
- Pathways to various course components
- Course syllabus
- Course timeline

Faculty Information

What's included in Faculty Information:

- Instructor Name
- Office location
- Options for multiple forms of communication (i.e., email and office phone).
- Office hours
- Clear instructions on the preferred method of communication for the fastest response time
- Self-Introduction



Lesson 3 Lessons, Collaboration, & Resources Summary

Lessons

- The contents of the Lessons area correspond to what students see, hear, and do in a seated course.
- Make sure your students have access to all of the required tasks and assignments from this area. If students need to leave this area and go to another area of the Course Menu, provide a course link to redirect them.
- Consider providing students with a printable to do list at the top of each module, unit, chapter, or week to help them manage their time and check off tasks as they complete them.
- The Lessons menu may be renamed Lessons-Units or Lessons-Modules, if desired.
- The folders within the Lessons menu may be organized by Units, Modules, Chapters, or Weeks.

- Assessments are suitable for a distance learning environment and effectively measure learning.
- Assessments and evaluations use multiple methods, where appropriate.
- Instructions for assessments, such as time limits, format, or submission guidelines are clearly stated.

Rubrics/Grading Criteria

- Rubrics or grading criteria are provided for substantive assignments (>5% individual or cumulative).
- Rubrics provide specific, descriptive criteria and a breakdown of point structure.
- Criteria relate directly to SLOs and course grading policy.

Intellectual Property

- All resources and materials used in the course are appropriately cited (when necessary).

Part D – Accessibility

Accessibility (ADA) Compliance

- Text-based course content uses heading styles and other built-in structures like ordered and unordered lists.
- All Word documents present in the course are accessible, including using an accessible heading structure and alt text for images.
- All Excel documents in the course are accessible.
- All PDF documents in the course are accessible.
- Font type, size, and color enhance readability throughout the course.
- Course content, including attached files, does not include text within a graphic (unless it is decorative) or blinking/moving text.
- A link to the plug-in is provided when needed.
- All file/document names adhere to accessibility guidelines.
- All file/document links are formatted for accessibility.
- All hyperlinks are formatted for accessibility.
- Internet resources, including videos, can be navigated or operated with keyboard shortcuts.
- All images within the course have alt tags.
- A long description is included near images, charts, graphs, and diagrams that are more complex.
- All tables are formatted to adhere to accessibility guidelines.
- All video content is closed-captioned.
- All audio content has transcripts provided.
- Linked and embedded multimedia clips and videos are captioned, and audio descriptions are included, when appropriate.
- Any other multimedia present in the course meets accessibility standards.
- All PowerPoint documents in the course are accessible.

Navigation

- Navigation between lessons is consistent, logical, and efficient.
- Unused navigation elements have been removed or hidden.
- All content can be accessed within 3-4 clicks.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) posted in each Lesson/Week/Module/Unit

- SLOs for the lesson/week/module/unit are clearly stated.
- SLOs for the lesson/week/module/unit are measurable.
- SLOs are consistent with the course-level SLOs.

Structure and Consistency

- Content within lesson/week/module/unit is sequenced.
- A form of “task list” is provided within each lesson/week/module/unit.
- Content within lesson/week/module/unit is structured in a consistent manner. (i.e., use of organizational tools that allow students easy access to content).
- The course design and/or layout is consistent and easily orients students.
- Content within each lesson/week/module/unit is organized and divided using titles, headings, subtitles, etc.
- Font type, size, and color are readable and consistent throughout the course.

Expectations

- All expectations and activities are clearly stated, including reading, learning activities, and assessments.
- Due dates for all assessments and activities are stated in a prominent place.

Collaboration

- Activities provide opportunities for faculty-student interaction when appropriate.
- Activities provide opportunities for student-student interaction when appropriate.
- The Collaboration course menu item links to at least one collaboration tool that is used in the course.
- Student participation in collaborative activities is defined, including consequences for non-compliance, and a mechanism for measuring quality and quantity is provided.

Variety

- Learning activities use a variety of technology tools and teaching methods.
- Activities provide opportunities for student-content interaction when appropriate.

Assessments

- The types of assessments in the course align with Course SLOs/ Lesson/Week/Module/Unit-level SLOs and complement course activities.

Collaboration

- Consider the following features of these common types of collaboration, all of which can be graded or non-graded:
 - **Discussion forums** are the most common type of collaboration used in online courses and can be set up so that students must post a thread before they can see other students’ contributions. Students and instructors can reply to one another’s posts, and when you grade, all of an individual student’s posts will be grouped together (making it easy to see how many times a student replied to others).
 - **Journals**—While journals can be made visible to course users, meaning that they can serve as a form of student-student interaction, they are most often kept hidden from other students and used for student-instructor interaction only. Journals may include several entries over the course of a given unit, allowing a student to demonstrate how his or her understanding has changed over time.
 - **Blogs**, like journals, are especially useful for ongoing reflection since students can post multiple time-stamped entries to the same blog over the course of a unit or semester. This tool can be set up so that each student has his or her own blog, or so that the entire class shares one blog. Students can also comment on one another’s blogs.
 - **Wikis** offer the most freedom for student collaboration since they can be open to student editing as well as commenting. Wikis can be a good way for students to work on a group project since each student can contribute and edit the information remotely. While you can view a participation summary of how many words each user modified and how many times he or she saved the page, keep in mind that it can be hard to know exactly who contributed what to a wiki.
 - **Groups** are a useful way of managing collaboration in a large online class, and you can give each group access to its own discussion board, blog, wiki, etc. within the group settings. You can decide which students are placed together (manual enroll), randomly assign groups (random enroll), or allow students to choose which group to join (self-enroll).
- This area of the course menu used to be called “Discussions,” but it has been renamed to give you more flexibility in the type of collaboration tools you use.
- Consider using non-graded collaboration spaces (like a Q&A Discussion Forum) in addition to graded activities so that students have virtual spaces to interact, ask questions, and share ideas without having their contributions evaluated.

Course Resources

The following types of course information should be added to this area:

- **Communication Expectations:** Expectations for discussions, email, and other types of written interaction should be clearly articulated to students.

- **Syllabus:** this document should include any prerequisites and required competencies or skills, and should be easy to locate, download, and print.
- **Course Calendar/Schedule:** This document should notify students of the key dates and deadlines for major assignments and assessments, organized by module/unit/week/etc. and should be easy to locate, download, and print.
- **Grading:** The grading scale, weight of assignments/assessments, and policies for late or incomplete work should be provided.
- **Attendance Policy:** The attendance policy should explain to students what constitutes “entry” into the course (the Course Entry Quiz), how attendance will be recorded, the consequences of non-attendance, and that regular attendance is required for student success; note that if your department’s policy is to withdraw a student who misses two consecutive weeks of work, this should be clearly stated as well.
- **Instructions:** Students should have access to instructional documents, videos, or links that answer basic questions related to research, writing format, technology, such as how to download and install required software, how to access publisher content, how to format a document, or how to submit assignments.
- **Instructional Materials:** Students should have access to a list of materials (textbooks, readings, publisher materials, supplies, access keys, software, websites, multimedia, etc.) required for the course, including ISBN numbers when available; if some materials are recommended but not required, clearly explain their purpose and be sure to clarify the difference between recommended and required materials.

The following are some examples of extra resources you might choose to include as well:

- Discipline-specific resources like periodic tables, conversion charts, MLA/APA format examples, dictionaries/glossaries, etc.
- Links to websites for independent study and review
- Links to external web tools relevant to the course
- LibGuides

Even if some of the above information is already included in the syllabus, consider repeating it in this area of the course so that students can find the information they need at-a-glance. Breaking up longer course policies into shorter, easily-digestible pieces is called “chunking.”

Lesson 4 Tools, My Grades & Student Support Summary

Summary

This lesson introduced the pre-populated Tools, My Grades, and Student Support course menu items. It guides faculty in customizing tools to display only those items used in the course, the importance of leaving the Student Support area intact and the importance of My Grades showing an accurate current standing of a student within a course.

Attendance Policy on Syllabus or posted as an individual item under Course

Resources

- The attendance policy is clearly stated.
- The attendance policy includes the purpose of the Course Entry Quiz in determining entry into the course.
- The attendance policy includes what constitutes attendance in the course.
- The attendance policy includes the consequences of non-attendance.

Instructions on Syllabus or posted as an individual item under Course Resources

- General “how to” assignment instructions for submission are provided and clearly written.
- Course instructions answer basic questions related to research, writing (format), and technology/software used.
- Links to plug-ins or required course software are provided when necessary.
- Any platform limitations are clearly stated as needed (i.e., OS or specific browser).

Communication Expectations on Syllabus or posted as an individual item under

Course Resources

- The expectations for student interaction are clearly articulated.
- Communication expectations, including netiquette for online discussions, e-mail, social media, and other forms of written interaction, are stated clearly.

Course Policies on Syllabus or posted as an individual item under Course Resources

- Course policies with which the student is expected to comply are clearly stated or links are provided to the information.

Student Support

- Student support area is pre-populated with required items.
- Content in Student Support is not duplicated.

Student Help

- A Student Help Forum or similar resource is available in the course under Collaboration.

Part C – Lessons

Introduction Assignment/Ice Breaker

- Introductory assignment is easy to locate.
- Clear instructions for the assignment, including participation requirements, are provided.
- The assignment is collaborative in nature and is designed to build rapport and/or a sense of community.



Tools

- Unused Tools are hidden to users to avoid confusion, make relevant content easier to find, and streamline course design.

Part B – Course Resources and Student Support

Syllabus

- Syllabus is the first item posted under Course Resources.
- Syllabus is provided in a printable format, for example, docx or pdf.
- The course description from the NCCCS CCL or WTCC course catalog is posted.
- Prerequisite courses are clearly stated.

Course-level Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) on Syllabus

- SLOs for the course are clearly stated on the syllabus.
- SLOs for the course are measurable (refer to Blooms Taxonomy).
- SLOs directly reflect the content and expectations described in the Course Description provided by the NCCCS.
- SLOs are representative of the scope of the course.

Course Materials on Syllabus or posted as an individual item under Course Resources

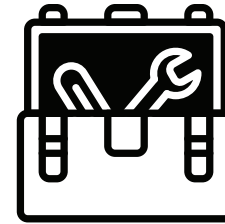
- Any required course materials [textbooks (including ISBN), supplies, publisher content, and/or software, etc.] are clearly stated.
- All materials are current and relevant to the course.
- The purpose of instructional materials (both required and recommended) and how materials are to be used are clearly explained.

Grading Policy on Syllabus or posted as an individual item under Course Resources

- The course grade weighting or points system is clearly stated.
- The grading policy/practices are easy to understand.
- Penalties for late and/or incomplete work are clearly stated.
- Turnaround time on graded assignments and where to locate feedback within the course is clearly stated.

Course Calendar or Schedule on Syllabus or posted as an individual item under Course Resources

- If it is a separate document*—Course calendar or schedule is posted in Course Resources.
- If it is a separate document*—Course calendar or schedule is provided in a printable format, docx or pdf, for example.
- Course calendar or schedule has a clear breakdown based on the structure of the course.
- Dates in the calendar or schedule are correct and reflect the current semester and year.



EPIC 102: Best Practices in Online Communication & Collaboration Summary

Lesson 1 Best Practices, Educational Concepts & Theories, and Structure of Course Summary

Best Practices

- Encourage contact between students and faculty
- Develop reciprocity and cooperation among students
- Give prompt feedback
- Communicate high expectations

Main Educational Concepts and Theories

- **Social Presence:** the degree to which a person is perceived as “real” in an online environment
- **Social Cognitive Theory:** learning occurs in a social context
- **Universal Design for Learning (UDL):** a framework that emphasizes multiple means of engagement
- **The Growth Mindset:** when students believe their abilities can be developed through hard work and determination

Key Terms and Concepts

- **Feedback:** Prompt feedback allows students to assess areas of strengths and weaknesses, and promotes an atmosphere of engagement.
- **Types of Communication:** Student-to-Student, Student-to-Instructor, and a combination of Student-to-Student and Student-to-Instructor

What does EPIC recommend?

If a division or department standard does not currently exist, the following are recommendations of “timely” based on the EPIC Quality eLearning Standards:

- Responding to emails/voicemails: within 24 hours or next business day (excluding weekends, holidays, semester breaks).
- Discussion Boards/Weekly Assignment: within 7 days
- Grading Intensive Assignments/Projects: Faculty should state when students will receive feedback and their grade.

Lesson 2 Using Welcome Message & Ice Breakers to Engage Students Summary

Welcome Message

EPIC Standard: Should be posted and visible when the student first enters the course at the start of the semester.

You should include the following in your Welcome Message:

- Name of the course - make sure everyone is in the right spot!
- A brief introduction
- A few words of encouragement
- Directions or instructions on how and when to begin the course

Other items you might include in your Welcome Message:

- Textbook information
- Supplemental materials information
- Links to course resources
- Due dates for first assignments
- What to expect in terms of course loads and time management
- Whatever else you may think students need to know immediately

Ice Breakers

Ice Breakers encourage a positive rapport and build community within a course.

Tips for creating effective Ice Breakers:

- Students should introduce themselves and interact with classmates.
- Focus on helping students get to know each other and find common interests.
- Try to customize to fit the course subject matter.
- Choose one that best fits your teaching style.

Examples:

Interesting Facts: ask students to share 3–5 interesting facts about themselves.

Basic Photo: have students include a photo of themselves with their introduction.

Two Truths and a Lie: ask student to list 2 truths and 1 lie about themselves, then have other students try to figure out which is the lie.

Favorite Music Video on YouTube: in addition to telling about themselves, have them post a link to a favorite music video.



EPIC ONLINE COURSE CHECKLIST



Part A – Menu, Getting Started, Faculty Information, and Tools

Navigation Menu

- The course menu follows the order of the standardized menu template.
- No more than 3 additional course menu items added.
- Course menu link titles follow EPIC guidelines.
- Standardized course menu links are not duplicated.
- Dividers are placed in the correct location.
- Color contrast is used effectively.
- Text is visible without overflowing menu area or button.
- Course entry quiz is hidden after the 10% mark.

Welcome Message

- Welcome message is posted in the Announcements or Getting Started section of the course and is easy to locate.
- Welcome message contains name of course, an introduction, words of encouragement, and directions to begin the course.

Getting Started

The following content is populated within Getting Started:

- Instructions clearly direct students how to get started and where to find various course components.
- Instructions introduce students to the purpose and structure of the course.
- Tips are provided on how best to succeed in an online learning environment.
- Provides a course link to the course syllabus (posted in Course Resources).
- Provides a course link to Student Support.

Faculty Information

The following content is posted within Faculty Information:

- Faculty's name and title.
- Faculty's college email address.
- Faculty's office phone number. ***N/A for adjunct instructors*
- Faculty's office hours. *** N/A for adjunct instructors*
- Faculty's office location, including campus. ***N/A for adjunct instructors*
- Preferred method of contact is clearly indicated.
- Clear standards are established for faculty responsiveness and availability.
- Avatar or representative photo of faculty member.
- Faculty bio/introduction.

Lesson 3 Online Learning Communities, Social Presence, Communication Environments Summary

Online Learning Communities

Online Learning Communities encourage communication and collaboration between faculty and students, promote positive learning outcomes, and increase student satisfaction.

Important characteristics among members of learning communities:

- a feeling of belonging
- a common sense of responsibility towards assigned tasks & peers
- a joint vision, control of ownership
- a safe environment to freely express opinions
- a sense of mutual support among the members

Social Presence

Social Presence: is the degree to which a person is perceived as “real” in online communication. Ways to convey social presence include online forums and blogs.

Communication Environments

Asynchronous: allows for deep learning and critical thinking.

- Email, discussion boards, blogs, wikis, announcements.

Techniques to Increase Student Engagement and Interaction

- Provide a major topic thread.
- Narrow down the topic.
- Organize discussion boards based on the topic or the chronological order of the course.
- Link topics to course assignments and activities.
- Model the type of interaction required.
- Facilitate and encourage participation and interaction.
- Make clear the expectation for participation and interaction, such as due dates and frequency of response.

Synchronous: provides opportunity for immediate feedback.

- Web conferencing with whiteboard, audio/video capabilities
- Chat rooms
- Instant messaging

Recommendations for Synchronous Chat Interactions

- Limit group chats to four or five participants.
- Establish rules for taking turns to speak.
- Allow time for off-topic questions at the beginning and end of the session.
- Limit sessions to approximately 45 minutes with time built in for pleasantries.
- Prepare students by sending an agenda before the session.

- Respond to students, referencing them by name if possible.
- Avoid long pauses.
- Have a backup plan in case of technology failure.

Types of Communication

Three types of communication that are important in online learning communities:

- Content-related communication
- Planning of tasks
- Social support

Technology and Interaction

Three types of interaction in an online course:

- Instructor-to-Student: opportunity to motivate and support students
- Student-to-Student: opportunity to assess their knowledge
- Student-to-Content: opportunity to engage and interact with the content

Lesson 4 Active Learning, Instructor Presence, Encouragement, and Growth Mindset Summary

Active Learning

Students will be more engaged if they are actively (as opposed to passively) learning.

Activities and Tools that Support Active Learning

When designing courses, you should include activities that promote or support active learning. Examples of activities that promote active learning:

- Online Discussions
- Group Work
- Problem-Based Learning

Online Discussions

Simply requiring students to participate in discussions will not automatically engage students and promote active learning. To engage students and promote active learning in online discussions, consider the following:

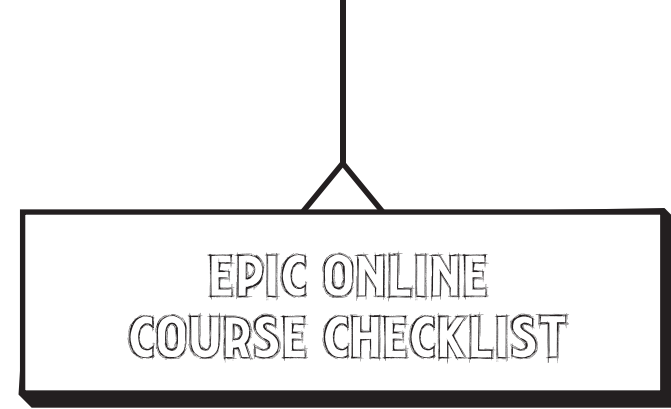
Set expectations for how discussion questions are to be answered

- Give students a general idea of how long a response to a prompt should be.
- Give examples of effective vs. ineffective ways to answer prompts.
- Provide students with a rubric for online discussions.

Set expectations for how students respond to other students' questions

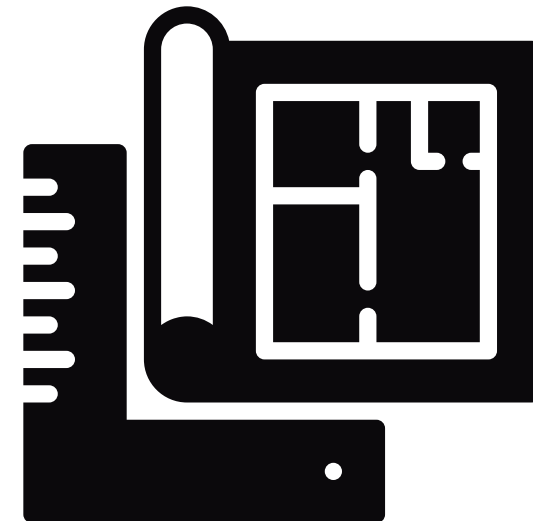
- Give examples of poor responses vs. strong responses.
- Give students "a starter sentence/phrase" for responding to other students.
- Remind students to be respectful and use netiquette.

Avoid discussion questions that require completely factual answers.



Use the following to ensure your course meets the *EPIC eLearning Quality Standards*.

(Updated 9/15/2018)



Tools for Collaboration

- Discussion Boards
- Journals
- Blogs



Group Work

Group work, especially in an online environment, must be designed carefully and with great consideration. If designed improperly, group work in an online environment can be burdensome and cumbersome to students, leading to disengagement.

For group work to be effective and efficient, instructors must do the following: prepare students for group work, create an assignment conducive to group work, and provide effective and efficient technology for communicating online.

Preparing students for group work

- Make sure students understand the value of the process and the product of collaboration.
- Give students guidance for working in online groups.
- Make sure the group sizes are small enough so that all members can participate.
- Before students actually start the group project, give them the opportunity to “meet” one another and to develop a sense of community.

Creating an assignment conducive to group work

- Make sure the assignment or project is actually one that can be broken up in to equal parts, but also requires a level of interdependence for completion.
- Be very clear on the expected outcomes for the group assignment. (Example: You may consider giving students examples of what a completed project will look like.)
- When setting deadlines and due dates, remember to factor in time for preparation and communication.

Evaluation

- Provide rubrics at the beginning of the lesson to help guide students’ work.
- Hold students accountable for their own individual work by requiring both self-evaluations and peer-evaluations.

Providing technology for working together online

- Provide students with the proper tools and instructions for communicating online.
- Make sure each group has their own online workspace.

Tools for Group Work

- Groups
- Wikis

Problem-Based Learning

Problem-Based Learning will keep students engaged as they are actively learning and problem solving.

A problem that requires a written or verbal response: Pose a problem in the form of an email, letter, video, etc. and have the student write a written response. To offer students Multiple Means of Expression, you may give students an option in how they respond to the letter.

A problem that requires creating a product: Pose a problem from the perspective of a client who needs a service and have the students create a product. To offer students Multiple Means of Expression, you may give students an option in the product they create.

Instructional Materials that Support Active Learning and Engagement

In order for learning to occur, students must be attentive and engaged. Though attentiveness and engagement may seem intrinsic, there are steps instructors can take to support and promote engagement.

Providing multimedia support to textual material: Adding multimedia to textual materials is a great way to engage learners. For example, to prevent students from just passively watching the video, you may consider doing the following:

- Pose a question at the beginning of the video.
- Provide a self-assessment quiz at the end of the video.
- Have students create their own quiz questions based on the video, and post them to the discussion board. Students will then be able to answer each other's quiz questions.
- Provide a discussion

Varying instructional materials: Varying instructional materials is a great way to enhance student learning and increase engagement. However, to truly promote active learning, you must take it a step further and make sure the students are actively reading, studying, or reflecting upon the instructional material.

Engagement and the Growth Mindset

Students who have a growth mindset tend to be more engaged and more successful than those with a fixed mindset. The following are a few examples:

- Set high expectations: Students need to know that though the class may be challenging, they have the ability to be successful.
- Provide mastery-oriented feedback that allows students to learn from their mistakes.
- Support students with monitoring their own progress: When students see that they are making progress, they should be able to associate it with effort.

Blogs and Wikis as Assessments

- Blogs and journals can be used as formative and summative assessments.
- Blogs are generally created by individuals.
- Wikis are created by groups.

Peer Review and Portfolios

- Peer review refers to peer assessment, peer grading, peer evaluation, or peer review.
- Benefits of peer review include:
 - Students complete assignments ahead of time.
 - Students submit higher quality work when they know their peers will be reviewing and also react better to peer feedback.
- Portfolios are collections of student work compiled with the guidance of an instructor.
 - A grading rubric should be used to grade a portfolio effectively.



Lesson 4 Rubrics Summary

Rubric Rating Scales

- **Holistic Scoring:** scores as a whole product and does not provide specific information about student performance
- **Analytic Scales:** breaks down objectives or final product into parts, and each part is scored independently. This scale provides good information on strengths and development needs.

General versus Task-Specific Rubrics

- **General rubrics** use criteria and descriptions of performance that generalize or can be used with different tasks.
- **Task-specific rubrics** are specific to a performance task and contain answers to a problem or explain the reasoning.

Building a Rubric

- Define the Learning Outcome and Work Backwards
- Assign Scores
- Share the Rubric with Students
- Give it a Practicality Test

EPIC Quality eLearning Standards for Rubrics in Online Courses

- Rubrics or grading criteria are provided for substantive assignments (>5% individual or cumulative).
- Rubrics provide specific, descriptive criteria and a breakdown of point structure.
- Criteria relate directly to SLOs and course grading policy.

Four Types of Assessments

- **Selected response**
 - Examples: Multiple Choice, Matching, True/False, Fill-in-the-blank
- **Written response**
 - **Short answer responses** are most often used for answering knowledge-level objectives.
 - **Extended written responses** are good for assessing reasoning-level outcomes (use Rubric).
- **Performance response**
 - Example: Create a tutorial in which you explain how to convert fractions into decimals.
- **Personal Communication**
 - Examples: Discussion Boards, Journals, Blogs, Adobe Connect, Skype, etc.

Lesson 3 Tools and Strategies for Creating Online Assessments Summary

Tips for Assessing with Online Instruction

- Create discussion questions that require students to analyze and reflect on a topic rather than just stating facts.
- Make sure the question is not completely an opinionated question (student should be required to incorporate information from course material).
- Prevent students from seeing other responses before they post their own response.
- Give students an option (or options of questions to answer), when possible.
- Provide a rubric that sets clear expectations.

Formative Discussion Assessments:

- Gauge what students know about a topic and can help students gauge their own progress (generally are not weighted heavily).
- Examples include:
 - Assessments that ask specific questions or require performance of a specific task related to the topic
 - General questions that gauge knowledge on a subject/topic
 - Assignments that require students to submit a portion of the assignment and/or report on progress of an assignment

Summative Discussion Assessments:

- Gauge how much students have learned from course readings, lectures, assignments, etc. at the end of a module
- Some examples include:
 - Students as Discussion Facilitators: have students come up with a discussion topic and then facilitate the discussion.

Instructor Presence and Engagement

Instructors can help to create faculty presence by doing the following:

- Establishing a strong initial presence
- Maintaining regular contact with students
- Providing timely and appropriate feedback
- Getting to know your students



Establishing Initial Presence

- Create an engaging introductory announcement
- Conduct a synchronous meeting
- Create a video that introduces yourself

Regular Contact and Effective Feedback

- **Weekly Contact:** Let students know what to expect for the week and offer insights on trends you're noticing in the course.
- **Contact Students Individually**
 - Check-In Emails
 - Contact students who are not performing well
- **Feedback:** Give timely and effective feedback so students can monitor their course progress.

Response Expectations and Engagement

If a student contacts an instructor or turns in an assignment, not knowing when or if he or she will receive a timely response, then that student may become disengaged. Instructors should set and communicate clear standards for responsiveness and availability.

The following are the college's guidelines for response expectations:

- Guidelines for response time of emails/voicemails are clearly stated, and there is evidence that this policy is upheld.
- Guidelines for the turn-around of graded assignments are clearly stated, and there is evidence that this policy is upheld.
- Faculty grades are regularly updated, easily accessible, and located in a secured environment.

If a division or department standard does not currently exist, then the following guidelines apply:

- Responding to emails/voicemails: 24 hours or next business day (weekends, holidays, semester breaks)
- Discussion Boards/Weekly Assignment: 7 days
- Grading Intensive Assignments/Projects: For these types of assignments/projects/papers/lab reports, faculty should state when students will receive feedback and their grade.

Support students with monitoring their own progress: When students see that they are making progress, they should be able to associate it with effort.

EPIC 103: Best Practices in Online Assessments Summary

Lesson 1 Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) Summary

What are SLOs?

Student Learning Outcomes, or SLOs, are statements that specify what students will know or be able to do at the end of your course. Outcomes are usually expressed as:

- Knowledge
- Skills
- Attitudes
- Values



SLO Requirements

- SLOs are clearly stated on the syllabus.
- SLOs must be measurable—observed externally, concrete, and objective (refer to Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy).
- SLOs directly reflect the content and expectations described in the Course Description provided by the NCCCS.
- SLOs are representative of the scope of the course.

Remember: SLOs must be measurable.

Write SMART SLOs

An easy way to remember how to write SLOs is to use the acronym SMART.

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Results-Focused
- Tailored



Examples of SLOs:

- Poor Example: Students will understand atomic mass.
- Better Example: Students will be able to locate the atomic mass of a specified element when given a periodic table.
- Poor Example: Students will write an essay about what caused WWI.
- Better Example: Students will construct a timeline of the events precipitating WWI.

Module/Unit Level SLOs

Course-level SLOs vs. Module/Unit Level SLOs

- Module/ Unit Level SLOs are much more specific than Course SLOs. Module Level/Unit Level SLOs describe what students should be able to do by the end of a unit, module, or lesson. As an instructor, you may be required to write your own module or unit level outcomes.

- The Module/Unit Level SLOs must be aligned with the course level objective.

Example of a Module/Unit Level SLO associated with a Course SLO

- **Course SLO:** Demonstrate writing and inquiry in context using different rhetorical strategies to reflect, analyze, explain, and persuade in a variety of genres and formats.
- **Module/Unit Level SLO:** Create an outline for a narrative essay.

SLOs and Alignment

For optimal student achievement:

- Course SLOs, Module/Unit Level SLOs, Assessments, and Learning Activities should be aligned.
- An Alignment Table is a great tool to get an overview of how your assessments, learning activities, and SLOs align.

Example Alignment Table

This Alignment Table was taken from a Calculus course. The table illustrates how the Module/Unit Level SLOs are aligned with the Course SLO and the Assessment Activities.

Course SLO	Unit 1 SLOs	Assessment Activity
Use derivatives to analyze and graph algebraic and transcendental functions.	Find the critical numbers of a function.	Homework, quiz, curve sketching lab
	Determine the maximum and minimum values of a function using the 1st and 2nd Derivative Tests.	Curve sketching lab, optimization project
	Determine the intervals where a function is concave up or concave down.	Curve sketching lab, quiz

Lesson 2 Assessment Types Summary

Best Practices

- The types of assessments in the course align with Course SLOs/ Lesson/ Week/Module/Unit-level SLOs and complement course activities.
- Assessments and evaluations use multiple methods, where appropriate.

Formative and Summative Assessments

- **Formative assessments** redirect teaching and learning and are not weighted heavily.
- **Summative assessments** determine grades and are generally weighted heavily.

Overlap of Formative and Summative Assessments

- Summative assessments may also be formative (see examples below).
 - After unit test results are given, the instructor revises a lesson, or the students may decide to revise their study tactics (or a combination of both).
 - Students turn in a rough draft as a formative assessment and a final draft as a summative assessment.