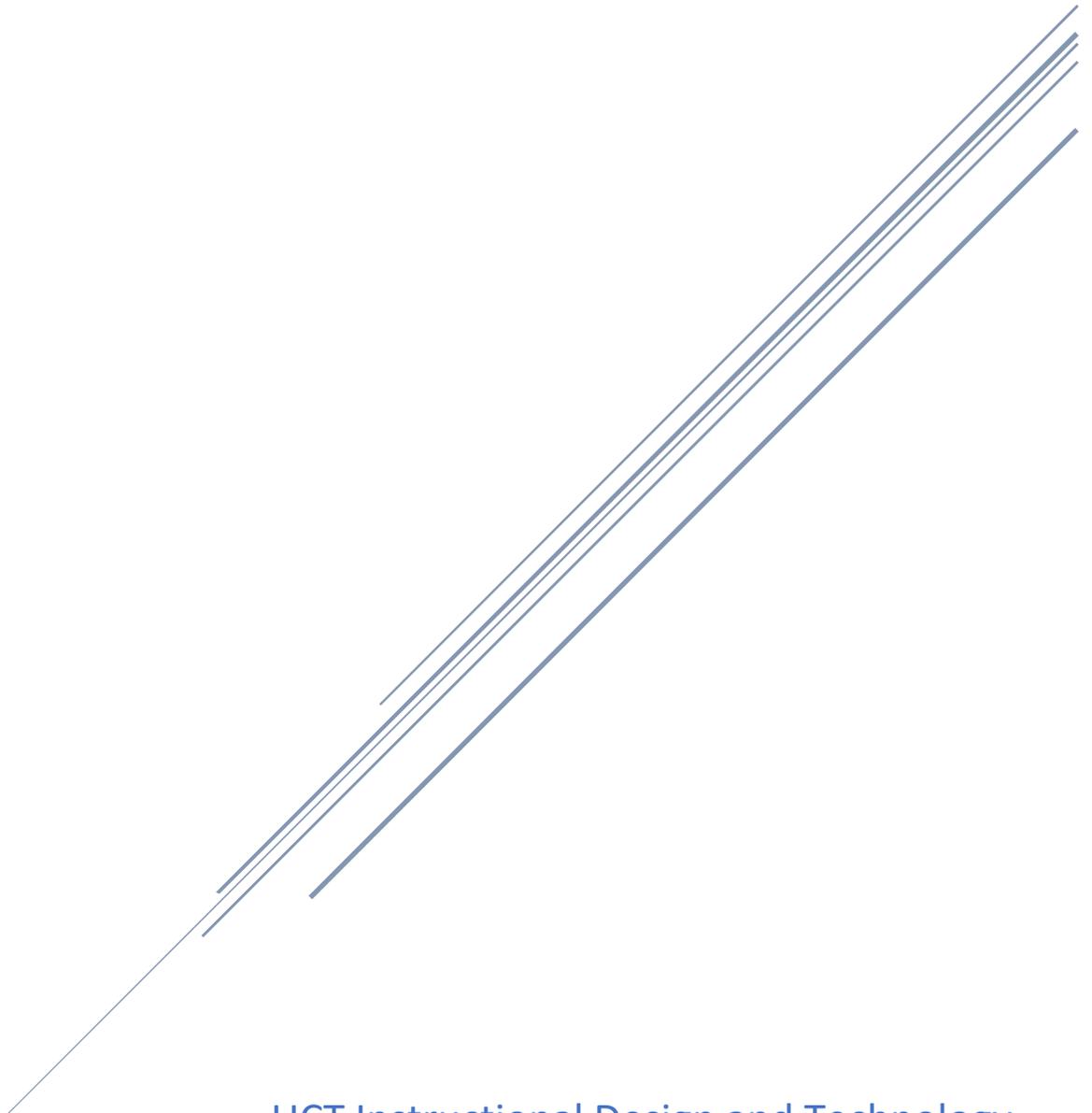


FULLY ONLINE COURSE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT GUIDE



UCT Instructional Design and Technology
Revised, October 1, 2020

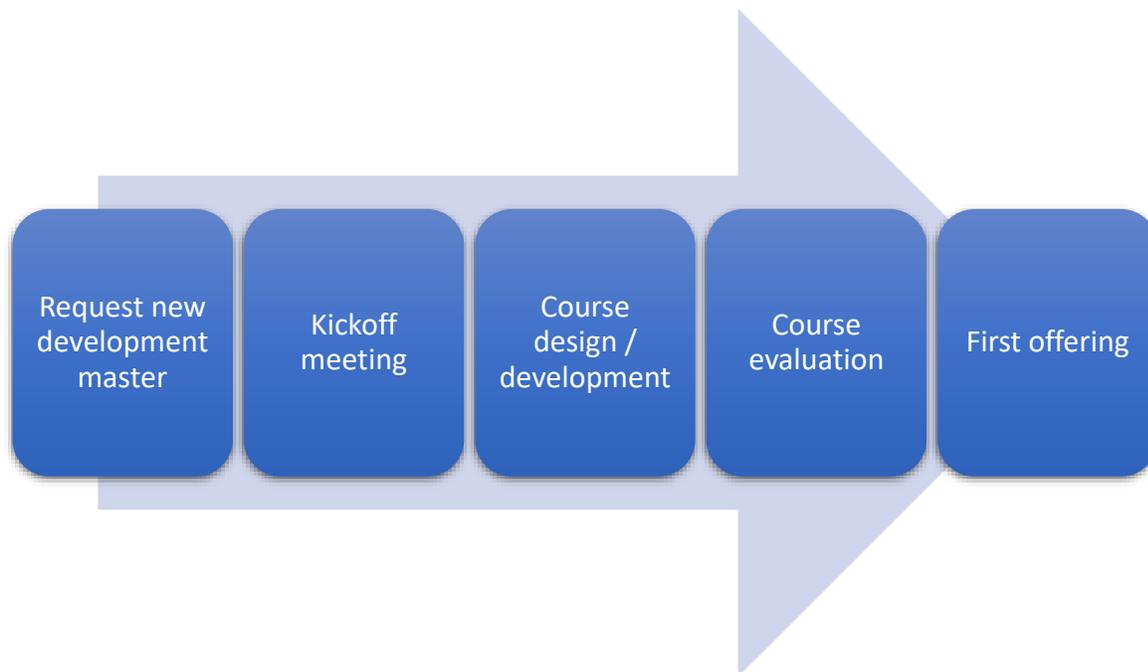
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This Fully Online Course Design and Development Guide provides critical information for instructors about every aspect on the instructional design, instructional development, and evaluation of a new fully online credit course at UHCL. The process of preparing a new online course goes beyond simply modifying materials and activities from the face-to-face version of the course and putting those into Blackboard. Because asynchronous fully online delivery often places additional burdens on both faculty and students, online courses must be carefully planned and organized almost as though it was for an entirely new course. Courses that are haphazardly developed, or even developed "on the fly," can cause tremendous confusion and frustration for students, which in turn can hamper student academic performance and make the teaching and learning process a struggle for everyone involved. The information in this guide is intended to serve as guide or "roadmap" to the process of requesting, designing, developing, and evaluating a new online course, ideally leading to an exceptional new online class.

Online Course Process Overview

The chart below represents, in the simplest terms, the process of getting from the course request through teaching the new course for the first time.



A more detailed representation of the process is as follows:

Online Course Request

The process begins when the developing instructor uses the [Request Development of New Fully Online Course form](#). That request is automatically routed to UCT's Instructional Design and Technology team and assigned to a member of our instructional design staff. A new blank development master shell is created in Blackboard and your designated instructional designer will contact you to schedule the course design and development kickoff meeting.

The university maintains an [Online Course Development Calendar](#) that contains the deadlines by which new fully online course requests must be submitted for the specific delivery semester in which you plan

to teach the course for the first time. Faculty should submit development requests 9-12 months before the expected delivery semester and should plan to have the course completed and submitted for evaluation and approval 3-4 months before the course will be taught online for the first time. For information about the deadlines for course requests and for Minimum Standards Review submissions, please feel free to watch our short video presentation, [Understanding the Course Development Calendar](#).

Course Design/Development Kickoff Meeting

Once an instructional designer has been assigned to your course design and development project, (s)he will schedule a face-to-face or virtual kickoff meeting to get the process underway. Participants in this meeting will include you, your designated instructional designer, and (pending availability) a faculty associate, and a library associate, who represent the multi-faceted support model for online course development at UHCL. This support team will assist you throughout the process as described below:

- **Designated Instructional Designer (ID)** - the role of your assigned ID can vary to suit your needs and preferences. At a minimum, we are required to host the kickoff meeting, assist with keeping the design/development project on schedule, and provide guidance at the end of the development to prepare the course for Minimum Standards Review. When used to the full extent of our services, your ID can provide:
 - regular consulting, review, and advising throughout the project,
 - assistance in the design/development of activities, assessments, and instructional content,
 - review/feedback regarding alignment between learning outcomes and assessment,
 - recommendations for appropriate use of technology tools that support the use of Blackboard,
 - resources and recommendations to support learner engagement and active learning throughout the course, and more.
- **Faculty Associate** - the faculty associate is a UHCL faculty member who has experience designing, developing, and teaching online courses, and who has volunteered to provide peer-to-peer advice and assistance during the design/development process and in preparing for the Minimum Standards Review.
- **Library Associate** - each library associate is a full-time member of the library's professional staff who has volunteered to provide support and consultations throughout the design/development process regarding services available through the library (e.g., OER, online research guides, instructional materials available from the library, etc.) to support your online teaching and student learning.

During this initial meeting, your instructional designer will gather information from you about your course, previous experience developing and teaching online, your teaching preferences, etc. They will also review the course design and development process, the minimum standards criteria, and the roles and responsibilities of each member of the support team. By the end of the kickoff meeting, you will have already set a deadline for the first section (sprint) of the design/development process.

Course Design and Development

Our team uses a modified Agile course design process in place of a traditional ADDIE model of instructional design. This approach provides greater flexibility during the design/development process,

enabling you to design and develop a portion of the course, and then review and modify that section before moving on to the next. At any point during the design/development process, you have the flexibility to reevaluate and revise your course.

As shown in the following list, the Agile course design/development process includes a number of stages, the exact number of which varies depending upon the nature of your particular course.

- **Sprint 1** - After the kickoff meeting (discussed previously), the instructor develops a draft syllabus and schedule and completes the Instructional Plan document, in which they outline the organizational structure for the course, the learning outcomes for each section of instruction, as well as all readings, other instructional materials, activities, assignments, and assessments for each section of the course. The Instructional Plan (IP), when finalized, will serve as the foundation for the rest of the project.
- **Sprints 2+ (number of sprints will vary, depending on the course)** - Based on the IP, the instructor and ID will set a tentative schedule for the design/development of the course materials, activities, and assessments. During each sprint, an agreed-upon portion of the course will be completed and deployed in the Blackboard development shell, with the instructor identifying, creating, and providing materials to the ID. The ID will provide consulting and related support to assist in the creation of instructional content and to support deploying materials into Blackboard.
- **Pre-Review and ID Courtesy Review** - Once the entire course has been developed and all contents, activities, and assessments are in the Blackboard shell, it's time to prepare for the university's required Minimum Standards Review (formerly known as Quality Assurance, or QA). In preparation for the official review, the developing instructor and faculty associate will collaborate to conduct a self- and peer-review of the completed course, using the same checklist that will be used for the official review. Based on the outcome of this process, final changes/adjustments may be made to the master course. Once the instructor notifies their ID that the course is ready, the ID will perform a final courtesy review and offer feedback on any issues that may present an issue during the Minimum Standards Review.
- **Minimum Standards Review and Course Approval** - By the time that a new course has been subject to a thorough self/peer review and the ID courtesy review, the actual Minimum Standards Review should be a formality. During the official review, an ID who did not work on the new course will review the master based on the Minimum Standards Review checklist/criteria. Assuming that the course meets or exceeds minimum standards, the new master will be approved for instructional use, added to the university's inventory of approved fully online courses, and converted into a production master course, the contents of which may then be used to teach in any subsequent semester.
- **Initial Offering Evaluation/Revision** - Although not formally a part of the course design/development process, your designated ID will touch base with you 1-2 times during the semester in which you first teach the new course, and again after that semester ends. These informal meetings will provide an opportunity to discuss what aspects of the course are working well for you and your students and which areas may need further adjustment. Your ID will work with you throughout this initial offering period to make modifications needed for the next time you teach the class.

Where Do Associates Fit into the Project?

Agile Stage	Faculty Associate	Library Associate
Start/Kickoff	Attend kickoff meeting and provide insight based on previous design and development experience.	[Optional, but invited to attend] Briefly describe the types of resources and services that the library can provide.
Instructional Plan	Interact with project team and consult with developing instructor regarding objectives, organization, materials, activities, and assessment options. Serve as a peer reviewer to provide feedback/recommendations.	Once the IP nears completion, review the draft plan and offer suggestions and recommendations regarding library resources and services that the instructor may want to consider using.
Design/Development Sprints	Via emails, calls, etc., answer questions, provide advice and encouragement, review new materials and provide constructive feedback.	Independently, or through the project team, touch base with the developing instructor to see if they would like any assistance with library resources and services.
Evaluation/Approval	Host a self- and peer review session with the instructor to evaluate the course against the university's minimum standards checklist.	Review the completed course to determine whether any additional resources or services may be of value.

Minimum Standards Review Checklist

The Minimum Standards Review Checklist ([Appendix A](#)) is designed to evaluate the course on non-content considerations that support students in accessing, navigating, and successfully completing the course, supported by (1) instructor-student, student-student, and student-content interaction throughout the course, (2) meaningful, engaging, and frequent activities and assignments with timely and useful corrective feedback, and (3) assessments that are clearly aligned with instructional outcomes and that promote and assess applied, higher order thinking. The checklist is divided into the following sections:

- Syllabus Elements
- University Policies (within the Syllabus)
- Course Structure
- Course Assignments
- Content Accessibility (courses are not currently required to meet accessibility criteria; however, designing courses with proactive accessibility in mind is strongly recommended)

As discussed earlier in this document, the Minimum Standards Review Checklist is used in the following stages of new online course design/development:

- Instructor and Faculty Associate Self-/Peer-Review
- Instructional Designer (ID) Courtesy Review
- Official UHCL Minimum Standards Review

However, it is recommended that you review the checklist early and often throughout the design and development of your course to ensure that the minimum standards are addressed throughout that process, rather than being "tacked on" at the end.

Accessibility

UHCL is committed to ensuring that all courses, online and otherwise, reflect universal accessibility in their design and in their instructional materials, activities, and assessments. Effective in the Fall 2020 semester, all Blackboard shells will have Blackboard Ally activated to provide information to instructors about whether or not their courses and materials are accessible and, if not, to offer guidance on how to fix those problems. Your Instructional Designer can assist you in how to interpret and use Ally as you develop your new course. In addition, the staff of UHCL's [Accessibility Support Center](#) can provide training and support on how to create accessible Word documents, PDF files, PowerPoint slide decks, and audio/video contents.

Recommendations for Effective Online Lessons/Units/Modules

There is no "one size fits all" approach to creating the "perfect" online course. However, research indicates that effective online courses share a number of commonalities, which are discussed below:

Clear and Consistent Organizational Structure

- Course menu should contain fewer than twelve items, to limit the amount of scrolling/searching through the menu options.
- For each instructional section, there should be prominent and clear information about assignments, activities, and expectations for students (e.g., "to do" list, module overview).
- The folder structure within the course content area(s) should enable students to quickly locate everything that they need to complete each section of the course (week, unit, lesson, etc.).
- Instructional sections should follow the same layout, design, and flow from one to another.
- All Blackboard-native items should use a consistent sans serif font/typeface and size throughout and should be free from an abundance of different colors, underlining, and other distractions.

Sense of Instructor "Presence" Throughout the Course

- There should be a prominent instructor welcome and introduction, including an overview of the course design/layout.
- There should be regular, multiple communications each week throughout the course (e.g., the Announcements tool with email option is a quick and easy way to send reminders, share new information, etc.).
- There should be clear expectations provided to students about how soon you will reply to emails, provide grades/feedback on activities/assignments, etc.

- There should be feedback that is more than just a numerical or letter grade (the insert audio or video feedback option when grading in Blackboard is a quick and easy way to provide short, individualized messages to students about their grade).

Learning Objectives and Instructional Alignment

- Don't just copy/paste from the textbook/PowerPoints; if there are ten objectives listed in the text, but you are only going to assess students over five of them, then just post those five.
- Restate objectives from publishers, etc. in terms that make sense to students.
- Explain to students how they can use learning outcomes to self-assess their progress as they study and work their way through each section of the course.
- Ensure that most activities/assignments/assessments align with the stated objectives for that section of the course, especially "big ticket" assessments.

Engaging Activities/Assignments

- Provide multiple, shorter activities in each unit, lesson, etc. that enable students to demonstrate their understanding of new concepts, knowledge, and skills in multiple ways.
- If information is important enough to be required reading/watching in the course, there should be an activity that enables/requires students to use that information and/or to demonstrate that they have done so.
- Provide timely and meaningful feedback to activities and assignments that informs students about areas of misunderstanding and encourages them to review and correct before moving onto to the next lesson.
- When possible, provide students with opportunities to interact with their classmates in activities/assignments and to demonstrate understanding in multiple means (e.g., paper, video, poster).

Regular, Meaningful Feedback on Performance

- Significant assessments (e.g., term paper, project) should include significant feedback.
- Feedback on smaller activities can be made in announcements, emails, videos to the class as an overview of areas of strength/weakness throughout the class with corrective advice for improvement.
- Students should have multiple opportunities to understand how they are performing and about areas of misunderstanding that they can correct BEFORE the first mid-term or major assignment.

Conclusion

On behalf of UCT's Instructional Design and Technology team, we hope that this guide will be of use to you as you begin planning for your new fully online courses. At any time, please feel free to contact your designated Instructional Designer with any questions or concerns. If you aren't sure how to reach your ID, contact the Support Center to have a help ticket created and assigned to our team. You may reach the Support Center by email (supportcenter@uhcl.edu) or by telephone (281.283.2828).

Appendix A. Minimum Standards Review Checklist

Course Rubric/Number/Name: ABCD #### / Title

Faculty Name: First Last

Faculty Email: username@uhcl.edu

Reviewed by: First Last

Date: ##/##/2020

	Yes	No	Comments/Suggestions
SYLLABUS:			
1. Is the course syllabus prominently displayed in the course and does it meet the minimum requirements for its designated college (e.g., BUS, COE, CSE, HSH)?			
2. Does the syllabus specify the course delivery mode as fully online?			
3. Does it state the required materials such as texts or software?			
4. Are any technical skills required for the course clearly stated on the syllabus?			
5. Is there a policy stated about student lack of participation or non-communication?			
6. Does the instructor list their policies on late work?			
7. Does the instructor list their policies on incompletes?			
8. Does the syllabus clearly state the frequency and context of instructor-to-student interaction?			
9. Does the instructor list their policies on grading/grading scales?			
10. Does the instructor explain how the student receives feedback on their assignments regarding to turn-around time for grade postings and communication?			
11. Does the instructor state the minimum amount of time (such as hours per week) that students could expect to spend on the course and activities to be successful?			

	Yes	No	Comments/Suggestions
12. If synchronous communication is required, is the time and date clearly stated?			
13. BUS ONLY: Does the instructor provide information about test proctoring (Proctor U)?			
SYLLABUS/UNIVERSITY POLICIES			
14. Does the instructor state their policy concerning academic honesty and cheating?			
15. Is the last drop date listed for the semester, expressed EITHER as a specific date (in the syllabus OR schedule) OR provided as a link to the given semester's calendar page?			
16. Does the instructor state their willingness to accommodate students with disabilities?			
COURSE STRUCTURE			
17a. BUS ONLY: Is the Academic Honesty Resources folder and quiz in course?			
17b. BUS ONLY: Is content adaptively released base on Academic Honesty Pledge Quiz?			
18. Is there an instructor introduction?			
19. Are the tools needed to support student-teacher interaction (in reference to item #8, above) present within the course?			
20. Are there activities that encourage students to communicate with each other, including at a minimum, a student introductory activity (e.g., discussion, blog)?			
21. Is there a course calendar or schedule of activities and assignments clearly provided in the course, EITHER within the syllabus OR as a separate document?			

	Yes	No	Comments/Suggestions
22. If the use of online resources outside of Blackboard (e.g., library, web sites, software) are required, are links to those resources provided within the course?			
23. Is the course organized in a way that promotes easy student navigation in the course (e.g., use of folder structure in weeks, units, modules, or other “chunked” segments)?			
24. Does each instructional section have learning objectives written from the student perspective?			
25. Does each instructional section list the activities and assignments that go with it?			
26. Do all course links, videos, and other multimedia contents function properly (including opening in a new window)?			
27. Are there links provided for students to quickly access UHCL academic (either a left menu link or the “Academic Support” item on a content page) and technical support?			
28. Is there a place for the student to evaluate the course and their satisfaction in it? BUS: Is there a prominent statement that the course evaluation link will be emailed to students by BUS?			
ASSIGNMENTS:			
29. Are the directions to the assignments and activities posted easy to understand and located within proximity of the tool being used (e.g., with the drop box, in the discussion instructions)?			
30. Does the instructor list any expectations or provide instructions about how to submit assignments,			

	Yes	No	Comments/Suggestions
uploading files, or posting on the bulletin board?			
31. Does the instructor specify how activities, assessments, and assignments will be graded, OR provide a rubric?			

The following items are checked by the Instructional Design Team when they assist with a new course. Although **these items are NOT required for Minimum Standard Review (MSR) approval**, we do strongly recommend that faculty consider taking steps to make their courses as accessible as possible during course development, rather than waiting until they receive a notice that they have a student requiring accommodation before implementing such criteria. For additional support and guidance regarding accessibility, faculty are advised to contact UHCL's Accessibility Support Center (formerly Disability Services).

ACCESSIBILITY (RECOMMENDED):	Yes	No	Comments/Suggestions
<p>A01. Does text within Blackboard items, instructions, discussions, etc. meet common accessibility standards?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Text is consistent throughout the course and provided in Arial or Verdana fonts for maximum readability. ▪ Text is rendered consistently as a dark font color on a light background. ▪ The number of fonts and colors for text throughout course is kept to a minimum. ▪ Use of all CAPS, bold, italics, colored, or centrally aligned text is kept to minimum (not used for entire paragraphs or multiple sequential sentences). ▪ Words are not underlined, as screen readers will interpret those words as navigation links. 			<p>NOTE: The IDT Team is now using Blackboard Ally to determine the presence of accessibility issues in new online courses. In addition, IDs check the Syllabus and Schedule documents for accessibility. Faculty should contact UHCL's Accessibility Support Center (formerly Disability Services) to resolve any accessibility issues referenced in this report for items other than the Syllabus and Schedule.</p>
A02. Do all documents within Blackboard (e.g., Word, PowerPoint, PDF) meet common accessibility standards?			

ACCESSIBILITY (RECOMMENDED):	Yes	No	Comments/Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use of style sheets and standard heading levels is used to organize document contents. ▪ Word processing documents are free of text boxes. ▪ Alt text descriptions are provided for ALL graphs/charts, tables and images within documents. NOTE: Decorative images need an alt tag identifying them as such, but do not require long descriptions. ▪ Tables contain header rows and, if exceeding one page in length, utilize repeating header rows. ▪ All PowerPoint contents on a slide appears when “Outline” view is in use. ▪ PowerPoint slides each have a unique title. ▪ Narrated PowerPoint presentations, unless rendered and deployed as MP4 videos (with captions or transcripts), are not used. 			
A03. When using charts, either individually or within documents and presentations, are textures/patterns used (rather than color alone) to distinguish between pieces of information?			
A04. Are scanned PDF articles accessible via the Read Out Loud feature?			
A05. Are all links to web resources descriptive, rather than using the URL address or “Click here” as link text?			
A06. Are all web links and files in Blackboard are set to open in a new window?			

ACCESSIBILITY (RECOMMENDED):	Yes	No	Comments/Suggestions
A07. Are all images used clear and un-stretched, and supported with alternate text (alt tags)?			
A08. Is the course free of animated and blinking images and/or text?			
<p>A09. Are all video contents are optimized for accessibility and ease of navigation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Video files are not directly uploaded into Blackboard as files. Instead, they are either linked from UHCL’s streaming media server as embedded media or are deployed as links from web-based sources (e.g., YouTube, TEDTalks). ▪ The instructor has obtained copyright owner permission to deploy video contents that were not created by them and/or are not in the public domain. ▪ Videos are clear and contain detailed descriptions of images, charts, demonstrations and slides. Closed captioning or a transcript file is provided in the course for each video. 			
<p>A10. Are all audio contents are optimized for accessibility and ease of navigation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Audio files are not directly uploaded into Blackboard as files. Instead, they are either linked from UHCL’s streaming media server as embedded media or are deployed as links from web-based sources (e.g., YouTube, TEDTalks). ▪ The instructor has obtained copyright owner permission to deploy audio contents that were not created by them and/or are not in the public domain. 			

ACCESSIBILITY (RECOMMENDED):	Yes	No	Comments/Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Audio contents are free of background noise or distortion. ▪ A transcript file is provided in the course for each audio. 			
<p>A11. If synchronous web conference sessions are used, does the course contain a clear explanation regarding when and in what format accessible transcripts of those sessions will be provided to students?</p>			

Appendix B. Sample Instructional Plan

Even when developing a new online course based on existing face-to-face or hybrid/blended Blackboard course contents, the design/development process should begin with the completion of an Instructional Plan document for the new course. This step serves several purposes:

1. encourages the faculty member to think through how the fully online version of their course should flow and whether there are delivery-specific adjustments that need to be made to optimize fully online instruction, as opposed to how they have previously taught the course face-to-face/hybrid in the past;
2. provides a scope/sequence for the design/development process, so that the instructional designer can assist in setting a reasonable design/development schedule for the entire project; and
3. Provides information that can be used by the library associate and/or faculty associate to guide their advice and recommendations to the developing instructor.

Shown below is a truncated sample Instructional Plan, showing the information for the first few weeks/units of a fully online course being developed.

	Topic	Learning Objectives	Instructional Events
1	Introduction, Overview, Universal Design, and Introduction to Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the assistive technology continuum and give examples at each point on the continuum. • Differentiate between assistive technology devices and assistive technology services. • Understand how assistive technology helps students with disabilities gain access to the curriculum. • Access resources that support the use of assistive technology for students with disabilities. • Be able to apply the principles of Universal Design for Learning to the components of a curriculum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the Introduction to Accessibility resources in the Module 01 folder • Complete online module, Assistive Technology: An Overview (~ 2 hours) • Complete online module, Universal Design for Learning: Creating a Learning Environment that Challenges and Engages All Students (~ 2 hours) • Read Chapter 1, Introduction to Assistive Technology • Read Chapter 4, Technology to Support Universal Design for Learning and Differentiated Instruction • Introductions Discussion • Syllabus Quiz • Module 01 Quiz • Module 01 Exit Survey • [Optional] Module 01 Web Conference