

UPDATE ON ONLINE LEARNING

BACKGROUND

Online learning is a rapidly emerging educational delivery strategy in Washington's public schools. As an increasing number of districts enroll an increasing number of students in online courses, practitioners, policy makers and citizens are concerned about the impact of this trend on our public education system. Specific concerns address quality, accountability, equity, funding, and state oversight.

The 2009 Washington State Legislature passed SSB 5410 to begin to address these concerns and to establish an organized approach to public K-12 online learning in Washington State.

POLICY CONSIDERATION

SSB 5410 requires OSPI to establish a review and approval process for certain online learning providers in Washington. Specifically, section 3 (1) of the law reads:

"The superintendent of public instruction, **in collaboration with the state board of education**, shall develop and implement approval criteria and a process for approving multidistrict online providers; a process for monitoring, and if necessary, rescinding the approval of courses or programs offered by an online course provider; and an appeals process. The criteria and processes shall be adopted by rule by December 1, 2009."

A draft set of criteria has been included with this document for review and is entitled "Criteria for Approval of Multi-District Online Course Providers". The criteria are organized in tables showing the category, references for sources of examples, and whether OSPI will use a rubric in its assessment. The reference column in the document contains the following abbreviations:

- NACOL = North American Council for Online Learning
- DLC = Digital Learning Commons

EXPECTED ACTION

SBE will comment and give advice on OSPI's draft approval criteria and process for approving multidistrict online providers.

Criteria for Approval of Multi-District Online Course Providers
Digital Learning Department, OSPI

DRAFT
8/6/2009

Course Content and Instructional Design : The course provider requires all courses and instruction to incorporate the following:		Source	Rubric or Yes-No*
Course goals and outcomes			
A1	Clearly stated and measurable objectives and course goals describing student's knowledge at the end of the course.	NACOL - courses	Rubric
	Course goals and objectives are present, explicitly stated, and can be easily found by students. The student's level of mastery is measured against each goal and objective. After reading the list of goals and objectives, students will understand what they will be learning throughout the course.	Texas's National Standards of Quality for Online Courses Supplemental doc	
A2	Content of sufficient rigor, depth, and breadth to teach the standards being addressed.	NACOL - courses	Rubric
	Rigor is defined as a condition of the learning environment which stretches the individual learner to move beyond his/her comfort zone and grow as an independent learner. Depth refers to the degree to which the course content adheres to the standards being taught. Breadth refers to the completeness of the course.	Texas's National Standards of Quality for Online Courses Supplemental doc	
A3	Course assignments that reflect course goals, representative of the scope of the course, and clearly stated.	NACOL - courses	Rubric
	The scope and sequence of the course is appropriately designed for the subject area and grade level. Concepts and skills are accurately presented, built on one another logically, and connections between concepts and subjects are explicit and relevant.	Texas's National Standards of Quality for Online Courses Supplemental doc	
NOTES			
Course materials and organization		Source	Rubric or Yes-No*
A4	Instructional materials, including supporting materials - such as textbooks, manuals, and videos - are made easily accessible to and usable by learners.	DLC	YES NO
A5	Readability levels, written language assignments and mathematical requirements appropriate for the course content.	NACOL - courses	YES NO
A6	Course content is organized in standard format, ie units and lessons, which include overviews describing central objectives, activities and resources.	NACOL - courses	YES NO
A7	Assessment and assignment rubrics, answers and/or explanations are provided to the student.	NACOL - courses	YES NO
NOTES			
Student engagement		Source	Rubric or Yes-No*
A8	Opportunities to address the needs of diverse learners with multiple learning styles.	NACOL - courses --> New	YES NO
A9	Activities that engage students in active participation and exploration.	NACOL - courses	
	Students are discovering, processing and applying information they learn throughout the course. Less emphasis is placed on giving information and more on discussing, listening, writing, reading, and reflecting.	Texas's National Standards of Quality for Online Courses Supplemental doc	Rubric
A10	Opportunities for students to engage in higher-order thinking, critical-reasoning activities and thinking in increasingly complex ways.	NACOL - courses	
	Assignments, activities, and assessments provide opportunities for student to elevate their thinking beyond memorization into the realm of analyzing situations, synthesizing information, or evaluating an argument. Activities should include open-ended questions, and encourage students to categorize and classify information. Opportunities for group work, decision-making, and finding patterns should also be included in the course activities.	Texas's National Standards of Quality for Online Courses Supplemental doc	Rubric
A11	Opportunities for appropriate (synchronous and asynchronous) instructor-student interaction, including timely and frequent feedback about student progress.	NACOL - courses	YES NO
A12	Opportunities for appropriate instructor-student and student-student interaction to foster mastery and application of the material and a plan for monitoring that interaction.	NACOL - courses	YES NO
A13	Assignments structured to require consistent efforts and an appropriate amount of time for online interactions, study, and homework throughout the term.	Massachusetts	YES NO
A14	Multicultural education and instruction, incorporated as appropriate, that is accurate, current and free of bias.	NACOL - courses	YES NO
A15	Aligned as appropriate to OSPI's Educational Technology Standards: http://www.k12.wa.us/EdTech/techstandards.aspx.	NACOL - courses --> New	YES NO
NOTES			

* Rubric items are scored via exploration of provider's online courses submitted for review

Possible sources of supporting evidence for Yes-No criteria include, but aren't limited to:

- Curriculum development/design and evaluation standards
- Course development/design and evaluation standards
- Instructor expectations, responsibilities and procedures
- Supplemental materials selection guidelines
- Program/course review schedule and process
- Program/course assessment and performance

B (4)	Classroom Management: The provision of the following classroom management standards are enforced:	Source	Rubric or Yes-No*
B1	Academic integrity and netiquette (Internet etiquette) expectations regarding lesson activities, discussions, e-mail communications and plagiarism are clearly stated.	NACOL - courses	YES NO
B2	Grading policy and practices are explicitly stated.	NACOL - courses	YES NO
B3	Clearly stated privacy policies are disclosed and adhered to.	NACOL - courses	YES NO
B4	A system for the school and the instructor to deal with inappropriate student behavior and issues of discipline.	Massachusetts	YES NO
NOTES			

* Possible sources of supporting evidence for Yes-No criteria include, but aren't limited to:

Curriculum development/design and evaluation standards
 Course development/design and evaluation standards
 Instructor expectations, responsibilities and procedures
 Supplemental materials selection guidelines
 Program/course review schedule and process
 Program/course assessment and performance

C (5)	Student Assessment: All courses and instructors are required to employ the following measures when assessing student performance:	Source	Rubric or Yes-No*
C1	Adequate and appropriate methods and procedures to assess students' mastery of content, course goals and standards.	NACOL - courses --> new	
	Multiple assessments* allow students to demonstrate their understanding in a variety of contexts. Formative and summative assessments are a part of the structure of the course. *Pre-tests, post-tests, objective and subjective questioning, self -assessments, group projects, peer review, evaluating levels and quality of participation, and portfolios are examples of different types of assessments that can be used.	Texas's National Standards of Quality for Online Courses Supplemental doc	
C2	Ongoing and frequent assessments conducted and feedback provided to verify each student's readiness for the next lesson.	NACOL - courses	YES NO
C3	Assessments selected and methods used for submitting assessments are appropriate for the online learning environment.	DLC	
	The online classroom incorporates teacher- and/or computer-graded assessments and activities that reach a broad and deep array of skill sets and learning models appropriate to the subject matter.	Texas's National Standards of Quality for Online Courses Supplemental doc	
C4	Assessment materials assess students in a variety of ways.	NACOL - courses	YES NO
C5	Grading rubrics and models of partially- to fully-completed assignments.	NACOL - courses	YES NO
NOTES			

* Rubric items are scored via exploration of provider's online courses submitted for review

Possible sources of supporting evidence for Yes-No criteria include, but aren't limited to:

Curriculum development/design and evaluation standards
 Course development/design and evaluation standards
 Instructor expectations, responsibilities and procedures
 Supplemental materials selection guidelines
 Program/course review schedule and process
 Program/course assessment and performance

D (4)	Course Evaluation and Management: The course provider incorporates the following standards in the evaluation and management of its courses:	Source	Rubric or Yes-No*
D1	Multiple modes of assessing course effectiveness are used including feedback solicited about the quality of the course design, content, instruction, support systems, and infrastructure from students, parents, and school administrators and findings are used as basis for improvement.	NACOL - courses & Massachusetts	YES NO
D2	Courses are updated on regular schedule to ensure content timeliness and functionality.	NACOL - courses & DLC	YES NO
D3	Results of peer review and student evaluations of courses are available.	NACOL - courses	YES NO
D4	An internal review process documenting course reliability, completeness and effectiveness.	DLC --> New	YES NO
NOTES			

* Possible sources of supporting evidence for Yes-No criteria include, but aren't limited to:

Academic calendar
 Course catalog with materials and costs
 Organizational structure with roles and responsibilities
 Completion and success data

E (5)	Student Support: The course provider ensures the following provisions are made to enhance student experience and success:	Source	Rubric or Yes-No*
E1	Information - provided to students, parents and mentors - on protocols for communicating with the instructor and course provider.	NACOL - courses	YES NO
E2	Institutionalized practices for monitoring student progress and helping students keep up with the pace of their course.	DLC	YES NO
E3	Policies and systems to address student, school and parent questions, complaints, appeals, and/or recourse if the course is not delivered as described.	Massachusetts	YES NO
E4	Disclosure of prerequisite technology skills prior to enrollment.	NACOL - courses	YES NO
E5	Training and online support to students (required) and mentors (optional) to aid them in navigating the online environment.	Massachusetts	YES NO
NOTES			

* Possible sources of supporting evidence for Yes-No criteria include, but aren't limited to:

Student self-assessment, skills assessment and student application tools
 Student course/courseware orientation
 Instructor expectations, responsibilities and procedures
 Mentor handbook
 Mentor communication protocol and sample mentor communications
 Organizational structure with roles and responsibilities

F (2)	Mentor Support: The course provider ensures the following provisions to facilitate support of student success:	Source	Rubric or Yes-No*
F1	Mentors are recognized within the provider's systems and frameworks as the local adult point of contact available to the student and instructor as a reliable agent of support to the student's success.	DLC	YES NO
F2	Mentors are given the means to support student success, including: ability to view course content; technology troubleshooting information; online participation tracking and grading system; online mentor handbook and policies; frequent and unsolicited engagement with the course instructor.	DLC	YES NO
NOTES			

* Possible sources of supporting evidence for Yes-No criteria include, but aren't limited to:

Student self-assessment, skills assessment and student application tools
 Student course/courseware orientation
 Instructor expectations, responsibilities and procedures
 Mentor handbook
 Mentor communication protocol and sample mentor communications
 Organizational structure with roles and responsibilities

G (6)	Technology: The course provider enforces programmatic standards that include the following:	Source	Rubric or Yes-No*
Ease in navigation			
G1	Ease in navigation of the courseware platform, supporting systems and within each course.	NACOL - courses	
	Navigation links within the course and supporting systems are organized into key categories in a logical order with students using minimal clicks to get from one place in the course to another.	Texas's National Standards of Quality for Online Courses Supplemental doc	
NOTES			
Technology requirements			
G2	Disclosure of program- and course-specific hardware, Web browser and software requirements prior to enrollment.	NACOL - courses	YES NO
G3	Online textbooks and materials that meet nationally endorsed standards (NIMAS) for publishers to ensure distribution of accessible, alternative versions of textbooks and other instructional materials.	NACOL - courses	YES NO
G4	Course architecture permitting the addition of content, activities and assessments to extend learning opportunities.	NACOL - courses	YES NO
NOTES			
Tech Support			
G5	Tech support offered via various disclosed means including phone, email and/or online help pages.	CHEA	YES NO
G6	Administrative monitoring of the quality and timeliness of technical problem resolutions.	DLC	YES NO
NOTES			

* Rubric items are scored via exploration of provider's online courses submitted for review

Possible sources of supporting evidence for Yes-No criteria include, but aren't limited to:

Technology support systems and protocol
 Organizational structure with roles and responsibilities
 Course development/design and evaluation standards

H (5)	Staff Development and Support: Provider demonstrates an institutionalized protocol to ensure online educators' ability to challenge and meet the needs of online students.	Source	Rubric or Yes-No*
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H1	Instructors are trained in the online course delivery system on which they are teaching and effectively use the various instructional media available.	DLC	YES NO
H2	Instructors promote high level of classroom interaction by being well versed in various modes of communication.	DLC	YES NO
H3	New instructors are paired with and supported by experienced instructors in their first year of online instruction.	DLC	YES NO
H4	Instructors are trained in the emotional and social aspects of online learning and in e-mail communications demonstrating proper tone to their students.	DLC	YES NO
H5	Instructors are evaluated on a regularly scheduled basis.	DLC	YES NO
NOTES			

* Possible sources of supporting evidence for Yes-No criteria include, but aren't limited to:

- Instructor job descriptions and hiring protocols
- Instructor training program
- Instructor expectations, responsibilities and procedures

I (5)	Program Management: The course provider applies the following standards to ensure effective program management:	Source	Rubric or Yes-No*
I1	Administrative monitoring of and intervention in the quality and timeliness of instructors' responses to student assignments and questions.	DLC	YES NO
I2	Administrative monitoring of student records to ensure that students are progressing through their courses at an acceptable rate, to identify any problems and intervene when necessary.	DLC	YES NO
I3	System-driven execution of non-instructional tasks – enrollments, login info dissemination and course materials delivery, etc – performed via established procedures.	DLC	YES NO
I4	Established procedures for fees and payments and handled efficiently.	Massachusetts	YES NO
I5	Accommodations to multiple school calendars; e.g., block, 4X4 and traditional schedules	NACOL - courses	YES NO
NOTES			

* Possible sources of supporting evidence for Yes-No criteria include, but aren't limited to:

- Academic calendar
- Course catalog with materials and costs
- Organizational structure with roles and responsibilities
- Completion and success data

OVERVIEW OF SSB 5410: AN ACT RELATED TO ONLINE LEARNING

Martin Mueller, Assistant Superintendent Student Support, OSPI
September 18, 2009

SSB 5410: Legislative “Intent”

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- Take the first step in improving oversight and quality assurance of online learning programs.
- Examine possible additional steps that may need to be taken to improve financial accountability.

OSPI; 9/18/2009

SSB 5410: “The First Step”

3

- Provide objective information to students, parents, and educators regarding available online learning opportunities, including:
 - Program and course content.
 - How to register for programs and courses.
 - Teacher qualifications.
 - Student-to-teacher ratios.
 - Prior course completion rates.
 - And other valuable information.
- Create an approval process for multidistrict online providers.

OSPI; 9/18/2009

SSB 5410: “The First Step” continued

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- Enhance statewide equity of student access to high quality online learning opportunities.
- Require school district boards of directors to develop policies and procedures for student access to online learning opportunities.

OSPI; 9/18/2009

Implementation of 5410: OSPI Requirements

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- OSPI must develop approval, monitoring, and appeal process for multidistrict online providers. The criteria and processes shall be adopted by rule by December, 1, 2009.
- Initial approval will be for 4 years.
- Grandfathering: Multidistrict online providers either already approved by the DLC or accredited by NAAS are exempt from approval process until August 31, 2012.

OSPI; 9/18/2009

Implementation of 5410: OSPI Requirements

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- OSPI shall make first round of approval decisions by April, 1, 2010; thereafter, decisions must be made by November 1 of each year.
- OSPI shall establish Online Learning Advisory Committee.
- OSPI shall create an Office of Online Learning:
 - ▣ Staffed by former DLC staff.
 - ▣ \$700,000 annual appropriation.

OSPI; 9/18/2009

Implementation of 5410: OSPI Requirements

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Tasks of the Office of Online Learning

- Develop and maintain a Web site that provides objective information regarding online learning.
- Develop model agreements with approved multidistrict online providers that provide a template for districts interested in contracting with these entities.
- In collaboration with ESDs:
 - Provide TA and support to districts.
 - Provide online tools for students, teachers, others.

OSPI; 9/18/2009

Implementation of 5410: OSPI Requirements

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Tasks of the Office of Online Learning, continued

- Develop model policies and procedures for districts.
- Modify the standards for course reporting to include designation of online courses in CEDARS.
- Submit annual report to State Board of Education, the Legislature, and the Governor.
 - Demographics.
 - Course enrollment data.
 - Course completion data and passing rates.
 - Outcomes of course/provider approval reviews.

OSPI; 9/18/2009

Implementation of 5410: School District Requirements—Policy

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By August 31, 2010, districts must adopt policies and procedures regarding student access to online courses and online learning programs.

- Policy must cover broad range of online learning issues.
- Policies must be submitted to OSPI by September 15, 2010.
- OSPI must submit summarizing report on policies to the Legislature by December 1, 2010.

OSPI; 9/18/2009

Implementation of 5410: School District Requirements—Funding

10

- Beginning with the 2011–12 school year, school districts may claim BEA for students enrolled in online courses or programs only if the online courses or programs are:
 - Offered by an OSPI-approved multidistrict online provider.
 - Offered by the district itself to its own students and fewer than 10 percent of out-of-district students enrolling in the program are under the “choice” law.
 - Offered by a regional provider operating under and inter-district cooperative agreement.
- ALE requirements still apply.

OSPI; 9/18/2009

ONLINE LEARNING QUALITY REVIEW STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

September 18, 2009
9:00 to 9:30
Puget Sound ESD

Multidistrict Online Provider Approval Criteria

- Legislative guidelines
- Sources
- Criteria categories
- Approval process
- Timeline

Legislation

- Accredited by NAAS or another national, regional or state accreditation program listed by OSPI after consultation with WaCOL
- Alignment with state academic standards
- Require that all teachers be certificated in accordance with WA state law
- High school courses must be eligible for high school credit
 - Awarding of credit remains the responsibility of the school districts
- Other approval criteria
- Website information
 - Overall instructional program
 - Content of individual online courses and school programs
 - Registration process
 - Teacher qualifications
 - Student-to-teacher ratios
 - Course completion rates and definitions
 - Other evaluative and comparative information

Sources for Criteria

- iNACOL's National Standards of Quality for Online Courses and Online Teaching
- Keeping Pace with Online Learning 2008
 - Other states with legislated provider approval criteria and processes
- Digital Learning Commons
- Various other online and educational resources

Categories for Approval Criteria

1. Course content and instructional design
 - ▣ Course goals and outcomes
 - ▣ Course materials and organization
 - ▣ Student engagement
2. Classroom management
3. Student assessment
4. Course evaluation and management
5. Student support
6. Mentor support
7. Technology
 - ▣ Ease in navigation
 - ▣ Technology requirements
 - ▣ Tech support
8. Staff Development and support
9. Program Management

Thoughts and Ideas

- ▣ Other sources to consult?
- ▣ Any elements missing that would help ensure quality?
- ▣ How will these categories function as a tool for providers and reviewers?

Approval Process

- Teams of reviewers selected for their expertise and experience; training mandatory
- Online process with documents and scoring forms/rubrics; multiple reviewers for each application
- Completed applications only; ability to prepare online over time
- DLD compiles and distributes applications to reviewers; available to reviewers for assistance; compiles results for additional OSPI review
- Applicants notified of decisions; feedback provided

Timeline

- *July – August:* Research and initial iterations of the criteria
- *August – November:* Online Learning Advisory Committee feedback
- *August – December:* Adopt by Rule process
- *September – January:* Recruit and train application reviewers
- *December, January:* Criteria and process on website
- *January:* Providers submit applications
- *February:* Application packets reviewed
- *March:* Reviewer input compiled and recommendations made
- *April 1:* Decisions made on first round of approved multidistrict online providers
- *April – May:* Applicants notified and approved providers posted on the website for 2010 school year
- *April – May:* Appeals process
- *November 1, 2010 ongoing:* Approval decisions announced