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High Quality Online Courses Facilitator Guide

Peeking behind the curtain

Welcome to **High quality online courses: How to improve course design and delivery for your post-secondary learner**s (HQOC). The HQOC [course authors and development team](#) are thrilled that you are running this course at your institution!

As an authoring and development team, we have striven, as much as possible, to create a resource that will meet the wide-ranging needs of post-secondary educators (instructors and academic support unit staff) in the college and university sectors. In the interest of transparency, we offer you a brief overview of the steps we took to identify the needs of our prospective learners, and the design decisions we made to meet those needs.

What did we do to find out about and meet our learners' needs?

Needs analysis interviews

Before starting development, **we conducted a series of needs analysis interviews** in which we asked instructors and ASU staff at academic institutions across Ontario what they were looking for in a resource of this nature.

Here's what interview participants told us they wanted.

Opportunities to create resources for their own course/a focus on take-aways they could use

Participants wanted the course to guide them in creating **concrete and tangible resources that they could use in their own context.** Most emphasized a desire to be able to come away from the course with resources for developing and/or assessing their own real-world online course for quality.

An emphasis on examples and peer modelling

Participants wanted to see real-world **examples of quality online courses,** and to hear from **peer instructors** about their own quality courses. Templates, case-studies, practical examples, and videos from other instructors were all mentioned as valuable.

Skills in online course design and development

Participants were keen to improve skills in:
- **Online pedagogy,** including backward design;
- **Online assessment,** including designing opportunities for active learning and authentic assessments;
- **User experience, content and information design,** including segmenting, course structure, organization, findability and accessibility, and
- **Fostering student engagement**.

A modular format that was easy to navigate and delivered asynchronously

Some participants wanted to be able to easily **find and dive into specific topics** of interest readily, without necessarily taking an entire course. In addition, the time individuals were willing to invest on this course ranged from 4 hours to 20 hours, so ensuring modularity was a priority.

A course available both as an OER and in an LMS

Some participants wanted the course available as an OER, so that they could share it with colleagues easily, while others preferred a facilitated offering in an LMS, so that they could experience it in a cohort with peers and facilitated by experts. Several participants indicated an interest in receiving a credential that they could reference on their CV. Some ASU staff indicated that they would like a credentialed version of the course, but others indicated that they did not have the resources to staff it with facilitators, so they preferred a resource-conservative asynchronous LMS course. Some ASU staff indicated that they would not be able to maintain a course in their institutional LMS and preferred the OER.

Design decisions made in consideration of identified needs

The needs analysis informed the following course design features:

- **A modular format**, organized according to the typical stages of development of an online course:

Development Stage	Module
Conception and Planning	**Module 1** (which focuses on learner-centred design and backward design);
Design and Development	**Module 2** (which focuses on activity and assessment design);
	Module 3 (which focuses on course structure and content design); and
Delivery and Revision	**Module 4** (which focuses on facilitation and continuous improvement).

  These modules can be completed sequentially or as stand-alone modules, allowing participants to begin at whatever development stage/module aligns best with their goals.

- **A focus on application-based outcomes:** Activities in the course are designed to help participants actively build/revise/facilitate their own online course, so that by the end of the course, they have a good start on their own course development/revision/facilitation project.
- **Plenty of practical examples, case studies, and templates:**
    - We've made these easy to locate by including a "**Module examples, strategies, and templates**" page after each of the four module overview pages. This page provides

direct links to the examples, strategies, and templates provided throughout the module.

- o We've included both "**Quality Essential**" and "**Quality Advanced**" examples in each module. Importantly, examples labelled **Advanced** are not superior to those labelled **Essential**. Advanced examples may be more complex, may require more time to implement, or may explore a particular principle in greater depth or breadth.
- o We have designed the entire course to be an example of the strategies and principles we've highlighted throughout. We've made these design choices explicit in the "**How we did this in this course/module**" sections peppered throughout the course.

To ensure that we were meeting the needs of as many users as possible, we created this course with two distinct components:

- **An Open Educational Resource (OER)**, built within Pressbooks:
    - o [High quality online courses: How to improve course design and delivery for your post-secondary learners](#) **(HQOC Pressbook)**
    - The HQOC Pressbook OER is open and available to anyone, at anytime, on the web. It is a self-directed learning experience and has **no credential** associated with it.
- This **Learning Management System (LMS) companion site**, which includes the opportunity for learners to earn a certificate of completion for the course. This companion site contains:
    - o **four module pages** that provide links to the corresponding module in the OER and links to the module activities;
    - o **four module quizzes** in which learners indicate which activities they have completed in each module.

The LMS materials enable learners to earn a credential for the course, either through a facilitated or an unfacilitated offering, as described in the "**Over to you!**" section below.

Environmental Scan

We conducted an environmental scan to ensure that we were not creating an OER/course that already existed. This scan surfaced some valuable OERs that provide more information about different topics addressed in the course. These resources have been curated and included as "**Resources for further study**" sections at the end of each module.

User experience (UX) testing

After we developed the prototype module (Module 1), **we conducted UX testing** with instructors and ASU staff. Participants were observed as they performed a series of tasks in the developed module and were subsequently interviewed about their experiences, sharing what they liked, didn't like, what worked well for them and what did not. Usability problems that surfaced during this testing were fixed, including:

- improving navigation by adding module page links to the module overview page;
- renaming module section titles to increase clarity;

- more clearly explaining the options for navigation in the "About this course" section;
- improving the layout of the "Resources for further study" pages, and
- making the Territorial Acknowledgement more prominent.

However, the biggest take-away from the UX testing was a reaffirmation that participants wanted the course to focus on **practical applications and take-aways that they could use in their own contexts**. As one participant asked, "*What do I gain from it? Are my students going to be more engaged, [will there be] efficiencies in my workflow, will it save me time? I am looking for the reward*."

As a result of this feedback, we streamlined our learning outcomes, focusing them more tightly on application-based outcomes, and ensured that all the learning activities helped participants actively build/revise/facilitate their own online course as they progressed through the content, as explained in the Course overview section of the HQOC Pressbook.

It is also worth mentioning that some UX participants were very eager to read the research literature in support of the course design principles we introduced in the module, while others weren't interested in this at all. To address both of these audiences, we have included very short "**Why this matters**" sections throughout the course, which provide brief summaries of what the research literature says about the design principles introduced. For those who want to take deeper dives into the research literature, we've referenced some of the key literature in the "Resources for further study" and "Bibliography" sections in each module.

That, in a nutshell, describes the backstory of this course. We are delighted to hand it over to you now, to continue its journey, and to take the story in whichever direction you and your learners need it to go.

Over to you!

As explained above, our needs analysis identified that while some prospective learners were keen to **acquire a credential for this course,** and to **participate in a facilitated version** of it, others (e.g., ASU staff at some institutions) indicated that they would **not be able to maintain a facilitated offering** of the course in their institutional LMS.

To meet these divergent needs, we offer below a few recommendations for delivering a **credentialed** version of this course in your institutional LMS, either as an **unfacilitated** or as a **facilitated** offering.

If you intend to run an unfacilitated version

This course is currently set up to run unfacilitated. The unfacilitated version of the course can be set up to result in a credential. We've made this easy to do:

1. On the **Course Overview** page, learners are provided with a **Course Schedule** that shows the structure of the course, and outlines recommended deadlines to help learners stay on track to obtain their certificate of completion.
   - If you are offering the asynchronous, unfacilitated course in cohorts where everyone starts at the same time, you may want to add the specific days of the month/week by which you would like learners to complete each module.

2. Learners will move through the content modules at their own pace, following the recommended due date structure.
3. At the end of each module, learners are provided with a list of activities and are asked to complete 3 of their choice. Rather than submitting these activities for grading, learners are asked to complete a module quiz to indicate which of the 3 activities they completed. If 3 activities are selected, learners will be given an automatic passing score. A passing score on all 4 Module quizzes indicates the successful completion of the course.
4. Upon successful completion of the course, learners can be given a certificate of completion. A Word version of a certificate of completion is available in the **Facilitator Guide** section of this LMS. It can be adapted (e.g., by adding an institutional logo, and including the successful participant's name and the date of completion of the course) and sent to successful participants either automatically through your LMS, or manually:
   - If your LMS allows for conditional release of content, you may be able to automate the release of a generic version of this certificate, once participants achieve a pass on all 4 module quizzes. If this is the case, you will need to modify the Certificate of Completion, to create a generic version without a name or date field.
   - If your LMS does not have this functionality, a facilitator may need to manually check that participants have successfully completed all module quizzes and email the certificate to successful participants individually.

If you intend to run a facilitated version

Some ideas for you to consider include:

1. Providing learners with a **structured schedule** with deadlines. We have created a schedule for you, but feel free to modify it to align with your needs. You can access the schedule in the **Course Overview** section of the LMS.
2. Creating **dropboxes/assignment submission folders or assignments** for learners to submit their activities, and having facilitators offer individual feedback.
3. Creating **discussion forums** for learners to share ideas and receive feedback from their colleagues prior to submitting their activities to the dropboxes/assignment submission folder or assignments area.
4. Setting up one or two **synchronous sessions** where facilitators and learners can discuss course content and ask questions or offer course-specific advice in real time.
5. Asking learners to engage in a **final reflective exercise**, as drafted below. This can be made available as an asynchronous discussion activity.

> **Final Reflection Activity**
>
> Take this opportunity to reflect on what you've learned in the course, and how that will impact your approach to online course design and development.
>
> **Discussion prompt:** How has your thinking about online teaching and learning shifted as a result of what you've learned? What will you do differently? What change(s) will you implement right away?

6. Upon completion of the course content and activities, providing learners with the **certificate of completion** located in the **Facilitator Guide** section of this LMS.

Note: Some institutions may be using Learning Management Systems that are incompatible with the common cartridge file we've exported and made available in the eCampusOntario Open Library. For those institutions, we've included a copy of the LMS pages in the Appendix that follows.

Appendix: Text versions of the LMS pages

Course overview – Start here!

Welcome to **High quality online courses: How to improve course design and delivery for your post-secondary learners (HQOC).** This course has two components:

1. An Open Educational Resource (OER), built within Pressbooks, which has the same name:
   - [High quality online courses: How to improve course design and delivery for your post-secondary learners](#)**(HQOC Pressbook)**
   - The HQOC Pressbook OER is open and available to anyone, at anytime, on the web. It is a self-directed learning experience and has **no credential** associated with it.
2. This Learning Management System (LMS) companion site, which includes the opportunity to earn a certificate of completion for the course. This companion site contains:
   - **four module pages** that provide links to the corresponding module in the OER and links to the module activities;
   - **four module quizzes** in which you indicate which activities you have completed in each module.

What do I need to do to obtain a credential for this course?

To obtain a **certificate of completion** for the course, you are required to complete **three activities of your choice in each module**, as outlined on the module pages:

- **Module 1: Create your quality online course blueprint**
- **Module 2: Quality activities and assessments**
- **Module 3: Quality course structure and content**
- **Module 4: Quality facilitation and improvement**

Where should I start?

To get started, read the "[About this course—Start here!](#)" section of the HQOC Pressbook. It provides an overview of the course, including the course

learning outcomes, key course features, and tips on how to navigate the Pressbook.

Then, work through the modules, according to the recommended deadlines outlined on the **Course schedule.**

Course schedule

The schedule below outlines the course workflow and the recommended deadlines for each activity in order to achieve a certificate of completion.

Week	Assigned	Recommended Deadline
Weeks 1-2	Module 1 Activities (complete 3 of 4) Module 1 Quiz	Day 7 of Week 2
Weeks 3-4	Module 2 Activities (complete 3 of 4) Module 2 Quiz	Day 7 of Week 4
Weeks 5-6	Module 3 Activities (complete 3 of 5) Module 3 Quiz	Day 7 of Week 6
Weeks 7-8	Module 4 Activities (complete 3 of 4) Module 4 Quiz	Day 7 of Week 8

Module 1: Create your quality online course blueprint

Learning outcomes

Welcome to Module 1! This module will invite you to approach quality in online learning from the perspective of your learners. You will learn how to plan an online course that provides the best possible learning experience for your learners. By the end of the module, you should be able to

- recognize quality in online learning as centred on **learners** and **facilitating learning**;
- identify the characteristics of your online learners, including their **situational context** and **prior knowledge**, and adapt your course design plan accordingly;
- develop **learning outcomes** for your course that provide a clear destination for your learners (i.e., that are explicit and assessed), and
- reflect on ways to cultivate a **sense of inclusion and belonging to a learning community** that are authentic to you and your course.

Content

All of the content for Module 1 can be found on the Module 1 overview page of the High-Quality Online Course Pressbook:

- [1.1 Module overview](#)

Reminder: Before starting Module 1, read the "[About this course—Start here!](#)" section of the HQOC Pressbook. It provides an overview of the course, including the course learning outcomes, key course features, and tips on how to navigate the Pressbook.

Required activities for certificate of completion

Throughout the module, you will encounter activities that will help you actively build your own online course. **If you are working towards a credential**, you are required to complete **three** of these activities as evidence of your learning in the course, according to the recommended deadlines outlined in the Course schedule.

This is your course and your learning experience – choose 3 activities to complete and submit that will be most useful to you, your professional development, and your course. The links below will take you directly to the activity description and instructions in the [High Quality Online Course PressBook](#) where the course content resides.

Complete at least 3 of the Module 1 activities outlined below:

- [Module-level alignment chart](#)
- [Course-level alignment chart](#)
- [Who are my learners?](#)
- [What do my learners already know?](#)

Once you have completed three or more activities of your choice, **complete the Module 1 Quiz**, indicating which activities you have completed. You will receive a score of 1 for each selection in the quiz.

Modules quizzes are due by the deadline that appears in the Course schedule (if applicable). Quizzes will be available to complete for the duration of the course. You can submit the quiz multiple times, but only your final submission will be graded. Quizzes will be automatically graded and you will see your score when you submit.

Important note: In order to obtain a certificate of completion for this course, you must self-score 3 in each of the 4 module quizzes.

Module 2: Quality activities and assessments

Learning outcomes

Welcome to Module 2! This module will introduce you to strategies for designing high quality online activities and assessments that provide meaningful ways for learners to interact with you, the course content, and each other. You will learn how to design assessments and provide feedback that promotes learning and enables your learners to succeed in your course.

By the end of the module, you should be able to

- create **formative and summative** assessments that align with your intended learning outcomes;
- design **meaningful interactions** into your course (instructor–learner and learner–learner) that foster a sense of belonging to a learning community;
- adopt strategies to encourage **academic integrity**, and
- effectively communicate expectations for and provide **feedback on learner performance.**

Content

All of the content for Module 2 can be found on the Module 2 overview page of the High-Quality Online Course Pressbook:

- [2.1 Module overview](#)

Required activities for certificate of completion

Throughout the module, you will encounter activities that will help you actively build your own online course. **If you are working towards a credential**, you are required to complete **three** of these activities as evidence of your learning in the course, according to the recommended deadlines outlined in the Course schedule.

This is your course and your learning experience – choose 3 activities to complete and submit that will be most useful to you, your professional development, and your course. The links below will take you directly to the

activity description and instructions in the [High Quality Online Course PressBook](#) where the course content resides.

Complete at least 3 of the Module 2 activities outlined below:

- [Academic integrity checklist](#)
- [Scaffolded assessment scheme](#)
- [Assessment outline](#)
- [Grading criteria](#)

Once you have completed three or more activities of your choice, **complete the Module 2 Quiz**, indicating which activities you have completed. You will receive a score of 1 for each selection in the quiz.

Modules quizzes are due by the deadline that appears in the Course schedule (if applicable). Quizzes will be available to complete for the duration of the course. You can submit the quiz multiple times, but only your final submission will be graded. Quizzes will be automatically graded and you will see your score when you submit.

Important note: In order to obtain a certificate of completion for this course, you must self-score 3 in each of the 4 module quizzes.

Module 3: Quality course structure and content

Learning outcomes

Welcome to Module 3! In this module, you will learn how to structure your course and design your content in ways that facilitate and motivate learning. You will learn to recognize and remove barriers to learning, so that all of your learners have the opportunity to succeed in your course.

By the end of the module, you should be able to

- **structure your course** in a way that is clear and easy to navigate;
- present **content** in ways that facilitate and motivate learning;
- implement principles of **equity, inclusivity, and accessibility** into your course design, and
- use **Open Educational Resources (OERs)** as part of your content delivery strategy.

Content

All of the content for Module 3 can be found on the Module 3 overview page of the High-Quality Online Course Pressbook:

- [3.1 Module overview](#)

Required activities for certificate of completion

Throughout the module, you will encounter activities that will help you actively build your own online course. **If you are working towards a credential**, you are required to complete **three** of these activities as evidence of your learning in the course, according to the recommended deadlines outlined in the Course schedule.

This is your course and your learning experience – choose 3 activities to complete and submit that will be most useful to you, your professional development, and your course. The links below will take you directly to the activity description and instructions in the [High Quality Online Course PressBook](#) where the course content resides.

Complete at least 3 of the Module 3 activities outlined below:

- Create a course schedule
- Create a module overview page
- Attend to this topic!
- Create an online content storyboard
- Curate a list of Open Educational Resources (OERs)

Once you have completed three or more activities of your choice, **complete the Module 3 Quiz**, indicating which activities you have completed. You will receive a score of 1 for each selection in the quiz.

Modules quizzes are due by the deadline that appears in the Course schedule (if applicable). Quizzes will be available to complete for the duration of the course. You can submit the quiz multiple times, but only your final submission will be graded. Quizzes will be automatically graded and you will see your score when you submit.

Important note: In order to obtain a certificate of completion for this course, you must self-score 3 in each of the 4 module quizzes.

Module 4: Quality facilitation and improvement

Learning outcomes

Welcome to Module 4! This module will introduce you to teaching strategies that provide meaningful ways to connect with your online learners, and for them to connect with each other.

By the end of the module, you should be able to:

- identify **facilitation strategies** that you will use to build your presence and foster an inclusive, supportive environment in your online course;
- create opportunities for learners to engage in **meaningful interactions** that foster a sense of belonging to a learning community, and
- create a plan for **iterative improvement** in your online course design and delivery.

Content

All of the content for Module 4 can be found on the Module 4 overview page of the High-Quality Online Course Pressbook:

- [4.1 Module overview](#)

Required activities for certificate of completion

Throughout the module, you will encounter activities that will help you actively build your own online course. **If you are working towards a credential**, you are required to complete **three** of these activities as evidence of your learning in the course, according to the recommended deadlines outlined in the Course schedule.

This is your course and your learning experience – choose 3 activities to complete and submit that will be most useful to you, your professional development, and your course. The links below will take you directly to the activity description and instructions in the [High Quality Online Course PressBook](#) where the course content resides.

Complete at least 3 of the Module 4 activities outlined below:

- [Create a welcome announcement](#)
- [Design a structured synchronous session](#)
- [Create a plan for assessing and revising](#)
- [Create a teaching checklist](#)

Once you have completed three or more activities of your choice, **complete the Module 4 Quiz**, indicating which activities you have completed. You will receive a score of 1 for each selection in the quiz.

Modules quizzes are due by the deadline that appears in the Course schedule (if applicable). Quizzes will be available to complete for the duration of the course. You can submit the quiz multiple times, but only your final submission will be graded. Quizzes will be automatically graded and you will see your score when you submit.

Important note: In order to obtain a certificate of completion for this course, you must self-score 3 in each of the 4 module quizzes.