

# UH Quality Online Standards

## Executive Summary

The University of Hawai‘i (UH) Quality Online Standards were developed to provide a system-wide document that could be referenced by faculty and staff for online and hybrid course delivery. By condensing and cross-walking the [Quality Matters \(QM\) Higher Education Course Design Rubric Standards](#) and the [SUNY Online Course Quality Review Rubric \(OSCQR\)](#) national online standards into one set tailored to the UH context, the UH Quality Online Standards cover essential aspects of online course design and delivery. The aim is to create a common language and an established baseline for integrating these researched national standards to improve access and practical application.

The development process was a community-driven effort among instructional designers and faculty support members of the [UH Instructional Design Professional Learning Community \(ID PLC\)](#), ensuring the standards are reflective of collective expertise and best practices within the UH community. The curation and creation of simple and clear standards for instructors to easily implement was important to the group. The standards were also adapted to the specific context and needs of the UH system, ensuring relevance and applicability.

### The UH Quality Online Standards include:

- [Standard 1 - Course Overview and Introduction \(Ho‘olauna\)](#)
- [Standard 2 - Content Presentation and Organization \(Papahana\)](#)
- [Standard 3 - Learning Engagement and Interaction \(Pilina\)](#)
- [Standard 4 - Assessment and Measurement \(Hō‘ike\)](#)
- [Standard 5 - Course Technology \(Pa‘e‘e\)](#)
- [Standard 6 - Accessibility and Usability \(Kaulike\)](#)

This document includes ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i (Hawaiian Language) terms and values in alignment with the mission and purpose of the UH and its unique responsibility to the Indigenous people of Hawai‘i with its use of language and cultural parity (University of Hawai‘i, 2012, 2022, 2024). The annotations in this document also include relevant alignments between [Nā Honua Maoli Ola](#) and national online learning standards, showing how they mutually reinforce holistic, culturally responsive learning environments (Ka Haka ‘Ula O Ke‘elikōlani, University of Hawai‘i–Hilo, 2014).

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## Standard 1 – Course Overview and Introduction (Ho'olauna)

Standards related to how the course is introduced, including course [learning objectives/outcomes](#) and goals, course structure, and policies.

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### 1a. Course includes a welcome message, instructions on getting started, and where to find course components.

Annotation:

- Includes reference to one's origination (one hānau) and family (mo 'okū 'auhau)<sup>1</sup>
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### 1b. Learners are introduced to the purpose and structure of the course.

Annotations:

- Course provides an orientation or overview, as well as module-level overviews to make course content, activities, assignments, due dates, interactions, and [assessments](#), predictable and easy to navigate/find.
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### 1c. Course guidelines, schedule, and expectations are provided.

Annotation:

- These could include items such as a course schedule/calendar, communication guidelines, student-student/student-instructor; instructor-student expectations, netiquette standards, etc.
  - Items could be included in a course syllabus or overview page with an option for a printable format that does not require paid software such as PDF or HTML.
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### 1d. Institutional and course policies are clearly stated or linked to current policies.

Annotation:

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<sup>1</sup>Relevant alignments between Nā Honua Maoli Ola and national online learning standards. Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'elikōlani, University of Hawai'i–Hilo (2014). *Nā Honua Mauli Ola: Hawaiian Cultural Pathways for Healthy and Responsive Learning Environments*. <https://www.olelo.hawaii.edu/en/olelo/nhmo>.

- Course includes relevant system, institutional, and/or course policies (or links to policies) such as academic integrity, computer use, filing grievances, accommodating disabilities, etc.
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**1e. Minimum technology requirements and guidance for obtaining the necessary third-party tools/technologies used in the course are clearly stated.**

Annotation:

- Required course materials and third-party tools are listed and guidance is provided on how to access materials (when needed).
  - Faculty should do their due diligence in researching appropriate/relevant third-party tools for use in courses (e.g., checking the [UH ITS Reviewed Instructional Third-Party Online Tools](#) list for tool approval/status, reviewing privacy policies and accessibility statements, selecting current/up-to-date options aligned with industry standards, etc.).
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**1f. Course prerequisites and minimum technical skills are clearly stated.**

Annotation:

- Technical skills required for participation in course [learning activities](#) and assessments are scaffolded (e.g., orientation, practice, and application) where appropriate.
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**1g. The self-introduction by the instructor is welcoming and is available in the course site.**

Annotation:

- Course provides contact information for instructor(s), department, and program.
  - Learners have multiple methods to engage with the instructor throughout the course (e.g., instructor self-introduction, office hours, email, etc.)
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**1h. The course includes activities for fostering class community.**

Annotation:

- Introductory activity includes the opportunity for learners to introduce themselves.
- Ongoing course activities support open communication, promote [regular and substantive interaction \(RSI\)](#), establish trust, and build relationships (pilina) with

classmates (e.g., ice-breaking activities, course bulletin board, scheduled office hours, dedicated discussion forums, etc.).<sup>1</sup>

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**1i. The course modality is stated and explained.**

Annotation:

- Course modality information such as online, blended, synchronous, asynchronous, etc. Requirements such as mandatory synchronous sessions are explained.
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## **Standard 2 – Content Presentation and Organization (Papahana)**

*Standards related to the arrangement and display of [instructional materials](#).*

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**2a. The course-level [learning objectives/outcomes](#) are clearly defined, measurable, and aligned to [instructional materials](#), [learning activities](#), and [assessments](#).**

Annotations:

- The learning objectives/outcomes are learner-centered and prominently located in the course.
  - The relationship between learning objectives/outcomes, instructional materials, learning activities, and assessments is made clear.
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**2b. The module/unit-level learning objectives/outcomes are clearly defined, measurable, and aligned to course-level learning objectives/outcomes, instructional materials, learning activities, and assessments.**

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**2c. The learning objectives/outcomes are relevant, rigorous, and reflect the level of the course.**

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**2d. The course models academic integrity by including licensing status for copyrighted materials.**

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**2e. A variety of instructional materials are used in the course which are current in the discipline.**

Annotation:

- Instructional materials are presented in a variety of formats (e.g., text, audio, graphics, multimedia, videos, etc.) and sources (e.g., articles, peer-reviewed research, podcasts, blogs, interviews, etc.)
  - Where available, Open Educational Resources (OER), free, or low-cost materials are used.
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## **Standard 3 – Learner Engagement and Interaction (Pilina)**

*Standards for promoting learner interactions and communication in the course.*

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**3a. The [learning activities](#) help support learners' achievement of the stated [learning objectives/outcomes](#).**

Annotation:

- If applicable, the course provides activities for learners to develop higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills, such as critical reflection and analysis.
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**3b. Course provides opportunities for [active learning](#) and [experiential learning](#).**

Annotations:

- The end goal is to provide opportunities for active and experiential learning that applies to real-world or relevant scenarios.
  - Real-world applications include activities such as case studies, problem-based activities, etc.
  - Consider Hawai'i-placed learning activities on-site or virtual (i.e. visit a historic site in-person or online, field trip in-person or online, community engagement activity, etc.)<sup>1</sup>
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**3c. The instructor's plan for [regular and substantive interaction \(RSI\)](#)<sup>2</sup> with learners during the course is clearly stated.**

Annotation:

- RSI includes student↔instructor interactions.
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**3d. Learner expectations for course interactions are clearly stated.**

Annotations:

- Expectations for all course interactions (instructor to student, student to student, student to instructor, and interactions with those external to the course such as librarians, etc.) are clearly stated and modeled in all course interactions/communication channels.
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**3e. Course offers opportunities for learner-to-learner interaction and constructive collaboration.**<sup>1</sup>

Annotation:

- Learners should have opportunities to interact, share resources, and integrate knowledge from diverse sources of information with guidance and/or standards from the instructor.
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## **Standard 4 – Assessment and Measurement (Hō'ike)**

*Standards guiding the evaluation of learner performance and provision of feedback.*

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**4a. The [assessments](#) measure the achievement of the stated [learning objectives/outcomes](#).**

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**4b. The course grading policy is stated clearly.**

Annotation:

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<sup>2</sup> Reference the [WCET Regular & Substantive Interaction](#) and [ACCJC's Policy on Distance Education and on Correspondence Education](#) for additional information.

- A clear, written, and full explanation of how grades are calculated is presented at the beginning of the course (i.e., in the course syllabus). Late work policy is also addressed.
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#### **4c. Criteria for the assessment of graded assignments are clearly articulated.**

Annotation:

- Assessment criteria can be articulated in the course grading policy.
  - Descriptions of course assignments, such as rubrics, exemplary work, etc., may be found in specific assignments, modules, etc.
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#### **4d. The course assessments are sequenced, varied, and suited to the level and/or subject of the course.**

Annotation:

- Demonstration and application of learned content. Assessments provide multiple ways for learners to demonstrate progress and achievement. Courses might use a combination of assessment types, including exams, essays, discussions, reflective journals, group projects, portfolios, written papers, presentations, multimedia projects, and interviews.
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#### **4e. The course includes opportunities for frequent, substantive, and timely feedback through assessments that allow learners to track their learning progress and improve learning achievement.**

Annotation:

- Opportunities are provided for learners through smaller, lower-stakes assessments, such as pre-tests, self-tests with feedback, reflective assignments, peer assessments, knowledge checks, quizzes, etc.
  - If an assessment is timed, include details in the course grading policy and ensure accommodation is provided to learners as needed.
  - Course includes the opportunity for learners to provide descriptive feedback on their experience in the online course, the course design, content, user experience, and technology.
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#### **4f. Learners have easy access to a well-designed, organized, and up-to-date gradebook.**

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## Standard 5 – Course Technology (Pa‘éé)

*Standards addressing the use of technological tools and media to enhance learning.*

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**5a. Any required and recommended digital and technological skills are clearly stated.**

Annotation:

- Resources are provided to support learners with requisite digital information literacy and technical skills.
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**5b. The tools used in the course support the [learning objectives/outcomes](#).**

Annotation:

- Course tools align with and enhance the learning objectives/outcomes, ensuring they are used purposefully and cater to diverse learning styles and disciplines.
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**5c. A variety of course tools are used to promote learner engagement and active learning.<sup>1</sup>**

Annotation:

- Course tools are selected and utilized to foster learner engagement with the course, the instructor, and peers to encourage active, participatory learning, aligning with diverse and inclusive needs.
  - A [comprehensive list of third-party tools](#) (submitted by UH faculty/staff) has been reviewed by UH ITS for privacy and potential risks to the organization. Please review the sheet for the approval status of tools that have been submitted before integration into instruction.
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**5d. Privacy protection information is provided to learners, including links to privacy policies of used technology tools.**

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**5e. All course technologies meet accessibility standards, and vendor accessibility statements are provided.**

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## Standard 6 – Accessibility and Usability (Kaulike)

*Standards that ensure course materials are accessible to all learners, including those with disabilities.*

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### **6a. Course materials include clear descriptions of the technical support available and guidance on how to access content.**

Annotation:

- Description of technical support may include providing links to the tech support center, frequently asked questions, assistive technology, etc.
  - Provide appropriate guidelines for participation regarding technical requirements (e.g. browser version, mobile, publisher resources, secure content, pop-ups, browser issues, microphone, webcam).
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### **6b. Course syllabus includes relevant institution and/or campus accessibility policies and accommodation services (or hyperlinks if applicable).**

Annotation:

- In addition to the course syllabus, items above may also be in other relevant locations (e.g., course overview)
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### **6c. Course instructions articulate or link to the institution's academic support services and resources, including student services, to help learners succeed in the course.**

Annotation:

- Support (kōkua) for all students by informing them of resources.<sup>1</sup> Academic support services and resources could include items such as technical help, support services, orientation, academic honesty, access to library resources, online learning readiness assessment/survey, and tutoring services.
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### **6d. Course layout and visual design are logical, consistent, easy to navigate, and support diverse learners.**

Annotation:

- Layout, color scheme, and icons are consistent, related content is organized together, titles are self-evident, and frequently used tools are easily accessed.

- Tools not being used are removed from the course menu.
  - Accessibility is considered when making design choices, such as color contrast, headings, etc.
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#### **6e. Course content is readable and well-structured.**

Annotation:

- Instructions are provided and well-written in language that is easy to comprehend by a diverse audience.
  - Text is formatted with titles, headings, and other styles to enhance readability and improve the structure of the content.
  - Course content avoids grammatical or spelling errors.
  - The information is [chunked](#) into manageable sections, with sufficient white space around and between each section.
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#### **6f. Course content is accessible.<sup>1</sup>**

Annotation:

- Reference [Appendix A: Accessibility Checklist](#).
  - Ensuring that individuals with disabilities have an equal opportunity to participate is a commitment by UH as indicated in the [Voluntary Resolution Agreement](#) (VRA).
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## References

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# Appendix A: Accessibility Checklist

For more information, review the [Accessibility at UH](#) website.

## 1. Text-based content is accessible.

- There is enough contrast between text and background for the content to be easily viewed.
- Flashing and blinking text are avoided.
- A sans-serif font with a standard size of at least 12 pt is used.
- All text content (including PDF documents or any text contained within an image) is readable by assistive technology.
- Additional forms of text emphasis are also used (e.g., bold, italics) in combination if color is used as a form of emphasis.
- Avoid using underline for emphasis unless the text is a descriptive link.
- Hyperlinked text is both descriptive and meaningful, avoiding the use of "click here."

## 2. Course images (e.g. photos, graphics, icons, logos, etc.) are accessible.

- Images include alternative (alt) text with detailed descriptions.
- Text, graphics, and images are designed to be comprehensible even without color.

## 3. Multimedia (i.e., video, images, audio, and animation) are accessible.

- A text equivalent for every non-text element is provided (alternative text, subtitles, captions, transcripts, etc.), and audio descriptions are provided for video-only content.
- Navigation controls and user settings are enabled/provided.

## 4. Tables are accessible.

- Tables are accompanied by a title and summary description.
- Table header rows and columns are assigned.
- Tables should only be utilized when appropriate, and not for the sole purpose of visual layout.
- Avoid merging table cells.
- Avoid empty table cells.

## 5. Slides are accessible.

- Slideshows use a predefined slide layout and include unique slide titles.
- For all slideshows, there are simple, non-automatic transitions between slides.

## Appendix B: Terms and Definitions<sup>3</sup>

**Active learning** - Any instructional method that engages students in the learning process, typically requiring them to perform meaningful activities and to think about what they are doing (Prince, 2004).

**Assessments** - Instruments that evaluate students' learning and understanding in order to provide accurate feedback (Sievertsen, 2023).

**Chunk** - To group small pieces of information into sets to make them more memorable (Méndez-Carbajo & Wolla, 2019).

**Experiential learning** - Exercises or activities that involve students in the learning process through life experience (Kolb & Kolb, 2017).

**Hō'ike** - 'Ōlelo Hawai'i (Hawaiian language) term selected to represent Standard 4 - Assessment and Measurement. The applied definition of the term is to show, exhibit, or display ([Wehewehe Wikiwiki](#), 1986).

**Kaulike** - 'Ōlelo Hawai'i (Hawaiian language) term selected to represent Standard 6 - Accessibility and Usability. The applied definition of the term is equality, equity, treat fairly and impartially ([Wehewehe Wikiwiki](#), 1986).

**Instructional materials** - The content in a course can include videos, presentations, animations, educational games, online articles, and digitized material from traditional print texts (Rice & Ortiz, 2021).

**Learning activities** - Physical and mental activities that students perform that support the achievement of learning objectives (Nofrion & Wijayanto, 2018).

**Learning objectives/outcomes** - Statements that describe, in measurable terms, what a student should know or be able to do after successfully completing a lesson (Sana, et al.; Schoepp, 2019).<sup>4</sup>

**Ho'olauna** - 'Ōlelo Hawai'i (Hawaiian language) term selected to represent Standard 1 Course Overview and Introduction. The applied definition of the term is "to give introduction to" ([Wehewehe Wikiwiki](#), 1986).

**Papahana** - 'Ōlelo Hawai'i (Hawaiian language) term selected to represent Standard 2 - Content Presentation and Organization. The applied definition of the term is a project or plan ([Wehewehe Wikiwiki](#), 1986).

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<sup>3</sup> The sources used for terms and definitions are located in [References](#).

<sup>4</sup> There are many varied definitions for learning objectives, outcomes, goals, etc. However, for purposes of this document, the terms objectives and outcomes will be used interchangeably to encompass both definitions.

**Pa‘e‘e** - ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i (Hawaiian language) term selected to represent Standard 5 - Course Technology. The applied definition of the term is “on-line, i.e. describing the state of an electronic device ready to receive data, connected to a computer network, or accessible by means of a computer or computer network” ([Wehewehe Wikiwiki](#), 1986).

**Pilina** - ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i (Hawaiian language) term selected to represent Standard 3 - Learner Engagement and Interaction. The applied definition of the term is relationship, union, connection ([Wehewehe Wikiwiki](#), 1986).

**Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI)** - Meaningful interactivity between instructors and students that is "predictable and scheduled," and provides direct instruction, feedback, responses to questions, and/or the facilitation of group discussions or other instructional activities (ACCJC, 2024; Davis & Kerensky. 2023).

## Appendix C: Credits

The following two sets of globally recognized standards for online education were referenced when creating the UH Quality Online Standards.

1. [Quality Matters Higher Education Rubric Standards](#) (QM)
2. [SUNY Online Course Quality Review Rubric](#) (OSCQR)

Mahalo nui to the following UH Instructional Design Professional Learning Community (PLC) members who contributed to these standards.

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