

Canvas Course Design (and Evaluation) Checklist

This checklist was developed for two purposes/audiences:

1. **Design** - Faculty wanting to design a course with best practices for content presentation, interaction, assessment, and accessibility.
2. **Formative Evaluation** - Faculty conducting a formative peer review of a colleague's online course.

Special Features:

This checklist integrates best practices for course design and teaching *alongside* the levers that Canvas provides, through its software. It is an integrated guide. There are **39** total standards in **four** major sections, and the ability to check off individual progress towards meeting a standard at a point in time. In this sense, it is a **developmental guide**; we encourage faculty to print, save, or otherwise keep a copy of how they progress over time, in the event they want to show their growth to a department head, or program director.

Each standard is accompanied by a star rating.

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

A ★★★ (3-star) rating is **Exemplary** and elevates learning.

Linked information provided in the **Criteria** column includes Canvas guides, CAST - UDL Guidelines and the SUNY Online Course Quality Review Rubric (OSCQR) Standards.

For questions about this guide, contact the Coulter Faculty Commons.

Section 1: Course Information

★ Essential ★★ Best Practice ★★★ Exemplary

	Sufficiently Present	Minor Revision ½ hour or less	Moderate Revision ½ to 2 hours	Major Revision 2+ hours	Not Applicable	Criteria
1.1 Foundational ★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Home Page provides visual representation of course; a brief course description or introduction; clear instructions for students (e.g., where to begin) and quick and easy navigation to current content. UDL 2.5 Illustrate through multiple media</p> <p>OSCOR 1.1 Course includes Welcome and Getting Started content</p>
1.2 Foundational ★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Course Navigation is clear and consistent (unused items are hidden). Canvas Guide - Navigation Links. Mobile Design Consideration</p> <p>UDL 7.3 Minimize threats and distractions</p> <p>OSCOR 1.2 An orientation or overview is provided for the course overall, as well as in each module. Learners know how to navigate and what tasks are due.</p>
1.3 Foundational ★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Instructor has provided key learning information such as goals, learning objectives and/or standards as well as course materials, supplemental textbooks, and reading lists.</p> <p>UDL 8.1 Heighten salience of goals and objectives</p> <p>OSCOR 1.9 Course objectives/outcomes are clearly defined, measurable, and aligned to learning activities and assessments.</p>
1.4 Foundational ★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Instructor has provided class expectations such as participation rules, etiquette expectations, code of conduct; policies for grading, late work and make-up work; and technology requirements.</p> <p>OSCOR 5.38 Expectations for timely and regular feedback from the instructor are clearly stated (questions, email, assignments).</p> <p>OSCOR 5.39 Expectations for interaction are clearly stated (netiquette, grade weighting, models/examples, and timing and frequency of contributions).</p>
1.5 Foundational ★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Instructor has provided contact information which may include biography, availability information, communication preferences, response time, and picture.</p> <p>OSCOR 1.10 Course provides contact information for instructor, department, and program.</p>
1.6 ★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Course card provides 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</p>
1.7 ★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Course contains information and links to institutional resources (e.g. library, institutional services, school's website).</p> <p>OSCOR 1.5 Course includes links to relevant campus policies on plagiarism, computer use, filing grievances, accommodating disabilities, etc.</p>

Section 2: Course Content

★ Essential ★★ Best Practice ★★★ Exemplary

	Sufficiently Present	Minor Revision ½ hour or less	Moderate Revision ½ to 2 hours	Major Revision 2+ hours	Not Applicable	Criteria
2.1 Foundational ★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Copyright law is followed. Course breaks no copyright considerations. Canvas Guide - Copyright Resources</p> <p>OSCQR 4.33 Course materials and resources include copyright and licensing status, clearly stating permission to share where applicable.</p>
2.2 Foundational ★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>All links, files, videos and external URLs are active and working. Canvas Guide - Link Validation</p>
2.3 ★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Learning activities include student-student interaction to foster a sense of community (e.g. discussions, constructive collaboration and peer reviews). 📌 UDL 8.3 Foster collaboration and community</p> <p>OSCQR 5.42 Course offers opportunities for learner to learner interaction and constructive collaboration.</p>
2.4 ★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Learning activities include student-teacher interaction (e.g. teacher is actively engaged in authentic conversations and provides quality feedback). 📌 UDL 8.3 Foster collaboration and community</p> <p>OSCQR 5.40 Learners have an opportunity to get to know the instructor.</p>
2.5 ★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Learning activities include student-content interaction (e.g. students interact with engaging content and resources) and provide opportunities for self-assessment. 📌 UDL 8.3 Foster collaboration and community 📌 UDL 9.3 Develop self-assessment and reflection</p>
2.6 ★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Content is "chunked" into manageable pieces by leveraging modules (e.g. organized by units, chapters, topic, or weeks). Canvas Guide - Modules 📌 Mobile Design Consideration 📌 UDL 3.3 Guide information processing, visualization, and manipulation</p> <p>OSCQR 3.16 A logical, consistent, and uncluttered layout is established. The course is easy to navigate (consistent color scheme and icon layout, related content organized together, self-evident titles).</p>

Section 2: Course Content

★ Essential ★★ Best Practice ★★★ Exemplary

	Sufficiently Present	Minor Revision ½ hour or less	Moderate Revision ½ to 2 hours	Major Revision 2+ hours	Not Applicable	Criteria
2.7 ★★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	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 OSCQR 5.41 Course contains resources or activities intended to build a sense of class community, support open communication, and establish trust (at least one of the following - Icebreaker, Bulletin Board, Meet Your Classmates, Ask a Question discussion forums).
2.8 ★★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Personalized learning is evident through opportunities for student choice. UDL 7.1 Optimize individual choice and autonomy
2.9 ★★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	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
2.10 ★★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Modules begin with an Introduction/Overview page and end with a Conclusion/Summary page to “ bookend ” each module. UDL 3.1 Activate or supply background knowledge OSCQR 1.2 An orientation or overview is provided for the course overall, as well as in each module. Learners know how to navigate and what tasks are due.
2.11 ★★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Text headers and indentation are included within modules to help guide student navigation. Canvas Guide - Add Text Header UDL 2.2 Clarify syntax and structure OSCQR 3.21 Text is formatted with titles, headings, and other styles to enhance readability and improve the structure of the document.
2.12 ★★★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Opportunities for course feedback are present and available to students throughout the duration of course. Instructor uses formal and informal feedback to improve subsequent course revisions. OSCQR 6.50 Learners have multiple opportunities to provide descriptive feedback on course design, course content, course experience, and ease of online technology.
2.13 ★★★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	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

Section 2: Course Content

★ Essential ★★ Best Practice ★★★ Exemplary

	Sufficiently Present	Minor Revision ½ hour or less	Moderate Revision ½ to 2 hours	Major Revision 2+ hours	Not Applicable	Criteria
2.14 ★★★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	External tools (e.g., Quizlet, Khan Academy, Padlet, Nearpod, CK-12) are relevant to course content and support active learning techniques. 📌 UDL 5.2 Use multiple tools for construction and composition
2.15 ★★★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Auto-open Inline Preview is used thoughtfully. Canvas Guide - Auto-open for Inline Preview
2.16 ★★★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	MasteryPaths are included. Canvas Guide - MasteryPaths 📌 UDL 7.2 Optimize relevance, value, and authenticity

Section 3: Assessment of Student Learning | ★ Essential ★★ Best Practice ★★★ Exemplary

	Sufficiently Present	Minor Revision ½ hour or less	Moderate Revision ½ to 2 hours	Major Revision 2+ hours	Not Applicable	Criteria
3.1 Foundational ★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Detailed instructions are clearly written to ensure understanding to support student actions. ↑ UDL 4.2 Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies OSCQR 3.19 Instructions are provided and well written.
3.2 Foundational ★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A variety of assessments is used (e.g., discussions, individual and/or group assignments and quizzes) to increase learner engagement and promote active learning. ↑ UDL 4.1 Vary the methods for response and navigation OSCQR 4.29 Course offers access to a variety of engaging resources that facilitate communication and collaboration, deliver content, and support learning and engagement. OSCQR 4.30 Course provides activities for learners to develop higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills, such as critical reflection and analysis.
3.3 ★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Low-stakes (formative) assessments occur frequently throughout the course to measure knowledge, skills and attitude and occur before high-stakes assessments.
3.4 ★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	High-stakes (summative) assessments are clearly aligned with stated goals, learning objectives and/or standards.
3.5 ★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Assessments include option for instructors to use SpeedGrader to score and provide prompt and high-quality feedback. Canvas Guide - SpeedGrader ↑ UDL 8.4 Increase mastery-oriented feedback OSCQR 6.49 Learners have easy access to a well-designed and up-to-date gradebook.
3.6 ★★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sample assignments are provided to illustrate instructor expectations. ↑ UDL 5.3 Build fluencies with graduated levels of support for practice and performance OSCQR 6.46 Criteria for the assessment of a graded assignment are clearly articulated (rubrics, exemplary work).
3.7 ★★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rubrics used to evaluate assignments and/or discussions. Canvas Guide - Rubrics OSCQR 6.46 Criteria for the assessment of a graded assignment are clearly articulated (rubrics, exemplary work).
3.8 ★★★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Canvas Outcomes are tied to assessments. Canvas Guide - Outcomes ↑ UDL 8.1 Heighten salience of goals and objectives

Section 4: Course Accessibility

★ Essential ★★ Best Practice ★★★ Exemplary

	Sufficiently Present	Minor Revision ½ hour or less	Moderate Revision ½ to 2 hours	Major Revision 2+ hours	Not Applicable	Criteria
4.1 Foundational ★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	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 OSCQR 2.15 Any technology tools meet accessibility standards.
4.2 ★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Accommodation Statement is present and easily located (e.g., on Home Page or Syllabus). 📌 UDL 4.2 Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies
4.3 ★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	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 OSCQR 3.18 There is enough contrast between text and background for the content to be easily viewed.
4.4 ★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Images are used to support course content (e.g., banners, headings and icons) and 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 OSCQR 4.35 A text equivalent for every non-text element is provided ("alt" tags, captions, transcripts, etc.).
4.5 ★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	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 OSCQR 3.21 Text is formatted with titles, headings, and other styles to enhance readability and improve the structure of the document. OSCQR 3.22 Flashing and blinking text are avoided.

Section 4: Course Accessibility

★ Essential ★★ Best Practice ★★★ Exemplary

4.6 ★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>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").</p> <p>WebAim - Introduction to Links and Hypertext 📌 UDL 4.2 Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies</p>
4.7 ★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Audio materials (mp3, wav, etc.) are accompanied by a transcript and videos / screencasts are closed-captioned. Canvas Guide - Create Caption Files 📌 UDL 1.2 Offer alternatives for auditory information</p>
4.8 ★★	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Tables are used appropriately and are accessible. WebAim - Creating Accessible Tables 📌 Mobile Design Consideration</p> <p>OSCQR 3.24 When possible, information is displayed in a linear format instead of as a table.</p> <p>OSCQR 3.25 Tables are accompanied by a title and summary description.</p> <p>OSCQR 3.26 Table header rows and columns are assigned.</p>

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>
- Best practices for building Universal Design principles into your Canvas courses. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.sfu.ca/canvas/instructors/universal-design/building_udl_into_canvas.html
- CAST (2018). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 2.2. Retrieved from <http://udlguidelines.cast.org>
- Moore, E. (2017, October 16). Implementing Universal Design for Learning on Canvas. Retrieved from <https://community.canvaslms.com/groups/designers/blog/2017/10/16/implementing-universal-design-for-learning-on-canvas>
- Online Course Best Practices Checklist. (2012). Retrieved from <https://www2.palomar.edu/poet/BestPracticesChecklistSP1>
- SUNY Online Course Quality Review Rubric - OSCQR. Retrieved from <https://oscqr.suny.edu/>

Original Course Evaluation Checklist Canvas Contributors

[Deonne Johnson, Ph.D.](#), Team Lead, Consultants, Instructure
[Erin Keefe](#), Principal Consultant, Instructure
[Lily Philips](#), Team Lead, Instructional Design, Instructure
[Michelle Lattke](#), Senior Manager, Learning & Strategy, Instructure
[Tom Gibbons](#), Trainer, Instructure



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons [Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/) License.