Course Evaluation Checklist v3.0

Our Learning Services team members work with Canvas institutions across the globe to provide course evaluation reviews and have found the most successful courses combine both curriculum and learning design elements. The modifications in this version focus on adding curriculum elements found to be most effective for successful learning. These elements support instructors, designers, and administrators to develop courses that are fully functional for every learner.

How To Use: A ★ (1-star) rating indicates an **Essential** and standard design component to online learning (including the top 10 **Foundational** items); a ★★ (2-star) rating is considered **Best Practice** and adds value to a course; and a ★★★ (3-star) rating is **Exemplary** and elevates learning.

Each institution has unique requirements for its courses. This checklist serves as a resource or starting point for teams to develop course design plans best suited to your institution. *The Learning Services team would love to hear how you're using this checklist. Please leave comments in the* Canvas Community: Course Evaluation Checklist v3.0 blog post.

Course Information & Expectations

Yes ✓	Criteria
☐ ★ Foundational	**1.1 Home Page** provides a visual representation of course; a brief course description or introduction; clear instructions for learners (e.g., where to begin), and quick and easy navigation to current content. 📍UDL 2.5 Illustrate through multiple media
☐ ★ Foundational	**1.2** Course **Navigation** is clear and consistent (unused items are hidden). Canvas Guide: Navigation Links 📍Mobile App Design Consideration 📍UDL 7.3 Minimize threats and distractions
☐ ★ Foundational	**1.3** Course **Standards or Outcomes** are identified and measurable (e.g.: goals, learning objectives, and/or standards). If available, the official standards document is cited with a link to the official standards and the year those standards were adopted. 📍UDL 8.1 Heighten salience of goals and objectives
☐ ★	**1.4** A course **syllabus** is available and includes **class expectations** such as participation rules, etiquette expectations, code of conduct; **policies** for grading, late work, and make-up work; supplemental textbooks, reading lists, and technology **requirements**. Canvas Guides: Syllabus 📍UDL 8.1 Heighten salience of goals and objectives
☐ ★	**1.5** Instructor has provided **contact information** which may include a biography, availability information, communication preferences, response time, and picture. 📍8.3 Foster collaboration and community
☐ ★	**1.6** A **pacing guide** is available that outlines when and in what order standards are taught and assessed in the course. 📍UDL 6.2 Support planning and strategy development ⇸ UDL 6.3 Facilitate managing information and resources

☐ ★	**1.7 Course card** provides a visual representation of the subject by adding an image in Course Settings. [Canvas Guide: Add Image to Course Card](#) 📍UDL 2.5 Illustrate through multiple media
☐ ★	**1.8** Course contains information and links to **institutional resources** (e.g. library, institutional services, institution's website) in an intro or resource module.📍UDL 8.3 Foster collaboration and community
☐ ★★	**1.9 Standards or Outcomes, if used, are rephrased or broken down** into student-friendly language while not changing the intent.📍UDL 8.1 Heighten salience of goals and objectives
☐ ★★★	**1.10** Opportunities for **course feedback** are present and available to learners throughout the duration of the course. The instructor uses formal and informal feedback to improve subsequent course revisions.📍UDL 7.3 Minimize threats and distractions 📍Mobile App Design Consideration

Course Structure

Yes ✔	Criteria
☐ ★ Foundational	**2.1** All links, files, videos, and external **URLs** are active and working. [Canvas Guide: Link Validation](#)📍4.2 Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies
☐ ★	**2.2** Content is "chunked" into manageable pieces by leveraging **modules and pages** (e.g. organized by units, chapters, topics, or weeks). When possible, Canvas **Pages** are used to present content, instead of linking to external URLs or files in the module's flow. [Canvas Guide: Modules](#); [Example Resource Comparison](#)📍Mobile App Design Consideration📍UDL 3.3 Guide information processing, visualization, and manipulation
☐ ★	**2.3** Each content item type is **formatted consistently** to make expectations predictable (e.g. all assignments are formatted to include the directions, followed by the guidelines, and a technical support area that links to help guides) 📍UDL 7.3 Minimize threats and distractions
☐ ★	**2.4 Course files** needed for learning activities are available for download and meet accessibility guidelines. [Canvas Guide: Uploading Documents](#)
☐ ★★	**2.5** There is a "Welcome" or "Let's Get Acquainted" discussion designed to build a **sense of community** and establish rapport.📍UDL 8.3 Foster collaboration and community
☐ ★★	**2.6** Modules and items within modules have a thoughtful **naming convention** (e.g. name the module "Chapter 1: Pandas in the News," not just "Chapter 1").📍UDL 2.2 Clarify syntax and structure
☐ ★★	**2.7** Modules begin with an Introduction/Overview page to **activate knowledge** and end with a Conclusion/Summary page **to summarize** each module.📍UDL 3.1 Activate or supply background knowledge
☐ ★★	**2.8 Text headers** and **indention** are included within modules to help guide learner navigation. [Canvas Guide: Add Text Header](#)📍Mobile App Design Consideration📍UDL 2.2 Clarify syntax and structure
☐ ★★★	**2.9** Module **completion requirements** and/or **prerequisites** are utilized to provide course structure, pacing, and flow. [Canvas Guide: Adding Prerequisites](#)📍UDL 3.3 Guide information processing and visualization 📍Mobile App Design Consideration
☐ ★★★	**2.10** Learners may choose from **options for differentiation** to demonstrate mastery in **MasteryPaths**. [Canvas Guide: MasteryPaths](#) 📍UDL 7.1 Optimize individual choice and autonomy

Course Content

Yes ✓	Criteria
☐ ★ Foundational	**3.1 Copyright** law is followed. Course follows Copyright, Fair Use Guidelines, and Creative Commons licenses. [Canvas Guide: Copyright Resources](#)
☐ ★ Foundational	**3.2** Course **content builds logically** and increases in understanding and difficulty. 📍UDL 7.3 Minimize threats and distractions
☐ ★	**3.3** Includes **terminology clarification** if potentially harmful terms are included to assist students in developing increased cultural understanding and empathy. 📍UDL 9.2 Facilitate personal coping skills and strategies
☐ ★	**3.4** Content is at the **appropriate reading level**. 📍UDL 3.3 Guide information processing and visualization. ⇢ UDL 3.4 Maximize transfer and generalization
☐ ★	**3.5 Vocabulary** for **content-specific terms** have clear definitions. 📍UDL 2.1 Clarify vocabulary and symbols
☐ ★	**3.6** Uses **inclusive language** respecting learner identity, learner experience, and background (heritage, family, socioeconomic). 📍UDL 7.3 Minimize threats and distractions
☐ ★	**3.7 Content is appropriate** for the learners and permitted by the program to use the content. Content adheres to state laws and regulations if applicable. 📍UDL 7.3 Minimize threats and distractions
☐ ★★	**3.8 Personalized learning** is evident through opportunities for choice.📍UDL 7.1 Optimize individual choice and autonomy
☐ ★★	**3.9 Multiple methods** of content delivery are included (e.g.: text, video, and images).📍UDL 2.5 Illustrate through multiple media
☐ ★★★	**3.10 Permissions** are saved in course files if materials are requested for use in the course. [Canvas Guide: Copyright Resources](#)
☐ ★★★	**3.11** Includes **additional vocabulary** specific to assisting English Learners and readers below reading level in gaining a more complete understanding (e.g.: perjury is a term that would be used in a history course but not always defined. English Learners and readers below grade level would benefit if it were defined). 📍UDL 2.1 Clarify vocabulary and symbols ⇢ UDL 3.4 Maximize transfer and generalization
☐ ★★★	**3.12 Readings have multiple supports** for readers who are at a higher or lower level. 📍UDL 3.4 Maximize transfer and generalization

Learner Interaction

Yes ✓	Criteria
☐ ★ Foundational	**4.1 Learning activity descriptions and instructions** are clear, detailed, and include instructor expectations and clear expectations for the creation of the learning product. Instructions are platform neutral (mobile and browser friendly) to minimize student confusion.📍3.3 Guide information processing, visualization, and manipulation ⇢ UDL 8.1 Heighten salience of goals and objectives

Yes ✓	Criteria
☐ ★ Foundational	**4.2** Learners are provided detailed directions on **how** and **where** they will **submit work**. 📍UDL 9.2 Facilitate personal coping skills and strategies
☐ ★	**4.3** Tasks and submission requirements are **appropriate for teaching methods –** synchronous, asynchronous, or blended. 📍UDL 6.3 Facilitate managing information and resources
☐ ★	**4.4** Task matches the **submission type** — discussion, assignment, quiz, audio or visual recording, handwritten or typed, etc. 📍UDL 3.4 Maximize transfer and generalization
☐ ★	**4.5** Activities include **learner-learner interaction** to foster a sense of community (e.g. discussions, constructive collaboration, and peer reviews). 📍UDL 8.3 Foster collaboration and community
☐ ★	**4.6** Activities include **learner-instructor interaction** (e.g. instructor is actively engaged in authentic conversations and provides quality feedback). 📍UDL 8.3 Foster collaboration and community
☐ ★	**4.7** Activities include **learner-content interaction** (e.g. learners interact with engaging content and resources). 📍UDL 9.3 Develop self-assessment and reflection
☐ ★★	**4.8** Activities include **learner-self interaction** for opportunities for low stakes self-evaluation and self-assessment of mastery (e.g. pre-assessments, self-assessments, and reflections on learning) 📍UDL 9.3 Develop self-assessment and reflection
☐ ★★★	**4.9 Videos or animations** are included in the directions to **model and clarify** the expectations of an activity. 📍UDL 2.5 Illustrate through multiple media
☐ ★★★	**4.10 Sample assignments** are provided to assist learners in understanding expectations. 📍UDL 5.3 Build fluencies with graduated levels of support for practice and performance

Assessments

Yes ✓	Criteria
☐ ★ Foundational	**5.1** Learning activities directly **tie into a standard** or the tasks **provide scaffolding** to reach the standard. 📍UDL 8.1 Heighten salience of goals and objectives
☐ ★	**5.2** Formative and summative forms of assessment are included in **consistent use throughout the course.** 📍UDL 8.2 Vary demands and resources to optimize challenge
☐ ★	**5.3** A variety of **assessment formats** are used (e.g., discussions, quizzes, and individual/group assignments) to increase learner engagement and promote active learning. 📍UDL 4.1 Vary the methods for response and navigation
☐ ★	**5.4** Low-stakes **(formative) assessments** occur frequently throughout the course to measure knowledge, skills, and attitude and occur before high-stakes assessments. 📍UDL 8.4 Increase mastery-oriented feedback
☐ ★	**5.5** High-stakes **(summative) assessments** are clearly aligned with stated goals, learning objectives, and/or standards. 📍UDL 8.4 Increase mastery-oriented feedback
☐ ★	**5.6** Assessments support instructors' use of **SpeedGrader** to score and provide prompt and high-quality feedback. Canvas Guide: SpeedGrader 📍UDL 8.4 Increase mastery-oriented feedback

☐ ★★	**5.7 Clear grading expectations** are identified based on the use of **rubrics** (may include objective or subjective measurements) or other means (questions have correct or incorrect answers, other measures of objective assessment). [Canvas Guide: Rubrics](#) 📍UDL 9.1 Promote expectations and beliefs that optimize motivation ⇝ UDL 6.4 Enhance capacity for monitoring progress
☐ ★★	**5.8** Graded assignments, quizzes, and tests are **appropriately weighted** to reflect the impact of the assessment. 📍UDL 7.2 Optimize relevance, value, and authenticity
☐ ★★★	**5.9** Assessments are **linked to Outcomes** to demonstrate mastery by standard or learning outcomes. [Canvas Guide: Outcomes](#) 📍UDL 8.4 Increase mastery-oriented feedback

External Resources

Yes ✓	Criteria
☐ ★	**6.1** External links are **reliable sources** and always **available** (i.e.: not behind a subscription paywall or limited to a number of articles per month) 📍UDL 3.4 Maximize transfer and generalization
☐ ★	**6.2** External sites are **accessible** to all learners by meeting W3C standards. 📍UDL 4.2 Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies
☐ ★	**6.3 External tools** (e.g., Quizlet, Khan Academy, Padlet, Nearpod, CK-12) are relevant to course content and support active learning techniques. LTIs are used when available versus a link to the resource. 📍UDL 5.2 Use multiple tools for construction and composition
☐ ★	**6.4 Links** to external content, documents, or learning resources are relevant to the task and **appropriate for learner use**. Consideration is given to other material on the site, advertising, and institution firewalls. 📍UDL 7.3 Minimize threats and distractions

Course Accessibility

Yes ✓	Criteria
☐ ★ Foundational	**7.1** Web tools and/or software are utilized to identify and correct **accessibility issues** within the course (e.g. Accessibility Checker.) [Canvas Guide: Accessibility Checker](#) 📍UDL 7.3 Minimize threats and distractions
☐ ★	**7.2 Accommodation Statement** is present and easily located (e.g., on Home Page or Syllabus). 📍UDL 4.2 Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies
☐ ★	**7.3 Color** enhances the aesthetic appeal and effectiveness of the course; sufficient contrast between text and background makes information easy to read; and color is not used in isolation to convey meaning. [Canvas Guide: Accessibility Checker](#) 📍UDL 7.3 Minimize threats and distractions
☐ ★	**7.4 Images** are used to support course content (e.g., banners, headings, and icons) and are accompanied by text descriptions (Alt text) or captions for more complex descriptions. [Canvas Guide: General Accessibility Design Guidelines](#) 📍UDL 1.3 Offer alternatives for visual information
☐ ★	**7.5 Styles** (e.g. Paragraph, Heading 2, etc.) are used to format text. [Canvas Guide: General Accessibility Design Guidelines](#) 📍UDL 4.2 Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies

Yes ✓	Criteria
☐ ★	**7.6 Hyperlink** text incorporates the hyperlink destination/purpose (avoid raw URLs, e.g., https://www.canvaslms.com) and includes words and phrases to provide context for screen-readers (e.g., use "Canvas Guide: Hyperlink" rather than "Canvas Guide"). WebAim: Introduction to Links and Hypertext 📍UDL 4.2 Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies
☐ ★	**7.7 Audio** materials (mp3, wav, etc.) are accompanied by a transcript and videos/screencasts have accessible captions. Canvas Guide: Create Caption Files 📍UDL 1.2 Offer alternatives for auditory information
☐ ★★	**7.8 Tables** are used appropriately and are accessible by having assigned scope (caption and/or heading row/table). WebAim: Creating Accessible Tables 📍Mobile App Design Consideration 📍UDL 4.2 Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies

Instructor Supports

Yes ✓	Criteria
☐ ★	**8.1 Answer keys** are provided for instructor-graded assignments. 📍UDL 8.1 Heighten salience of goals and objectives
☐ ★★	**8.2 Specific information** is included unpublished in content for the instructor to help teach (e.g.: sensitive topics, additional external resources). 📍UDL 3.3 Guide information processing and visualization
☐ ★★★	**8.3 Synchronous session supports** are included for courses with blended or synchronous components (e.g.: activities that lend themselves to synchronous learner actions, outline for a synchronous session). 📍UDL 3.3 Guide information processing and visualization

Mobile App Considerations

If your learners use a mobile app, consider the following. Search "Instructure" to find free teacher and student apps available for iOS and Android.

Yes ✓	Criteria
☐ ★	**9.1 Preview your course in the Canvas mobile app** to experience it from a mobile user's perspective. Make any necessary revisions or adjustments to improve the mobile experience. Check your course in both light mode and dark mode.
☐ ★	**9.2** Consider the length of text passages in content and assessments as they may require excessive scrolling and they **may not display optimally on smaller screens.** 📍UDL 3.3 Guide information processing and visualization
☐ ★★	**9.3** Students are alerted and given **alternatives** when an unsupported file type is used on the mobile app. Example Message 📍UDL 7.3 Minimize threats and distractions
☐ ★★★	**9.4** Assessment design takes into account the **additional tools** students have when working on a mobile device - camera, video, audio, file upload, or Mobile Annotations. Canvas Guide: Submit a PDF assignment with annotations - iOS and Canvas Guide: Submit a PDF assignment with annotations - Android

Wrap-Up

The Learning Services department is always ready to help your organization create a cycle of success with Canvas through Design, Curriculum, and Professional Learning & Strategy Services! If you would like to learn more about our offerings, please contact your CSM or Learning Services at learning.services@instructure.com.

Resources

Baldwin, S., Ching, Y.-H., & Hsu, Y.-C. (2018). Online course design in higher education: A review of national and statewide evaluation instruments. *TechTrends*, *62*(3), 46-57. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11528-017-0215-z

Baldwin, S., & Ching, Y.-H. (2019). Online course design: A review of the Canvas course evaluation checklist. *International Review of Research in Open & Distributed Learning, 20*(3), 268-282. https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v20i3.4283

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Going Mobile with Webcourses@UCF. Retrieved February 18, 2020, from https://vimeo.com/134745175

Canvas Live Presentation: Canvas Mobile Design, Ryan Seilhamer, UCF

Canvas Blog: Are Courses Really Mobile First? Ryan Seilhamer, UCF

Design a Mobile Ready Course with Universal Design, Kate Miller, CU Online

Canvas Teacher Mobile Features and Mobile Guides - Canvas Teacher

Canvas Student Mobile Features and Mobile Guides - Canvas Student

Contributors

Deonne Johnson, Ph.D., Former Manager, Design Services, Instructure
Erin Keefe, Program Manager, Learning Services, Instructure
Lily Philips, Former Instructional Designer, Instructure
Michelle Lattke, Sr Director, Learning Services, Instructure
Lyndsey Martin, Principal Program and Curriculum Designer, Instructure
Brittany Jeanes, Principal Instructional Designer
Miranda McIntosh, Manager, Learning Services, Instructure

Mobile Contributors

Ryan Seilhamer, Program Director of Mobile Strategy & Innovation, University of Central Florida
Deonne Johnson, Ph.D., Former Manager, Design Services, Instructure
Erin Keefe, Program Manager, Instructure
Lily Philips, Former Instructional Designer, Instructure