

# CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING ONLINE COURSES

Adapted from the “CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING ONLINE COURSES”  
 Southern Regional Education Board's (SREB) Educational Technology Cooperative  
<http://www.evalutech.sreb.org/criteria/online.asp>

Criteria	Florida Online Reading-Professional Development (FOR-PD) course
<b>General</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Course is accredited by a nationally- or state-recognized academic accrediting agency</li> </ul>	The FOR-PD course is approved by the Florida DOE for 60 inservice points and by participating universities for 3 credit hours.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Course is aligned to originating state’s academic standards and/or to national standards, with realignment to participant’s state standards guaranteed if necessary</li> </ul>	The course is aligned to the Florida DOE’s standards and meets competency 2 of the state reading endorsement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Course reviewed and endorsed by both the Local Education Agency (LEA) and the state Department of Education (DOE)</li> </ul>	The FOR-PD course is approved by the Florida DOE for 60 inservice points and by participating universities for 3 credit hours.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Course documentation (credit hours, LEA FTEs, certification renewal) determined by LEA and DOE</li> </ul>	The FOR-PD course is approved by the Florida DOE for 60 inservice points and by participating universities for 3 credit hours.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Technical requirements for student access are documented</li> </ul>	All technical requirements are documented on this page for potential participants: <a href="http://www.itrc.ucf.edu/forpd/register/overview.html#reqt">http://www.itrc.ucf.edu/forpd/register/overview.html#reqt</a>  This page also contains links that prepare potential participants for the technological

	aspects of online learning.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Minimum technology competencies for students are announced and assessed</li> </ul>	Announcements with links to assessments for minimum technology competencies are located here: <a href="http://www.itrc.ucf.edu/forpd/register/overview.html#reqt">http://www.itrc.ucf.edu/forpd/register/overview.html#reqt</a>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Access to learning resources (books, periodicals, etc.) is available equal to traditionally delivered course</li> </ul>	Access to learning resources surpasses those typically available in traditionally delivered courses. Each lesson contains extensive lists of resources and links to extensions which include periodicals and research conducted at reading organizations and centers. Examples of and manipulatives for users to apply are also readily available. An example of the learning resources in FOR-PD's lessons can be found here: <a href="http://www.itrc.ucf.edu/testcourse/lesson7/lesson7topic4.htm">http://www.itrc.ucf.edu/testcourse/lesson7/lesson7topic4.htm</a>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Online and offline activities are available to the student</li> </ul>	The FOR-PD course consists primarily of online activities in the form of discussion boards, chat rooms, e-mail, reading online texts, and doing online extensions and reviews. Facilitators of the course are given the flexibility to integrate offline learning that may take the form of research papers, reading traditional texts, and class meetings.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Asynchronous and/or synchronous interaction between teacher/facilitator and student and student-to-student guaranteed</li> </ul>	FOR-PD is asynchronous between students and facilitators and between students and students through our discussion boards. It is synchronous between students and facilitators and between students and students through available chat rooms.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Teacher/facilitator credentials are verified and in place</li> </ul>	The strict credentials for facilitators of the course are verified and located at this site: <a href="http://www.itrc.ucf.edu/forpd/facilitators/requirements.html">http://www.itrc.ucf.edu/forpd/facilitators/requirements.html</a>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Teacher/facilitator is trained in Web-based instruction techniques</li> </ul>	All facilitators must successfully complete an in-depth facilitator training course which has an emphasis on Web-based instruction techniques.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Course has been previously field-tested and revised if necessary</li> </ul>	FOR-PD was pilot tested in fall 2002, and the program is revised frequently to make it the most effective and relevant program possible.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Monitoring plan for student chat sessions and/or student-</li> </ul>	Chat sessions are scheduled by facilitators so they can monitor student-to-student interactions. Discussions posted on the discussion board also are monitored by the

to-student interaction is in place	facilitators.
○ Teacher/facilitator workload and compensation is aligned with LEA/DOE standards	Teachers and facilitators workload and compensation has been approved by the Florida DOE and participating universities.
○ All qualified students are given equal opportunity for course enrollment	All certified Florida educators may take the course. Graduate students in educational fields are also given equal opportunities to take the course through their universities.
○ LEA has approved course for credit	Course has been approved by the Florida DOE for 60 inservice points and by participating universities for 3 graduate credits.
○ LEA has established policy for tuition/fees and enrollment procedures	District enrollment procedures have been establishes. University enrollment and tuition procedures have also been established.
○ Site facilitator/coordinator is trained and in place	All facilitators must successfully complete an in-depth facilitator training course, and they are assigned sections based on their areas of expertise (as it applies to individuals taking the course) and location.
○ Just-in-time technical assistance is available to student and facilitator	Technical assistance is available for all students and facilitators seven days a week via phone and e-mail. Technical assistance can also be solicited via AOL Instant Messenger under the screen name, “forpdhelp.”
○ Procedures are in place to guarantee security of student work	The FOR-PD program is secure and password protected to ensure the security of all student work.
○ Students will be advised/surveyed about the program to determine that they possess the self-motivation and commitment to learn online.	Potential FOR-PD participants are provided the opportunity to assess their self-motivation and commitment to learn online on the following page, which links that assessment under the name, “Are distance courses for me? (College of DuPage).” <a href="http://www.itrc.ucf.edu/forpd/register/reqt">http://www.itrc.ucf.edu/forpd/register/reqt</a>
○ Provision is made for students with special needs	Students with special needs will receive the appropriate accommodations. Contact information for people with special needs so they may be addressed is found here:

	<a href="http://www.itrc.ucf.edu/forpd/faqs/#teachers">http://www.itrc.ucf.edu/forpd/faqs/#teachers</a>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Quality control and assessment procedures are in place for both student participation/behavior and course delivery/quality</li> </ul>	<p>To ensure that all participants understand what is expected of them (with regard to content, quality, and delivery) all assignments are accompanied by a clear scoring rubric. An example of the rubrics used can be found here:  <a href="http://www.itrc.ucf.edu/testcourse/lesson7/lesson7assign.htm">http://www.itrc.ucf.edu/testcourse/lesson7/lesson7assign.htm</a></p>
<b><i>Course Content</i></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Syllabus available for review and is understandable by students</li> </ul>	<p>The course syllabus, which is outlined in a clear and understandable format is found at the following location where it can be reviewed by students:  <a href="http://www.itrc.ucf.edu/forpd/register/syllabus.html">http://www.itrc.ucf.edu/forpd/register/syllabus.html</a></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Course is comparable in rigor, depth, and breadth to traditionally delivered courses</li> </ul>	<p>The course is comparable in rigor, depth, and breadth to traditionally delivered courses and is offered at several universities as a graduate course</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Instructional goals, objectives, strategies, and evaluation are aligned to state/national standards</li> </ul>	<p>The FOR-PD course is approved by the Florida DOE for 60 inservice points and by participating universities for 3 credit hours.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Instructional and learning goals are clearly defined for student</li> </ul>	<p>Each lesson in the FOR-PD program begins with a list of objectives telling participants, “After this lesson you will be able to...” Those objectives serve as a guide to the content of activities that follow. An example of how the objectives are stated to begin each lesson is found here:  <a href="http://www.itrc.ucf.edu/testcourse/lesson7/lesson7intro.htm">http://www.itrc.ucf.edu/testcourse/lesson7/lesson7intro.htm</a></p> <p>The course goals, which are outlined on the course syllabus (<a href="http://www.itrc.ucf.edu/forpd/register/syllabus.html">http://www.itrc.ucf.edu/forpd/register/syllabus.html</a>), are clearly aligned with objectives that begin each lesson. These goals have been designed to follow various standards of teacher education.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Course promotes active</li> </ul>	<p>FOR-PD offers many ways of interacting and collaborating with facilitators of the</p>

<p>learning through student interaction with class peers and/or worldwide peers</p>	<p>program and participants. The discussion board is a location on the website where a great deal of idea sharing, question asking and answering, and reflecting takes place. An example of how prevalent communication is on the discussion boards was evident on the course discussion board for Alachua County, there were a total of 295 discussion postings. Many of them came from teachers sharing experiences in their classrooms and how they related to particular lessons. To ensure that all students in the FOR-PD program interact, there are required postings throughout the course. There are also collaborative assignments designed to build a community among learners where students are required to e-mail commentaries to each other and reflect on them. In an effort to facilitate dialogue between participants, there is a “chat” section, where individuals can give and take in real-time and have meaningful discussions about the lessons with immediate, interactive responses; the chat room experience of FOR-PD is comparable to having face-to-face discussions in a traditional classroom setting. Facilitators participate on the discussion board and in chat rooms, and they are also available on an e-mail system that students use to communicate any inquiries they have; responses are typically given within twenty-four hours after receiving e-mails.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Course is organized in coherent, sequential manner</li> </ul>	<p>A course evaluation is taken by participants at the end of the course that provides much information regarding the quality of the course design. Evaluation results from a sample of twenty-eight participants in Seminole County, Florida, revealed positive attitudes towards various aspects of the course design. 100% of the students felt the organization of the course was at least satisfactory, with over 92% feeling the organization was good or excellent. Over 96% of the participants stated that they found the course easy to navigate.</p> <p>All web pages in the FOR-PD course follow the same format and are both visually and functionally consistent throughout the course to ensure our participants can focus on the content of the course. To experience the cohesive nature of one of FOR-PD’s lessons, you may access an entire lesson (Lesson 7) starting here:  <a href="http://www.itrc.ucf.edu/testcourse/lesson7/lesson7intro.htm">http://www.itrc.ucf.edu/testcourse/lesson7/lesson7intro.htm</a></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Course is designed to take advantage of the unique applications for online delivery</li> </ul>	<p>The utilizes its online format in the form of discussion boards, chat rooms, and a multitude of links to resources to further individuals’ understandings of content.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Assignments are clear and</li> </ul>	<p>To ensure that all participants understand what is expected of them on assignments, all</p>

understandable to the student and site coordinators.	assignments are accompanied by a clear scoring rubric. An example of the rubrics used can be found here: <a href="http://www.itrc.ucf.edu/testcourse/lesson7/lesson7assign.htm">http://www.itrc.ucf.edu/testcourse/lesson7/lesson7assign.htm</a>
<b><i>Teacher/Facilitator Interaction</i></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Course is taught in such a way as to promote trust and teamwork between teacher/facilitator and student and among students</li> </ul>	Trust and teamwork between teachers and facilitators as well as students and students is promoted through the use of discussion boards, the participation of local facilitators, and the approval of university faculties.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Various levels of teacher/facilitator control are planned and teacher guides and monitors students in lower control assignments</li> </ul>	To establish facilitator control and monitoring, facilitators grade assignments and monitor quiz results.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Teacher models standards for accountability and appropriate online interaction</li> </ul>	Facilitators monitor discussion board assignments.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Teacher/facilitator addresses and supports individual student needs, skills, and knowledge</li> </ul>	Feedback on content is constantly encouraged by instructors and can be given on the discussion board, in chat rooms, and sent in e-mails.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Teacher/facilitator provides timely, specific, and authentic feedback</li> </ul>	Feedback is immediate on all quizzes. All facilitators are to provide feedback on assignments within a week of their submission, and chat sessions are frequently scheduled so facilitators can provide immediate feedback on all questions participants have.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Teacher/facilitator provides criteria for grading and weighting for each assignment.</li> </ul>	To ensure that all participants understand the criteria used for grading all assignments, all assignments are accompanied by a clear scoring rubric. An example of the rubrics used can be found here: <a href="http://www.itrc.ucf.edu/testcourse/lesson7/lesson7assign.htm">http://www.itrc.ucf.edu/testcourse/lesson7/lesson7assign.htm</a>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Teacher/facilitator provides private communication to students when appropriate.</li> </ul>	Private e-mail is available and used in instances where facilitators and participants must communicate privately.

<b><i>Student Evaluation</i></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Evaluation is timely, fair, and based on local/state/national standards</li> </ul>	Quizzes are graded immediately upon submission and rubrics are provided for all assignments.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Teacher/facilitator and student sites have monitoring/proctoring policies in place</li> </ul>	Facilitators monitor all student progress based on structured rubrics that are followed throughout the course on each assignment. Weekly quizzes are also monitored each week.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Teacher/facilitator and student sites have verification of student participation/performance procedures in place</li> </ul>	Facilitators monitor all student progress based on structured rubrics that are followed throughout the course on each assignment. Weekly quizzes are also monitored each week.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Teacher/facilitator and student sites have intervention plans for student failure</li> </ul>	Facilitators monitor student progress and provide necessary feedback. The course may be repeated if necessary.
<b><i>Teacher/Facilitator Evaluation</i></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Teacher/facilitator evaluation is determined and conducted according to state and/or local policies</li> </ul>	Facilitators are monitored by the FOR-PD staff. Facilitators must complete the Facilitator Certification Course. Additionally, Facilitators must meet the stated requirements and qualifications.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Teacher/facilitator evaluation is based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Course content</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	The course evaluation given upon completion of the course has items related to course content.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Course design</li> </ul>	The course evaluation given upon completion of the course has items related to course design.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Course presentation</li> </ul>	The course evaluation given upon completion of the course has items related to course presentation.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Student performance</li> </ul>	Data suggesting the completion rates of students as well as their quiz scores are analyzed to assess the performance of facilitators.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Teacher interaction with students</li> </ul>	The course evaluation given upon completion of the course has items related to teacher interaction with students.
<b><i>Course Evaluation</i></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Course is evaluated on a regular basis and revisions documented</li> </ul>	The FOR-PD course is evaluated at the end of each semester through course evaluations, focus groups, and outside independent analysis. Revisions are made and documented.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Instructional materials are reviewed periodically to ensure they continue to meet program standards.</li> </ul>	Links are checked weekly and updated as needed. Instructional materials are revised as needed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Course evaluation includes:</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Technical design</li> </ul>	Elements of technical design are addressed in course evaluation questions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Curriculum alignment</li> </ul>	Elements of curriculum alignment are addressed in course evaluation questions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Rigor, depth, and breadth</li> </ul>	Elements related to rigor, depth, and breadth are addressed in course evaluation questions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Student performance</li> </ul>	Elements related to student performance are addressed in course evaluation questions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Student participation and interaction</li> </ul>	Elements related to student participation and interaction are addressed in course evaluation questions.