



# 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. 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.
- 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.



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## 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.

## 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 within **one week** of submission, with meaningful feedback provided.



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## 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

Beginning Spring 2026, faculty teaching online are required to complete the [Faculty Online Teaching and Design course](#). It is also encouraged that faculty participate in [professional development opportunities](#), including workshops and training on best practices for online teaching and using Blackboard and related online learning platforms.

## 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.).