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UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT

Office of Continuing and Professional Education

Contents

This guide outlines quality standards and design recommendations for noncredit short courses. It also outlines the submission process to the Office of Continuing and Professional Education to set-up noncredit course registration using Genius, a front-end student information system, to allow learners to register for noncredit courses without a UConn NetID.

Quality Standards of Online Non-credit Courses

Using the [Quality Matters CPE Rubric](#), all noncredit course development should consider each of the following areas and include them, when and where appropriate in courses as dictated by course content and learner needs.

The eight general standards to include in a noncredit course are:

1. Course Overview and Introduction

2. Learning Objectives (Competencies)

3. Assessment and measurement to reinforce the learning and for self-evaluation on learning progress

4. Instructional materials that support learner achievement of learning objectives with the inclusion of various modalities in content presentation to support learning

5. Course activities and learner interaction to engage the learner and promote content understanding toward a goal of reaching expected learning outcomes

6. Use of technology that provides ease of accessibility and encourages learner engagement through active learning

7. Learner support for technical assistance

8. Accessibility and usability by providing alternative opportunities for diverse learners to access course materials and ensuring ease of use through course design and technology

For additional detail, review the [Quality Matters Standards](#) for continuing and professional education, to align course development with these best practices.

Hallmarks of Well-designed Noncredit Courses

Based on a high-level review of noncredit offerings from universities and MOOC providers, there is agreement that the most successful noncredit courses for professional development are typically about 4 weeks in duration. This helps promote learner motivation, engagement and course completion. If a series of courses are offered that is part of a larger program, or one that may award a certificate of completion or micro credential, the duration may be longer.[i]
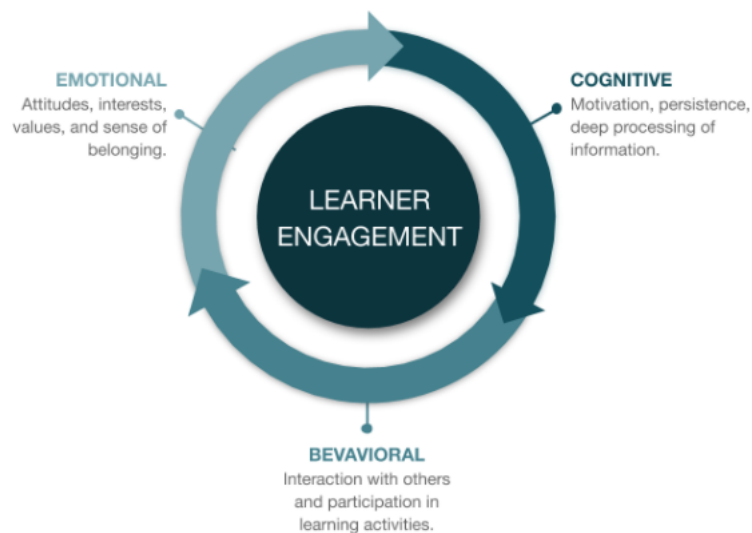
Noncredit course offerings are often self-directed and non-facilitated, so it is important to design courses that encourage learners to work virtually with others through online discussions. Also, including supplemental reading materials and providing both knowledge checks and graded assessments, can

support learners' in their individual work. When presenting course content, it should be straightforward, simple and easy to understand.

Design Recommendations

To ensure learner engagement and learner achievement of stated learning goals, the best course design is a multimedia approach. Adult learners learn best through interactivity, emotional interest, and setting context of how content relates to them. The graphic below identifies these areas and how to target each one.[ii]

Factors and Indicators of Learner Engagement *(Figure 1)*

EMOTIONAL
Attitudes, interests, values, and sense of belonging.

COGNITIVE
Motivation, persistence, deep processing of information.

LEARNER ENGAGEMENT

BEVAVIORAL
Interaction with others and participation in learning activities.

SOURCE: *Computer-based technology and student engagement: a critical review of the literature,* Laura A. Schindler, Gary J. Burkholder, Osama A. Morad & Craig Marsh, October 02, 2017.

When developing an online noncredit course, the focus should be to share ideas and information in different ways that support learners to be self-directed in their learning and to encourage exploration of content. This means presenting content through brief summaries, basic simulations when appropriate, relevant articles, and videos. The key is to ensure a variety of content delivery to gain learner attention, hold interest, and promote the learning process.

Additional resources and links can be provided to support the learner who is interested in delving deeper into the course content. Noncredit courses typically require a learner commitment of ~3-5 hours per week to remain engaged over a period of 4-6 weeks, dependent on course content and delivery modalities

Submitting a Noncredit Course to OCPE

To ensure noncredit course submission fully provides all the information needed to summarize a new course, faculty should complete the intake from on the OCPE website or reach out directly by email to: ruth.kustoff@uconn.edu . Following the course submission, faculty will be contacted (within 2 business days) to schedule a follow up discussion related to course development and university quality standards for noncredit course offerings.

The following information is the minimum required to create a course thumbnail for course registration on the Genius catalog page:

- Course(s) title
- Course Start and end date
- Course duration (# of weeks)
- Estimated number of learner contact hours expected per week
- Course fee (if applicable)
- Course summary - up to 300 words
- Course image as jpg or png 300x200 – see template for size specifications (on OCPE website)
    - When naming image do not use symbols, abbreviations or dashes
- List of course instructor(s)

Quality Review of Noncredit Courses Using Genius

To ensure high quality standards of all noncredit offerings and to check course information and course links, prior to course launch, OCPE will complete a review of:

- Registration instructions to learners including all links to Genius
- A new noncredit course on Blackboard to ensure it meets quality standards and requirements. This includes:
    - Clearly stated and written learning objectives
    - Clear audio – no background noise
    - No long breaks in audio
    - Clearly written and legible slides
    - Closed captions that have been reviewed and edited (CETL can support creation of closed captioning if needed)
    - A course introduction – either written, audio or video that includes:
        - Length of each module – or video presentation
        - Seat time of how much a learner can expect to dedicate to completing self-directed learning, such as, activities, readings, exercises, assignments
        - Projected total learning time of video presentations and seat time

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[i] Micro-credentials can be a certificate of completion for a series of noncredit courses and in some cases, a micro-credential awards course credit that can be used toward a graduate certificate or degree.
[ii] https://www.lambdasolutions.net/blog/andragogy-secret-how-to-use-adult-learning-theory-to-drive-ld-engagement-success