Conducting Quality Online Course Evaluations: Different Modalities, Different Tools

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Do you have a separate process for evaluating your online instructors?
Looking Back

- Throughout the development and evolution of online courses over the last 20 years, course evaluation tools and processes did not keep pace.
Looking Back

- As LMS systems changed and improved and overall quality advanced, most college processes related to course evaluations stayed static and focused on the traditional face to face modality.
Looking Back

- As more classes move to the online modality, colleges began to understand that evaluation processes did not fit the online modality.
- Most simply tried to fit an existing tool into an online evaluation.
External Factors Are Requiring New Processes

- Academic Senate policy on regular and effective contact
- ACCJC policies on what constitutes distance education in California and "substantive interaction."
- Federal Financial Aid guidelines on attendance and faculty interaction.
How Traditional Evaluation Tools Fail to Serve Online Courses

- Attendance requirements are different.
- Instructor generated content is different in an online class.
- Defining instructor presence and interaction.

- Accessibility and other compliance standards must be evaluated and assessed.
- Separation of the instructor performance and the college tech infrastructure (the classroom)
RSI/REC as an Example: Definition of Distance Education

34 C.F.R § 602.3 (ACCJC Policy on DE and on CE)

“Education that uses one or more of the technologies listed in paragraphs 1 – 4 to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between students and the instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously. The technologies may include:
What is Required by ACCJC that pertains to Evaluation?

1. Definition of Regular and Substantive Interaction
   a. What activities demonstrate regular and substantive interaction?
   b. Where is this found?
   c. Do DE instructors consistently do these activities?

2. Student Authentication
   a. Does the college have a way to assure the student that enrolled in the course is actually the student doing the work? AND
   b. Does the instructor follow it?

3. Comparable Services
   a. Do DE students have access to comparable learning support services as face-to-face students?
Regular and Effective Contact (REC)/Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI)

- What is your DE definition of Regular and Effective Contact? Does your college have a definition of Regular and Effective Contact?

- Can a visitor to a course see in Canvas that interaction is regular and effective as defined BY THE CAMPUS (and printed in the catalog and schedule of classes)?
Regular and Effective Contact (REC)/Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI)

- Some examples of acceptable methods of regular and effective contact:
  - Archivable personalized feedback via CMS or district email
  - Frequent interaction in discussion boards within the CMS. (Any discussion of grades must remain private)
  - Archivable and ADA compliant Chat/IM
  - ADA compliant Synchronous Sessions / Closed captioned video conferencing
  - Regular Announcements that are Personalized to the Course
Practical Evaluation of Online Classes: Considerations

• Who designed the course? (ID? Faculty?)

• Who is doing the evaluation? Peers? Students? Administrators?

• Do you have training for non-online teaching peers and for administrators about what to look for?
Practical Evaluation of Online Classes: Considerations

- How do you gain access to the course and in what role? (FERPA Considerations for looking at grades will help determine which role to use)

- How much of the class are you asking to see?

- Do you have the instructor sit with you and show you the course?
What are you looking for?

• Clear and reasonable structure: Would the student know what to do first?

  • If you can’t figure out what to do it’s likely students can’t either.
  
    ➢ Sometimes, instructors close the beginning information after a few weeks.
    
    ➢ If you find no beginning instructions, ask the instructor if there were some and, if so, you’d like to see them.
    
    ➢ Look for an announcement or syllabus document that tells students how to navigate the course.
What are you looking for?

- Is there a syllabus?
  - Expectations?
  - Online Course Policies
  - College resources?
- Are there instructor prepared materials?
- Are there clear and varied methods used for delivering content?
- Is there sufficient content to cover the same material as in the FTF course?
- Are there additional content oriented resources?
What are you looking for in discussions?

• Evaluation should be based on the quality of instructor postings (and not the length or number).

• Instructors should post expectations for discussions.

• Instructors need to provide two types of feedback: information feedback and acknowledgment feedback.
What are you looking for in discussions?

• Learners should be required to participate (and their grade should depend on participation).

• Learners should receive feedback on their discussions and should, for at least some forums, be required to respond to other students’ postings.

• Evaluation should be based on the quality of postings (and not the length or number).
College School Samples

Foothill College Sample:
http://www.fafhda.org/agreement-2016-19/appendix/Appendix%20J1.pdf

Santa Rosa Junior College, provided by Lisa Beach:
https://de.santarosa.edu/form/online-instructor-evaluation

Mt. San Jacinto College provided by Anna Stirling:
https://www.msjc.edu/CollegeInformation/Administration/AcademicSenate/Pages/Evaluations.aspx

College of the Desert Sample Provided by Donna Green:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HKZwg0b2kTTpdsKl51oj3YPxIHPAN_ZoJbJePqYhzcc/edit?usp=sharing