Is Your Online/Hybrid Course ACCREDITATION Ready?

The accrediting team assigned to West Valley College will be randomly selecting online courses for review. Here’s a checklist to see how your course aligns with ACCJC standards.

Course Organization and Presentation of Content

Navigating within the course should be straightforward from the student’s perspective, beginning from day one of the course and throughout the semester.

At start of semester

- Clean up the Canvas shell of the course for easier student navigation (i.e., hide the Canvas Course Navigation links that are not being used)
- Provide clear instructions on how to start the course and how to access instructional materials on day one.
  - Suggestion: Provide a list of 1-2-3 steps on how to start in your course on the course home page, or
  - Suggestion: Create a “Start Here” module that includes the syllabus and other information relevant to the course, and add a link to the course front page to this module
- Include in the syllabus all required and recommended information such as required texts and materials, SLOs, instructor contact info (phone/email), communication plan (timeline for return of grades and feedback on assignments), grading policy, info on student support services and tech services.
  - Suggestion: Adopt the WVC Accessible Syllabus Template which includes sections for each of the above.

As the semester progresses

- Organize each learning unit (or module) consistently in Canvas Modules, with each module providing students with:
  - Learning outcomes/objectives of the module (note: module objectives should align with the course objectives and SLOs)
  - Assignments that clearly relate to the learning objectives of the module
  - Course content delivered in various modes to address different learning styles
  - Content delivered in manageable “chunks” to reduce cognitive load on students both at the module and page level
  - Suggestion: Use “Text Headers” within Canvas Modules to distinguish different elements of the module, and use the same headers in the same order consistently across modules.
  - Suggestion: In addition to readings (text), develop and/or curate videos, audio files, graphic presentations, etc. for delivery of course content.
  - Suggestion: Use Canvas Pages to organize topics into manageable “bite-size” pieces for students, and include resources (readings, videos, etc.) as needed.
  - Suggestion: For each assignment, provide a sentence (or two) explaining the goal/purpose of the assignment.
Structure the course in a way that keeps students moving through the course TOGETHER so they interact with each other and the instructor to process the content of the course.

- Suggestion: Establish weekly due dates throughout the semester.
- Suggestion: Enter “Available from” and “Until” dates for all assignments to keep students working at the same pace as the rest of the class, and keep students from submitting work past the due date.
- Suggestion: Provide timed access to the content of each learning unit (or module) as the semester progresses by using the “Lock Until” function within “Edit Module Settings”.
- Suggestion: Use “Add Prerequisites” function or “Add Requirements” function within “Edit Module Settings” to ensure students complete activities sequentially.
- Suggestion: Use due dates that promote interaction (i.e., in a discussion forum include “post by” and “reply by” deadlines).

Regular and Substantive Instructor-initiated Interaction

Accreditors are looking for EVIDENCE of Regular and Substantive Instructor-Initiated Interaction (RSI). Although there are many ways to engage in RSI, not all of them will be visible to the accrediting team. We are NOT recommending you discontinue effective modes that will not be visible. Rather, be sure to include modes that WILL BE VISIBLE.

Evidence that WILL BE VISIBLE to the accrediting team:

- Interaction happening IN your Canvas course. Examples include:
  - Announcements from the instructor that are substantive in nature (about the content of the course, more than just due date reminders, etc.). Example: clarification or elaboration about a concept of study.
  - Discussion boards showing instructor-student as well as student-student interaction.
  - Meaningful feedback from faculty to students using rubrics and the assignment-comments feature.
  - Collaborative meetings between the instructor and students. Example: A real-time review session open to all students using Canvas Chat or ConferZoom. The Canvas Chat tool provides a history of Chats that have taken place in the course. For ConferZoom, consider recording the Zoom meeting and post it in the course as a student resource.

Evidence that will NOT BE VISIBLE to the accrediting team:

- Interaction happening OUTSIDE your Canvas course. Examples include:
  - Email, including Canvas Inbox. This is private communication, that ONLY you and the person/people you are communicating with have access to.
  - Publisher content that is accessed through a link taking the user outside of Canvas. This means interactions happening in a publisher’s platform instead of Canvas will not be visible. If possible, move the conversation/discussion into Canvas.
  - Other external sites and applications.

Much of my RSI happens through email. What should I do?

- Suggestion: Use Announcements in addition to or instead of all-class emails. In Course Settings>Course Details>More Options, select “Show recent announcements on course
homepage” and then select how many announcements to show on the homepage. (We recommend no more than 3 announcements to avoid cluttering of the homepage.)

✓ Suggestion: If you send all-class emails in addition to Announcements, compose the message to “All in” so that any accreditors in your course will be able to see the message.

Compose Message

✓ Suggestion: Keep individual conversations with students grounded in Canvas SpeedGrader Assignment Comments when possible. Ask students to set their Canvas Notification Preferences so they know right away when there are new submission comments. Then they can then receive and reply to your submission comments directly from their Canvas Inbox while also leaving a record of the conversation in the Assignment Comments.

Pre-course contact

☐ Provide a welcome message to students prior to or at the immediate start of the course.

✓ Suggestion: Using Canvas Inbox, send a welcome message to students in the class.

✓ Suggestion: Create a short video introducing yourself and providing directions on how to navigate the course and access materials. Post video on course homepage for first two weeks of the course and/or in introductory module.

✓ Suggestion: Allow students access to the course PRIOR to the start of the semester by changing Settings of the course.

Communication Plan

☐ Provide students with a communication plan that includes information on:
  o How best to contact the instructor (email, phone, ConferZoom, GoogleChat, etc.)
  o Expectations on turnaround time for responding to student questions and emails
  o Expectations on turnaround time for grading of assignments/exams
  o Expectations on instructor feedback on assignments/exams
  o Office hours, either face-to-face or virtual

✓ Suggestion: Include your communication plan in the syllabus and stick to it!

✓ Suggestion: Include your communication plan as a Canvas Page in the Welcome Module.

Instructor-to-Student Interaction

☐ Your presence (as the instructor) is evident to students in multiple ways. Email correspondence (whether on wvm.edu account or Canvas Inbox) is **NOT** accepted as evidence of instructor-to-student interaction.
✓ Suggestion: Use Canvas Announcements 2-3 times weekly (or more!). Messages should be **substantive** in nature (about the content and ideas of the course, more than just due dates reminders, etc.). In Course Settings>Course Details>More Options, select “Show recent announcements on course homepage” and then select how many announcements to show on the homepage. (We recommend no more than 3 announcements to avoid cluttering of the homepage.)

✓ Suggestion: Provide feedback to students on assignments using Canvas SpeedGrader. Your feedback can be written, audio, or video. Ask students to set their Canvas Notification Preferences so they know right away when there are new submission comments.

✓ Suggestion: Participate in discussion forums on a regular basis. Tip! Create the first post in the forum and use this space (which is at the top of the forum and the first comment students see) to provide comments to the class.

✓ Suggestion: Update the course’s front page periodically. This keeps your course home page “fresh” and shows your attention to the course and students.

**Student-to-Student Interaction**

❑ Provide students with opportunities to interact with one another.

 ✓ Suggestion: Discussion forums are a great example of this. To further encourage student-to-student interaction, require (as part of the grade) that students respond/comment to 2-3 other students.

 ✓ Suggestion: Set up a space for students—like an ungraded “café” discussion forum—to ask/answer questions with each other. As the instructor, be sure to monitor the forum to ensure that proper netiquette is being followed.

 ✓ Suggestion: If applicable, allow students to work with one another to peer review each other’s essay or project prior to submission. Points can also be assigned to the review/collaboration.

 ✓ Suggestion: Engage students in small group discussions or collaborative projects using the Groups function in Canvas.

 ✓ Suggestion: Refer to the [ONE Student-Student Interactions Professional Development Guide](#) for even more great ideas!

**Student-to-Learning Material Interaction**

❑ Provide opportunities for and evidence of student engagement with learning materials that support the course/module objectives.

 ✓ Suggestion: Create a shared study guide and ask students to collaboratively add the information they think they need to know and study for (i.e., what they think will be on the test). Be sure to provide feedback and guidance so they know they’re on the right track (note: your feedback would also count toward regular and substantive interaction).

 ✓ Suggestion: For each learning unit, task students with an activity that leads to their reflection on their understanding of the material presented. For ex., students are assigned to develop a question (multiple choice, short answer) that reflects a concept covered in the module, and provide an explanation for the correct answer.

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Assessments

Alignment of assessments with objectives of the module and/or course
✓  Suggestion: Add a 1-2 sentence explanation of the purpose of the assessment and how it aligns with the module/course objectives.

Frequency and variety of assessments
✓  Suggestion: Use the variety of question types available (multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, matching, essay, drop-down menus, etc.) in Canvas Quizzes to meet different student learning/assessment styles.
✓  Suggestion: For each module, provide students with a short ungraded quiz/survey for self-assessment of understanding and/or knowledge of module concepts.
✓  Suggestion: Provide opportunities beyond quizzes/exams for students to show their knowledge and/or understanding of course content. For example, open-ended discussion forums, puzzles or games, or creation of audio/visual artifacts.

Assessment instructions
✓  Suggestion: Have a colleague (or a former student) review and evaluate the instructions provided at the top of the assignment/quiz for clarity.

Use of rubrics & feedback
✓  Suggestion: Use the Canvas Rubrics tool to provide students with the basis for grading of assignments.
✓  Suggestion: Within the assessment, provide links to the Canvas Student Guides on how students can view feedback on assignments/assessments.

Accessibility
❑  Make sure that basic accessibility principles and best practices are exhibited in your Canvas course. Check for the following:
  o  All documents—including Canvas Pages, Word, and Google Docs—are formatted using formatting or “Styles” tools.
  o  Do NOT use space-space-space or tab-tab-tab to center text, and do NOT use customized fonts/colors or only change text size to denote titles/headings. Instead, use the formatting tools to do this so that anyone using a screen-reader can navigate the page.

Humanizing Your Course

"Humanizing" online education refers to making sure the human presence is
Welcome to Humanizing Online Teaching and Learning
A Welcome from Michelle!

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Text used in instructional materials (Word docs, PowerPoint slides, Excel spreadsheets) is easily readable in terms of font size, font style and color contrast.

- Suggestion: For most printed documents, body text should be minimum of 12 point. Headers/footers should be minimum 9 point. For PowerPoint slides, minimum font size should be 24 point.
- Suggestion: Use sans serif fonts (for ex., Arial, Verdana and Tahoma) that are easier to read as compared to serif fonts (such as Times Roman, Courier New and Garamond)
- Suggestion: Use a color contrast tool like WebAIM’s Color Contrast Checker to check readability of text color to color background.

Alternate text is provided for images and pictures used in instructional materials.

- Suggestion: Check alt text for all images to ensure it provides the reader with meaning/purpose of the image. Some images imported into a document will have alt text that includes jibberish! If an image is not relevant to content but is more decorative, you can label alt text as “decorative.”

Videos are captioned.

- Suggestion: YouTube has a robust tool set for captioning your videos that is easy to use. These include the auto-caption feature that can do most of the work for you (make sure you edit the auto-captions to ensure accuracy). Any videos uploaded to YouTube can be directly embedded into your Canvas Pages.

Transcripts are provided for audio files.

Descriptive links are used in instructional materials and are operational.

- Suggestion: Link text should tell the user where the link goes. For example, click here doesn’t say where it leads but English 1A Syllabus does.
- Suggestion: The same goes for urls as link text; don't make people using screen-readers listen to the url. Just tell them where it leads. If you need to include the url for paper versions of the document, you can include it at the bottom or find the shortest possible url. To further shorten the url, leave off “https://www” because browsers fill that in automatically.