

# **Suggested Guidelines for the Development and Peer Review of Online Distance Learning Courses**

A Supplement to  
Distance Learning:  
A Policy Handbook for  
Schools/Divisions/Districts

Manitoba  
Education,  
Training  
and Youth

Éducation,  
Formation professionnelle  
et Jeunesse  
Manitoba



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***SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR  
THE DEVELOPMENT AND PEER  
REVIEW OF ONLINE DISTANCE  
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# INTRODUCTION

School divisions/districts planning to develop online distance learning courses are encouraged to form development teams to work together in an ongoing way to

- develop the course materials
- identify appropriate learning resources
- review and revise learning materials continually as they are developed

Experience has shown that working as a team results in a more satisfying experience for the developer(s) than working in isolation. An added benefit is the professional learning opportunities inherent in this process for all members of the development team.

A peer review process is an important component of any distance learning course development model. The process is intended to ensure that distance learning courses

- are consistent with recognized curricula and instructional design principles
- are pedagogically sound and reflect best practices of learning, teaching, and assessment

The peer review process is formative and consists of

1. periodic peer review sessions
2. sign-off by all members of the peer review team for the acceptance of the distance learning course

## **Cycles within the Development Process**

The process of developing distance learning courses consists of two cycles:

1. **Content development cycle:** The content development process, undertaken by the content development team, is characterized by an iterative cycle of creation, review, revision, and editing of content, repeated on a frequency determined by the development team (e.g., after each lesson or series of lessons).
2. **Peer review cycle:** Peer review teams will use a consensus approach in reviewing course content and structure, using the Formative Peer Review Criteria that follow.

# FORMATIVE PEER REVIEW CRITERIA

## Formative Peer Review of Online Distance Learning Course

Please indicate your assessment of the course content and structure by placing a check mark opposite each criterion listed below. Use additional pages to make specific recommendations or comments that may be of value to the course developer.

**Course title:** \_\_\_\_\_

Peer Review Criteria		
A. Overall Considerations	Meets Expectations	Does Not Meet Expectations
1. The course takes students' backgrounds, ability levels, and expectations into account.		
2. The course follows a modular design.		
3. Students are given explicit instructions on how to proceed.		
4. The language, style, tone, and voice are appropriate for the target audience.		
5. Instructions are straightforward and easy to understand.		
6. The readability of the course is consistent.		
7. Copyrighted material is identified.		
8. Online course:		
a. Content is appropriately "chunked" (divided) for onscreen presentation.		
b. Students have opportunities to interact with content.		

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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<b>C. Module: Body</b>	<b>Meets Expectations</b>	<b>Does Not Meet Expectations</b>
1. Each section includes a brief introduction that relates to the previous section and to the entire module.		
<b>Content</b>		
2. Learning outcomes are stated in concise terms that students can understand.		
3. Copyrighted material is identified.		
4. Content is appropriate to students' ability levels.		
5. Content is accurate, relevant, and current.		
6. Content addresses learning outcomes.		
7. Content is divided into suitable learning "chunks."		
8. Content involves resource-based learning.		
9. Content is appropriate to students' characteristics and experiences.		
10. Content is sequenced appropriately and logically.		
11. Content is free of cultural, racial, religious, sexual, and age biases.		
12. Content integrates the four foundation skill areas of literacy and communication, problem solving, human relations, and technology.		
13. Various media are integrated into the appropriate portion of the module (i.e., overview, body, conclusion).		
14. The media are suitable and interesting.		
15. Special features are included to aid learning (e.g., graphic aids, illustrations, maps, glossary).		
16. New terms are defined in context or in a glossary provided.		
17. The length of each section is appropriate to the priority of the learning outcomes and to the size or weight of the module.		

<b>C. Module: Body (continued)</b>	<b>Meets Expectations</b>	<b>Does Not Meet Expectations</b>
<b>Learning Strategies</b>		
18. Instructions and directions are clear.		
19. Students are given a choice of learning activities.		
20. A variety of appropriate learning activities are provided.		
21. Primary and follow-up learning activities are clearly distinguished.		
22. Learning activities vary in levels of difficulty.		
23. Learning activities facilitate students' active engagement in the learning process.		
24. Online course:		
a. Content includes appropriate links to external resources.		
b. Full (complete) solutions are provided for "homework" assignments.		
c. Tutorials on the use of new software are provided.		
d. Self-test opportunities are provided at appropriate points.		
e. Self-test items include comments for each distracter.		
f. Terms used in context are linked to the glossary.		

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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<b>E. Assignments and Tests</b>	<b>Meets Expectations</b>	<b>Does Not Meet Expectations</b>
1. The course offers a variety of appropriate assignments, directly relating to the learning outcomes stated in the module/section introductions.		
2. Instructions are clear.		
3. The number of assignments is reasonable.		
4. Assignments reflect the priority of learning outcomes.		
5. Assignments reflect the learning approach and methodology used in the course.		
6. The values for each question are clearly identified to assist students in gauging the amount of information needed.		
7. Students are provided with descriptive feedback based on specified criteria so that they can improve their learning.		
8. Online course:		
a. Diagrams for test items are constructed to allow reuse in other items.		
b. Students have opportunities to submit assignments via email.		
c. Test databases have categories corresponding to the module titles and provide a range of items (difficulty and question type) for each module.		
d. Test items provide clear instructions for answering questions and submitting completed work.		

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **SUMMATIVE EVALUATION AND SIGN-OFF FORM** ████████

### **Summative Peer Review of Online Distance Learning Course**

This form is to be completed by each member of the peer review team as the culminating activity of the peer review process. The list below consists of general review categories and assumes that a formative review process has been completed.

**Course title:** \_\_\_\_\_

Consider the following categories as part of your summative review of the course:

- congruence with approved curriculum
- course structure and instructional design
- writing style
- student assessment and evaluation
- learning resources
- copyright
- course developed in WebCT 3.0 or current Department-licensed software

Please identify your suggestions for improvement.

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#### **Sign-Off**

- I have reviewed the course and it is ready for field validation without any substantive changes.
- I have reviewed the course and substantive changes are required. My suggestions for changes have been communicated to the course developer.
- Once changes are made, I need to review the document again.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Reviewer's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date