Online Course Certification System
An international quality benchmark for online courses

2019 EOCCS
STANDARDS & CRITERIA


EOCCS STANDARDS & CRITERIA

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1 The EOCCS documents are revised periodically and it is the responsibility of the Institution to always use the latest version of the document. Older versions of the EOCCS document set are only acceptable by prior approval from the EOCCS Office. The periodical changes to the documents are always published on the EFMD Global Network website in the beginning of each year.
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Introduction

The present document sets out the Standards and Criteria to evaluate the quality of online business and/or management-related courses that stand alone or constitute part of a certificate or degree programme with a considerable amount of their content delivered over the Internet. The all-encompassing nature of EOCCS also includes MOOCs, SPOCs, blended learning courses, suites of courses/modules and other course formats. The fundamental objective of the EFMD Global Network Online Course Certification System (EOCCS) is to raise the standard of these courses so as to ensure these are exemplary and contemporary courses. Applying Institutions must demonstrate that they deliver an online course, or a suite of courses, which are integrated into their strategy and covers normally at least twenty (20) hours of study.

Value and Benefits of EOCCS

1. International Quality Benchmark
   - EOCCS is a demonstration of quality online learning which is determined by rigorous standards and Peer Review for Higher Education and Corporate Institutions, and Public Agencies
   - EOCCS is an indication of quality and can be used as part of marketing specific courses to potential learners

2. Continuous Improvement
   - The EOCCS application is an opportunity for an Institution to reflect on best practices and innovative solutions in online learning for their own development
   - The Peer Review process, with active experts in the field, gives institutions constructive feedback, suggestions for improvement and future growth
   - EOCCS also explores the sustainability of an Institution’s online learning offering

3. Community and Peer-to-Peer Learning
   - EOCCS enables you to engage with a community of experts in the field during the Peer Reviews
   - You can become part of an Annual Symposium and Community of Practice reporting on new practices, sharing experiences and exploring collective capabilities and future direction as a community
   - EOCCS enhances potential for international online collaborations and partnerships
   - Through EOCCS Institutions can profit from mutual learning opportunities and gain insights into the “best practices” of EFMD members

Quality of Online Learning

Recent years have seen a profound change in the use of technologies in higher education. Online learning is not per se an indicator of innovation for teaching and learning. Also, simply transferring a face-to-face teaching model online does not equalise understanding the different learning opportunities of the learning technologies.\(^2\) However, online courses can enable a more efficient and effective way of learning which can be very satisfying for a student if learning is carried out diligently. Course participants can adapt the pace of learning to their competences, construct their own learning independently and share their insights with others. EOCCS is designed as an international certification system and allows for different approaches

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\(^2\) It should be noted that the online course under discussion may involve blended elements which are delivered face-to-face. Chapter 2 includes opportunities for the Institution to make a reference to cases like these.
and diversity in designing and implementing online courses. Moreover, the overall process of certification is intended only to be a guide for all the parties involved: The Institution and its course team, the Review Panel and the Certification Board. Institutions should be able to explain why certain technologies were adopted for a course and the benefits that are associated with them. The benefits for the learners and the impact on learning need to be monitored by the Institution and assessed closely. Online learning requires different approaches to quality assurance than traditional classroom teaching and entails considerable challenges. Lack of or lesser face-to-face contact, for instance, can mean less immediate ways of the teacher spotting students failing, withdrawing or in difficulty. This can be addressed prospectively through careful attention to the learning design and reactively through learning analytics. The Institution should conduct a continuous course evaluation system directed towards course improvement and there should be a consistent focus on quality. In addition, strategic coherence with the Institution’s teaching and learning policy and the curriculum content should be transparent and comprehensible. Finally, sound backup with scientific and didactic excellence is necessary.

Specific attention needs to be given to the qualifications of the course team. Designing and delivering online courses demand specific skills. The rapidly evolving technologies require major investments from the Institution, in hardware and software. The technology needs to be kept up-to-date and match with the requirements of both teachers and learners. However, the Institution also needs to invest in the didactic capabilities of the teachers to be able to make meaningful use of technology.

**Using the Standards and Criteria**

The standards and the associated criteria are grouped into four chapters covering the different areas that will be reviewed. The purpose of this document is twofold: on the one hand, to provide a comprehensive description of the Standards and Criteria and, on the other, to give guidance to Institutions in preparing their Course Self-Assessment Report. In line with EFMD’s other accreditation systems, EOCCS is based on a vision of Management Education, which seeks to balance academic quality and practical relevance. It is important that courses provide both an up-to-date learning experience and contemporary content that recognises the realities of management in a changing global context.

Each chapter begins with the EOCCS standards relating to the area in question. Thereafter, an Introduction sets out the distinguishing features (or ‘philosophy’) of the EOCCS approach in order to help Institutions to better understand the spirit that underlies the questions that are being put. The following section entitled “The Assessment Criteria” lists the criteria, which have been grouped into a variable number of ‘key areas’. Within each key area, the Institution is invited through the bullet points to describe, explain, summarise, analyse, assess and so on. A series of questions is included to guide the Institution in the construction of its response.
Chapter 1: The Institutional Context

The EOCCS Standard

The Institution should have a defined and coherent strategy for online courses, which relates to its overall learning strategy. The strategy should reflect the Institution’s market positioning, resources and any given constraints. The online course must be sustainable regarding the qualifications and experience of the teachers and the technical infrastructure of the Institution. There should also be an IT-strategy which describes the technology currently used and its sustainability for at least the duration of the certification sought.

Introduction

The purpose of this first chapter is to situate the type of Institution, its identity and its strategic objectives for online learning within its market. This chapter will guide you in providing a concise, but comprehensive summary of the organisation and positioning, resources and facilities, and course team involved. EPAS, EQUIS or CLIP accredited institutions and institutions in the accreditation process need only provide information on the date they sent in their original Datasheet.

The Assessment Criteria

The key areas are:

a) The Institution in its environment
b) Strategic planning
c) Resources and facilities
d) Course team

a) The Institution in its environment

- Describe briefly the status of the Institution and the educational environment in which it operates.
  - What is the type of Institution (e.g., company, public, private, regulated/non-regulated, profit/not-for-profit, business school within a wider university framework)?
  - How well does the environment of the Institution allow for online learning methods? What possible constraints exist?
  - What impact does the provision of online learning have on the markets the Institution operates in or enters as result of this?

b) Strategic planning

- Elaborate on the Institution’s strategic plan and considerations on online learning.
  - What objectives does the Institution embrace in online learning? Is there a link present between the institutional mission and the online learning policies?
What kind of opportunities and/or risks has the Institution recognised regarding the provision of online courses? How can the Institution benefit from the possibilities of online learning?

How has the Institution's strategic position changed as regards to strategic plan and considerations on online learning over recent years?

Explain the origin of the course content and the method of delivery.

Is the course content drawn from core expertise within the Institution?

Does the Institution offer online courses in cooperation with other bodies, e.g., academic or non-academic education providers?

State the current and future plans for internal or external promotion of the course.

c) Resources and facilities

Does the Institution have the financial and human resources that are necessary to achieve its plans for the online course delivery?

What sources of funding are available for sustaining and enhancing online learning activities?

Describe the general technological facilities/infrastructure of the Institution in relation to the online course.

d) Course team

Summarize qualifications and experience of the course team that is in charge of the planning, design, production, delivery, management, maintenance, and evaluation of the course and explain respective roles and affiliations, (e.g., assistants, authors, discussion leaders, e-tutors, facilitators, instructors, quality managers, retention specialists, content specialists, teachers, teaching assistants, community managers, etc.).

What expertise do they have regarding the technical planning, design, and maintenance of the course?

What teaching and learning qualifications do they have and are they appropriate to support the Institution's approach on online courses? What skills do they have to design and deliver online courses? Which qualification criteria have you set?

How do you support the course team members to keep up with developments in technology and learning? Which kind of training do you offer?

Outline how workload is managed.
Chapter 2: Course Composition

The EOCCS Standard

The content of the course is meaningful, of high intellectual quality, and up-to-date. In order to develop participants for an international management career, the course should develop a contemporary perspective. The Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) must be aligned with the content of the course, the delivery and assessment methods. The course should be designed inclusively and be accessible to all participants. The choice of technology is based on their appropriateness for the learning design (not vice versa) and takes into account both learners and teachers.

Introduction

This chapter draws on a variety of issues which are of significance regarding the composition of the course, specifically drawing on conditions which are inherent in online learning. The Institution may experience that providing an online course for a variety of participants from a number of destinations implies a number of challenges. It is recommended to explain the design of the course from start to finish, including all course team members involved in this process (e.g., production team, presentation team, learning and teaching services). The Institution is required to explain the overall learning design and its didactic rationale into which the other design elements fit. Online learning typically requires greater attention to careful design of the learning experience. In the face-to-face classroom, there is often greater opportunity for moment by moment adaptation to signs that the learning process is not working for students. By contrast, in the online environment it is important to be confident in advance that participants are supported through a designed, structured and engaging learning journey.

The Assessment Criteria

The key areas are:

a) Target groups
b) Design for learning
c) Design of course layout
d) Design of course content
e) Design of course delivery
f) Applied technology
g) Qualification

a) Target groups

- Elaborate on the participants of the course.

  - How does the Institution identify target groups? How does it aggregate information on the profiles of participants? Which skills do they have in terms of online learning?
  - Is the Institution aware of participants’ expectations on learning and an online course? If so, how do these have an influence on the design of the course?

- Explain the scope of the course.
Can participants enrol in the course from all over the country/globe, and if so, how are courses designed to address these challenges (e.g., time differences, language barriers etc.)? How do you address a global audience?

Explain the composition of course participants with regard to background, location, and culture and any challenges that this might entail for the design of the course.

Explain how the course guarantees accessibility to all participants.

Which measures are in place to inspect and evaluate the accessibility of the course for participants with challenges? How does the Institution support participants in their accessibility requirements?

b) Design for learning

Explain the overarching learning design of the course.

How do the different elements of signposting, course resources, synchronous and asynchronous interaction with peers and teacher, learning activities and assessment combine to enable this design and achieve learning outcomes?

How does the course make effective use of the advantages of learning technologies rather than simply using them to replicate the classroom experience?

c) Design of course layout

Introduce the layout of the course.

Does the planning of the course follow design principles or a set of guidelines and/or templates? How do you ensure that the course is well-structured, consistent and clear?

Introduce the menu of the course.

Does the menu follow a standardised process? How do you define a user-friendly menu and how do you put it into practice? How do you ensure that participants find the organisation and components (syllabus, discussion groups, test/assignment grading, live/synchronous classrooms, etc.) of the course easily and navigate properly through the course components?

d) Design of course content

Explain the processes for the design of course content.

How does the planning of sessions take place and who is involved?

Does the course stand alone or is it part of a series of courses?

Do you make use of third-party contents? If so, what is the proportion of third-party contents?

Introduce the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) of the course, in the light of its sessions, scheduling and timetabling.

How do the ILOs link with the institutional objectives (e.g. a School's Mission)?
Which ILOs refer to knowledge?
Which ILOs refer to skills?
What are additional ILOs (e.g. social responsibility)?

Describe how you align the ILOs with the content of the course, as well as with the delivery and assessment methods.

Elaborate on the contemporary dimensions of academic content, if applicable.

Is there a schedule for course improvement and updating? How is this schedule determined?

e) Design of course delivery

Make a reference to the language of the course.

Are course elements delivered in English or another major language?

Describe the flexibility regarding the learners' participation.

Can learners study the course at any time, place and pace of their choice? To what extent does the course accommodate the learner's needs?
Which course elements are optional, which ones are compulsory?

Identify the elements of the course which take place synchronously (i.e., live), asynchronously, or both.

Which course elements are active, which ones are passive? What is the proportion of self-directed learning in the course?

If applicable, identify the elements of the course which may be blended (i.e. are delivered face to face). If so, what is the proportion of blended elements?

How do you combine online teaching with face-to-face delivery? Why is face-to-face delivery beneficiary to the learning activity at this point in time of the course?

Which milestones are in place to ensure the learners' progress effectively?

f) Applied technology

Outline the general technological infrastructure of the course (e.g., course management, web tools, video).

Describe the different media which is made use of in the course (text, image, sound, data etc.).

Outline the interactive, communicative and collaborative elements of the course.

Does the course put the learner at the centre of the learning and creating process, i.e., does the learner actively produce knowledge?
Does the course facilitate teacher-with-learner, as well as peer-with-peer interaction?
Does the Institution use a Learning Management System? If so, how does it support the course (e.g., how does it support the communication between teachers and learners)?

Does the course enable virtual collaboration of heterogeneous groups? Does the course encourage team activities? Does the course provide a discussion board?

How do video and audio engage participants with their learning?

Do certain tools enable the independent communication among participants?

Do certain tools enable the production and presentation of the participants’ own work?

How is networking among participants encouraged?

What role does social media play in the course?

With regard to the questions above, outline the strategic considerations associated with the choice of digital tools.

Are the selected technologies appropriate and relevant, particularly with regard to participants, teachers and the learning design intended?

To what extent do the technologies designed for online delivery provide a sustainable learning resource, e.g., are they utilised across different courses?

Describe the maintenance and monitoring of the course and explain how any problems are handled.

Which processes test and ensure the usability and reliability of the applied technology prior to course start?

Sum up how the applied technologies can add value to the learning experience.

How are potential new technologies reviewed and, when appropriate, incorporated into courses? How are faculty/students advised of new technologies and trained in their use?

g) Qualification

Elaborate on the various examination methods of the course (e.g., assignments, tests, written exams, artefacts, project work, peer reviews etc.).

Are examinations proctored? If so, how?

What provisions are made throughout the course to best assure it is the enrolled student’s work?

Outline the regulations for single and group work.

How do you communicate deadlines?

Outline how you prevent academic misconduct (including plagiarism, collusion, falsification of results, bought, work etc.)

How do you ensure that the participants have done the work themselves?

Do you use plagiarism detection tools such as Turnitin or similar? Can students access these tools to check their work prior to submission or are they just used by tutors?

Outline the qualifications which can be obtained by the participants after the successful completion of the course.
Do these comply with the general qualification/module system of the Institution?
How many credits can be obtained in the course and how does that relate to the overall credit system of the programme and/or course structure?
If applicable, what kind of certificate is issued and which are the requirements for participants to obtain it?

Describe the examination procedures of the course.

Following submission of work, what is the staff deadline for assessment and feedback?
Chapter 3: Course Delivery & Operations

The EOCCS Standard

Course participants must be provided with comprehensive and sound information about the course objectives, assignments and assessment methods. Any required prerequisite knowledge must be clearly stated. Participants must be advised where to find academic and technical support at all times. Their performance is monitored and conveyed to them regularly. Feedback on both the participants’ assignments and their questions is constructive and provided swiftly. The Institution is responsive to any complaints concerning the course in a timely manner.

Introduction

This chapter draws on the procedure and sequence of course delivery, from start to finish, particularly drawing on the support and feedback which is given to participants.

The Assessment Criteria

The key areas are:

a) Course participants
b) Course presentation
c) Corporate interaction

a) Course participants

- Describe how the Institution recruits participants.
  - How do you provide information on the course to potential participants?

- Describe the process of admission to the course (e.g., requirements of general/academic/technical nature, registration, applicable course fees, etc.).
  - Who can enrol in the course?
  - How does the Institution ensure that participants are sufficiently skilled to be able to manage and use the technologies required to study the course?

- Describe the methods of communication between the teachers and course participants.
  - How do you inform participants about updates or any changes of the course?

b) Course presentation

- Describe the introductory elements which take place prior to and at the start of the course.
  - How do you convey the course’s content and ILOs, timetable and key dates to participants?
  - How do you give an overview of all learning activities and recommended/compulsory readings?
  - How do the teachers present themselves?
Describe how you provide academic and technical support and refer on the availability of teachers and other personnel.

- Do you offer a tutoring/help system, Q&A’s and/or a moderated discussion forum?
- Are there any response rules (i.e. responses must be given within 24 or 36 hours)?
- Are the students offered an introduction to online learning?
- What are the resources dedicated to ongoing student support (online resources and face-to-face)?

Describe how feedback is given to participants.

- Is feedback given from multiple sources and perspectives, i.e., teachers and peers?

Elaborate on the metacognitive aspects of the course.

- How do you ensure that participants are made aware of the current level of course progression in relation to their own achievement at different stages of the course?
- To what extent are participants encouraged and enabled to identify their strengths and weaknesses when learning?

c) Corporate interaction

Describe the interaction which takes place with partners from the corporate world, if applicable.
Chapter 4: Quality Assurance Processes

The EOCCS Standard

*The Institution uses sound and effective assessment methods and can demonstrate reliably how the course’s ILOs are achieved. The quality of the assessed participants' work must reflect the ILOs. Participants should be given the possibility to evaluate the course and its teachers. It is expected that the Institution’s major stakeholders (such as persons responsible at management level), and in particular the course participants, are involved in the quality assurance process.*

Introduction

This chapter provides the Institution with guidelines to explain its policies and processes in the area of quality assurance. The criteria not just draw on the review of the course and assessments of course participants, but also on the monitoring of teaching and learning.

The Assessment Criteria

The key areas are:

a) Institutional system
b) Course review
c) Assessment of participants
d) Monitoring of teaching
e) Monitoring of learning

a) Institutional system

- Outline the quality processes which are in place for reviewing the institutional system (e.g., planning of the course, appointment of appropriate personnel etc.).

b) Course review

- Outline the quality processes which are in place for the review of course content and delivery.
  
  - How does the review cycle ensure that the ILOs as well as the content and the delivery methods are relevant, up-to-date and of high quality? If applicable, how are blended deliveries (i.e. the combination of online and face to face teaching) reviewed?
  - Are evaluations/reviews divided into technology, content and teaching sections?
  - Is the feedback of participants used effectively in the reviewing process?
  - How does the Institution evaluate progression, completion, failure and drop-out rates of the course?
  - Is the quality of the course compared to on-campus courses (if applicable)?
  - Are partners from the corporate world included in the reviewing process (if applicable)?

- Outline the quality processes which are in place for the review of the applied technology.
  
  - How does the review cycle ensure that inadequate technology is replaced in following courses and more appropriate technology introduced?
Describe the processes for the review of third-party contents and corporate input, if applicable.

Outline the evaluation process in place.

- How do participants evaluate course and teachers?
- How is feedback used for continuous improvement?

Elaborate on the key learnings which the Institution has gained from providing online courses.

c) Assessment of participants

Describe the assessment process.

- Who conducts the assessment and discusses the results?
- How do you ensure that the assessments relate to the individual participant's own work and ability?
- How are the results used for the continuous improvement of the course? How do you ensure that a review cycle is closed?
- Have the ILOs been achieved? If not, how will this be counteracted in the future?

Elaborate on the assessment methods used in the course.

- Are the assessment methods formative and/or summative?
- Are the assessment methods direct and/or indirect measurements?
- Have the assessment methods been designed specifically for the course?
- Do the assessment methods differ from the ones used for regular, on-campus courses (if provided by the Institution)?

d) Monitoring of teaching

Explain the processes in place for evaluating individual teachers. Also include how the effectiveness of non-core faculty contributions (if applicable) is evaluated.

- Which processes evaluate the quality of teaching and the didactic approach of the course?
- Is the functionality of the technology implemented adequate to meet the course's objectives? How is this assessed?
- Do course participants have the opportunity to evaluate the teacher/s?
- Is technology assessed differently than course content/instruction?

e) Monitoring of learning

Explain the processes in place for evaluating the learning behaviour and progress of course participants.

- What opportunities does the teacher have to spot participants with learning difficulties at different stages of the course? What support is in place for these learners?
- How do you gain information on how the participants experienced the learning journey and learning outcomes?
Do you use learning analytics? If so, in which way do you use these for the quality assurance of your participants' learning progress?

Are lessons learned incorporated in the quality assurance process?
**Glossary**

*Asynchronous (learning)* - A technology-enhanced teaching method that enables the individual to learn outside of a fixed setting, i.e., regardless of a certain place and time.

*Blended learning* - A concept which combines online learning and face to face learning, in order to complement the latter.

*Collaborative elements* - Forms of cooperative learning that take place among teachers and learners as well as peers and peers.

*Communicative elements* - Elements which support the dialogue of the different parties involved in the course (e.g., discussion boards).

*Course team* - The entirety of persons involved in the design, production, teaching, and monitoring of the course.

*Datasheet* - The Datasheet contains basic factual information about the Institution’s course portfolio, activities and organisation as well as specific information about the course being offered for assessment.

*Institution* - Refers to the Institution that enters the EOCCS certification process, be it a company, public, private, regulated/non-regulated, profit/not-for-profit, or a business school within a wider university framework. The applying Institution is responsible for course content but may collaborate with specialist providers for the online delivery element and design.

*Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)* - The ILOs define what the course participants should know and be able to do by the end of the course.

*Interactive elements* - Tools which put the learners at the centre of the learning and creating process, so that they can actively process and produce knowledge.

*Learning analytics* - Enable the collection of various data concerning the learning process of a course’s participants in order to interpret and improve their learning progress.

*Learning design* - The overarching didactic design of the online course.

*Learning Management System (LMS)* - A software system which provides the course content, supports e-learning methods and functions as an interface between teacher and learner, and between learners.

*Online courses* - The courses under consideration here are business and/or management related courses with a contemporary perspective which have a considerable amount of its content delivered over the Internet. This can include MOOCS, SPOCS, blended learning courses, suites of courses/modules and other course formats. The courses cover normally at least twenty (20) hours of study.

*Course Self-Assessment Report (CSAR)* - A thorough review of the course which is provided by the applying Institution and forwarded to the EOCCS Certification Board with the EOCCS Application Form.
**Suite of courses** - A suite of courses is defined as a group of courses/modules that are related in their content to form a specialisation. This type of structure is common to the MOOC format of online learning whereby one subject matter is divided into smaller chunks of learning for flexibility purposes. A suite of courses will have a common structure in terms of content, delivery, operation and quality assurance processes.

**Synchronous (learning)** - Refers to learning that takes place at a fixed place and setting for all participants involved. This may also be in an online learning environment.
Further Information and Contacts

If you have any questions concerning the EOCCS certification system, or would like to receive more information, please consult the EFMD Global Network website where all documentation in available to download:

http://www.efmdglobal.org/EOCCS

Alternatively, you can contact the EOCCS Office:

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