

## Course Evaluation Checklist v3.0

Our Learning Services team members work with Canvas institutions across the globe to provide course evaluation reviews and have found the most successful courses combine both curriculum and learning design elements. The modifications in this version focus on adding curriculum elements found to be most effective for successful learning. These elements support instructors, designers, and administrators to develop courses that are fully functional for every learner.

**How To Use:** A ★ (1-star) rating indicates an **Essential** and standard design component to online learning (including the top 10 **Foundational** items); a ★★ (2-star) rating is considered **Best Practice** and adds value to a course; and a ★★★ (3-star) rating is **Exemplary** and elevates learning.

Each institution has unique requirements for its courses. This checklist serves as a resource or starting point for teams to develop course design plans best suited to your institution. *The Learning Services team would love to hear how you're using this checklist. Please leave comments in the [Canvas Community: Course Evaluation Checklist v3.0](#) blog post.*

### Course Information & Expectations

Yes ✓	Criteria
<input type="checkbox"/> ★ Foundational	<b>1.1 Home Page</b> provides a visual representation of course; a brief course description or introduction; clear instructions for learners (e.g., where to begin), and quick and easy navigation to current content. 📌 UDL 2.5 Illustrate through multiple media
<input type="checkbox"/> ★ Foundational	<b>1.2 Course Navigation</b> is clear and consistent (unused items are hidden). <a href="#">Canvas Guide: Navigation Links</a> 📌 Mobile App Design Consideration 📌 UDL 7.3 Minimize threats and distractions
<input type="checkbox"/> ★ Foundational	<b>1.3 Course Standards or Outcomes</b> are identified and measurable (e.g.: goals, learning objectives, and/or standards). If available, the official standards document is cited with a link to the official standards and the year those standards were adopted. 📌 UDL 8.1 Heighten salience of goals and objectives
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>1.4 A course syllabus</b> is available and includes <b>class expectations</b> such as participation rules, etiquette expectations, code of conduct; <b>policies</b> for grading, late work, and make-up work; supplemental textbooks, reading lists, and technology <b>requirements</b> . <a href="#">Canvas Guides: Syllabus</a> 📌 UDL 8.1 Heighten salience of goals and objectives
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>1.5 Instructor has provided contact information</b> which may include a biography, availability information, communication preferences, response time, and picture. 📌 8.3 Foster collaboration and community
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>1.6 A pacing guide</b> is available that outlines when and in what order standards are taught and assessed in the course. 📌 UDL 6.2 Support planning and strategy development → UDL 6.3 Facilitate managing information and resources

<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>1.7 Course card</b> provides a visual representation of the subject by adding an image in Course Settings. <a href="#">Canvas Guide: Add Image to Course Card</a> 📌 UDL 2.5 Illustrate through multiple media
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>1.8</b> Course contains information and links to <b>institutional resources</b> (e.g. library, institutional services, institution’s website) in an intro or resource module. 📌 UDL 8.3 Foster collaboration and community
<input type="checkbox"/> ★★	<b>1.9 Standards or Outcomes, if used, are rephrased or broken down</b> into student-friendly language while not changing the intent. 📌 UDL 8.1 Heighten salience of goals and objectives
<input type="checkbox"/> ★★★	<b>1.10</b> Opportunities for <b>course feedback</b> are present and available to learners throughout the duration of the course. The instructor uses formal and informal feedback to improve subsequent course revisions. 📌 UDL 7.3 Minimize threats and distractions 📌 Mobile App Design Consideration

## Course Structure

Yes ✓	Criteria
<input type="checkbox"/> ★ Foundational	<b>2.1</b> All links, files, videos, and external <b>URLs</b> are active and working. <a href="#">Canvas Guide: Link Validation</a> 📌 4.2 Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>2.2</b> Content is "chunked" into manageable pieces by leveraging <b>modules and pages</b> (e.g. organized by units, chapters, topics, or weeks). When possible, Canvas <b>Pages</b> are used to present content, instead of linking to external URLs or files in the module's flow. <a href="#">Canvas Guide: Modules; Example Resource Comparison</a> 📌 Mobile App Design Consideration 📌 UDL 3.3 Guide information processing, visualization, and manipulation
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>2.3</b> Each content item type is <b>formatted consistently</b> to make expectations predictable (e.g. all assignments are formatted to include the directions, followed by the guidelines, and a technical support area that links to help guides) 📌 UDL 7.3 Minimize threats and distractions
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>2.4 Course files</b> needed for learning activities are available for download and meet accessibility guidelines. <a href="#">Canvas Guide: Uploading Documents</a>
<input type="checkbox"/> ★★	<b>2.5</b> There is a “Welcome” or “Let’s Get Acquainted” discussion designed to build a <b>sense of community</b> and establish rapport. 📌 UDL 8.3 Foster collaboration and community
<input type="checkbox"/> ★★	<b>2.6</b> Modules and items within modules have a thoughtful <b>naming convention</b> (e.g. name the module “Chapter 1: Pandas in the News,” not just “Chapter 1”). 📌 UDL 2.2 Clarify syntax and structure
<input type="checkbox"/> ★★	<b>2.7</b> Modules begin with an Introduction/Overview page to <b>activate knowledge</b> and end with a Conclusion/Summary page <b>to summarize</b> each module. 📌 UDL 3.1 Activate or supply background knowledge
<input type="checkbox"/> ★★	<b>2.8 Text headers</b> and <b>indentation</b> are included within modules to help guide learner navigation. <a href="#">Canvas Guide: Add Text Header</a> 📌 Mobile App Design Consideration 📌 UDL 2.2 Clarify syntax and structure
<input type="checkbox"/> ★★★	<b>2.9</b> Module <b>completion requirements</b> and/or <b>prerequisites</b> are utilized to provide course structure, pacing, and flow. <a href="#">Canvas Guide: Adding Prerequisites</a> 📌 UDL 3.3 Guide information processing and visualization 📌 Mobile App Design Consideration
<input type="checkbox"/> ★★★	<b>2.10</b> Learners may choose from <b>options for differentiation</b> to demonstrate mastery in <b>MasteryPaths</b> . <a href="#">Canvas Guide: MasteryPaths</a> 📌 UDL 7.1 Optimize individual choice and autonomy

## Course Content

Yes ✓	Criteria
<input type="checkbox"/> ★ Foundational	<b>3.1 Copyright</b> law is followed. Course follows Copyright, Fair Use Guidelines, and Creative Commons licenses. <a href="#">Canvas Guide: Copyright Resources</a>
<input type="checkbox"/> ★ Foundational	<b>3.2 Course content builds logically</b> and increases in understanding and difficulty. 📌 UDL 7.3 Minimize threats and distractions
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>3.3 Includes terminology clarification</b> if potentially harmful terms are included to assist students in developing increased cultural understanding and empathy. 📌 UDL 9.2 Facilitate personal coping skills and strategies
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>3.4 Content is at the appropriate reading level.</b> 📌 UDL 3.3 Guide information processing and visualization. ➔ UDL 3.4 Maximize transfer and generalization
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>3.5 Vocabulary for content-specific terms</b> have clear definitions. 📌 UDL 2.1 Clarify vocabulary and symbols
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>3.6 Uses inclusive language</b> respecting learner identity, learner experience, and background (heritage, family, socioeconomic). 📌 UDL 7.3 Minimize threats and distractions
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>3.7 Content is appropriate</b> for the learners and permitted by the program to use the content. Content adheres to state laws and regulations if applicable. 📌 UDL 7.3 Minimize threats and distractions
<input type="checkbox"/> ★★	<b>3.8 Personalized learning</b> is evident through opportunities for choice. 📌 UDL 7.1 Optimize individual choice and autonomy
<input type="checkbox"/> ★★★	<b>3.9 Multiple methods</b> of content delivery are included (e.g.: text, video, and images). 📌 UDL 2.5 Illustrate through multiple media
<input type="checkbox"/> ★★★★	<b>3.10 Permissions</b> are saved in course files if materials are requested for use in the course. <a href="#">Canvas Guide: Copyright Resources</a>
<input type="checkbox"/> ★★★★	<b>3.11 Includes additional vocabulary</b> specific to assisting English Learners and readers below reading level in gaining a more complete understanding (e.g.: perjury is a term that would be used in a history course but not always defined. English Learners and readers below grade level would benefit if it were defined). 📌 UDL 2.1 Clarify vocabulary and symbols ➔ UDL 3.4 Maximize transfer and generalization
<input type="checkbox"/> ★★★★	<b>3.12 Readings have multiple supports</b> for readers who are at a higher or lower level. 📌 UDL 3.4 Maximize transfer and generalization

## Learner Interaction

Yes ✓	Criteria
<input type="checkbox"/> ★ Foundational	<b>4.1 Learning activity descriptions and instructions</b> are clear, detailed, and include instructor expectations and clear expectations for the creation of the learning product. Instructions are platform neutral (mobile and browser friendly) to minimize student confusion. 📌 3.3 Guide information processing, visualization, and manipulation ➔ UDL 8.1 Heighten salience of goals and objectives

<input type="checkbox"/> ★ Foundational	<b>4.2</b> Learners are provided detailed directions on <b>how</b> and <b>where</b> they will <b>submit work</b> . 📌 UDL 9.2 Facilitate personal coping skills and strategies
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>4.3</b> Tasks and submission requirements are <b>appropriate for teaching methods</b> – synchronous, asynchronous, or blended. 📌 UDL 6.3 Facilitate managing information and resources
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>4.4</b> Task matches the <b>submission type</b> — discussion, assignment, quiz, audio or visual recording, handwritten or typed, etc. 📌 UDL 3.4 Maximize transfer and generalization
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>4.5</b> Activities include <b>learner-learner interaction</b> to foster a sense of community (e.g. discussions, constructive collaboration, and peer reviews). 📌 UDL 8.3 Foster collaboration and community
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>4.6</b> Activities include <b>learner-instructor interaction</b> (e.g. instructor is actively engaged in authentic conversations and provides quality feedback). 📌 UDL 8.3 Foster collaboration and community
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>4.7</b> Activities include <b>learner-content interaction</b> (e.g. learners interact with engaging content and resources). 📌 UDL 9.3 Develop self-assessment and reflection
<input type="checkbox"/> ★★	<b>4.8</b> Activities include <b>learner-self interaction</b> for opportunities for low stakes self-evaluation and self-assessment of mastery (e.g. pre-assessments, self-assessments, and reflections on learning) 📌 UDL 9.3 Develop self-assessment and reflection
<input type="checkbox"/> ★★★	<b>4.9 Videos or animations</b> are included in the directions to <b>model and clarify</b> the expectations of an activity. 📌 UDL 2.5 Illustrate through multiple media
<input type="checkbox"/> ★★★	<b>4.10 Sample assignments</b> are provided to assist learners in understanding expectations. 📌 UDL 5.3 Build fluencies with graduated levels of support for practice and performance

## Assessments

Yes ✓	Criteria
<input type="checkbox"/> ★ Foundational	<b>5.1</b> Learning activities directly <b>tie into a standard</b> or the tasks <b>provide scaffolding</b> to reach the standard. 📌 UDL 8.1 Heighten salience of goals and objectives
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>5.2</b> Formative and summative forms of assessment are included in <b>consistent use throughout the course</b> . 📌 UDL 8.2 Vary demands and resources to optimize challenge
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>5.3</b> A variety of <b>assessment formats</b> are used (e.g., discussions, quizzes, and individual/group assignments) to increase learner engagement and promote active learning. 📌 UDL 4.1 Vary the methods for response and navigation
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>5.4</b> Low-stakes ( <b>formative</b> ) <b>assessments</b> occur frequently throughout the course to measure knowledge, skills, and attitude and occur before high-stakes assessments. 📌 UDL 8.4 Increase mastery-oriented feedback
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>5.5</b> High-stakes ( <b>summative</b> ) <b>assessments</b> are clearly aligned with stated goals, learning objectives, and/or standards. 📌 UDL 8.4 Increase mastery-oriented feedback
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>5.6</b> Assessments support instructors' use of <b>SpeedGrader</b> to score and provide prompt and high-quality feedback. <a href="#">Canvas Guide: SpeedGrader</a> 📌 UDL 8.4 Increase mastery-oriented feedback

<input type="checkbox"/> ★★	<b>5.7 Clear grading expectations</b> are identified based on the use of <b>rubrics</b> (may include objective or subjective measurements) or other means (questions have correct or incorrect answers, other measures of objective assessment). <a href="#">Canvas Guide: Rubrics</a> 🔴 UDL 9.1 Promote expectations and beliefs that optimize motivation → UDL 6.4 Enhance capacity for monitoring progress
<input type="checkbox"/> ★★	<b>5.8</b> Graded assignments, quizzes, and tests are <b>appropriately weighted</b> to reflect the impact of the assessment. 🔴 UDL 7.2 Optimize relevance, value, and authenticity
<input type="checkbox"/> ★★★	<b>5.9</b> Assessments are <b>linked to Outcomes</b> to demonstrate mastery by standard or learning outcomes. <a href="#">Canvas Guide: Outcomes</a> 🔴 UDL 8.4 Increase mastery-oriented feedback

## External Resources

Yes ✓	Criteria
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>6.1</b> External links are <b>reliable sources</b> and always <b>available</b> (i.e.: not behind a subscription paywall or limited to a number of articles per month) 🔴 UDL 3.4 Maximize transfer and generalization
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>6.2</b> External sites are <b>accessible</b> to all learners by meeting W3C standards. 🔴 UDL 4.2 Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>6.3 External tools</b> (e.g., Quizlet, Khan Academy, Padlet, Nearpod, CK-12) are relevant to course content and support active learning techniques. LTIs are used when available versus a link to the resource. 🔴 UDL 5.2 Use multiple tools for construction and composition
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>6.4 Links</b> to external content, documents, or learning resources are relevant to the task and <b>appropriate for learner use</b> . Consideration is given to other material on the site, advertising, and institution firewalls. 🔴 UDL 7.3 Minimize threats and distractions

## Course Accessibility

Yes ✓	Criteria
<input type="checkbox"/> ★ Foundational	<b>7.1</b> Web tools and/or software are utilized to identify and correct <b>accessibility issues</b> within the course (e.g. Accessibility Checker.) <a href="#">Canvas Guide: Accessibility Checker</a> 🔴 UDL 7.3 Minimize threats and distractions
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>7.2 Accommodation Statement</b> is present and easily located (e.g., on Home Page or Syllabus). 🔴 UDL 4.2 Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>7.3 Color</b> enhances the aesthetic appeal and effectiveness of the course; sufficient contrast between text and background makes information easy to read; and color is not used in isolation to convey meaning. <a href="#">Canvas Guide: Accessibility Checker</a> 🔴 UDL 7.3 Minimize threats and distractions
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>7.4 Images</b> are used to support course content (e.g., banners, headings, and icons) and are accompanied by text descriptions (Alt text) or captions for more complex descriptions. <a href="#">Canvas Guide: General Accessibility Design Guidelines</a> 🔴 UDL 1.3 Offer alternatives for visual information
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>7.5 Styles</b> (e.g. Paragraph, Heading 2, etc.) are used to format text. <a href="#">Canvas Guide: General Accessibility Design Guidelines</a> 🔴 UDL 4.2 Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies

<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>7.6 Hyperlink</b> text incorporates the hyperlink destination/purpose (avoid raw URLs, e.g., <a href="https://www.canvaslms.com">https://www.canvaslms.com</a> ) and includes words and phrases to provide context for screen-readers (e.g., use “Canvas Guide: Hyperlink” rather than “Canvas Guide”). <a href="#">WebAim: Introduction to Links and Hypertext</a> 📌 UDL 4.2 Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>7.7 Audio</b> materials (mp3, wav, etc.) are accompanied by a transcript and videos/screencasts have accessible captions. <a href="#">Canvas Guide: Create Caption Files</a> 📌 UDL 1.2 Offer alternatives for auditory information
<input type="checkbox"/> ★★	<b>7.8 Tables</b> are used appropriately and are accessible by having assigned scope (caption and/or heading row/table). <a href="#">WebAim: Creating Accessible Tables</a> 📌 Mobile App Design Consideration 📌 UDL 4.2 Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies

## Instructor Supports

Yes ✓	Criteria
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>8.1 Answer keys</b> are provided for instructor-graded assignments. 📌 UDL 8.1 Heighten salience of goals and objectives
<input type="checkbox"/> ★★	<b>8.2 Specific information</b> is included unpublished in content for the instructor to help teach (e.g.: sensitive topics, additional external resources). 📌 UDL 3.3 Guide information processing and visualization
<input type="checkbox"/> ★★★	<b>8.3 Synchronous session supports</b> are included for courses with blended or synchronous components (e.g.: activities that lend themselves to synchronous learner actions, outline for a synchronous session). 📌 UDL 3.3 Guide information processing and visualization

## Mobile App Considerations

If your learners use a mobile app, consider the following. Search “Instructure” to find free teacher and student apps available for iOS and Android.

Yes ✓	Criteria
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>9.1 Preview your course in the Canvas mobile app</b> to experience it from a mobile user's perspective. Make any necessary revisions or adjustments to improve the mobile experience. Check your course in both light mode and dark mode.
<input type="checkbox"/> ★	<b>9.2</b> Consider the length of text passages in content and assessments as they may require excessive scrolling and they <b>may not display optimally on smaller screens.</b> 📌 UDL 3.3 Guide information processing and visualization
<input type="checkbox"/> ★★	<b>9.3</b> Students are alerted and given <b>alternatives</b> when an unsupported file type is used on the mobile app. <a href="#">Example Message</a> 📌 UDL 7.3 Minimize threats and distractions
<input type="checkbox"/> ★★★	<b>9.4</b> Assessment design takes into account the <b>additional tools</b> students have when working on a mobile device - camera, video, audio, file upload, or Mobile Annotations. <a href="#">Canvas Guide: Submit a PDF assignment with annotations - iOS</a> and <a href="#">Canvas Guide: Submit a PDF assignment with annotations - Android</a>

## Wrap-Up

The Learning Services department is always ready to help your organization create a cycle of success with Canvas through Design, Curriculum, and Professional Learning & Strategy Services! If you would like to learn more about our offerings, please contact your CSM or Learning Services at [learning.services@instructure.com](mailto:learning.services@instructure.com).

## Resources

- Baldwin, S., Ching, Y.-H., & Hsu, Y.-C. (2018). Online course design in higher education: A review of national and statewide evaluation instruments. *TechTrends*, 62(3), 46-57. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11528-017-0215-z>
- Baldwin, S., & Ching, Y.-H. (2019). Online course design: A review of the Canvas course evaluation checklist. *International Review of Research in Open & Distributed Learning*, 20(3), 268-282. <https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v20i3.4283>
- Best practices for building Universal Design principles into your Canvas courses. (n.d.). Retrieved from [https://www.sfu.ca/canvas/instructors/accessibility/building\\_udl\\_into\\_canvas.html](https://www.sfu.ca/canvas/instructors/accessibility/building_udl_into_canvas.html)
- CAST (2018). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 2.2. Retrieved from <http://udlguidelines.cast.org>
- Moore, E. (2017, October 16). Implementing Universal Design for Learning on Canvas. Retrieved from <https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Canvas-Instructional-Designer/Implementing-Universal-Design-for-Learning-on-Canvas/ba-p/271887>
- Online Course Best Practices Checklist. (2012). Retrieved from <https://academicaffairs.syracuse.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/bestpracticeschecklistsp12.pdf>
- CAST (2018). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 2.2. Retrieved from <http://udlguidelines.cast.org>
- Going Mobile with Webcourses@UCF. Retrieved February 18, 2020, from <https://vimeo.com/134745175>
- [Canvas Live Presentation: Canvas Mobile Design](#), Ryan Seilhamer, UCF
- [Canvas Blog: Are Courses Really Mobile First?](#) Ryan Seilhamer, UCF
- [Design a Mobile Ready Course with Universal Design](#), Kate Miller, CU Online
- [Canvas Teacher Mobile Features](#) and [Mobile Guides - Canvas Teacher](#)
- [Canvas Student Mobile Features](#) and [Mobile Guides - Canvas Student](#)

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