

Guidelines for designing online courses



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This document aims to help UJI lecturers who would like to use the Virtual Classroom for distance or blended teaching, or as a complementary tool to face-to-face teaching, whether they have still to design the course or they are already using the Virtual Classroom and would like to consider options for improvement.

The criteria outlined below cover the basic aspects of designing an online course, although others could be added to complete a more comprehensive list if needed. They have been grouped in four main sections:

- Section A: CONTENT PRESENTATION
 - Structure and objectives of the course
 - Teaching materials
- Section B: INTERACTION AND COLLABORATION
 - Teaching communication strategies
 - Developing a learning community
- Section C: LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENT
 - Effective assessment
 - Coaching and feedback
- Section D: ACCESSIBILITY

Tick the checkboxes to the left of those criteria that you believe your course already meets. For the criteria you did not take into account in the initial design of the course, in the column on the right-hand side you can write the number and specific description of the actions for improvement that you would like to carry out, e.g. "3. Incorporate the activity schedule in the programme".

At the end of each section you can add other observations you deem appropriate.

Start by entering the details of the course to be reviewed:

Review data:	
Lecturer doing the review:	
Course name:	
Course URL or ID:	

Section A: CONTENT PRESENTATION

Structure and objectives of the course		Action plan
□ 1	The content is divided into teaching units, sequenced following a logical progression. Sections have descriptive titles and subtitles (in addition to "Topic 1").	
□ 2	<p>There is a section offering general information on the course which includes, at least:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The syllabus of the course. • News and announcements forum (to welcome students to the course, to notify them of any date changes, absences or changes in teaching units, to send reminders, information about new courses with supplementary training, etc.). • Tutorials forum (to deal with queries publicly). <p>Optionally (particularly for courses that are taught completely online) a social forum or participant presentation forum may also be included.</p>	

<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>3 The course syllabus is detailed and contains, at least:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic information about the subject (name, code) • Objectives or competences • Methodology • Time schedule • Activities and assessment • Technological requirements • Previous knowledge of the discipline 	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>4 The content, the learning activities and the assessment are consistent with the objectives and competences of the course.</p>	

Teaching materials		Action plan
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>5 The lecturers have checked that they have all the intellectual property rights needed to be able to use the course materials.</p>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>6 Priority is given to the use of materials with open licences, standard formats and free software, whenever possible.</p>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>7 Materials are used in appropriate formats (written narratives, slide presentations, videos, podcasts, webs, tutorials, articles, study cases, infographics, graphs, etc.), in line with the course objectives and contents.</p>	

<input type="checkbox"/>	8	When materials available through subscriptions to scientific journals or databases are used, the necessary instructions are provided (e.g. VPN).	
<input type="checkbox"/>	9	When additional software is used, it is preferably compatible with various operating systems, and the links and (where appropriate) costs are provided close to the activities it is to be used for.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	10	The size of big files is shown to help students to consider the download time and cost or smaller alternatives are provided.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	11	The materials (texts, videos, and so on) are divided into segments with an appropriate size to facilitate their use. Videos do not last more than six minutes (the longest videos have been split up or a reference is made to the most significant minutes).	
<input type="checkbox"/>	12	When external Internet services are used (e.g. Youtube, Facebook), students are provided with information on how to protect their data and privacy.	

Observations

Section B: INTERACTION AND COLLABORATION

Teaching communication strategies		Action plan
□ 13	The lecturers contact students for the first time before the course starts by introducing themselves, welcoming students, inviting students to contact them if they have any queries, and providing them with information for the start of the course (structure, methodology, first materials, and so on).	
□ 14	<p>The lecturers give their contact information (office hours, telephone, email, etc.) either through the course syllabus or elsewhere within the framework of the course.</p> <p>The course allows for regular and effective contact with lecturers thanks to a variety of communication tools or methods (either synchronous or asynchronous, as appropriate). These include a public tutorials forum, a dialogue for private tutoring, email for private queries, internal messaging, videoconference, etc.</p> <p>When synchronous communication (telephone, videoconference, etc.) is needed, the different time zones of the participants are taken into consideration.</p>	
□ 15	The lecturers privately contact students who haven't taken part in the activities during the first week of the course in order to encourage them to participate and to find out about their situation on the course. They also do the same if, on subsequent occasions, they notice that certain students are no longer participating in the course.	

□	16 The lecturers finish the course by making an appraisal of the work carried out, and provide information about the possible pathways students have open to them in order to continue to further their learning in the field in question or on how to apply what they have learnt to different professional contexts.	
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Developing a learning community		Action plan
□	17 The course includes resources and activities designed to create a feeling of belonging to the community and to favour a climate of trust (e.g. a presentation forum at the beginning of the course, ice-breaking activities, group assignments, activities with feedback from peers, etc.)	
□	18 Particularly for the case of online teaching (but also for blended teaching, if a face-to-face session has not been planned at the beginning of the course), students are encouraged to establish contact with their peers through an introduction activity.	
□	19 Students are encouraged to increase their participation online at the beginning of the course by incorporating information to their personal profile, such as their photo, links to personal pages or a description of interests.	

□	<p>20 Students are encouraged to share their knowledge and supplementary resources in their interventions throughout the course, as well as to report any mistakes they may find in the course.</p> <p>The lecturers also share their experience and point of view on the course subject matter.</p>	
□	<p>21 The collaborative activities help to consolidate the course content and learning objectives. They also favour the development of social skills, such as teamwork, cooperation, negotiation and building a consensus.</p>	
□	<p>22 In group assignments, the way groups are formed is specified, and the tasks, expectations about participation and final products to be delivered are also defined. Information about whether the mark will be the same for all the members of the group or not, whether there is peer or self-assessment and so on is also provided.</p> <p>Optionally, the lecturers may facilitate a space for group work (such as a forum or a shared folder or document).</p>	

Observations

Section C: LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENT

Effective assessment		Action plan
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>23 The assessment system (which is included on the syllabus and is announced at the start of the course) contains the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A calendar of the activities to be carried out. • The approximate number of hours to be spent on each activity. • Weighting of the various assessment items or activities taken into account for the final mark. 	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>24 A variety of types of learning activity are used, all of which are consistent with the objectives (e.g. brainstorming, discussion, webquest, case study, problem-based learning, challenge-based learning, service-learning, game-based learning, role playing, interview, comparative analysis, etc.), distributed over time and have a logical sequence, which promote both active learning (progressively increasing the students' levels of responsibility for their own learning process) and the higher-order thinking skills (analysis, evaluation, creation).</p>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>25 The assessment system includes several opportunities for personalised learning (e.g. supplementary and intensification activities, to cover individual interests or needs). It can include optional activities as extra credits.</p>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>26 The assessment system includes the consequences, if any, of delays when submitting activities.</p>	

□	27	The activities require the creation of artefacts in various formats, according to the objective of each activity (essay, article, letter, poster, infographics, timeline, interactive image, screencast, concept map, slide show, animation, stop motion, visual thinking, timelapse, visual storytelling in video or comic format, tag cloud, diagram, blog, webpage, ad, newspaper/radio/TV interview, e-portfolio, etc.).	
□	28	Including a description of the expected results in the assessment activities (e.g. with rubrics or assessment criteria) is considered. Optionally, samples of "good assignments" can be included.	
□	29	Emulation of authentic environments (e.g. by means of case studies, project development, experiential learning, problem or challenge-based activities, service-learning, etc.) is considered in order to facilitate transfer to the real world.	
□	30	Initial, continuous and final assessments are considered, which contain activities that provide students with opportunities to monitor their progress.	
□	31	In the period established for carry out activities, the idea of including a weekend is considered in order to provide students with more time and to make it easier to carry them out. For example, in a 15-hour activity scheduled for a week, the possibility of setting the deadline for the following Sunday or Monday, instead of Friday is considered.	

Coaching and feedback		Action plan
<input type="checkbox"/>	32 Asynchronous virtual tutorials are answered within 48 hours (excluding holidays and weekends). Students are notified in the event of justified periods of absence of teaching staff. Synchronous tutoring is available by appointment, e.g. by videoconference or telephone, when necessary.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	33 If continuous assessment is carried out that includes different activities, students can access their updated grades to check their progress, through the gradebook.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	34 Recommendations about how to carry out certain learning activities are considered (e.g. a reading guide that explains what to look for in an article, etc.).	
<input type="checkbox"/>	35 It is clearly stated when and how feedback will be given on the activities and whether previous drafts are allowed or required before the final version. Teaching staff give feedback on activities in a timely manner.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	36 Feedback is clear, positive, specific and focused on how to improve learning.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	37 Students' opinions on relevant aspects of the course and their experience on it are collected, either through the Virtual Classroom (e.g. with Forums or Feedback – anonymous or not) or through Google Suite (e.g. with Forms). This feedback is used to improve the course.	

Observations

Section D: ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility		Action plan
<input type="checkbox"/>	38 The accessibility of the contents has been checked with the accessibility tool of the text editor in the Virtual Classroom and of the software that has been used (e.g. Microsoft Office) and, if any errors were detected, they have previously been corrected.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	39 Titles are used as headings for the different sections of the course in order to facilitate browsing with assistive technologies. The title level (Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.) is used in the correct logical order. No different fonts, colours or formats (italics, bold, etc.) or images are used instead of title styles.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	40 Lists have been formatted using the numbered or unnumbered list function, rather than formatting them by hand, to allow screen readers to recognise them.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	41 Web links have a descriptive text, instead of just showing the URL or saying "click here".	
<input type="checkbox"/>	42 Tables are used to display datasets, not for the layout of the text. Columns have been labelled correctly and a legend or title has been provided.	

<input type="checkbox"/>	43	The contrast between the colour of the text and that of the background is sufficient to prevent visually impaired students from having difficulties (e.g. black text on a white background).	
<input type="checkbox"/>	44	Colour is not used as the only way to convey information. The text, graphs and images can be understood when viewed without colour.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	45	All the images have an alternative descriptive text.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	46	Presentations have a unique title for each slide. All text is visible in the "Outline View" to ensure it can be read by screen readers. All the images have an alternative descriptive text.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	47	Spreadsheets include labels for rows and columns, as well as detailed labels for graphs and descriptions that highlight the importance of key cells, trends and totals.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	48	All the videos are subtitled. When the video has no relevant audio, this fact is indicated.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	49	All the audios have transcriptions.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	50	If there is a videoconference or live video broadcast, synchronised subtitles are available for students who need them.	

Observations