



prepared for :

COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION FOR COMMUNITY EDUCATION [CACE]

and the OFFICE OF LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES [OLT]

of HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT CANADA [HRDC]

CREATING QUALITY GUIDELINES FOR ON-LINE EDUCATION AND TRAINING CONSULTATION WORKBOOK

prepared by :

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INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Association for Community Education [CACE] and its partners are proud to sponsor this project to create quality guidelines for on-line education and training in Canada.

Partner organizations include:

- ❑ CADE – the Canadian Association for Distance Education
- ❑ AMTEC – the Association for Media and Technology in Education in Canada
- ❑ CanLearn – the HRDC education web portal for higher education and training
- ❑ TeleLearning Network – the Centre of Excellence providing research in this area
- ❑ Commonwealth of Learning
- ❑ New partners are welcome.
- ❑ LICEF TeleUniversity (University of Quebec)
- ❑ SchoolNet of Industry Canada

With funding from the Office of Learning Technologies [OLT] of Human Resources Development Canada [HRDC], CACE has engaged FuturEd to do the project work. FuturEd has prepared this draft set of quality guidelines, based on an extensive literature review of quality, distance education and learning technologies.

Until August 2001, FuturEd will be conducting a consultation with providers and consumers of on-line education in order to create a set of quality guidelines that are consensus-based, consumer-oriented, comprehensive, futuristic, and recommended only. Guidelines are needed by students to help make informed choices from among on-line education and training options. Developers and providers need guidelines to meet consumer needs and expectations.

This project will conclude with a “consumer’s guide to on-line education” -- a set of questions for learners to ask in the process of choosing between on-line learning products and services in order to maximize the return on their investment.

Your input to this project is much appreciated.



INSTRUCTIONS

This workbook, available in both English and French, contains the draft guidelines for on-line learning options and questions to focus your input. You can write answers to the questions and you can write on the document where you would recommend changes, additions or deletions.

1. IF YOU HAVE FOUND THIS WORKBOOK ON-LINE, PLEASE:

- complete it and send it as an attachment to consult@futuresd.com
- print it, write on it as you wish, and mail or fax it to FuturEd [see cover page]

2. IF YOU ARE PART OF A WORKSHOP OR FOCUS GROUP,

PLEASE WRITE AS MUCH OR AS LITTLE AS YOU LIKE AND MAKE SURE IT GETS TO FUTURED.

3. WE'D APPRECIATE KNOWING SOMETHING ABOUT YOU, BUT THIS IS OPTIONAL :

My primary interest in e-learning is as: (please check the appropriate box)

- teacher/professor
- instructional designer
- student or potential student
- parent or student advisor
- educational administrator
- commercial producer or service
- other

I am in the following age group: (please check the appropriate box)

- 15 - 19
- 20 - 29
- 30 - 49
- + 50

I am responding from this province:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> British Columbia | <input type="checkbox"/> Nova Scotia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alberta | <input type="checkbox"/> Newfoundland |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Saskatchewan | <input type="checkbox"/> Prince Edward Island |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Manitoba | <input type="checkbox"/> Northwest Territories |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ontario | <input type="checkbox"/> Yukon |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Quebec | <input type="checkbox"/> Nunavut |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New Brunswick | <input type="checkbox"/> Outside Canada |

I reside: (please check the appropriate box)

- in a town or city
- in a rural or remote location

Specific to e-learning, I have a particular interest in: (please check if any apply)

- women's learning issues
- services to persons with disabilities
- support to First Nations learners
- other _____

As a student, My learning goal is to: (please check the appropriate box or boxes)

- complete an undergraduate university or college degree
- complete a graduate degree
- upgrade my workplace skills
- pursue a new interest for personal growth
- other _____

You can contact me directly about the study. (please check the appropriate box)

- Yes, at this e-mail address: _____
- No.

This consultation document is in three parts. Completing it will take more than an hour, and you can submit each part separately at different times.

After the consultation, the guidelines will be used as the basis for a consumer's guide to e-learning. Thanks for taking the time to contribute to the development of a quality guidelines for e-learning.



PREAMBLE AND ASSUMPTIONS

1. There is a free market and a growing market in distance delivery of teaching/learning with great variety in content areas and quality. Potential students have choices. Not all distance education is provided by accredited institutions/agencies or recognized by accrediting bodies.
2. While distance learning includes all forms of delivery, such as regular mail and telephone, these guidelines focus on those that incorporate learning technologies such as the computers and the Internet. The term "technology-assisted distance learning" is intended to capture that notion.
3. Technology-assisted distance learning takes various forms: distance education, distributed learning, virtual or web-based education/training, synchronous and asynchronous learning. What they have in common is the fact that the learner is in one location and the "provider" of the learning is in another and technology is used to make the link.
4. Both providers and consumers of distance learning want education and training products and services that are effective and efficient. The term "quality" is used to encompass these concepts.
5. All learning products and services are a combination or system of inputs and resources, processes and practices, and outputs and outcomes. All are important; however, from the consumer's point of view, the outcomes are the most important, then processes and practices, and finally inputs and resources that have gone into the design, production and delivery of the learning product/service.
6. Learning products and services take numerous forms: individual courses, entire programs. The same principles or quality guidelines should apply to both.

PLEASE THINK ABOUT THESE QUESTIONS AS YOU READ

1. Are the guidelines clear?
2. From your perspective, what should be added? What should be removed?
3. What should be changed, and how?
4. How do you foresee using the guidelines?
5. What evidence would indicate that the guidelines were useful?

1. QUALITY OUTCOMES FROM TECHNOLOGY-ASSISTED DISTANCE LEARNING

1.1. Acquired content skills and knowledge are:

- 1.1.1. relevant to work and/or the best thinking in the field
- 1.1.2. general enough to be transferable between work / learning situations,
e.g., employability and communication skills
- 1.1.3. specific enough to lead to work or higher learning, e.g., content or technical expertise
- 1.1.4. a blend of traditional education and applied technology skills

1.2. Necessary learning skills are acquired for:

1.2.1. course / program completion and success, explicitly:

- sources of information and retrieval processes
- analytical and critical thinking
- reading and writing skills in context
- exam taking

1.2.2. lifelong learning by:

- providing a systematic introduction to the field
- offering a comparative or contextual framework for viewing the field of study
- seeking to broaden the learner and provide generic skills
- offering some freedom of choice and flexibility in structure
- providing for the incremental development of self-directed learning

1.2.3. self-directed learning management, for example:

- creation of a portfolio of acquired skills and knowledge
- awareness of personal gaps in skills and knowledge and relevant learning opportunities
- personal responsibility for one's own learning

1.3. Completion takes the form of credits or credentials that are:

- 1.3.1. recognized by professional accreditation bodies and employers
- 1.3.2. recognized by other education institutions – locally and internationally
- 1.3.3. of the same value whether acquired through on-site or distance learning
- 1.3.4. transferable within programs and institutions, and between provinces/territories

1.4. Return on investment of the learner's time, finances and energy meets expectations for:

- 1.4.1. accessibility as needed and when needed
- 1.4.2. objective benefits and utility
- 1.4.3. effectiveness: subjective achievement of personal goals
- 1.4.4. efficiency: best use of resources
- 1.4.5. customer satisfaction with all course/program elements

A search on the Internet will give you hundreds of choices for post-secondary education on-line. You could choose to take a course from a college or university in Canada or elsewhere in the world. You could complete an entire programs at some “virtual” universities. Do these guidelines help you make that decision?

1. Is this section of guidelines clear?
2. From your perspective, what should be added? What should be removed?
3. What should be changed, and how?

2. QUALITY PROCESSES AND PRACTICES IN TECHNOLOGY-ASSISTED DISTANCE LEARNING

2.1. Student management processes and practices include:

2.1.1. registration procedures that deliver:

- assurance that accepted students have the background, knowledge and technical skills needed to undertake the course/program
- a clear statement of expectations of learners
- an orientation program/service for those desiring it

2.1.2. intake and place procedures that provide:

- individualized course / career counseling
- assessment and recognition of prior learning
- appropriate placement

2.1.3. management of student records for:

- documentation of student achievement in each course and at completion of a program
- confidential treatment of records

2.1.4. learner involvement in decision-making

2.1.5. assistance with the technologies being used, i.e.,

- the purpose of the technology[ies]
- the etiquette involved
- skills and knowledge to manipulate and interact with it

2.2. Learning management processes and practices include:

2.2.1. teaching processes that:

- communicate high expectations
- provide prompt feedback to students
- respect diverse talents and ways of learning
- recognize the diversity of learners, learning needs, learning contexts, and modes of learning
- respond to individual learners
- incorporate an appropriate student-teacher ratio

2.2.2. approaches to learning that:

- foster active learning
- emphasize time on task
- build on learner's strengths and acquired skills and knowledge
- accommodate different individual learning styles
- support interaction and the development of learning communities
- increase learner control over time, place and pace of instruction

2.2.3. scheduling and timetabling that is:

- deliberately synchronous and/or asynchronous
- flexible and responsive to learners
- adequate and realistic

2.2.4. assessment of learning that is:

- frequent and timely
- appropriate and responsive to the needs of the learners
- in various forms such as written and oral assignments, self-assessment, demonstrations, and exams
- competency-based

2.2.5. authentic assessment of learning through:

- faithful representation of the contexts encountered in the field of study or in the real-life tests faced by adults
- engaging and important problems and questions
- non-routine and multistage tasks and real problems
- self-assessment
- trained assessor judgement
- the assessment of habits of mind and patterns of performance

2.2.6. evaluation of learning against criteria that are:

- transparent, relevant, realistic, reliable, and valid

2.3. Technologies are appropriately used to:

- 2.3.1. make students feel comfortable
- 2.3.2. accommodate and promote individualization
- 2.3.3. create opportunities for students to do meaningful work
- 2.3.4. increase proficiency at accessing, evaluating and communicating information
- 2.3.5. improve students' abilities to solve complex problems
- 2.3.6. nurture artistic expression
- 2.3.7. enable active engagement in the construction of knowledge
- 2.3.8. drill students on basic concepts to reach mastery

2.4. Communications facilities, processes and practices are able to:

- 2.4.1. encourage contact between students and faculty
- 2.4.2. provide flexible opportunities for interactions and problem-solving
- 2.4.3. develop reciprocity and cooperation among students
- 2.4.4. provide the opportunity to "hear" other students' questions
- 2.4.5. enable students to hear and to question experts in the field

2.5. Human resources management practices include:

- 2.5.1. recruitment and selection of appropriate personnel
- 2.5.2. a requirement for ongoing professional development in content areas
- 2.5.3. availability of technical skills development and support
- 2.5.4. regular evaluation of competence

2.6. Program management accountable for:

- 2.6.1. student management and students' rights
- 2.6.2. learning management
- 2.6.3. technology planning and utilization
- 2.6.4. planning and evaluation of all aspects of the product/service
- 2.6.5. responsiveness and flexibility to the student and to changing learning requirements
- 2.6.6. maintaining links within the education and business communities
- 2.6.7. research and continuous improvement
- 2.6.8. financial viability and continuity

Many high school courses are now delivered in a variety of ways, for example: on-line, on-site, conventional correspondence. Where the student has a choice, do these guidelines help make a good decision?

Some concepts are best taught in a laboratory, some don't seem to matter. Do these guidelines help compare choices and options?

1. Is this section of guidelines clear?
2. From your perspective, what should be added? What should be removed?
3. What should be changed, and how?

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3. QUALITY INPUTS AND RESOURCES FOR TECHNOLOGY-ASSISTED DISTANCE LEARNING

3.1. Intended learning outcomes are:

- 3.1.1. clearly stated
- 3.1.2. observable / demonstrable
- 3.1.3. measurable
- 3.1.4. achievable
- 3.1.5. useful and appropriate for the intended learners
- 3.1.6. shaped, where possible, with input from learners
- 3.1.7. appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the degree or certificate awarded
- 3.1.8. consistent with the providing organization's role and mission

3.2. Curriculum content is:

- 3.2.1. credible and academically respectable [source identified]
- 3.2.2. accurate
- 3.2.3. relevant
- 3.2.4. balanced and free of bias
- 3.2.5. updated consistently
- 3.2.6. documented
- 3.2.7. appropriate to the learning objectives
- 3.2.8. culturally sensitive

3.3. Teaching / learning materials are:

- 3.3.1. prepared by qualified content experts [author identified]
working with qualified design experts [identified]
- 3.3.2. readily available and learner friendly –
able to be used by the average student
- 3.3.3. interesting in content and layout
- 3.3.4. affordable
- 3.3.5. well-organized and free of errors
- 3.3.6. free of cultural, racial, class and gender bias
- 3.3.7. accessible to those with disabilities
- 3.3.8. relatively easy to use and free from technical hitches

3.4. A complete learning package includes:

- 3.4.1. course description
- 3.4.2. course/project objectives
- 3.4.3. information about the instructor[s]
- 3.4.4. learning/lecture notes and additional learning resources
- 3.4.5. course activities and assignments
- 3.4.6. quizzes and examinations
- 3.4.7. answers to questions/quizzes
- 3.4.8. a portfolio of acquired learning

3.5. Learning technologies are appropriate to:

- 3.5.1. the field of study or subject matter content and skills
- 3.5.2. the intended learning outcomes
- 3.5.3. the relevant characteristics and circumstances of the learner
- 3.5.4. cost and benefit for the learner
- 3.5.5. provide access to high-level and high-interest courses
- 3.5.6. provide representations in multiple modalities
- 3.5.7. provide interconnections among concepts through hypertext
- 3.5.8. increase global awareness
- 3.5.9. make available real-world situations and simulate laboratory work
- 3.5.10. provide instructor assistance with problems,
guidance and reminders of assignments and exam dates

3.6. Sound technical design such that learning materials and delivery methods are:

- 3.6.1. navigable
- 3.6.2. updateable and updated
- 3.6.3. complemented by graphics rather than distracted by them
- 3.6.4. available in text-only interfaces for non-graphical browsers
- 3.6.5. inclusive of "live" links to relevant, previewed documents
- 3.6.6. reliable
- 3.6.7. complete

3.7. Appropriate and necessary personnel include:

- 3.7.1. instructors / teachers / professors with
 - qualifications in the subject area
 - teaching experience at the relevant level [e.g., secondary, adult]
 - relevant experience and/or current knowledge in the field
- 3.7.2. customer-oriented management that helps with
 - information and course/program advising
 - application and registration procedures
- 3.7.3. content support persons, e.g.,
 - course / academic counseling
 - library staff
 - tutors and mentors
- 3.7.4. process support persons, e.g.,
 - technical support
 - learning skills support
 - career planning and employment counseling
 - problem-solving

3.8. Learning resources, in addition to teaching materials, are:

- 3.8.1. varied
- 3.8.2. easily and totally accessible via distance delivery
- 3.8.3. respectful of copyright
- 3.8.4. flexible to accommodate different learning styles

3.9. Program plans and budget include:

- 3.9.1. written policies for all aspects of the course/program
- 3.9.2. an adequate budget to achieve stated program goals
- 3.9.3. enabling legislation [public education / private enterprise]
- 3.9.4. financial and administrative commitment to the continuation
of a program for a period sufficient to enable students to complete a degree/certificate
- 3.9.5. integration of distance delivery with the institution's overall policy framework
- 3.9.6. a technology plan defining technical requirements and compatibility needed
to support the learning activities
- 3.9.7. security of systems to ensure the integrity and validity of information shared
in the learning activities

3.10. Evidence of program success through routine review and evaluation of:

- 3.10.1. course content and objectives
- 3.10.2. learning materials
- 3.10.3. instructional design
- 3.10.4. instruction and instructors
- 3.10.5. learning and student achievement
- 3.10.6. policies and management practices
- 3.10.7. operational procedures
- 3.10.8. customer satisfaction

3.11. Product/service information for potential students is:

- 3.11.1. in writing
- 3.11.2. clear
- 3.11.3. current
- 3.11.4. accurate
- 3.11.5. comprehensive and complete



3.12. Advertising, recruiting and admissions information includes:

- 3.12.1. pre-requisites and entry requirements
- 3.12.2. the curriculum overview
- 3.12.3. specific delivery format
- 3.12.4. course level and credit points
- 3.12.5. course length and degree requirements
- 3.12.6. all fees: registration, tuition, books and materials, equipment, other
- 3.12.7. institutional regulations
 - residency requirements
 - workload requirements
 - extensions
 - grade appeals
 - withdrawals and refunds
 - costs and payment policies
- 3.12.8. the nature of the faculty/student interaction
- 3.12.9. assumptions about technical competence and skills
- 3.12.10. technical equipment requirements, and availability of rentals
- 3.12.11. academic support services and learning resources
- 3.12.12. technical support services
- 3.12.13. financial aid resources
- 3.12.14. types of assignments and grading methods
- 3.12.15. learning assessment procedures and evaluation criteria
- 3.12.16. program success from evaluation and student follow-up reports

3.13. The comprehensive course package [all materials and technologies] is:

- 3.13.1. appealing in appearance
- 3.13.2. user-friendly
- 3.13.3. customizable
- 3.13.4. extensible
- 3.13.5. inclusive of all institutional services and activities
[registration, payment, advising, tutorial assistance, library services]
- 3.13.6. personalized
- 3.13.7. coherent and complete
- 3.13.8. reviewed and evaluated routinely

On-line learning options are limitless. You could enroll in a course for speed reading, GED preparation, naturopathy, foreign languages, computer programming language, business administration, whatever interests you. There are no regulations to govern those who offer courses on-line, so you will find great variety in registration fees and processes, the hardware and software you need, the reputation of the provider, and every other detail of an education or training course. Do these guidelines help to compare on-line services?

1. Is this section of guidelines clear?

2. From your perspective, what should be added? What should be removed?

3. What should be changed, and how?

Thinking about the guidelines as a complete set:

4. How do you foresee using the guidelines?

5. What evidence would indicate that the guidelines were useful?

6. Additional comments.....

