



# Guidelines on Effective Online Instruction at CSU

## Introduction

Cleveland State University is committed to providing high-quality online education that fosters student engagement, success, and learning outcomes.

CSU Online provides [resources](#) and [professional development opportunities](#) to CSU instructors who teach online. If you are a new online instructor, it is highly recommended for you to complete the “[Faculty Online Teaching and Design \(FOTD\)](#)” course prior to teaching your online course.

The following guidelines are designed to outline effective elements of online course design and best practices for teaching online at Cleveland State University.

## 1. Course Design Best Practices

- Use the [CSU Course Template](#) as the foundation for your online course. The CSU Course Template is designed to help build a course that meets Quality Matters Standards and provide a consistent experience for students across courses.
- Develop a detailed syllabus, including course objectives, grading policies, and communication expectations, should be provided.
- The course should meet at least “[Level 3](#)” on the “[Benchmarks for Online Course Quality](#)” scale, which includes meeting Quality Matters Essential Standards, with a focus on alignment of course objectives, module-level objectives, course materials, and instructional activities, assignments and assessments.

## 2. Engaging and Interactive Content

- Course materials should include a mix of multimedia (videos, readings, discussions, quizzes) to cater to different learning styles.
- Use of collaborative tools such as [discussion forums](#), [group projects](#), and [peer reviews](#) is encouraged.

## 3. Assessment and Academic Integrity

- A variety of assessments (quizzes, essays, projects) should be used to evaluate student learning.

# Guidelines on Effective Online Instruction at CSU

- Online [proctoring tools and plagiarism detection](#) software should be utilized to maintain academic integrity.
- Utilize formative assessments in the form of self-assessments or knowledge checks as opportunities for students to assess their learning.

## 4. Instructor Presence

- Plan ahead for instructor presence. Dedicate a specific number of hours per week to spend facilitating your online course. Ideally, this is a similar amount of time you would spend in a f2f course. This includes activities such as responding to student inquiries, grading, facilitating discussions, and providing feedback.
- Establish a strong instructor presence in your course by being consistent in your availability, feedback and communication with students.
- Hold virtual office hours through video conferencing or chat platforms, with additional availability by appointment.

## 5. Regular and Substantive Interaction Requirements

- Ensure you are meeting federal [regular and substantive interaction requirements](#) and accreditation in your online course.

## 6. Communication

- Use the [CSU Online RSI communication plan](#) to outline the cadence of communications with students throughout the semester.
- Respond to student emails **24-48 hours** during the workweek.
- Post weekly announcements to provide guidance on course materials, expectations, and deadlines.
- Provide information or respond to questions about the content of a course or competency.
- Post a communication policy in your course (see CSU Template) that outlines how you will communicate with students and turnaround times.

# Guidelines on Effective Online Instruction at CSU

## 7. Timely and Constructive Feedback

- Facilitate and engage in online discussions by responding to student posts, posing questions, and guiding conversations to enhance learning.
- Aim to grade assignments and assessments in a timely manner, with meaningful feedback provided. Communicate turnaround time on grading assignments to your students in your communication policy.
- Monitor, reach out or connect struggling students with helpful resources.

## 8. Continuous Improvement

- Review course outcomes and student feedback to make improvements after each time the course is taught
- Use the [CSU Online Continuous Course Improvement Evaluation Guide](#) to identify areas for improvement.

## 9. Professional Development

- Faculty teaching online are encouraged to participate in [professional development opportunities](#), including workshops and training on best practices for online teaching and course design.

## References

- CSU Online Faculty Resources website <https://www.csuohio.edu/center-for-elearning/faculty>.
- Quality Matters. (2023). *Quality Matters Higher Education Rubric* (7th ed.).
- Chickering, A. W., & Ehrmann, S. C. (1996). *Implementing the Seven Principles: Technology as Lever*. American Association for Higher Education Bulletin.
- Boettcher, J. V., & Conrad, R. (2021). *The Online Teaching Survival Guide: Simple and Practical Pedagogical Tips* (3rd ed.).