

General Standard 5 --- Learner Interaction and Engagement

Forms of interaction incorporated in the course motivate students and promote learning.

SPECIFIC REVIEW STANDARDS	POINTS	YES	NO	NOTES
<p>5.1 The learning activities promote the achievement of the stated learning objectives.</p> <p>Alignment</p>	3			
<p>5.2 Learning activities provide opportunities for interaction that support active learning.</p>	3			
<p>5.3 The instructor's plan for classroom response time and feedback on assignments is clearly stated.</p>	3			
<p>5.4 The requirements for student interaction are clearly articulated.</p>	2			

General Standard 5: *Engaging students to become active learners contributes to the learning process and to student persistence.*

ANNOTATIONS

Alignment: Learning activities align with the course and module objectives of the course (see Standards 2.1 and 2.2) by engaging students in activities that directly contribute to the achievement of those objectives and integrating smoothly with the tools and media (Standard 6.1) that enable these activities.

The purpose of learning activities is to facilitate the student's achievement of the stated objectives.

The learning activities actively engage the learner with the course content. Learning activities are varied in order to provide reinforcement and mastery in multiple ways and to accommodate multiple learning styles. Activities may include reading assignments, student presentations, science labs, class discussions, case studies, role playing, simulation exercises, practice quizzes, tests, etc.

Examples of mismatches between activities and objectives:

1. The objective requires students to be able to deliver a persuasive speech, but the activities in the course do not include practice of that skill.
2. The objective is "Prepare each budget within a master budget and explain the importance of each in the overall budgeting process." The students review information about this objective in their texts and observe budgets worked out by the instructor, but they themselves produce only one of the several budgets.

Activities encourage students' engagement during learning through different types of interaction as appropriate to the course. Interactions are designed as activities to support the course objectives and may vary with the discipline, purpose, and level of the course. Reviewers should look for the purpose of the interactions and not just the number of opportunities for interaction.

Types of interaction include student-instructor, student-content, and student-student. Active learning involves students engaging by "doing" something, such as discovering, processing or applying concepts and information. Active learning implies guiding students to increasing levels of responsibility for their own learning.

Activities for student-instructor interaction might include an assignment or project submitted for instructor feedback; an opportunity for student-instructor discussion in a synchronous session or an asynchronous discussion board exchange; or a frequently-asked-questions (FAQ) discussion forum moderated by the instructor.

A clear statement of instructor responsibilities is an important component of an online or blended course. Students are better able to manage their course activities when the instructor has stated his or her timeframe for responding to student emails and discussion postings and lets students know in advance when they will receive feedback on assignments and when grades will be posted. By sharing this information, the instructor also deflects unrealistic student

Look for a clear statement of the instructor's expectations for student participation in required course interactions (frequency, length, timeliness, etc.). The statement helps students plan and manage their class participation and provides a basis for the instructor to evaluate student participation. The more specifically the expectations are explained, the easier it is for the student to meet the expectations. Clearly explaining the role of the instructor and expectations for interactions with the instructor and with other students is especially helpful to students from cultures in which deference to the instructor is customary and who may need encouragement to "speak up."

Blended Courses: In courses that use both the online and face-to-face settings, the learning activities that occur in these two settings are connected by a common thread or theme and are mutually reinforcing. The connection and reinforcement are made clear to students. For example, the different parts of a particular activity might be sequenced in an alternating way in online and face-to-face meetings of the course.

Special Situations: When course objectives are institutionally mandated, the reviewer should refer to module/unit objectives to assess Standard 5.1.

Activities for student-content interaction might include assigned reading from a text, article, or online resource, assigned completion of a workbook or online exercise, or a learning-how-to-learn activity.

Activities for student-student interaction might include assigned collaborative activities such as group discussions, small-group projects, group problem-solving assignments, or peer critiques.

Reviewers should look for opportunities for student-instructor interaction, student-content interaction, and, if appropriate to the course, student-student interaction. Refer to the Instructor Worksheet to determine whether or not opportunities for student-student interaction are appropriate to the course.

NOTE: Reviewers' evaluation of the types of interactions designed into the activities should be based on what is found to be the nature of the course and not on personal preferences. Students' learning environments usually are broader than a single course and may include informal networks that are beyond the scope of a QM review.

expectations of 24/7 service from the instructor. Frequently this information is conveyed in the syllabus or the "meet the instructor" message.

If it is necessary to alter the response-time standards during the course, the instructor is responsible for clearly communicating the adjustment to students.

Typically, general statements of student performance expectations are included in the course information page or syllabus. These general requirements may specify the nature of the required participation and expectations for frequency and quality of the student's interactions. More specific, task-related performance expectations may be included in the individual task description. The instructor may also provide rubrics detailing how student interactions are evaluated, including reading and responding to the instructor's and classmates' posts.